The Coen Brothers

“Raising Arizona”, “Brother Oh Where Art There”, “Fargo,”, “Lady Killers,” and most recently “No Country for Old Men” are a few of the products of these movie geniuses. They combine fascinating stories, rich characters, a wide range of emotions and camera work that clearly leaves their trademark.
Kubrick mastered the movie camera like Picasso mastered canvas. Joel and Ethan have the same magic to make common scenes into masterpieces you could hang on the wall in a museum. “No Country” is just dark, “Fargo” is dark and violent with lighter overtones, the others are largely comedies.
Great stories, fascinating characters, are set in untypical settings: the rural west, the deep south, and the unmistakable accents of the Midwest in “Fargo”.
The Coen brothers have raised the cinematic arts to a new level.

Jewish Power According to Vanity Fair

Noted in the Jerusalem Post

In an article in Vanity Fair about the world’s “most powerful people” over 50 of the 100 listed were Jews.

Such recognition is a mixed blessing among the Jews concerned about ancient libelous canards of insidious Jewish power and conspiracy.

Thousands of books try to account for this influence. *In her most recent book, Jews and Power, (Ruth) Wisse accounts “for the achievement of Jews through the centuries,” describing it, she says, “as a consequence of their having to develop their*

powers of adaptation to an extraordinary degree."

Yuri Slezkine in "The Jewish Century" noted, " Modernization is about everyone becoming urban, mobile, literate, articulate, intellectually intricate, physically fastidious, and occupationally flexible. It is about learning how to cultivate people and symbols, not fields or herds. It is about pursuing wealth for the sake of learning, learning for the sake of wealth, and both wealth and learning for their own sake. It is about transforming peasants and princes into merchants and priests, replacing inherited priviledge with acquired prestige, and dismantling social estates for the benefit of individual, nuclear families, and book-reading tribes."

Yuri pens the reason for Jewish success in America and the modern world clearly and profoundly.

I have two other related theories. The Jewish religion worships the "word" of God, they worship a book. The religious services wrap the "Torah" in rituals and respect. They have thus placed a high respect on reading and learning. Jewish women were learning to read long before most women in other western ethnic and religious groups. This makes the Jews a natural fit for the information age.

Secondly, and this is somewhat related to Wisse's point, two thousand years of violent persecution and genocide have somewhat 'naturally selected' the surviving Jews to adapt to an inhospitable world. It is a little sad and ironic to think that our worst enemies may have had some impact on our success in the modern world.

Will Venezuela Be Judenrein?

by Mona Charen at National Review

We should not be surprised that a close ally of Ahmadinejad and Castro *engaged in steady anti-Semitic and anti-Israel propaganda. A little more than a year ago, Chavez declared in a Christmas Eve speech that "the world has wealth for all, but some minorities, the descendants of the same people that crucified Christ, have taken over all the wealth of the world."*

Mona's article noted many Jews who settled in Venezuela to escape the Nazi's are leaving the country.

Publications by the government's ministry of culture have featured titles like "The Jewish Question," with cover art showing a Star of David superimposed over a swastika. Jews were accused of complicity in the murder of a prosecutor. An article in a leading newspaper, El Diaro de Caracas asked whether it would become necessary "to expel [the Jews] from the country."

On a recent visit to Washington, D.C., Gustavo Aristegui – the shadow foreign minister in Spain's opposition party – told a group at the Hudson Institute that Hamas and Hezbollah are now operating freely in Venezuela.

The challenge among America's Jews is how overtly to protest and how much to attempt with behind the scenes diplomacy. A little media coverage may help. Maybe they could interview Sean Penn and Danny Glover and ask their opinions.

TANSTAAFL

The Ain't No Such Thing As A Free Lumch

Jeff Jacoby gets it, even if none of the politicians in either party do, From his article in the Boston Globe about the tax rebate:

But where did that $800 come from in the first place? Does the federal government have a warehouse full of surplus money it can spread around when recession clouds appear on the horizon? Of course not. Washington already spends more money than it has; just three months into the new fiscal year, the budget deficit is up to $107 billion. And since no one is proposing to pay for a stimulus package by curtailing other spending, the only way Uncle Sam is going to come up with your $800 is to borrow it.

In other words, before any money can be injected into the economy by means of rebate checks or other benefits, it must first be extracted from the economy by means of borrowing (or taxation). The $800 you spend at Home Depot or SeaWorld is $800 not available to the bond buyer who lent Uncle Sam the money for your rebate check. Washington cannot jump-start the US economy by taking money from Jane and giving it to Joan any more than I can boost my own prosperity by withdrawing money from a downtown ATM and depositing it in an uptown ATM. There's no free lunch.

But if Washington really has the power to restore vim and verve to the nation's economy by simply moving money around, why not do so all the time? Why should there ever be an economic slowdown if government spending can prevent it?

Here's why: Because the business cycle hasn't been repealed. Because booms are still followed by busts. Because politicians and policymakers cannot make a $14 trillion economy jump through hoops, particularly not by going even more deeply into debt.

The engine of economic growth is creating new wealth, not redistributing existing wealth. Rebating some of last year's taxes or expanding welfare-like benefits won't encourage anyone to be more productive. Permanently lowering tax rates – letting Americans keep more of the money they earn – will.

True, tax cuts instead of tax rebates would mean no kiss in the mail. Most politicians would rather treat you to a free lunch than stimulate you to work, invest, and take more risks.

Mighty Mouse and Perverted Insurance Salesmen

While checking sources on the internet in my hotel room I have the tube on in the back ground. An adult cartoon character on the Comedy Channel says to another cartoon character," You couldn't get laid at a convention of Jewish insurance salesmen."

We have come a long way since Loony Tunes and Mighty Mouse (my favorite cartoon as a kid).

Should I be offended? Normally this kind of humor appeals to my demented sense, but I just read about the first trial of Leo Frank in 1913 and how he was railroaded on a murder charge, largely on libelous charges of perversion.

The line just doesn't seem as funny tonight.