

This summer and fall promise to be an interesting time in Washington D.C. And not just from the sweltering heat. In a Senate panel's report filed last week came an interesting string of connections between Jack Abramoff, Ralph Reed (former head of Christian Coalition, current candidate for Lt. Gov. of Georgia) and Grover Norquist (all around anti-tax slimeball). It is well summarized here:

[Abramoff, Norquist, Scaife and company: one big happy family](#)

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Do you know who Ben Stein is? He was part of the Nixon speech writing staff, along with Pat Buchannon (far-right gadfly and 2000 Presidential candidate who mysteriously got thousands of votes in heavily Jewish counties in Florida, which even he said pointed to vote counting irregularities) and William Safire (New York Times language maven and former conservative columnist). More recently he has gained some renown as the droning history professor in Ferris Beuller's Day Off, for his game show "Win Ben Stein's Money" and in an ad campaign for Visine.

Well, he is also a lawyer and economist, and writes a column for the New York Times Sunday Business section. His most recent column caught my eye for its very reasonable title:

[Note to the New Treasury Secretary: It's Time to Raise Taxes](#)

His basic message:

Just to give you an idea what you are up against, Standard & Poor's issued a warning not long ago. The caution was that if the United States government did not seriously alter fiscal policy, Treasury bonds would be downgraded to BBB, slightly above junk status, by 2020. This is a stunning piece of news for the world's most highly rated security denominated in its primary reserve currency. The S.& P. report said further that if the nation did not make serious changes after that, by 2025 Treasuries would be junk bonds, like the bonds of less successful emerging-markets nations.

Oh goody, what fun. Maybe he should go back to game shows to make George the second more comfortable.

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The Times Bob Herbert wrote a love letter to John Edwards (former Sen., North Carolina and 2004 VP candidate) a few days ago. It is striking in that Herbert was not terribly supportive of Edwards when it might have mattered, but obviously something has changed his mind since then. In any event, it is a good read:

<http://select.nytimes.com/2006/06/22/opinion/22Herbert.html>