

- John King owns an electrical-contracting business near the Michigan-Ohio border—a non-union electrical-contracting business, to be precise. For years, the fact that his employees are not organized has grated on the area's unions, and some of their sympathizers have taken matters into their own hands, vandalizing his property and stalking him and his employees. Most recently, an assailant drove to King's house late at night, began painting the word "scab" on his vehicle, and fired a shot at him when he came outside, injuring him. All too often, union solidarity comes with an implied "or else."



"It's from America—they want to borrow money."



"My blasphemous opponent has been trying to inject religion into this campaign."

The notion that solar fluctuations might have something to do with warming and cooling on earth is hardly new. But just recently a group of scientists from CERN, the prestigious European physics-research institute, published a paper with experimental data detailing how this happens (solar cosmic rays, which vary with the number of sunspots, promote the formation of clouds) and how much of an effect it has (nearly half of all observed warming, they estimate). Before publication, however, CERN's director warned the researchers "to present the results clearly but not interpret them" and to avoid "the highly political arena of the climate-change debate"—even though scientists who believe in anthropogenic global warming have never hesitated to interpret their results. Any scientific question, particularly one with such great importance to the world, can be resolved only with vigorous inquiry and debate, and muzzling scientists will merely delay the process of understanding how human activity and natural cycles affect global temperatures.

- While Congress was busy parceling out a measly \$700 billion for the 2008-09 bank bailouts, the Fed was acting on its own, on an even larger scale. This has been known for some time, but documents recently released after a Freedom of Information Act request show the true scale of the intervention: The cash infusions, guarantees, and other support proffered by the Fed add up to \$7.77 trillion—half of the country's GDP. A single infusion on Dec. 5, 2008, totaled \$1.2 trillion—nearly twice what was put up under TARP. While we are inclined to believe that an independent Fed is preferable to a Fed under congressional management, the scale of the Fed's freelance operations during the financial crisis is troubling. Even more troubling is the secrecy with which these operations were conducted, and the Fed's attempt to keep them secret—the Bloomberg news service had to fight in court to get the documents. The Fed should remain independent of political management in its role as the executor of monetary policy, but both democratic values and prudent oversight require a significantly greater level of transparency in its operations. We simply cannot have Ben Bernanke betting 50 percent of GDP on struggling banks without openness and accountability.

