LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

A DISMAL RESPONSE

The Dismal Scientist asserts that "experts" too often step out of their designated areas of expertise, make ridiculous statements, and carry out inappropriate actions. No problem with that. He chooses some interesting examples, two of them unknown to me; Richard Bissell, failed master planner of assassinations targeting Fidel Castro for John F. Kennedy, and Sidney Gottlieb, also a Kennedy plotter, with a hilarious scheme for scheme for publicly depilating Fidel Castro's beard with chemicals! Were these failures due to lack of expertise, or simply ineptness in execution? We need to reflect on the motives of our folk hero J.F. Kennedy, in even considering these tactics! Were they both "light bulbs"? Was President Kennedy a light bulb? Hard to say in retrospect, but if there ever was an individual who stepped way beyond his expertise, it was JFK. Undoubtedly their egos were up to the task. Let's remember that unknown Bulgarian assassin however, who only needed an umbrella to carry out his lethal task. Was he a "light bulb" or simply a pro "traveler"?

William Shockley definitely qualifies as a light bulb. That he used it to illuminate genetic and sociological observations, which themselves are still ill defined, is not surprising. That he combined them with some inherent prejudices, and sold all under the Nobel label was most unfortunate, but sadly they won't take the medal away from him for misusing its glitter.

Noam Chomsky is indeed a renowned linguistic theorist, but more than that, he chose to risk this reputation by engaging in vigorous public debate on national and foreign policy, and still does. In the given quote he raised what would to most be an unsavory question. To what extent should a government

engage in terror to effect social change, especially land ownership? It's not a question you want to bring to your average town hall meeting? Nevertheless it is a question that could be discussed in an academic setting. After all, we've seen plenty of examples in history! Does Chomsky use his light to illuminate dark areas of human consciousness, or is he just being inappropriately provocative?

Robert McNamara is a decided light bulb, a certified Whiz Kid from early on. Did he step way out of the light as Secretary of Defense? Actually he was a very appropriate choice, because mass killing is an industrial enterprise in the 20th and now the 21st century. I don't mean just the production and accumulation of weapons and the mobilization of men of course, but the concept that killing can be achieved ever more efficiently and will less expenditures of "friendly" forces with properly organize high-tech weaponry. That he failed was profoundly embarrassing, and continues to haunt his current successor, Donald Rumsfeld, though of course he's not interested in history. So whom would you hire to carry out your mass killings? How about one of General LeMay's protégés? He definitely was a "traveler".

Finally, Paul Wolfowitz. I'm not sure why George Bush just didn't give him a Medal of Freedom in advance for "liberating" Iraq, but perhaps he had a suspicion that someone he trusts should be in charge of any monies that the U.S. would have to dole out to fix the post-war mess. Is Wolfowitz a light bulb? To be honest, I don't know. All I know is that the World Bank is stuck with him for another 3 years at least, enough to retard Third World development significantly. I agree with the Dismal Scientist. Wolfowitz is in deep doodoo, needing a good deal more light than his feeble bulb will yield.

Is it a coincidence that only presidential appointees were offered as illustration of the principle? Perhaps another foray into our corporate sector would bring out some additional egregious illustrations.

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