

we die, we shall go to Pullman Hell.” When the depression of 1893 hit, Pullman cut wages but not rent. His proles began to go hungry. There was a strike, and they fled paradise in droves. The bitterness ran so deep that when Pullman died in 1897, his coffin was “encased in a thick slab of concrete, lest anyone should try to desecrate his grave.”

Harsh feelings between CEOs and their charges were more recently excited by the corporate blood-lettings of the 1990s. “Neutron” Jack Welch cut 100,000 jobs during his first five years at General Electric. Al “Chainsaw” Dunlap laid off a third of the work force at Scott Paper within a year.

Why do we let work become such a dominant element of our lives? Just for the pay? As Donkin notes, the quest for money can’t explain Stonehenge, the pyramids, or the paintings at Lascaux and Chauvet. At its best, he believes, work enables us to “leave something better for those we leave behind, some signpost of our existence, our potential.” To that end, he recommends a new work ethic, “an ethic that questions the content of work, that does not value prolonged hard work above everything.” And he poses a revolutionary question: “If work is neither well done nor worthwhile, why work at all?” This book is both well done and worthwhile.

—BENJAMIN CHEEVER

**AN AMERICAN INSURRECTION:
*The Battle of Oxford,
Mississippi, 1962.***

By William Doyle. Doubleday.
383 pp. \$26

Nearly 40 years have passed since an epic constitutional confrontation between a daffy governor of Mississippi, Ross Barnett, and a dithering Kennedy administration almost escalated into a renewal of the Civil War. The 1962 desegregation of the University of Mississippi caused a night of carnage, including two deaths, and provoked the deployment of 30,000 troops to ensure James Meredith’s enrollment. The events inspired several books (and a ballad by Bob Dylan) before passing into Southern history. Now Doyle, author of *Inside the Oval*

Office (1999), has returned to the conflict. After interviewing surviving figures and inspecting hitherto unavailable material, he has produced a balanced narrative filled with fresh and important details.

To keep Meredith out of the school known as Ole Miss, Barnett and his segregationist allies fell back on legal arguments invoking states’ rights. But their passions were really fired by an abhorrence of racial integration; Barnett called it “genocide.” The author is unsparing in his account of the obstruction by Mississippi officials—and unflattering to the Kennedys, too. Though President John F. Kennedy privately thought such civil rights activity as the Freedom Rides a “pain in the ass,” he and his brother, Robert, the attorney general, were compelled to uphold the court desegregation order. Their protracted negotiations with Barnett would be considered *opéra bouffe* had they not led to such deadly results. Barnett’s deceit in the bargaining became well known and eventually crippled him politically.

The extent of the Kennedys’ misjudgments is documented here for the first time. Their agent in command, Deputy Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach, decided, “without any prior planning, without much thought at all,” to use federal marshals to seize the school’s administration building as a show of force. It triggered rioting. After reluctantly committing the army to quell the insurrection, the attorney general countermanded years of U.S. policy by forbidding the use of black troops—including many who



James Meredith escorted by U.S. marshals on the campus of the University of Mississippi

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held leadership rank. During the nightlong riot, the military command structure unraveled. Robert Kennedy complained, “The army botched it up.” But the author says that “it was the Kennedys who had botched things up, and royally,” by dealing with Barnett and then activating an invasion of Oxford in the middle of the night.

Despite claims by federal authorities that only tear gas—and no live ammunition—was used to repel the rioters, Doyle uncovered FBI papers indicating that marshals used revolvers at one point. He speculates that an errant bullet could have killed one of the victims. Using the Freedom of Information Act, Doyle also discovered that the army raided a fraternity house where Ole Miss senior Trent Lott was president and confiscated a cache of 24 weapons. Lott, now the Republican leader in the U.S. Senate, didn’t respond to Doyle’s repeated requests to discuss the case.

At the center of the storm was Meredith, a courageous but enigmatic man. Doyle

describes the black student as “an obscure loner” dwelling “inside a myth of his own design, a realm often remote and impenetrable to other people.” As one of the book’s few heroes, Meredith convinces Doyle that he cunningly engineered the conflict between the governor and the president. In reality, Meredith was merely the *deus ex machina* used to break segregation in Mississippi.

In his epilogue, Doyle notes that Meredith went on to embrace conservative causes. He even endorsed Barnett in a 1967 campaign in which the old governor finished fifth. There were many other ironies. Hundreds of white Mississippi National Guardsmen, put under federal command, joined thousands of regular troops in risking their lives to put down the rebellion. “Despite recommendations by various commanders,” Doyle writes, “the Defense Department issued not a single commendation medal for the bravery of U.S. troops during the Battle of Oxford.”

—CURTIS WILKIE

CONTEMPORARY AFFAIRS

HUBBERT’S PEAK: *The Impending World Oil Shortage.*

By Kenneth S. Deffeyes. Princeton Univ. Press. 224 pp. \$24.95

In *The Coal Question* (1865), economist W. S. Jevons predicted that Britain’s prosperity would decline in about a century, when the nation ran short of coal. The British coal industry did go into sharp decline in the 1980s, not because of supply constraints but because Britain developed its own oil industry (and because Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher wanted to undermine trade union power). In 1956, petroleum geologist M. King Hubbert predicted that American oil production would peak around 1975. He was close: It peaked in 1970. In this venerable vein, Deffeyes argues that world oil production will peak between 2004 and 2008 and decline thereafter, with potentially calamitous consequences.

Geologist Deffeyes began his career in the Oklahoma oil patches, proceeded to Shell Oil’s research lab, and ended up on the faculty of Princeton University. The first half of his



A gusher: Beaumont, Texas, in 1901