

► by any means available—one method is to drive a car at pedestrians, as in Dijon on December 21st last year.

At any one time MI5 and DGSI will each be keeping an eye on around 3,000 people who range from fairly low-priority targets—people who hold extremist views that they may or may not one day want to put into practice—through those who have attended training camps or been involved in terrorist activity in the past to those who are thought likely to be actively plotting an attack. But only a small number at the top are subjected to “intensive resource” surveillance. The amount of monitoring available for the others, particularly those towards the bottom, varies widely. This provides holes for smaller plots to get through. And a smaller plot can still be large in its outrage—see the decapitation of Fusilier Rigby—and in its body count. Anders Breivik killed 77 Norwegians in 2011 with no co-conspirators at all.

Even when there are identified co-conspirators, though, it is getting harder to tell what they might be up to. This is because of the third factor that is worrying the heads of Western security agencies; the increasing difficulty they say they have in monitoring the communications within terrorist networks. The explosion of often-encrypted new means of communication, from Skype to gaming forums to WhatsApp, has made surveillance far more technically demanding and in some instances close to impossible. Apple’s latest mobile operating system comes with “default encryption” and Google’s Android is about to follow suit. In such systems the companies do not have access to their customers’ passwords and therefore cannot provide security agencies access to messages even if the law requires them to. They say that they are simply responding to the demands of their users for privacy, but the heads of the security agencies see the new approach as, at least in part, a response to what Edward Snowden, a contractor for America’s intelligence services, revealed about their abilities in 2014.

The tech firms are very different from the once-publicly owned telephone companies that spooks used to work with, which were always happy to help with a wire tap when asked. Some, especially some of the smaller ones, have a strong libertarian distrust of government. And technology tends to move faster than legislation. Although the security agencies may have ways into some of the new systems, others will stymie them from the modern equivalent of steaming open envelopes.

The citizens of the West have grown used to the idea that their security services can protect them from the worst that might happen. Faced by a new range of threats and with countermeasures apparently of rapidly declining effectiveness, that may be about to change. ■

The reaction across Europe

Solidarity, for now

AMSTERDAM, BERLIN AND COPENHAGEN

A backlash against European Muslims would play into the hands of the killers.

“ISLAM” is part of Germany.” When Christian Wulff, then president of Germany, voiced that sentiment in 2010 it was controversial. The fact that the Pegida movement has brought people on to the streets every Monday for the past three months to protest against the “Islamisation” of Germany shows that it is far from universally accepted. But when Angela Merkel, Germany’s chancellor, repeated the claim at a rally on January 11th, it felt as though she was expressing the spirit of the nation in the aftermath of the attacks in Paris. “I am the chancellor of all Germans,” Mrs Merkel went on, clearly including her 4m Muslim compatriots.

The responses of most European leaders to the Paris attacks resembled that of Mrs Merkel. Yet anxiety over terrorism has risen across the continent. As the glow of righteousness dissipates, right-wing populists and others will have a chance to exploit both that specific worry and a more general unease about Muslims which fears of terror serve to strengthen. Any success they have will fit perfectly into the agenda of the sort of people who plan murders like those in Paris. Nothing serves the jihadist

cause as well as stoking up distrust of their co-religionists.

Nigel Farage, the leader of the increasingly popular UK Independence Party, channelled such concerns when he talked of a “fifth column” in the wake of the Paris attacks. Unlike some European parties of the far- and populist-right, UKIP has not been noted for its stance on Islam. The targets of its nativist ire have tended to be immigrants from eastern Europe, along with the idea of Britain being part of the European Union. But the vision of Britain it likes to promulgate harks back to a time when the country was home to far fewer Muslims. That taps into the concerns of a growing number of voters; the proportion of Britons who said that the country would lose its identity if more Muslims moved in rose from 48% in 2003 to 62% in 2013.

By way of contrast, the Dutch populist, Geert Wilders, and his Party for Freedom (pvv) are overtly anti-Islamic, having brought anti-Muslim xenophobia into mainstream politics a decade ago. The response to the Paris attacks in the Netherlands, though, has not been quite what the party’s lead in the opinion polls might sug- ►

Islam in Europe

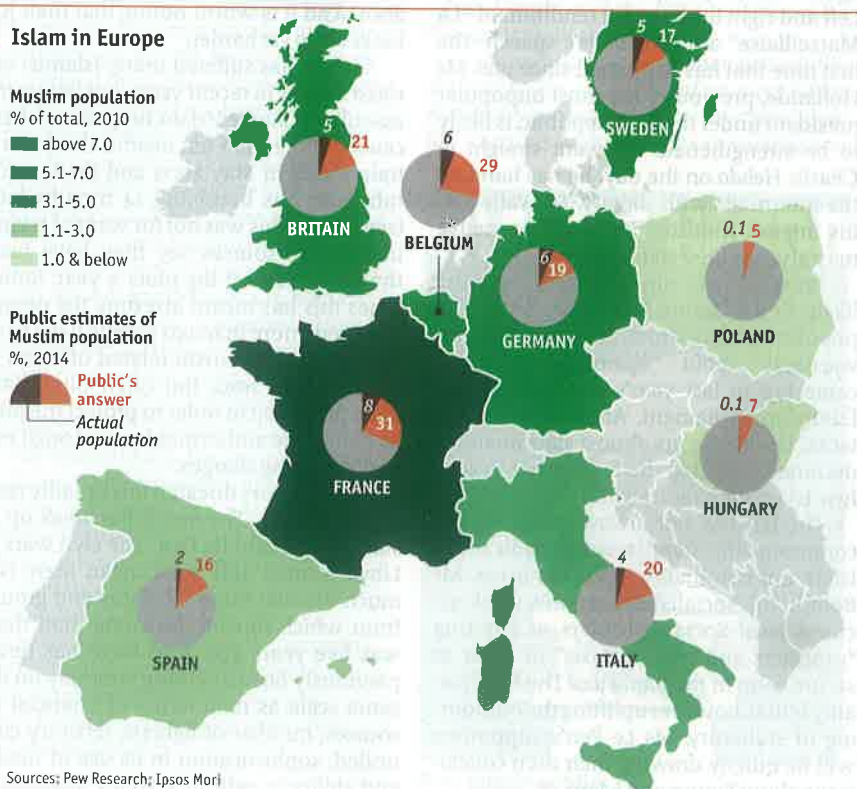
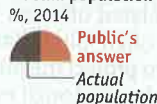
Muslim population

% of total, 2010



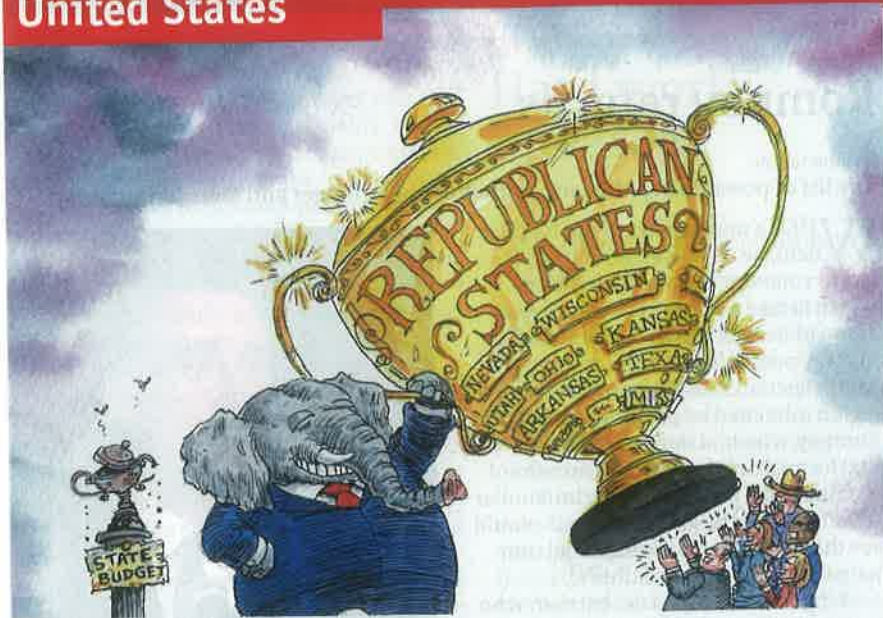
Public estimates of Muslim population

%, 2014



Sources: Pew Research; Ipsos Mori

United States



The state of the states

Republicans in charge

WASHINGTON, DC

The GOP has more clout in the states than at any time since the 1920s

ON ELECTION nights, the results for state legislatures get short shrift. Americans want to know who won the presidency or which party controls Congress, not whether the Kentucky state Senate turned red. But those not paying attention to recent down-ballot results have missed something big. Republicans now dominate government at the state level (see map). Bolstered by victories in last year's mid-term elections, they hold 31 state governorships, to the Democrats' 18. (Alaska's governor, Bill Walker, is an independent, although he was a Republican until 2013.)

Republicans now control both chambers in 30 state legislatures, while the Democrats control 11 and eight are split. In 24 states Republican power is unchecked—meaning they control the legislature and the governorship. The party has not had this much clout in the states since the 1920s.

When a clutch of new Republican governors took office four years ago, they acted on their conservative impulses, cutting taxes, trimming welfare and restricting abortion. Scott Walker of Wisconsin became a Republican hero for taking on the public-sector unions: he made state employees chip in more for their pensions, ended the automatic deduction of union dues from their wages and barred unions from collective bargaining over issues other than pay. The tax cuts of Sam Brownback, the governor of Kansas, were so bold as to earn an unwieldy nickname: Brown-

backonomics. Both Mr Walker and Mr Brownback won re-election last year, while Republicans nabbed governorships in Democratic states like Illinois, Maryland and Massachusetts. But the tide of conservative legislation may be ebbing. With many states facing big fiscal challenges, Republican governors have adopted a more moderate tone when laying out their agendas for 2015.

Take Mr Walker, who has described a proposal to make Wisconsin a “right-to-work” state—ie, to ban deals that make it compulsory for workers at a private com-

pany to join a union—as a “distraction”. Faced with a \$2.2 billion budget gap over the next two years, the governor has largely abandoned talk of cutting taxes. Republicans hold large majorities in both legislative chambers, but they support such fiscal prudence.

Presidential ambitions may be tempering Mr Walker's conservative zeal, but other Republican governors are following suit. In Arizona, which also faces a budget shortfall, Doug Ducey has scaled back his campaign promise to cut income taxes. Gary Herbert of Utah has told lawmakers to consider raising petrol or sales taxes to pay for highway repairs. Illinois finds itself in the deepest hole of any state, so Bruce Rauner has warned his constituents that they will all need to sacrifice.

To the newly-elected, Mr Brownback now serves as a cautionary tale. His business- and income-tax cuts, signed in 2012 and 2013, were the most ambitious of any state. He wanted to close loopholes to pay for this, but the legislature refused, leading to an enormous loss of revenue. After a hoped-for economic boom did not materialise, Standard & Poor's, a credit-rating agency, downgraded Kansas's debt, declaring its budget “structurally unbalanced”. Mr Brownback barely eked out a victory last year. In his inaugural address this month he acknowledged that the state has economic problems, but claimed “the solutions are principally cultural and moral”.

John Kasich, the governor of Ohio (who may also be gearing up for a presidential run), has been more pragmatic. Since taking office in 2011 he has balanced the state's budget while cutting taxes and red tape. He also picked a fight with public-sector unions, and lost. That spurred him to adopt a more conciliatory approach. Having won re-election by over 30 points last year, he now wants to cut income taxes even more—but he would pay for it by raising

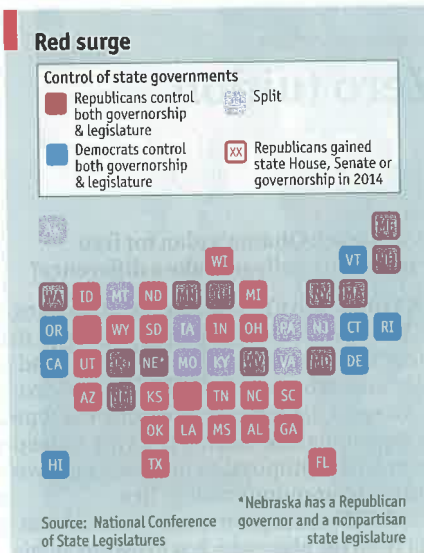
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Source: National Conference of State Legislatures

*Nebraska has a Republican governor and a nonpartisan state legislature

taxes on energy companies, which has incurred the wrath of some on the right.

Mr Kasich has faced fiercer criticism from conservatives for having accepted federal Obamacare dollars to expand Medicaid, the public health programme for the poor, in 2014. But he may have been ahead of the curve. Last month Bill Haslam said he hoped to make Tennessee the tenth state with a Republican governor to expand the programme. (His plan must still pass the legislature.) Five others are thinking about it. Some want to incorporate ideas like cost-sharing or job-training requirements, which would provide political cover. Drew Altman of the Kaiser Family Foundation, a research outfit, predicts that eventually "most, if not all" of the remaining states will find some way to accept the extra cash and expand Medicaid.

Schoolyard brawl

A more difficult test for pragmatic governors is "Common Core", the national education standards that have been adopted by over 40 states since 2010. Several governors (both Republicans and Democrats) have had to beat back efforts to kill the standards, which activists denounce as federal overreach or poor policy. Some governors, like Bobby Jindal in Louisiana, have withdrawn their support. States run by potential presidential candidates, such as Mr Jindal, seem most likely to backtrack. The issue is already dogging Jeb Bush, a pragmatic former governor of Florida who supports Common Core and has his eyes set on the White House.

With just seven states under complete Democratic control, it is easy to forget about the party's governors. But most have also set aside ideology to pursue practical agendas. In California Jerry Brown has held the line on spending, even as the state's university system clamours for cash. Instead of introducing new programmes, Mr Brown has focused on dealing with the state's long-term debts. In New York, Andrew Cuomo has vowed to tackle inequality and improve education. He has already upset teachers' unions by signalling that he wants to increase the number of charter schools and make it easier to fire bad teachers.

The states are not devoid of ideological conflict. Twenty-five are suing Barack Obama over his refusal to deport certain groups of illegal immigrants. Others are considering voter-ID requirements, drug tests for welfare recipients and further curbs on unions. A host of anti-abortion bills have been filed: Republicans are trying to build on the 231 new restrictions adopted since 2010, according to the Guttmacher Institute, a pro-choice think-tank. Many legislatures are also wrestling with gay marriage; 14 states still do not allow it. But on fiscal issues, at least, tight budgets restrain the radicals of the right. ■

The 2016 field

Romney returns

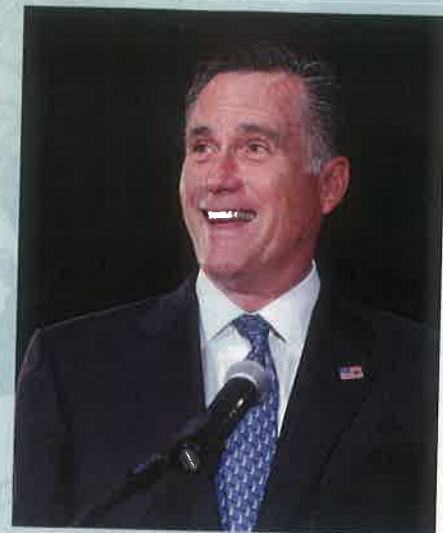
WASHINGTON, DC

The list of possible Republican candidates grows longer and more familiar

WHEN a man wishes to run for president, he no longer announces the fact to voters, or chooses an issue on which to take a stand. Instead, he lets a group of donors know that he is "exploring" the possibility of a bid, as if the campaign trail were some inaccessible region inhabited by polar bears. For Mitt Romney, who told donors on January 9th that he might run again, after months of scoffing at the idea, it is hardly unfamiliar terrain. Should he give it a go, 2016 would see the third Romney presidential campaign (not counting his father's).

Why Mr Romney—a decent man who in 2012 was pounded by adverts painting him as a heartless capitalist and careless pet owner, then denounced as useless by fellow Republicans when he lost—should want to make another attempt on the presidency is a puzzle. Perhaps the best explanation was given by another explorer: because it is there. In very early polling, Mr Romney tops a list of possible Republican candidates so long that it is sometimes quicker to mention who is not running. The likely Democratic nominee, Hillary Clinton, currently looks a formidable opponent for any of them, but she has hardly been tested yet and, if she runs, will get little campaigning practice in her party's primary.

Also in Mr Romney's favour is his surname. He would begin any campaign with the sort of recognition that costs many millions of dollars. More important, his name is not Bush, which polling suggests is not a popular one among independent voters. Republicans last won the White House without a Bush on



Because the last time was such fun

the ticket in 1972. But if feelings were to harden against Jeb Bush, the former governor of Florida and a fellow 2016 explorer, it would create some space on the business wing of the party, which thought it had found a winner until Chris Christie, the governor of New Jersey, got into a kerfuffle over a bridge and saw his state's bonds downgraded.

Were that gap to open, one of Mr Romney's immediate tasks would be to write a campaign book. Even for a life as lively as his, a third autobiography may seem like overkill. Though he is a self-described turnaround specialist, a Romney presidency seems unlikely. But that's what they said about Ronald Reagan, whose first two bids also failed.

Higher education

Zero tuition

NEW YORK

Will Barack Obama's plan for free community college make a difference?

ASHLEY MARTINEZ studies accounting at LaGuardia Community College in New York. She is also the mother of a toddler and worries about the cost of textbooks and daycare. She is exactly the type of person Barack Obama is trying to help with a new proposal to make at least two years of community college free.

Mr Obama says 9m students could benefit from his plan, which will feature in his

state-of-the-union address on January 20th. If all 50 states go along with it, a typical full-time community-college student could save \$3,800 a year, he claims. Students must maintain a 2.5 grade-point average (a C+) to qualify. Uncle Sam would cover 75% of the cost; the states would pick up the rest. The White House says the tab will be \$60 billion over ten years.

Community colleges are publicly funded local institutions that offer vocational courses or prepare students to transfer to a four-year university. Mr Obama calls them "essential pathways to the middle class" and praises their flexible schedules: "They work for people who work full-time. They work for parents who have to raise kids full-time. They work for folks who have gone as far as their skills will take them and want to earn new ones, but don't have the

► capacity to just suddenly go study for four years and not work.”

Tuition is typically \$3,300 per year—far less than at a university. Quality varies. Some courses are excellent; others are out of date or ill-matched to the local job market. Only 20% of full-time students at community colleges earn an associate's degree within three years—and it is supposed to take two.

The president's scheme might encourage Americans who were deterred by the price tag to study. But for many students, including Ms Martinez, community college was already free or nearly so. Financial aid averages around \$5,000 per student, per year. Anyone from a family that makes less than \$24,000 a year also qualifies for a Pell grant of up to \$5,730 a year—a scheme that Mr Obama has expanded.

Mr Obama's new plan is loosely based on the Tennessee Promise, a state programme backed by both Republicans and Democrats. It is also similar to a scheme in Chicago (see next article). However, a Republican Congress is unlikely to fund another federal spending spree, even if the cost to taxpayers is only \$6 billion a year (4% of the federal education budget). Lamar Alexander, a former secretary of education and now a Republican senator representing Tennessee, says he would like to expand the Tennessee Promise, but thinks such programmes should be left largely to the states, not the federal government.

If Mr Obama's proposal were to become law, it could have perverse effects, critics argue. States might cut direct funding to community colleges and put all their cash into aid to students, since this would attract three federal dollars for every one they spend. Colleges might then raise fees to absorb the extra cash. (University tuition has soared as the federal government has made student loans cheaper.)

One area where Republicans and Democrats agree, however, is that the forms families must fill in to apply for student financial aid are too complicated. “It's been a while since I filled it out, but I understand there's more than 100 questions on it,” marvelled Mr Obama on January 9th. A new bill seeks to simplify matters.

Also this week, both Mr Alexander, who heads the Senate education committee, and Arne Duncan, the education secretary, laid out their ideas for how to reform the No Child Left Behind Act, a law that makes federal funds for primary and high schools conditional on testing pupils every year. Mr Duncan called the law “tired” and “prescriptive”. He wants to keep the tests but give states more flexibility. Mr Alexander thinks there may be too many tests, a belief shared by teachers' unions. A compromise is possible. Indeed, with Republicans controlling Congress and Mr Obama in the White House, that is the only way anything much will change. ■

Chicago's schools

Hard work rewarded

CHICAGO

Rahm Emanuel's school reforms are working

“NO FAMILY should go to the poorhouse because they are giving their kid a crack at the American dream,” said Rahm Emanuel on January 9th. Chicago's mayor was presenting his plans for education at Kenwood Academy, a high school on the city's South Side.

On the same day in Tennessee, President Barack Obama announced plans to exempt qualified students from tuition fees at community colleges. The White House had taken a leaf out of Chicago's book, said Mr Emanuel, who last October introduced the Chicago STAR Scholarship, which pays the community-college tuition fees of the best graduates from Chicago's public-school system.

Mr Emanuel wants more students to enroll in a college and take courses (and, if they pass, get credits) while still in their last year of high school, which helps to reduce their tuition costs later. With the help of a donation of \$500,000 over three years from General Electric, the programme will grow from almost 2,500 students to more than 6,000 next year. Kenwood Academy has more students in the programme than any other high school in Chicago.

Some of the toughest decisions Mr Emanuel had to make in his first term concerned schools. He demanded merit pay for teachers and a longer school day (Chicago's was only 5 hours 45 minutes) and earmarked for closure 50 half-empty schools in poor districts. Teachers went on strike for the first time in 25 years, but Mr Emanuel got the longer day and the clo-

sure went ahead in 2013. The teachers kept their seniority-based pay system.

Mr Emanuel ploughed some of the money saved by closures into charter schools, which made him even more unpopular with the teachers' unions. But charter schools have worked well in Chicago. The Noble Network, which already runs 16 charter high schools with 10,000 pupils and plans to have 20,000 by 2020, has an attendance rate of 94% (compared with 73% for Chicago public schools) and a drop-out rate of only 0.4% (compared with 4.7%). It also gets better results on the ACT, a college-readiness test. It has an even higher percentage of minority students (98% compared with 92% at Chicago public schools), and slightly less public funding.

Rosa Alanis, the principal of Golder College Prep, one of the Noble network schools, says all her pupils have a teacher as a designated adviser, whom they see twice every school day. Attendance and performance are the advisers' responsibility, so they go to great lengths to ensure their charges show up, dress properly in their uniform of grey trousers and blue sweaters, and work hard. Ms Alanis herself looked after a group of 13 “challenging” boys. In one case she even drove to a pupil's house to get him to come to school. He was still in his pyjamas, but obeyed.

Mr Emanuel is keen on charter schools, but he didn't mention them when he presented his second-term plans for education. Instead he promised to put Wi-Fi in all classrooms, and to ensure that every family would be within three miles of a high school offering some special focus, such as science or the International Baccalaureate. Presumably, he did not want to annoy those who think that charter schools leave public schools in the dumps. In fact, competition has prodded public schools to shape up a bit. The drop-out rate has gone down and ACT scores have slightly improved, albeit from a very low level. ■



Let me teach you some new words

Lexington | Love, tax and wedlock

The high marriage rates of the 1950s are not coming back



AT THE start of a new Congress everything seems possible. Republicans have spent much of 2015 on bucolic retreats, pondering how to remake America. One rather ambitious idea is to repair both the budget and the country by supporting marriage. Most mothers under 30 are not married to the fathers of their children. Pledging to take care of each other for richer, for poorer is more and more the preserve of college-educated folks for whom poverty is theoretical. Senators Marco Rubio and Mike Lee have a proposal to change child tax credits to promote marriage; Senator Tim Scott is interested too. Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins says that ending marriage penalties will be part of any tax reform proposals from the House.

When marriage is hitched to politics the result is usually muddled thinking. Social conservatives think that lax attitudes to sex, a decline in manliness, short skirts and a hundred other things have chipped away at a sacred institution. The Heritage Foundation, a think-tank with a "Marshall Plan for Marriage", recently puffed a study suggesting that online pornography was the cause of the rot. People who reckon culture is to blame often propose economic solutions, from getting rid of marriage penalties to using public policy to promote wedlock. Thus some conservatives, who tend to assume that the government mucks up everything it tries, are nonetheless arguing that it can revive the traditional family. Leftish Democrats, meanwhile, think that marriage has been undermined by rising inequality, and especially the low wages of unskilled men, which make them less attractive as mates. They tend to argue that marriage, unlike practically every other social problem, cannot be fixed by government.

Both these views are confused. There are indeed marriage penalties in the tax code and in the welfare system: a single mother who marries a man with a job can lose all kinds of means-tested benefits. But there are also some marriage bonuses, and the tax code is so complicated that few Americans know whether tying the knot will mean they owe the taxman more or less. The federal government has made \$114 billion-worth of pro-marriage fiddles to tax laws in the past decade with nothing much to show for it. And there is no evidence from decades of marriage-promotion programmes that the government can persuade people to get or stay hitched, a finding that will not surprise anyone who has

ever actually been married.

As for the notion that inequality is to blame, that is muddled too. Most of the increase in income inequality has been at the very top of the scale: it is hard to see how the vast pay packet of a hedge-funder in New York changes the intentions of someone waiting tables in Utah. Though the wealthy are much more likely to wed than the poor, the relationship between money and vows is not clear-cut. Lots of people who decided to marry a few generations ago were poorer than those who choose not to today. Nor did marriage rates decline in the 1920s, when the surge in stock prices gilded the incomes of rich Americans. This tangle over inequality blinds Democrats to the possibility that causation may run in the opposite direction: that unwed parents raise poorer children. Isabel Sawhill of the Brookings Institution, a think-tank, calculates that returning marriage rates to their 1970 level would lower the child-poverty rate by a fifth. This omission may be deliberate: Democrats are reluctant to offend unmarried women, 60% of whom voted for the party's candidates in 2014.

A debate about marriage should begin by acknowledging that the high rates of the 1950s and 1960s were a peak rather than the norm. The marriage rate in America has only recently dipped below where it was at the end of the 19th century, according to Andrew Cherlin of Johns Hopkins University. Reviving marriage rates of the 1950s, an era looked on fondly both by conservatives (who remember an America as wholesome as its cereal adverts) and by liberals (who recall an age when well-paid jobs were available for people with few qualifications) would require reviving some of that decade's less jolly features too.

Shame and the single girl

First among them would be the glares of disapproval directed at loose women who had children before they were married. As late as the 1960s children thus brought into the world would have "illegitimate" stamped on their birth certificates. Many families were so ashamed of their unwed pregnant daughters that they were sent to places such as the Florence Crittenton homes, run by a charity founded to reform prostitutes, where they could give birth in secret and put their babies up for adoption: at least 25,000 mothers lost contact with their children this way every year.

Next on the list would be to bring back the huge difference between male and female wages that made marriage such a good financial bet for women. In the post-war years, an American working man could expect to double his earnings between the ages of 25 and 35, while women's wages were flat, according to Stephanie Coontz, a historian of marriage. It is no coincidence that the decline in marriage has accompanied the improvement of women's prospects in the workplace. It might be possible to increase the economic muscle of men relative to women, by giving tax breaks for possessing testicles, say, or discriminating in favour of men in college admissions. But it would be a terrible idea.

A stable, loving two-parent family may be the optimal way to raise children, but to mourn the retreat of marriage is also to regret two of the most welcome social changes of the past half-century. Those who would use the tax code to promote marriage "have a hard time putting themselves in someone else's shoes", says Adam Getz, a single father of two who helps to organise gatherings for single parents and their children in Virginia. Very few of the group wanted to be single, adds Mr Getz: in most cases singleness was forced upon them. Altering the tax code to the disadvantage of people like him will not change that. ■