THE WORLD'S CHOICE: MULLAHS OR PIRATES?

POLICY OPTIONS POLITIQUES

Richard Nielsen

The small band of Sept. 11 terrorists and the much larger movement against globalization obviously do not use the same methods. But each is in revolt against capitalism's need both to value human beings by their contribution to material production and to have the warlike conventions of economic competition determine human relations. We in the West are obsessed with the David vs. Goliath myth, whose theme of morally justified violence is now part of virtually all Hollywood movies. Whatever the immediate outcome in Afghanistan, unless we try to understand that West and East really are different, the many deadly slingshots Western technology provides its enemies with may doom us.

La poignée de terroristes responsables des attentats du 11 septembre et les partisans beaucoup plus nombreux du mouvement anti-mondialisation n'emploient évidemment pas les mêmes méthodes. Mais les uns comme les autres dénoncent un capitalisme qui mesure la valeur des êtres humains à leur apport à la production matérielle et qui modèle les rapports sociaux sur les codes guerriers de la concurrence économique. Nous sommes hantés en Occident par le mythe de David et Goliath, dont l'axe principal—la justification morale de la violence—sous-tend presque tous les films hollywoodiens. Quels que soient les résultats immédiats obtenus en Afghanistan, l'Occident continuera d'être menacé par les armes que sa propre technologie fournit à ses ennemis s'il renonce à comprendre les nombreuses différences qui séparent l'Est et l'Ouest.

Did the events of Sept. 11th mark a military watershed in which the world's only superpower was revealed to have prepared for the wrong war? Or has that possibility been effectively refuted by the success of the bombing and overthrow of the Taliban of Afghanistan? The answer depends on whether the terrorist attack against the U.S. was motivated by fanaticism—terrorism in the true sense—or whether it was a calculated response by an opposition with widespread support.

The activist protestors who have turned out at recent meetings of world leaders at Seattle, Quebec, Genoa and most recently Ottawa, are convinced they speak for so vast a coalition that its demands (or ideas) cannot, or need not, be articulated with any precision. The best evidence they may be correct in their claim to widespread support is that our leaders are so frightened of them—displaying anxiety and confusion which makes even supporters wonder what they might be up to.

Take the grandly titled "Conference of the Americas" in Quebec City in April. Was it about trade? Democracy? Human rights? Was it about creating a favourable climate for trans-national business, or about bringing prosperity to the hemisphere? Was it designed to reassure those opposed to any extension of NAFTA, or was it about forging a consensus so overwhelming it would silence NAFTA's critics? No one seemed willing, or able, to clear up the mystery.

The aims of the protesters were, if possible, even more obscure. Were they opposed to trade or simply out to scuttle arrangements that would foster freer trade? Were they resisting the U.S.? Or capitalism? Or the political leadership in their own countries? Why were they seemingly immune to the argument put forward by the organizers of the conference that their meeting was but a first step to ensure perpetual prosperity, and with the prosperity a lower birth rate, better education, high tech, high rise, high expectations and … well, all the things we of the globalized First World enjoy?

If, as some maintain, the protests at Quebec and elsewhere amount to a declaration of war against the world order created by America, Europe and Japan, then the protests and the World Trade Center attack are related even if they aren't linked. The new world order mandates a global economy with rules all economic institutions, private and public, will be compelled by logic and self-interest to acknowledge and accept. Does the targeting of the World

Trade Center and the Pentagon and the brutalities it involved mark a new stage in what has been, up to now, street theatre?

The success of the New York attack reveals that the U.S. is extremely vulnerable to the kind of war its enemies may be contemplating. Western technologies and institutions created for purely economic motivations, and operating in an open society, are available as weapons to our enemies but not to us, and these weapons are by no means confined to aircraft flown into buildings. The chaotic state of our merchant shipping, the openness of the Internet to mischief of all kinds, the wave of illegal immigration that we seem powerless to stop all make true security impossible to achieve.

Our economic vulnerability to the kind of war signaled by the events of Sept. 11 has become clear. The bills presented by the airlines for their losses following the attack, now augmented by bills from the hotel and catering industry, are only a slight indication of how fragile our sophisticated consumer economy has become. The attackers, using weapons the terrorists "purchased" (on credit cards) for the price of 19 airline tickets and some flying lessons will cost the United States untold billions of dollars. American government officials including Alan Greenspan suggest it may well have caused a deepening of a recession, in which case the cost may end up in the trillions.

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Because 20th century materialism, with its computers, TV and Internet, caters to our mental as well as our bodily appetites, it is difficult for us to imagine the case against the world we have created. So we concentrate our criticism on the confrontational theatrics—the *means* the protestors at Ottawa, Quebec and Seattle employed and the brutality of the New York attack. By doing so we avoid having to consider the possibility that our differences with them are not about means at all, but about ends. What we are proposing to the world in the globalized economy is the most thorough and far-reaching revolution in human history. Why should we be surprised if it generates violent opposition?

Many of the values our economically oriented society cultivates most vigorously contradict the basic moral assumptions on which the cultures of most of the rest of the world are based. Buddhism provides striking evidence of this. In Aiya Sura's *Jatakamala*, written in the fourth century A.D., there is a reference to one of the Buddha's previous lives:

> *I remember incarnation just as if I had woken from a dream. In it I was a workman, I led a sober life, but scraped a living by honest work for people whose only distinction was their wealth. One day I was about to begin on some hired work—that rich source of insult, exhaustion and misery. Self-preservation was my only motive. I was afraid of no longer being able to keep body and soul together. Suddenly, I caught sight of four monks begging alms. They were self-possessed and, it seemed, surrounded by the holy aura of monkhood. My heart melted with devotion, I was afraid no longer.*

So hired work for pay was seen as "a rich source of insult, exhaustion and misery" as long ago as the fourth century, while begging was seen as liberating: "I was afraid no longer." But hired work for pay in an ever more competitive environment is precisely what the new economic order promises the world.

We in the "developed" world have become used to the performance anxiety such competition involves, but to the uninitiated it is a fearful price to pay even for undreamed-of affluence. For most of our life the fear of death is as nothing compared to the fear that we will fail to provide for ourselves or for those who are in some measure dependent on us at a level that assures respectability. This fear is the fuel on which the world economy runs but Western societies have not dared name or admit it or evaluate its effects on the human spirit. Instead we have assumed that our civilization, our culture and economic arrangements—our "results"—are what the world wants. What the economists, corporations and the intellectual supporters of globalism are selling at Quebec and elsewhere is the American way of life—all of it. Thus American experience and indeed American attitudes hold the key to what much of the world finds so repugnant, which is why in all probability, only America will come under actual attack.

Part of the reason for this is that America has been Western culture's great hope. By and large it had not participated in colonialism and could even point to a colonial occupation of its own which it had overthrown. This "revolutionary past" is one of the reasons that Americans find it difficult to understand the opposition they now face. After all, the kind of society America is was created in large measure by the dispossessed who—if we are to believe the protestors at Seattle, Quebec and elsewhere—are now its most determined opponents.

Because America is capitalism's most orthodox and unyielding champion American values and the values of modern capitalism are inevitably linked. These attitudes originate in the immigrant experience. What brought immigrants to America was the expectation that they would be able to earn a higher return from the work they did in a competitive environment in which everyone had a chance. For that, they forsook their parents, their friends, their community—in many cases the very idea of community. But what they found at the heart of the work they embraced was an attitude that transmuted acquisitiveness into aggressiveness.

Even the terminology was aggressive. Settlers "fought" the wind, the weather and the soil; they "attacked" and "conquered" the forest and "laboured" in the factories. And the aggressive terminology only became more marked when success was achieved. The rich financial centers that emerged to pump out and accumulate the money that was the lifeblood of capitalism were described as "jungles." Thorstein Veblen, the great Norwegian-American economist, coined the phrase "conspicuous consumption" to describe how people in a burgeoning capitalist society spend in order to make their success known, and how over much of the world and throughout much of human history the preferred work has been "piratical" in nature. Piratical work, if not useless, is comparatively unproductive, often shifting wealth around rather than creating it.

Veblen identified this kind of work with the masculine ego forged in early times by the hunt. He described primitive societies in which, although women might produce 90 per cent of the food by farming, the ceremonies honoured the men who supplied 10 per cent by hunting, an activity that strongly resembled sport with its mixture of skill, daring and competitiveness. Even today, in sport the language of war and the hunt persists: we "beat" our opponents, or "dominated" or "crushed" or "humiliated" or "destroyed" them. The current preoccupation with competitive professional sport is a celebration of aggressiveness expressed in violence. And pleasurable work, the work people tend to refer to as a career, is increasingly treated like sport, with the some huge salaries for the superstars of business, and the same awards and publicity for significant achievers. Increasingly, we describe these people as "winners."

Led by America, Western societies have made work the prime validator of worth and have developed three distinct classes defined, not by their relationship to each other, but by their differing relationship to "work" itself. Those whose work is pleasurable or who think of themselves as having "careers" are "winners"; those whose work is physical, messy, repetitive and disliked by those who do it are "losers"; those who are truly marginalized, who have no work whatsoever are described as "the underclass" or "victims."

Losers do the work their immigrant parents and grandparents did on their arrival in America. It is onerous in its physical demands, closely supervised, carries no prestige and provides relatively small monetary rewards. This by and large is the "work" of the Third World. Its characteristic is its coerciveness: people do it to put bread on the table and to avoid sinking to the level of the underclass—the victims.

No matter how useful work in this category is, it is despised. No better example of that can be provided than the flight by North American women from the formerly respected role of housewife, to the point where the skills once associated with housework—sewing, cooking, cleaning, entertaining, nurturing—go unlearned. Instead young women flock to the university in pursuit of "exciting" careers in accounting, banking, advertising, the law, and other marginally useful but prestigious piratical employment. Indeed, the work of housewives carries the stigma that it is unpaid and is thus linked to the underclass, the victims.

More and more, our society is becoming angry with its victims, especially as their numbers increase. They lack validation in a society dedicated primarily, if not solely, to economic activity and performance. Not being paid "producers," their claim to our sympathy and compassion becomes problematic and their right to consume comes into question. We have extended this attitude to include whole continents—Africa, much of Asia and South America, encompassing almost all "indigenous" people. If America is hated, it is not because of what America has, but how America regards those who have less.

One of the ludicrous aspects of what has happened since Sept. 11th is that while America reserves the right to use its massive military power against anyone thought to be harboring terrorists, Americans never tire of deploring the violent tendencies in Islam. As Simone Weil, the French philosopher, observed many years ago, the only supreme sacrifice a pluralist society endorses is the one a soldier makes on

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behalf of the state, but a similar sacrifice for religious reasons becomes "fanaticism."

The opposition of much of the world to the new economic "order" is not primarily political or economic, but religious. And that religious objection is not confined to Islam. Eastern religions such as Buddhism, are inevitably at odds with a global economy if it makes economic growth and production a reason for being. Such "idolatry" would not necessarily bother them if they did not (like Tolstoy) believe the economic relationships capitalism creates are based on an ethic that endorses violence by cultivating competitiveness, acquisitiveness and aggression rather than compassion.

Buddhism makes enlightenment depend on "right livelihood": on work that motivates us because of its utility and does not need to be converted into a game or a contest. In the early 1970s, before he became a U.S. Senator, Patrick Moynihan, published a study that revealed that 98 per cent of American blue-collar workers considered themselves failures. The utilitarian nature of the work they did and its comparatively meager financial rewards condemned them in their own eyes. This deep anxiety at the heart of Western society, Buddhists would contend, is a product of illusions deliberately created and fostered to support an economic culture that demands great and continuous effort fueled by fear and anger.

Since Sept. 11th, the Western media has been searching for "moderate" Muslims. This term requires definition. Do we mean Muslims who oppose "terrorism" or do we mean those who buy into Western pluralistic values that place religion in a private sphere unrelated to politics or economics? The East, it need hardly be said, does not see our pluralistic culture as religiously neutral, nor for that matter do Western religions. Born of competition, modern Western "culture" supports the notion that all life be ordered around the lure of money, prestige and rewards—all related, as I've pointed out, to the work we do. The truly dangerous violence in the West, Easterners would argue, is not the violence that finds expression in the street or even in the bombs of American planes but in the anger used by each individual every working day to enable himself or herself to make the strenuous effort the economy demands.

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Of course, moral justification for this kind of violence is deeply rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Jesus seems to have been unalterably opposed to violence, not only to actual violence against persons, but to its very spirit, as well as its use in any form. But the instigators of modern capitalist society, being Protestants, were readers of the whole Bible and found much that was supportive, even inspiring and, unlike the Sermon on the Mount, "economically relevant." "Winning" has moral significance through most of the Bible. Perhaps the best example is David's victory over Goliath.

Significantly, the David and Goliath myth is the most persistent theme in modern movies. It is present, if not explicitly, then implicitly, in almost everything Hollywood turns out. Northrop Frye predicted the Americans would lose the Vietnam War because their soldiers had been conditioned by Hollywood to think of themselves as David, and in Vietnam were being forced to play Goliath.

But the myth of David and Goliath, for all its power, is fraudulent. We are introduced to Goliath as "the enemy" though no particular crimes are laid at his door. It is enough that he is a Philistine. Thus, his crime is that he is on the wrong side, and that he is immensely powerful—huge, armed and dangerous. Goliath crops up time and again in Hollywood films, because his power evokes our sympathy for David, who has no shield, no armour, and is small and young, and therefore, presumably, weak. But of course the appearance of weakness in David and strength in Goliath is an illusion. David has his slingshot and his skill in using it—"the equalizer" as it's called in Hollywood gangster films. So, in fact, it is David who is strong and Goliath who is weak and the outcome proves that Goliath should have had our sympathy if anyone did.

What then explains the omnipresence and the undying popularity of this myth? The answer is that the David and Goliath story is a disguised justification of violence. David's fragility prompts our sympathy and by so doing, provides moral validity for what we all deeply desire, some circumstance that will justify violence and provide a moral reason to defeat, annihilate and kill our opponent, who by menacing us with his power or his "terror" has sacrificed any claim on our sympathy or compassion.

Violence thus justified has become the essential underpinning of the vast and complicated edifice of customs, practices and controls that has been constructed to regulate, stimulate and direct the economic life of the planet, and which finds its ultimate expression in globalism. This violence is not only or primarily coercive, it is piratical as well, with its roots nourished by our

prevailing religion, a debased form of Judeo-Christianity which Harold Bloom has called "The American Religion." Its followers, who are legion—far more numerous than church attendance would suggest—have been able to largely dispense with any institutional religious framework because other more effective means exist to inculcate the values essential to it.

Few would disagree that it is the media, including Hollywood, which provide the stories that shape the new morality that defines modern Western culture. What isn't acknowledged, or widely understood, is that our stories are conceived to: reflect and inculcate attitudes concerning what we do for a living; emphasize winning and losing; and make life a contest which implicitly endorses violence.

This violence has eroticized economic competition, which has become the supposedly impartial arbiter of who will be praised, and who will be blamed, whom we should emulate, and whom we should scorn. This systemic violence, which the people of traditional societies recognize more clearly than we do, is the cause of their seemingly "irrational" opposition. They perceive it—and us—as evil and themselves and their threatened institutions as morally superior.

As a screenwriter, I am involved in the creation of stories that help maintain the competitive attitudes I've described, and to this end I am required to observe certain rigid "rules." For instance, heroes are defined as winners, and strength is proven in confrontation and combat. There is a word to describe this principle that is applied by every script supervisor employed anywhere within the influence of Hollywood; the word is "jeopardy." A story must have "jeopardy." A hero must be threatened by something or someone: that is, he or she must have a personal Goliath, who is to be slain. This is as true of love stories as it is of action adventures.

The two great genres of the American movie, the western and the crime story, are invariably settled by the good guy killing the bad. ("Dead or alive," the phrase favoured by George Bush, means "dead" in the movies.) But in less overtly violent genres, the sado-masochistic dichotomies of victory/defeat and success/failure still prevail. As with David and Goliath, having been placed in jeopardy, the apparent underdog proves stronger and is entitled, because of an earlier perceived weakness, to obliterate, destroy and humiliate his or her adversary. It makes little difference whether the competition is for half of Texas or for the girl, or boy, next door.

The moral poverty of such a view of human nature and its erotic implications are what identifies it as a perversion. There is a film that wonderfully illustrates how, in Hollywood, a highly moral story becomes perverted. The movie *Hud* is a simple story of a boy who has to choose whether to emulate his uncle Hud or his grandfather. In the novel, *Horsemen Pass By* by Larry McMurtry, Hud did not even exist. It was a story that told how the grandfather's strength of character in the face of adversity influences his grandson to accept him as his mentor. But that story lacked competition and jeopardy. For the movie the grandfather was given a son, Hud, a charming womanizer, brawler and hellraiser, so the two could compete for the love and regard of the young boy. Hud, who was played by Paul Newman, comes to dominate the movie so completely that it had to be named after his character.

Thus the film's apparent moral message, that it's wiser to choose virtue than vice, becomes muddled, because vice has to be made more attractive than virtue. Like Goliath, vice has to appear stronger in order for the story to have suspense, and so the story is altered to convey a highly immoral message. We learn that the grandfather has rejected Hud, describing him as "bent as a child" and "unprincipled" as a man. Hud, for all his attractions, is revealed as evil in order to satisfy another Hollywood rule that good and evil must be as clearly distinguished as God and the Devil—even though Hud (the Devil) is the reason we've stayed to watch. So, the attractions of vice are used to teach virtue, which turns out to be (of necessity) cruel, prompting the grandfather in the name of morality to reject his own child. As Hud says, "My mother loved me but she died."

Hud was made by Martin Ritt, perhaps the most moral and socially concerned director ever to work in Hollywood. A believer in the righteousness of causes, Ritt chose his Davids and his Goliaths with scrupulous care and therefore, in the end, served the Hollywood system as well as those who approached their work with no moral concerns whatsoever. Like David's, Ritt's purity lasted only until he took out his slingshot.

My industry—TV and the movies—is at the very centre of this process of culturization which eroticizes both the products and the processes of capitalism. Every story, whether fictitious or factual, is structured to reflect the dualism of good and evil, right and wrong, without which we are told life holds no drama and drama

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no life. What is interesting is that these conflicts, deemed to be so essential in attracting an audience, do not have "meaning" in themselves. Meaning is supplied by what the industry calls "reality" (moments that are real) and every screenplay is an attempt to provide the actor, director, producer and ultimately the audience with something that is, in some sense, real—which is to say, true.

This search for a truth that can be acknowledged between viewer and artist, however trivial or fleeting, is the quest that motivates all artists, and yet every age, without exception, seeks to use that impulse in the service of whatever illusion—military, commercial or ecclesiastical—underlies the pursuit of power, riches or control. The more complex the art (and therefore, the more costly) the greater the dilution of "truth" and the more pervasive the mixed message.

To return to *Hud*, it is the character of the grandfather that provides the truth and the lack of character of the evil Hud that provides the excitement. Simone Weil observed that nothing was more attractive in real life than goodness, or more dull in art. She theorized that this was because art was only a "reflection" of real life, indeed, its opposite. What she did not say or perhaps realize is that in popular art it is the relationship *between* art and life that accounts for what she observed. Evil in art is attractive precisely because it is so unattractive in life that it has to be masked, given other faces and names; that masquerade is the source of its artistic power. In Freudian or Jungian terms, its power comes from the release of what in real life has been repressed. In our daily lives, we encounter fear frequently, but few if any Goliaths whom we can punish for our fears.

Thus, creative writers involved in popular art in the West, whatever their chosen form, have to cater to the expectation that evil will supply sufficient excitement to make the search for meaning worthwhile. In Buddhist terms this means we are expected to make the illusion more interesting and alluring than the truth. This rule, governing what with television has become a universal collective fantasy, supports the illusion that energizes (and eroticizes) all modern economic activity by converting it into a drama of winners, losers and victims; an illusion that introduces into every life a sense of jeopardy or anxiety which starts the first day of school and does not end until retirement, not even for the rich.

It is a "jeopardy" designed to encourage us to produce a surplus, indeed, to make it impossible even to define what sufficiency might be, either personally or collectively. It invites the deprived developing world to a feast—if only they will discard what currently gives meaning and value to the life they have. They resist because they know us better than we know ourselves, for we display warts to them we keep hidden at home. They have to make the Nikes, we only wear them. To them the world created by Hollywood looks like fun, but they take it less seriously than we do, seeing our movies not as life but as diversions. The Muslims pray five times a day to remind themselves that they must not fall victim to such distractions.

Since Sept. 11, little time has been spent looking for the truth any competent script supervisor would demand. Instead we feed only the need for our victory and the other guy's defeat. The plight of the Muslim world—which has known nine different, non-Muslim occupiers in the last 90 years, not including the Americans, and which has had its politics and the national boundaries of its states altered to accommodate the West's need for oil—is little discussed, as we, religious illiterates that we are, search the Koran for evidence of Muslims' moral inferiority.

We eroticize war because we have already eroticized our everyday life, particularly our economic life, as a competition. "Right livelihood," defined as work which responds to genuine needs, both ours and others', is almost inconceivable in a society which has constructed an illusory drama in which work, or rather its rewards, is the measure of all things—to the point where its attractions threaten our ability to raise our children responsibly, and fuel a compulsion to consume that endangers all life on the planet.

What does the universal fear of being a "loser" or a "victim" make us do that we would not do if it were absent? What work would we choose if the motive of fear or reward were entirely absent, if we did work purely for its utility or, generously, for the pleasure it gives or the pain it alleviates? Some think they will overcome that universal fear by becoming rich—a "winner"—but in fact the more we have the more we fear losing what we have.

At my most optimistic I see television passing an array of fleeting images before each of us in what could become a meditation on our institutions, our ideas, our compulsions, our sexuality—all our illusions at last catalogued, while we sit, each of us, compelled to acknowledge their

illusory nature and their remoteness from that grounded reality which is the basis of all true human satisfaction. These fleeting images are of course *our* illusions, so that the crucial question is what they mean to that part of the world not under the American spell, as they ponder the future we propose for them.

The common ground between "us" and "them" is that we both aspire to an individual freedom without anxiety, which is only possible if we embrace the virtually unthinkable notion that we can be ourselves, our better selves, all the time, and still survive. Christ, in a beautiful passage in Matthew 6:28, admonishes us not to worry. "Do not say, 'what are we to eat, what are we to drink, how are we to be clothed?' It is the pagans who set their hearts on these things."

So democracy and human rights, attractive as they sound, are, for many, secondary to freedom from an illusion that has come to rule our lives in the affluent West. The immoral essence of that illusion is that our continued existence is dependent on our own individual efforts and that it is disgraceful to forego competition and place our faith in the compassion of others—and counterproductive, too, since they have been conditioned to think as we think. Thus do our work and the socially approved attitudes we bring to it harden our hearts against the rest of humanity and so, inevitably, against ourselves.

Some will see in such opposition to global capitalism a revival of Marxism, but Marxism was as materialist as capitalism. It failed not because it did not satisfy the soul but because competition proved more effective in the pursuit of materialistic ends than the grotesque amalgam of exhortation and coercion favoured by Marxists once they took power.

The violence that underlies the view of work which we embrace with such desperation collectively and individually and have recommended to the world's economically deprived arouses in them the fear that there may be no way to have what we have without becoming what we are. The challenge they pose is not economic or materialist but moral, subjective, spiritual—in a word "religious"—which does not rule out violence and indeed, as our history proves, may increase it.

America under George W. Bush is striving to find some measure of comfort as Goliath, thereby unwittingly creating a world of potential Davids. each watching as the giant buckles on his armour, fingering any slingshots they possess, or thinking of how they can acquire one. To the Jews, the story of David and Goliath wasn't a myth, it was history, but it would be hard to find a better military metaphor for the new technological age. For more than two centuries military power has depended on industrial power, which could not be overcome or overtaken in the short space of time encompassed by a modern war. But now, with technology having replaced industrial capacity as the chief determinant of military advantage, the military equivalent of David's slingshot is precisely what Goliath has to fear—a refinement of a microchip perhaps, capable of destroying the whole elaborate nerve system of America's military communications, while leaving the possessors' aggressive capability still operational.

Even more likely is the spectre raised by the World Trade Center attack—a war against American business, the soft underbelly of American power—which could give its competitors in other developed countries an inevitable competitive advantage. These "rogues" that Bush and Cheney and Powell see in their nightmares are out there, if not yet fully capable. But even if they did not exist, the very possibility that they might is a worm burrowing into the brains of America's military planners. Such is the fate of all Goliaths, and Goliath's response can be predicted: more and more armour, paranoia disguised as policy.

Richard Nielsen is founder and president of Norflicks, Ltd.

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Fast work Many of the best political speeches are produced on tight deadlines, which is one reason candidates often sound more interesting on the stump, when they're improvising, than in office, when they have a bigger staff and more time... Writing designed to be heard comes more quickly than writing designed to be seen on a page, because the way you say the words in your head is close to the way the speech should come out. Also, you can worry less about logical flow or possible repetition, because you can assume that the listener will hold only about twenty or thirty seconds of the speech in mind at a time, rather than looking on the page for consistency. so if the writer has, say, a couple of hours, he or she has a chance of batting out an interesting draft that advances one or two main themes.

James FALLOWS, *Atlantic Monthly*, Dec. 2001