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Casual

Adult Children of Hobbyists

My father now has a hobby. It involves stereo equipment, and I won't bore you with all the details because I don't understand them myself, except for the following points: 1) The stuff costs more than you could possibly imagine, and 2) The astonishing sound his so-called "rig" makes as the "St. Matthew's Passion" emerges from it would cause a choir of angels to hang its head.

I am very troubled by this turn of events in his life, and, by extension, my own. The truth is, my father has never had a hobby before. Indeed, he was the kind of person who made the very idea of a hobby seem trivial. Moviegoing has long been his only outdoor pursuit, and that doesn't exactly count—a hobby should be more active than that.

And so I, his only son, grew up hobby-less as well. What is more, I've always been proud of it. "Literate people," I would say in my most obnoxious and self-congratulatory moments, "have no use for hobbies. There's simply too much to read." Thus: No model airplanes. No ham radios. No collecting of any kind, whether it be stamps, bugs, or kitsch detritus. I have ever been a voracious consumer of television, Tin Pan Alley songs, and the New York theater, but I refused to have such activity dubbed a "hobby." I was pursuing my own aesthetic education, pure and simple.

We were surely both hampered, my father and I, by our hometown. It's hard for anyone to pursue a hobby in Manhattan. Gardening is an impossibility, especially for an anti-Communist, because the only free tracts of green are communally managed plots wedged between two brownstones (or tenements) where a condemned building once stood. Think "Stalinist collective" and you get the idea.

A New Yorker can't easily learn how to make or fix things—carpentry, auto repair, the like—because an apartment has no room for tools, never mind a workbench. Cars are not accessible, as they are elsewhere in America. A New Yorker's car lives in a fearsome nursing home known as a garage, where the monthly housing fee roughly equals a Haitian's per capita annual income.

Trust my father to come up with an inventive solution to the two worst problems posed by hobbies. First, space. Stereo equipment does fit very nicely into a living room—indeed, my father's rig has taken over the design and layout of the living room, as all the furniture is now skewed in tribute to the two speakers that sit at the far end as tall, proud, and enigmatic as the statues on Easter Island.

Second, exercise. Stereo equipment happily requires none of the physical activity other hobbies demand. To garden, you must pull out roots from the soil (upper-body strength), do the duck-walk the way they made us in grammar-school phys-ed (lower-body strength), and remain outside in the heat (endurance). Auto repair involves the use of wrenches and that little dolly you roll around on when you must actually labor underneath the car. At some point during carpentry exertions, I understand, one must carry a big piece of wood from point A to point B.

My father and I don't go for that kind of thing. We come from the sort of Jewish stock that believes the highest aim in life is to be able to sit in a chair and, two hours later, moan as you rise from said chair as though you have just accompanied Grete Weitz in the Boston Marathon. His hobby accommodates even this, as the stereo equipment is all pointed for maximum effect toward one large leather chair, in which he and only he sits. It's called the "soundstage," and he is the only audience in attendance.

Now he reads magazines about stereos. He has struck up satisfying friendships with the designers of speakers and the owners of stores. He has something to talk about besides politics, decadence, the nature of evil, and his grandchildren. He has given himself almost completely to an essentially frivolous pleasure.

He is, in other words, happy—happier, maybe, than he has ever been. But where does this leave me? My sisters knew enough to grow out of the family hostility to hobbies: one gardens, another builds furniture, a third not only does home repairs but even writes a newspaper home-repair column.

This leaves me, the last True Believer, the final Anti-Hobbyist, holding fast to the Old Way like the members of the East German Secret Service who showed up at work every day even after the Stasi was disbanded and its building padlocked shut forever. It seems I can no longer hold fast to the principle that hobbies are the sign of an unserious person. Now I must accept that they are good, and that everybody should have one.

But, damn it, I don't *want* a hobby!

John Podhoretz

Our Kind of Budget Deal

"The first year of a seven-year budget plan is the year you make the mark. We intend to make that mark, and . . . I think there's no doubt that once we get the work to the president's desk he'll be happy to pick up his pen and sign it and say, 'Mr. and Mrs. America, I've heard what you want, I'm proud of the Congress for responding, and I'm proud to put my stamp of approval on it.' "—Dick Armey, September 6, 1995

What explains conservative doubts about the political success of their own limited government principles, as we near the end of the first year of the first Republican, and most conservative, Congress in more than 40 years? We refer here not to House Majority Leader Dick Armey, whose forecast of orderly enactment for the fiscal 1996 budget (quoted above) strikes us as essentially accurate—if somewhat mischievously rosy. Instead, it's his would-be, should-be conservative allies who seem troubled. Many of them regard any such end-game scenario, involving resolution of a budget over anything short of President Clinton's dead body, as sissy talk—or even treason. This week's ostensible conservative hero is Bob Dole (!), who on Sept. 5 in Chicago assured the world, and likely Republican primary voters, that "this will not be an autumn of compromise."

"No compromise," in this context, of course, means the federal "train wreck" that so intrigues official Washington at the moment. Hill Republicans have sworn to pass a 1996 spending plan the subsequent-year implications of which involve a perfectly balanced federal budget by 2002. The 13 appropriations bills that form the domestic discretionary portion of this spending will be at the president's desk on or around the first of October. He has indicated an intention to veto most of them; their program cuts are too "cruel." He probably will. But he holds a weak hand. Absent his signature, all but a limited number of the "essential" government services covered by these bills must cease operations. And those services—all the acronymic junk at the Departments of Labor, HHS, and so on—primarily benefit, and were created by, his people: Democrats and liberals. Soon enough, Clinton's knees will surely buckle, and the appropriations bills will become law, on largely Republican terms.

The massive reconciliation bill that completes the budget process, and includes all non-appropriated entitlement spending, is a slightly different kettle of fish. It, too, will be denounced for excessive cruelty and vetoed. But here the president has every reason to stick with his veto as long as he dares. Barring the changes to existing law that such a reconciliation bill would make, federal entitlement spending—again, for a largely Democratic constituency—simply continues at its current rate.

Until, that is, the legislated federal debt ceiling is reached sometime in mid-November. At that point, unless Congress votes to raise the ceiling, Treasury Department borrowing authority will lapse, and the government will begin, technically at least, to default on its due debt obligations. In the first week of December, Social Security checks will be affected.

There is weird unanimity of enthusiasm for this train wreck in the capital these days—except maybe for that last part. No question: It would make a great story, so news people are shamelessly promoting the prospect. Democrats are warming to the idea, too. It protects their pet spending projects in the near-term, and they'd like to believe that Republicans will get most of the blame for the ensuing chaos, or back down before it comes. Conservatives, if anything, like the train wreck idea best of all. It's tough. It signals steadfast adherence to the principle of a balanced budget by seven-year date certain. Republicans will get credit for sticking to their guns. And if they don't, or so the argument goes, conservatism, and the meaning of last year's historic election, will be betrayed.

Not so fast. Last year's voters loudly declared their disgust with an inefficient, intrusive, and ruinously expensive federal government. They elected a Republican Congress to do something about it, big time, by sharply curtailing the size, scope, and reach of the executive branch. And yes, absolutely, sooner is better

than later. But if Congress can adjourn this year with a budget agreement that significantly cuts taxes, cuts domestic spending, and slows entitlement growth, then Republicans—and conservatives—can and should claim success. The fact that Clinton's signature will be on it won't by itself turn the deal rotten. And bedrock conservative principle won't have been violated, even if, in the process, the zero-deficit target sadly slips, say, from seven years to eight.

Now, it's true that conservatives with purist politics and pessimistic temperaments aren't waiting for such a less than perfect outcome to feel betrayed. A perfectly strong theoretical case can be made that they've been betrayed already by a 104th Congress, whose seven-year balanced budget plan conducts only relatively minor surgery on the institutional viscera of liberalism. This complaint is given eloquent form by David Frum elsewhere in these pages. The Energy and Education Departments, for example, originally targeted for elimination in the House, will survive for now. So will lots of other comparably pernicious waste.

But, hey: Why not balance the budget in five years, instead of seven? The Cato Institute's fiscal 1996 budget proposal would have imposed spending reductions sufficient to achieve that goal, while providing tax cuts of $400 billion, roughly twice the size of those expected in the Republican reconciliation bill. Looking back over the Cato plan's details—a long, muscular list of program reductions and outright terminations—you nod your head in conservative agreement. Looks good. Speaker Gingrich would almost certainly agree.

But the ugly, unavoidable truth is that it turns out a five-year balanced budget, though powerfully attractive, is still politically infeasible. The votes aren't there. And neither, yet at least, are the voters. Which is why Hill Republicans, professional politicians each of them, chose seven years instead. No shame attaches to that decision. And no shame—not much, anyway—should attach if, at the end of the day, fiscal balance is delayed a small bit further. Our friends at the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page issued an anxious warning on Sept. 7 that any movement away from the $270 billion Medicare savings target Republicans have advanced will constitute "a 1990-style budget compromise." Actually, no. It won't.

For conservatives still on the rebound from the Bush Administration—and who among us isn't?—a habitual suspicion of anything that smells like "compromise" may be forgiven. But the situation we face this year is almost exactly the reverse of that produced by the 1990 Andrews Air Force Base "budget summit" catastrophe. Then, we lost. George Mitchell and Tom Foley won. That infamous deal gave us a large, broad tax increase, something Mr. Bush had vowed never to allow. We also got a huge increase in domestic discretionary spending and accelerated growth in entitlement programs.

This year, though, we win. They lose. At bottom, a "1995 budget deal" would directly reverse 1990's embarrassments to Republican honor. That deal would be somewhat less than ideal, perhaps, but movement in the right direction just the same.

On the biggest remaining partisan sticking point, Medicare, Congress and the White House are already much closer than each party's talking points care to admit. The difference in proposed spending reductions is roughly $10 billion annually. The Republican number involves a cap in the growth of Medicare expenditures of 6.4 percent a year, more than the increase projected between now and 2005 from medical inflation and Medicare enrollment growth combined. So the GOP goal won't be without practical consequence, but it isn't politically unrealistic, either. And even if Republicans were somehow forced to give up the whole $10 billion in each of the next seven years, which is inconceivable, we'd still be left with the following result: Domestic discretionary spending on those federal programs that conservatives most love to hate would decline in real terms; tax cuts would be granted in some form; and entitlement growth would substantially shrink.

We can understand why the Republican majority might threaten to douse the government with gasoline and actually light a match. It's a good, hard-eyed bargaining strategy to make the coming budget deal even better. But should conservatives relish the possibility of a real conflagration if it risks consuming that majority in the process? Mr. Gingrich made a bold decision at the beginning of this year to attempt genuine Congressional government in America for the first time in many decades. That decision has paid off. Republicans and conservatives have dominated national politics ever since. One notable result, however, is that many Americans quite correctly believe that it's the Speaker himself up front, not the president, driving the train we're all talking about wrecking. It's by no means clear that conservatism would benefit from the crash that might result from this game of budgetary chicken.

Unless, of course, you think a shoot-the-moon budget gamble this fall is our last and only hope, because the conservative future looks pretty grim. We don't agree. THE WEEKLY STANDARD, the first issue of which you hold in your hands, is born in the aftermath of a national election the significance of which cannot be overestimated. Turnout was up—a lot. Incumbents did fine, provided they were Republicans. The highest House GOP vote count in any previous off-year election had been under 28 million. In 1994 it

was almost 37 million, 9 million more than in 1990, the largest vote increase for any party in a single cycle in the entire history of the United States. In elections for state office—which are further removed from national politics, and therefore less easy to "blame" on President Clinton personally—the Republican victory was even bigger. The GOP now controls a majority of governorships. And having netted almost 500 seats nationwide, Republicans now also control a majority of state legislative chambers, where before November Democrats had enjoyed a two-to-one margin.

A huge surge of votes like this for a single major party has happened only rarely in our history, and only once before in this century: in the early 1930s, for Democrats, at the beginning of the New Deal. Scholars divide American political history into a series of clearly defined "party systems." There have been five or six of them, depending on how you count. The New Deal period of liberal activism and Democratic party dominance was the last one.

And it's over. Forever. After 65 years, led by the Republican party, there has been a conservative realignment.

THE WEEKLY STANDARD intends to speak for, interpret, and guide this realignment. We have every reason to expect it will last. Congressional retirements and district-by-district results from 1994 suggest, so far as such predictions may safely be made this far in advance, that Republican majorities will expand next year. In almost three years, Mr. Clinton's base of popular support has not increased a jot beyond the 43 percent who voted for him in 1992. His party's 1994 campaign would, on a state-by-state basis, win him only 73 electoral votes next year. And public approval of the current Republican Congress remains quite firm, as these things go: 52-35 in the latest Gallup Poll, for example.

The GOP's final remaining challenge this year will be producing the Medicare growth reductions necessary to achieve all the other policy goals embedded in its budget, while at the same time retaining a level of broad popular support that will allow conservatism to expand those achievements in the future. *Time* reports that its respondents prefer smaller cuts in Medicare and a ten-year balanced budget plan, President Clinton's (admittedly phony) proposal, over larger Republican cuts and a seven-year plan, by a 41-19 margin. Other polls aren't quite so bad. But they're not great, either. Gallup has the Clinton vs. Congress Medicare "preference" difference at 45-38.

It's perfectly legitimate for Hill Republicans to take such numbers—to take public opinion—into account. We won't be at all surprised if the Republican leadership spends the next few weeks denying even the remote possibility that its budget targets might get looser. In fact, we'd be disappointed if they didn't; that's how a sophisticated endgame is played. No one will cheer louder than this magazine if Gingrich and Dole do manage to force a seven-year path to budgetary balance. It could well happen. Clinton could blink. A scoring dispute could provide cover for some promised out-year adjustments. But barring some unforeseen development, we expect to be cheering the fiscal 1996 budget outcome one way or the other.

There'll undoubtedly be plenty of occasions for conservative disappointment in the future. The Clinton-Dole-Gingrich Rose Garden budget-signing ceremony probably won't be one of them.

—David Tell, for the Editors

Capitol Hill

GOP ON OFFENSE

by Fred Barnes

HOUSE SPEAKER NEWT GINGRICH has Medicare, the budget, the debt limit, and the fate of government as we know it in America on his plate this fall. But his thoughts have already wandered to next year. "In January, after consulting with all the presidential candidates and [Republican national chairman] Haley Barbour, we announce the spring offensive," he says. The issues: privatization, more block grants, immigration reform, curbs on affirmative action, tax reform, the death penalty for narcotics wholesalers, making English the nation's official language. And those are just for starters.

This is obsessive agenda setting, for sure, but Gingrich has a political objective in mind: staying permanently on offense in Washington. Why is that so important? Because, as Bill Bennett once said, if you're not on offense in Washington, you're on defense. And if you're on defense, you can forget about enacting your program. The problem is it's hard to stay on offense for a sustained period. No political figure has managed this since President Franklin Roosevelt in the New Deal era sixty years ago (and even he was often on the defensive by his second term). Now comes Gingrich, who believes it will take six to ten years for Republicans to replace, not merely reform, the welfare state and the status quo in Washington. That's if all goes well, which means staying on offense.

Gingrich has a strategy for this, one that's worked flawlessly (with one exception) so far in 1995. Rep. Bill Paxon of New York, chairman of the National Repub-

lican Congressional Committee, calls it the "Gingrich permanent offense planning model."

But planning is only one part of it. Ideas, repetition, and persistence are also necessary components. A constant flood of fresh ideas is required to keep the public interested and the media busy. Repetition is needed to make sure the public actually hears the ideas. "You have to keep explaining to the American people what you did, why you did it, and what you hope the result will be," says Frank Luntz, Gingrich's pollster. Persistence—never relaxing as Ronald Reagan and his allies often did in the 1980s—is necessary to keep your foes from regrouping.

On offense, no detail is too inconsequential to be addressed. For example, House Republicans and their aides have been urged to halt any interview or chat in which Medicare "cuts" are mentioned. They're supposed to insist Republicans aim to save Medicare by "slowing its growth," not by cutting. Tony Blankley, Gingrich's press secretary, and Ed Gilllespie, House Majority Leader Dick Armey's spokesman, were assigned to badger reporters who wrote or talked about "cuts." The calls paid off. In July, John Kasich of Ohio, chairman of the House Budget Committee, rushed into a meeting of GOP leaders, holding up a copy of the *Washington Post* and whooping. "Look at it," he shouted. "Look at it. They finally got it right." A *Post* story on Medicare cited Republican plans for Medicare without mentioning "cuts." Kasich said he'd hounded the reporter, even called him at home. The Republican leaders applauded.

The 1995 experience has made Republicans all the more determined to stay on offense. Gingrich attributes their success to "the way we phased the sequences." The Contract with America took up the first three months, then the budget was paramount, now it's Medicare. Each phase was planned meticulously. "Part of being permanently on offense is permanently planning," says Blankley. With the Contract completed, House Republicans went home for the April recess with a 75-page briefing book on the budget. For the August recess, they toted a briefing book on Medicare. When House Republicans leave Washington this fall, they'll have a book on next year's budget.

The one slip-up was in March on the school lunch program. Democrats pounded Republicans for "cutting" school lunches. (In truth, the GOP budget increased spending, but less than the Clinton administration wanted.) Gingrich and other Republicans were tardy in responding. "It was mismanagement," Gingrich concedes. "We were still in cycle for finishing up the Contract. We underestimated how much the disinformation was penetrating. . . . That may have saved us on Medicare. The experience of the Democrats' willingness to lie blatantly and the willingness of the news media to carry the lies taught us to be dramatically more aggressive." Almost immediately—this was late winter—Gingrich and his allies began planning for the Medicare offensive this fall.

The concept of the permanent offense came to Gingrich gradually. Years ago, when reading a book about Dwight Eisenhower, he was struck by the failure of the Allies to plan for the breakout from the Normandy coast after D-Day. The invasion was nearly stymied as a result. Then, in 1981, the Reagan administration let down its guard over the August recess and Democrats seized the agenda. "The Reagan administration never recovered," Gingrich says. Finally, he read an interview with Bennett in *Policy Review* in 1988 that included Bennett's memorable formulation about offense and defense. (Bennett also said there are no time outs in Washington.) Gingrich says his reaction was, "Boy, is that exactly right!"

Gingrich's model for the permanent offense is not FDR, but three Republican leaders at the turn of the century: Presidents William McKinley (1897-1901) and Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909) and Republican strategist Mark Hanna. The struggle between these Republicans and William Jennings Bryan, the chronic Democratic presidential candidate, has "remarkable parallels to where the two parties are today," Gingrich argues. "Bryan was a remarkably shallow but emotionally effective demagogue, maximizing class warfare and a sense of fear in order to avoid modernization. McKinley, Roosevelt, and Hanna represented the rise of modern America. But they had to convince the people the only way you could get to a free lunch pail was to modernize." In case you hadn't figured it out, Gingrich has Clinton pegged as Bryan, himself as today's version of the farsighted Republicans.

The McKinley-Roosevelt-Hanna crowd did two things Gingrich admires enormously. They dominated the agenda with ideas, issues, and policy initiatives, and they were extraordinarily disciplined in confronting Bryan. Their schemes for modernizing America, including the creation of a blue-water navy, produced a "constant wave of reforms"—precisely what Gingrich craves now.

And, he says, "they defined Bryan strategically, not tactically. Bryan would have won a mano-a-mano race with McKinley [in 1896]. He was a better candidate, more energy, better speaker. They drew a very deliberate contrast. What they were driving at was very simple: 'No matter what Bryan says, no matter how appealing he is, no matter how effective he is, he stands for the end of this country economically and you cannot afford him.' "

To keep ideas flowing, Gingrich has more than 100

House members working on projects that may lead to legislation, published studies, position papers, articles, or books. Gingrich himself is a cornucopia of ideas. In his best-selling *To Renew America*, written last spring, he listed six strategic goals for America in the first chapter. Later, he and his advisers worked up a "management memo" based on what Gingrich would like to accomplish in seven-and-a-half more years as House speaker. Three new strategic goals—creating a benchmark for government excellence, suppressing violent crime and the drug culture, and "leading the planet"—were added.

In the unlikely event Gingrich runs dry, he can call on Kasich, who says, "Ideas give us energy. . . . High energy doesn't come from doing the same thing over and over. It comes from the excitement of new ideas and new approaches." Kasich has assigned his staff to come up with "budget ideas for the 21st century." Next year, he says, the budget may also stress pilot projects for testing new policies: "You've got to stay a step or two ahead of your opponents, even a few ahead of your own side."

Gingrich has concluded the easiest way to lose the offensive is by taking up peripheral issues: "What we need to do is not get sucked into little fights that don't matter. We need to keep coming back to the big issues that truly define things." Curbing teenage smoking isn't one of them. "It'd be silly for us to get into that fight," he says. "Let President Clinton fight that stuff. My point to our guys is, 'This fall no matter what Clinton talks about, you talk about balancing the budget while cutting taxes, saving Medicare with a better plan, and getting welfare reform that emphasizes work and family. If you talk about those, let him talk about anything he wants to.' "

There's another problem—the Senate. "It's hard for one body to be on permanent offense while the other is on permanent stall," says Luntz, the pollster. By balking at sweeping legislation that's passed the House, the Senate is "undermining" the GOP. "If the Senate fails to pass the elements of the Contract with America, the House will pay the price," Luntz warns. Republicans will lose seats. "Newt is powerless if enough Republicans aren't returned to office to control the House."

Gingrich, for one, doesn't think this will happen. Rather, change and reform will spur more change and reform, and permanent offense will become, well, permanent. "It's the treadmill theory, " says Luntz. "When you put an animal in a treadmill, getting it started is difficult because you're running against gravity. But once the treadmill begins to move, stopping it becomes difficult. In politics, initial change is hard. Once change becomes expected, preventing it or stopping it becomes impossible." Gingrich hopes so. ♦

Medicare

Healthy Recess

by Matthew Rees

When House Republican leaders met on September 6, giddiness reigned. House members had not been brutalized at town meetings during the August recess, as some had feared, over GOP plans to save $270 billion in Medicare spending (and thus balance the budget in seven years). The town meetings held by most House Republicans had gone swimmingly, with few protests over Medicare. Declared House Speaker Newt Gingrich: "By the end of August, it is fair to say that on the core questions—does Medicare need to be saved and do you want to see somebody do something about Medicare?—we had won."

In the Senate, Republicans aren't so sure. Before the recess, even conservative senators like Trent Lott of Mississippi, the GOP whip, and Spencer Abraham of Michigan, the most influential of the Republican freshmen, were privately proposing to trim the $270 billion target, make a deal with President Clinton, and take Medicare off the table as a hot political issue. Now, they are less squeamish. Abraham was scarcely asked about Medicare at all while in Michigan. But others remain anxious, especially Pete Domenici of New Mexico, chairman of the Senate Budget Committee. And Majority Leader Bob Dole is ambivalent. In his September 5 speech to the Economic Club of Chicago, Dole promised "this will not be an autumn of compromise," then contradicted himself by asking Clinton "for the good of the country [to] agree to take Medicare out of the realm of politics." Sounds like pre-emptive surrender, said Rep. John Linder of Georgia, a Gingrich confidant. Dole insisted it wasn't.

The Medicare strategy, as devised by Gingrich, is to win three simultaneous battles: for public opinion, the activist groups, and substance. It will begin in mid-September with what Tony Blankley, Gingrich's flack, calls "a two-week rollout campaign" that includes a speech to the nation, TV ads, town meetings, and congressional hearings.

On the public opinion front, Republicans have already achieved a level of success that amazes even them. "Who'd have thought six months ago," asks Rep. Bill Paxon of New York, that the public would come to believe Medicare must be reformed? Polling substantiates exactly that. A national survey in August by Frank Luntz found only 36 percent agreed that "if balancing the budget requires cuts in Medicare or

slowing Medicare spending, I'd rather not balance the budget." (Fifty-six percent disagreed.) Also, 52 percent disagreed that Republicans "want to cut Medicare spending to find money to pay for their tax cut for the rich." More striking still was a poll for the RNC showing the public trusts Congress more than Clinton (57 percent to 30 percent) to rescue Medicare.

For now at least, activist groups have been neutralized. Republicans appeased the major concerns of conservative and free-market groups, particularly that the reform plan would force old folks into HMOs, not simply encourage them to give up traditional fee-for-service care. The Democratic National Committee launched attack ads on TV, and the American Association of Retired Persons, a reliable ally of Democrats, conducted town meetings. But neither of these August offensives frightened Republicans or aroused the public. The mud thrown by Democrats in their 13-state advertising campaign either didn't stick or, in South Dakota, backfired. When a TV spot charged that "Republicans are wrong to want to cut Medicare benefits," Democratic Rep. Tim Johnson of South Dakota urged the ad be withdrawn there. "I simply cannot support this type of partisan activity," he said in an August 18 letter to Sen. Chris Dodd, chairman of the Democratic National Committee. Dodd pulled the ad.

Republicans aren't home free yet on Medicare, however. Gingrich isn't worried, but other Republicans fret over what will happen when the specifics are presented publicly. The worst case is that Democrats, the AARP, and other liberal groups will click with their attacks on the substance of the Medicare proposal. To prevent a sustained attack, Republicans have delayed, until the last minute, releasing the contents of the Medicare bill. They don't want it nitpicked to death like Clinton's health care plan was last year.

The GOP plan is to accelerate consideration of Medicare reform (a vote is expected in early October), leaving opponents with only two weeks to mount criticism. Some foes are ready. AFSCME, the state and local government employee union, scheduled its $2 million print, television, and radio campaign to begin just before the GOP unveiled its Medicare proposal. Other opponents are expected to weigh in heavily. At the least, the onslaught will exceed anything Republicans experienced at home during the August recess. On their side, roughly $10 million worth of advertising will support the GOP Medicare effort, much of it funded by the Coalition for Change, an amalgam of conservative and business groups.

The key to success will be getting out of the gates quickly, says Tom Scully of the Federation of American Health Systems. Indeed, Republicans will be in hot water unless they immediately define what they're doing on their own terms. So far, they've done a good job of this. Case in point: Rep. Dan Miller, whose southwestern Florida district has a higher ratio of senior citizens (35 percent) than any congressional district in the country. When Medicare was raised at his trailer park town meetings in June and July, the anger was not so much with the GOP but with "the system" for letting the financing get out of control.

This fits perfectly with the Republican strategy of framing their plans for Medicare reform as bold action needed to avert bankruptcy rather than spending restraint required to balance the budget and cut taxes. To the extent this message has gotten across to the public, it's been for three reasons. First, in true Gingrich style, Republicans were prepared for a fight. Just this year, the House has held 29 hearings, and the Senate nine hearings, on Medicare. When House Republicans left Washington for the August recess, they received a blue briefing book that detailed the lessons learned from the hearings. The book was composed of 20 overhead slides, answers to likely questions, and a Medicare primer prepared by Gail Wilensky, a former administrator of the Health Care Financing Administration.

Members were told to emphasize the $270 billion figure is not a "cut," but a "reduction in the rate of growth," and that much of the savings can be made up through controls on fraud and abuse. They were given a slogan—"preserve, protect and strengthen"—to describe their goal for Medicare ("improve" was dropped from the slogan after polling found senior citizens didn't believe the idea of improving Medicare was credible). On the PR front, Wilensky gave presentations in senior-heavy districts, and some House Republicans, such as Jim Kolbe of Arizona and Jon Fox of Pennsylvania, established Medicare task forces. The Republican National Committee issued daily press releases in August on "Medicare Fact vs. Medicare Fiction" and ran radio ads in 11 Democratic congressional districts charging that the targeted member was "ignoring Medicare's looming bankruptcy."

The second reason for Republicans' preliminary success is they took some of the sting out of their plan by presenting it as bipartisan or even nonpartisan. While this is a stretch, the GOP had a couple of valuable allies. The authors of the Medicare trustees report, which predicted last April that the trust fund would go broke in 2002, were three Clinton administration Cabinet secretaries: Robert Reich, Donna Shalala, and Robert Rubin. Many Republicans distributed summaries of this report at their town meetings. Also aiding the Republicans was Ross Perot. He testified before the Senate Finance Committee on August 29, and his new book, *Intensive Care: We Must Save Medicare and Medicaid Now*, lays out ideas in rough

agreement with those being talked about by the GOP.

The third element was that Republicans persuaded themselves that something must be done about the financing of Medicare and that the public agreed. In a Times Mirror poll in August, 87 percent said they'd heard about Medicare's serious financial problems. Another poll showed 76 percent back "fundamental" change in how Medicare works.

While there were no major explosions over the recess, a few brush fires needed tending. On August 7, Gingrich had to delay an appearance at a Congressional Institute Medicare forum in Atlanta after Democratic Rep. John Lewis led over 100 union members in a demonstration. A few days later, a House Ways and Means committee draft Medicare proposal, outlining dramatic increases in monthly Medicare premiums and the exclusion of medical savings accounts, was leaked to the *Washington Post*. This prompted grumblings from the right, and op-eds started appearing in the *Washington Times* and *Human Events*, warning of a return to "ClintonCare." Nineteen conservative activists—Gary Bauer, Phyllis Schlafly, Paul Weyrich, etc.—complained to Gingrich in a letter. Peter Ferrara, a free-market health guru at the Washington-based National Center for Policy Analysis, conferred with key House Republican aides. And on September 6, a number of conservative and free-market groups met with Sheila Burke, Bob Dole's chief of staff, to discuss Medicare. Conservative grumbling quieted some.

To put it mildly, Republicans have a lot riding on the Medicare fight. Gingrich told the *Washington Times*: "If we win the Medicare debate . . . we have established a framework for a conservative majority for a generation." What he didn't say is that if they lose, the rest of the Republican agenda, plus the party's prospects in 1996, is in jeopardy. So for Republicans, winning is practically everything. ♦

Elections

President Powell?

by William Kristol

Suddenly, Bob Dole's nomination no longer seems inevitable. Having won less than a quarter of the vote in the Iowa straw poll, he now trails Bill Clinton in national surveys. Focus groups suggest that the age issue is beginning to bite, and the return of a campaign contribution to a group of gay Republicans indicates a touch of panic.

Maybe the Dole campaign will shake off these troubles and cruise to victory. But maybe not. As the GOP agenda sinks ever deeper into the Senate's bog, Senator Dole's downhill trajectory could accelerate. A poor showing in the November 17 Republican presidential debate, combined with, say, a third-place finish in the accompanying Florida straw poll, would mark the beginning of the end. By Christmas, Bob Dole could be out of the Presidential race, graciously yielding to the man who will have emerged as leader of the Republican field: Colin Powell.

Half of all Republicans, in a recent *U.S. News* poll, already say they want Powell to run for president. As Dole falters, all Powell has to do is to shed his cloying coyness about the pursuit of elective office, and temper his pundit-pleasing disdain for political parties. He will have to move, with all deliberate speed, to make clear both his interest in the presidency, and his judgment (with all suitable rhetorical qualifications and modifications) that his rightful home is the Republican party. At that point, Powell will be the only potential Republican nominee who easily beats Clinton in the polls—and the candidate whose biography, character, and personal deportment make a particularly attractive and pointed contrast to Clinton.

Still, Powell is a moderate, and will present himself more or less as such—"a fiscal conservative, with a social conscience," as he says in his new book. Can a moderate win the nomination of a conservative, newly-energized, Reagan-Gingrich Republican party? Yes—especially if Powell throws a few bones to conservatives by saying the right things about personal responsibility, no new taxes, and limited government.

In any case, remember: Bill Clinton will be running in 1996 as a me-too Republican, muting the ideological contrast Republicans were able to draw with him and the Democrats in 1994. And many conservative primary voters will reassure themselves that a Gingrich-led House, and a Senate with an increased GOP majority, will continue in any event to move public policy in the right direction. Gingrich's ideological victory in 1994 may have established the groundwork for a far less ideological election in 1996—especially given the absence of any candidate like Ronald Reagan, who commanded both ideological loyalty and personal admiration. If Gingrich were a viable presidential candidate, there might be less of an opening for Powell. But Gingrich will continue to be preoccupied by the Hill for the next two months—and by then, if Powell is in, it will be hard for Gingrich to justify launching so high-risk a candidacy.

There would, of course, be conservative opposition to Powell. But conservatives will likely remain divided between Phil Gramm and Pat Buchanan—whereas moderate Republicans will abandon Pete Wilson and Lamar Alexander to close ranks behind Powell. And

lots of reasonably conservative primary voters aren't as ideological as some in Washington like to think. It won't be easy for his opponents to paint General Powell, Ronald Reagan's national security adviser, as a typical moderate Republican squish.

So Powell wins the Republican nomination, picks a pro-life running mate to obviate a third-party right-to-life effort, and defeats Clinton.

Would a Powell presidency be a good thing? The idea presents both risks and opportunities for enthusiasts of the revolution of 1994. The risk is that a Powell presidency could thwart hopes for a fundamental transformation of the Republican party and American politics. A Powell administration would be centrist and establishmentarian. The impetus to radical reform of the welfare state might well peter out; Powell would be to Gingrich what Bush was to Reagan.

On the other hand: Reagan was retired. Gingrich won't be. A Gingrich-led Republican Congress could continue to push domestic policy to the right under the umbrella of a Powell presidency. The mere example of an up-by-the-bootstraps black Republican war hero as president could have a broadly conservative cultural effect. And a (presumably) huge victory by Powell, running as a Republican, would expand and solidify the emerging Republican majority. So, the ideological opacity of a Powell presidency notwithstanding, it could be a useful way station on the road to a lasting conservative realignment.

This may be wishful conservative thinking. In any event, a Powell candidacy may never happen. *U.S. News* tells us that "political pros in both parties think he won't run." The *New York Times* writes that "experts consider it unlikely that the general, a moderate on many social issues, could win the Republican nomination." But the pros and experts are usually wrong. If I had to bet today on one person for the Republican presidential nomination, I'd put my money on Colin Powell. ♦

Politics

Coalition Man

by Marshall Wittmann

For two years of my life, I spent a good deal of time answering the question, What is a nice Jewish boy like you doing in a place like this? It used to remind me of the old ad for rye bread: "You don't have to be Jewish to love Levy's." Well, you don't have to be an evangelical Christian to see the need for a return to traditional values and hence to appreciate the work of the Christian Coalition.

In December 1992, I was on the verge of unemployment. My boss, George Bush, had just lost an election. The Christian Coalition was opening a Washington office, and I decided to send my resume to Ralph Reed, who appeared to be a real *mensch* and an unflappable spokesman for a movement whose obituary was prematurely being written. I was already a foot soldier in the culture war; as deputy assistant secretary of Health and Human Services, I had fought to sustain Bush's pro-life vetoes. And as one committed to the security of Israel, I felt that Pat Robertson was good for the Jews. Besides, I am a baby boomer and had seen Christians and Jews allied for civil rights and against the Vietnam War. My first job out of college was organizing for the United Farm Workers, whose key backer was the Catholic Church.

But in the mid-1960s, liberalism suffered a nervous breakdown. Tossing old truths aside, liberal elites propagated the view that drugs were okay, the two-parent family was optional, criminals were misunderstood, prayer in public places was bad, and abortion was just another form of birth control. Thirty years later, it is obvious that our nation must experience a cultural rebirth and that central to its regeneration is putting faith and families first. Religious conservatism is nothing more than a moral environmental movement.

It is also, however, politically incorrect—and thus fair game for stereotyping. My first day working for the coalition, a page-one story in the *Washington Post* described the followers of Pat Robertson as "poor, uneducated and easy to command." The *Post* was immediately inundated with faxes reporting the bank balances and advanced degrees of evangelicals, and we distributed a button on Capitol Hill that read: "Poor, uneducated and easy to command."

In that early phase of my association with the Christian Coalition, even I wondered what truth there might be in the general assumption that my new crowd was bigoted and backward. It was with some trepidation that I set out for my first encounter with the Christian grass roots at a coalition meeting in Baton Rouge in March 1993. What I found were educated, family-oriented, middle- and upper-middle-class people who actually hungered for Jewish allies. And well they might. The media will take seriously a moral message expounded by an Irving Kristol that they would dismiss coming from a Christian conservative.

In early 1993, Washington was unfriendly to my new employer in more ways than this. The Democrats dominated the White House and the Hill, and many Republicans blamed Bush's defeat on the "religious right." These Republicans urged greater distance be-

tween the party and the movement. Working the Hill as a lobbyist, I sensed in others the same discomfort I had felt myself before that trip to Baton Rouge.

Still, attitudes changed as legislators learned about our mainstream program for family tax relief and school choice and against federal funding for abortion. It also helped that I was Jewish. Many legislators were pleasantly surprised that we did not pass judgment on their religious *bona fides*. Over and over, I pointed out that we were a public-policy lobby, not a theological organization.

In the end, the group most discomfited by my job was my own family. My relatives, good open-minded liberals, thought I was *meshugah.* To them, a "Christian coalition" evoked pogroms and worse.

But America is not Europe. My grandfather emigrated to Waco, Texas, from Poland at the turn of the century and ended his life a pillar of that Southern Baptist community. Millions of Jews have similarly thrived as a minority in Christian America. In fact, a culture of tolerance has grown from our country's Christian roots, with the result that American Jews face a greater threat from assimilation than from persecution.

That reality does not dispel the alarm Jews express at conservative Christians' desire to allow religious expression in the public square. National Jewish organizations often join with civil liberties groups to protest voluntary prayer in schools and the display of creches in front of city halls. I believe these protests are misplaced. At a time when our children suffer from a lack of character education and the vulgarization of the popular culture, reminders of our Judeo-Christian heritage should be welcome. But the radical separation of church and state is an article of faith in the liberalism that is many Jews' ersatz religion.

During my two years with the Christian Coalition I never encountered even a trace of anti-Semitism from the organization or its members—but I did witness intolerance directed at the coalition by an established Jewish organization, the Anti-Defamation League. In June 1994, with the coalition already under attack from the national Democratic party, the ADL issued a report suggesting that religious conservatism was anti-Semitic.

Jews ought to be more receptive than that. They ought to realize that religious conservatism is the nation's most dynamic political movement—and that no non-Jewish group in America is more committed to the security of Israel. I found it amusing to hear Jews devalue evangelicals' support for Israel by attributing it to "biblical" teachings about the end of time. Where did Jews acquire their interest in Israel if not from the Bible?

The Christian Coalition is not asking for government to impose morals, only to ensure that government does not undermine the Judeo-Christian values that built our nation and that are crucial to our future. That is why it is kosher for a nice Jewish boy to have worked for the Christian Coalition.

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China

Rule By Thieves

by George Jochnowitz

Hillary Clinton, in Beijing, complained publicly about the treatment of delegates to the U.N. Women's Conference. She feared for their fate. But what about the fate of China's cigarette smugglers? There are lots of smokers in China, and the manufacture of cigarettes is a major source of revenue. Let us consider the following headline on page one of the May 30, 1994, issue of *China Daily*, an official English-language newspaper published in Beijing: "4 cigarette smugglers executed."

A year later, on June 26, 1995, cigarette smuggling had not yet been stamped out, according to a story in the Business Weekly Supplement of *China Daily*. Under the headline, "State raises checkpoints on the tobacco road," we read: "Violators will face severe punishments." The nature of the punishments is not specified. Let us not think, however, that China may be getting soft. Another headline, the same day, announces, "34 drug traffickers executed."

After Communism comes kleptocracy—rule by thieves. China's wealth is increasing rapidly. The adjective most frequently used is "overheated." Yet China's booming surge toward prosperity is being threatened by corruption, which increases, despite draconian punishments.

Chairman Mao could not be corrupted. The greatest monsters in human history have been incorruptible. Hitler, in 1944, when faced with the choice between supplying his beleaguered soldiers or transporting Jews to death camps, chose to give priority to the Final Solution. Not even the possibility of victory could tempt him from doing what he thought right. Similarly, Chairman Mao was so committed to the insane policies of the Great Leap Forward that he allowed between 20 million and 60 million people, most of them peasants, to die during the years 1959-61. Mao closed the universities during the Cultural Revolution despite the fact that he knew he needed scientists to

build his atomic weapons. Mao's loyalty to the Marxist dream of equality, where people would "raise cattle in the morning [and] criticize after dinner," outweighed China's need to defend itself.

When Mao died, however, corruption took over. This always happens when the crazy, wicked leaders who create totalitarian states are followed by the sane, wicked leaders who inevitably succeed them. The Communist party, which Mao had created, was in a position to monopolize corruption.

But what good is corruption in a world of poverty? China's leaders wanted to have a rich country to exploit, one that was worth exploiting. Deng Xiaoping therefore invented Marxist capitalism—a system where one worships Marxist teachings while ignoring them. The advantage of Marxist capitalism is that it provides a rationale for continuing absolute power of the Communist party while at the same time letting the country get rich.

As the economy becomes more capitalist, however, outsiders—those not in the party—move into positions where they may participate in the corruption of the state. An honest society, unfortunately, is not available as an alternative. Chairman Mao destroyed traditional values, and there is no legal system apart from the Communist party. There is no democracy, which could create a legitimate system that spoke with the authority of the people. There are no human rights, so there need be no human responsibilities. There is no liberty, so there can be no room for moral choices. Societies emerging from Communism are always corrupt because they have to be. The framework for a system based on law does not exist. Russia is no longer Communist; China is. Both, however, are kleptocracies.

China might have become an exception to this rule. During Beijing Spring, between April 15 and June 4, 1989, China became an honest and a responsible state. Trucks carrying food and beverages to Tiananmen Square kept passing by. Feeding the million demonstrators in Beijing was a task that required organization and a great deal of effort. A city-wide drop in crime, accidents, and fires was reported. Had the Democracy Movement not been crushed, China would not have become a kleptocracy.

In a country with no politics, there is no way for ordinary people to make their views known and no avenue for change from the bottom. There is no possible connection between talking about politics and doing something about it. All innovations come from the top and are transmitted and enforced through the hierarchical structure of the party. New directives coming from the party leaders can change life quite abruptly, which makes Chinese society extremely unstable.

Stalin and Mao brought nothing but instability to their people. No one knew when the laws would change retroactively, since the law in a totalitarian state is unknowable. No one knew when a new campaign would be launched against some unsuspecting and harmless group, like land-owning peasants or teachers. No one knew when violent fighting would break out, as happened during Mao's Cultural Revolution, when rival groups of Red Guards killed each other for the greater glory of Chairman Mao.

Stability means that governments can change legally and in an orderly fashion. It means that disagreement is viewed as a constructive way to exchange ideas. Only democracy can bring stability. Corruption and instability go together. Dictatorships resort to severe punishments because they have to. Sooner or later, the dictator falls, and chaos surfaces. There is no legal process to choose a new leader.

Perhaps trade, wealth, and openness will lead China to create an orderly, stable society after the death of Deng Xiaoping. Perhaps. But China's decision to treat those in attendance at the U.N. conference as terrifying interlopers is not evidence of stability. And the execution of four cigarette smugglers is not a sign of order.

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Bosnia

Mission Possible

by Robert Kagan

THE BOMBING CAMPAIGN against Radko Mladic's Bosnian Serb army alone has not solved the Balkan crisis. But NATO air strikes have dramatically altered the situation in the Balkans to the point where a peaceful settlement stands its best chance to take root since the start of the conflict four years ago. More important, the success of this measured but effective use of military might may help the world's most powerful nation get over the pervasive fear that every foreign policy tangle is a Mission Impossible. That would be a welcome step forward, because a timid superpower poses a greater danger to the present world order than ten Serbias.

When the foreign ministers of Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia met in Geneva on September 8 to begin talking about a settlement of the conflict, they stood on the rubble of four years of conventional wisdom that American and NATO military action in the Balkans could have no useful effect. Indeed, just this past month, Gen. Charles G. Boyd (recently retired as

Deputy Commander in Chief of the U.S. European Command) declared in the pages of *Foreign Affairs* that any course of action other than acquiescing to the territorial demands of the Serbs was foolhardy. American and NATO military power could accomplish little.

"Only very large numbers of troops on the ground" could "make a difference," Boyd wrote, skillfully employing the Powell doctrine with its usual purpose of frightening civilian leaders away from the use of force. Air power? "Despite its appeal to the amateur strategist, a reliance on air power alone—the strike option—in this type of terrain with these kinds of targets has never held any real promise of conflict resolution."

For years, military experts like Boyd and politicians from both parties have patiently and persistently explained to the American people that military activism doesn't work. Every military campaign is a potential quagmire; every air campaign is futile; every use of force promises body bags or downed pilots but no hope of success. Our expensive, high-tech tanks won't work in the Middle Eastern desert. Our laser-guided bombs won't work in the Balkan hills. Foreign disputes in which we involve ourselves, especially in this post-Cold War era, are "age-old" or "ethnic" and, therefore, "intractable." Those we support and those we oppose are irrational and thus not susceptible to the kinds of threats and blandishments that once worked so well in dealing with such rational leaders as Stalin, Khrushchev, Mao, and Kim Il-Sung.

Small wonder Americans sometimes seem unenthusiastic about conducting foreign policy. They have been told that the world is a chaotic, incomprehensible place where the old rules about power no longer apply—and where even the weakest players are somehow impervious to the vast military, economic, and political influence America wields.

Until last week, the Mission Impossible syndrome thrived on the Bosnian crisis. American fears of what could go wrong in any military mission, combined with the perception that Bosnia's conflict was waged by men driven mad by ethnic hatred, had turned the Bosnian Serbs into invincible giants. In addition, a prostrate Russia scarcely able to quell the rebellion of Chechens on its own territory transmuted into a powerful Serb patron capable of vetoing international decisions just as if it were the Soviet empire of old. And America's own allies had come to appear as powerful as they were independent, capable of disdainfully brushing off America's feeble requests as if this were once again the early nineteenth century.

It took the tiny army of Croatia to prove that the enormous dark shadows that had paralyzed American foreign policy were being cast by very small and vulnerable figures. NATO's air campaign might have succeeded in cowing the Serbs even without the Croatian victory in the Krajina last month. But one wonders if the United States and NATO would have had the courage to launch the campaign before the Croats revealed just how weak the Serbs really were. Even as waves of NATO warplanes flew missions over a virtually depleted Bosnian Serb army, even as Serb leaders in Serbia and Bosnia both eagerly sought negotiations while the bombs fell, American and NATO officials fretted about what the fist-shaking Mladic would do next—as if there were something he could possibly do in the face of such overwhelming power.

NATO airstrikes will not create the "enduring solution" Boyd and others claim to want. But the demand for enduring solutions to the world's troubles is really just a debater's trick. It is also another key element of the Mission Impossible syndrome, for it sets the bar ever beyond the reach of any practicable foreign policy. A successful policy in the Balkans will solve problems where possible and suppress the worst manifestations of the problems that cannot be solved. To accomplish that perfectly reasonable and important goal, however, will require Americans to get past their misplaced fear of their own powerlessness.

This fear may be America's only serious weakness in the post-Cold War era, but for a great power it can be the most dangerous. Displayed daily by politicians and pundits whose words are beamed to every corner of the world, the Mission Impossible syndrome begs for challenges from the world's ruthless men. They know that the United States, even after its triumph in the Cold War, still has Vietnam on its mind. They know that although America has the wherewithal to destroy them, American will to do so will always be open to question.

As if to prove the point, Mladic brought up Vietnam last week in a CNN interview. He reminded viewers how the United States had left Southeast Asia with its "tail between its legs," and he predicted it would do so again in Bosnia. In the past six years, Manuel Noriega, Saddam Hussein, and Raul Cedras all made the same calculation. The result in all three cases was an unnecessary intervention.

Americans could save themselves and the world a great deal of trouble if they developed a bit more confidence in the prudent and timely use of force, a confidence commensurate with their nation's capabilities. Military missions will always be fraught with risks, but the leadership role that politicians in both parties claim for the United States cannot be won without some risk. And after years of being told about all the many chances for failure, perhaps the launching of last week's air campaign will remind Americans that military action can also succeed. ♦

Killers Loved Him

by Matt Labash

Perhaps Mohammed Saleh, one of the World Trade Center bombers, put it best in a letter to an appeals court: "There is no need to say, 'Who is Kunstler?' He is as a mountain on the ground." Well, now William Kunstler of the scoliotic stoop and caterpillar brow, is in it—a victim of heart failure at the age of 76.

Defender of Stalinists, all-around press hound, and guest star on TV's *Law and Order*, Kunstler was the subject last week of the kind of mindless eulogizing leftist icons always seem to generate. The *Los Angeles Times*: "He came to epitomize a generation of white, middle class attorneys who worked for civil rights, fought police brutality and protested the Vietnam War."

Reuter: "He fought against what he saw as the racism of the judicial system, backing unpopular black defendants in difficult cases." David Lerner of the Center for Constitutional Rights called him "a great American hero, a leader of the fight for social justice." "He devoted his life to fighting for the oppressed," cried law partner Ronald Kuby.

Kunstler's downtrodden roll call included the following: an Atlanta child murderer (Wayne Williams), a Central Park rapist (Yusef Salaam), two mob dons (Joseph Bonanno, John Gotti), a crack smoker (Marion Barry), numerous cop killers (the Black Panthers, Larry Davis, Leonard Peltier), a would-be assassin (Quibilah Shabazz), a mass assassin (Colin Ferguson), conspiring mass assassins (the Islamic World Trade Center/United Nations cartel), an assassin's assassin (Jack Ruby), and a man acquitted of clerical assassination (El Sayyid Nosair, seen by numerous witnesses leaving the hotel ballroom with gun in hand where extremist Meir Kahane was murdered by gunshot, but convicted instead on other charges as the witnesses howled in disbelief).

Lest anyone doubt he was a true patriot, ask flag-burner Gregory Johnson and KGB two-timer Clayton Lonetree, to whose aid he came. But a patriot for whom? It fell to Joan Baez to feel his red-blooded scorn in 1979, when her famous open letter to Hanoi protesting human rights violations was greeted with Kunstler's response: "I don't believe in criticizing socialist governments publicly, even if there are human-rights violations. The entire Baez campaign may be a CIA plot."

Nosair, still in prison on federal charges, told Reuters, "He was a very good-hearted man who treated me like a son and I will miss him." You're not alone, El Sayyid. ♦

The Standard Question: When Newt Gingrich innocently proposed to revive orphanages, the media, the Clintons, and the children's lobby went bonkers. A primitive idea, they insisted. Maybe not, said sociologist Charles Murray, when you consider the alternatives. If you died, Murray asked, would you want your surviving children to be raised by a welfare mother, in the foster care system, or in an orphanage run by a church or synagogue? Good question. So The Weekly Standard had pollster Fred Steeper of Market Strategies ask it in a national survey of 1,000 Americans conducted August 25-28. The result: 55 percent chose an orphanage, 16 percent a welfare mother, 16 percent the foster care system, 13 percent didn't know.

♦

You Gotta Lunch Hurt: Now that Cal Ripken has bested Lou Gehrig, the obvious question for the sabremetricians is: Who holds the record for "doing lunch" in Washington? Consensus has it that the late public-relations man Robert Gray set a 2,130-lunch total that may be impossible to beat. Rain or shine, Democratic or Republican administration, from the glory days of Sans Souci to the closing days of Maison Blanche, Gray was *there*.

Former Democratic National Committee chairman Robert Strauss gave Gray a run for the money, but Strauss had to go onto the 2-year disabled list when named ambassador to Moscow during the Bush administration. Larry King was looking good there for a while, but they closed his favorite establishment, Duke Zeibert's, and he just hasn't been able to get into the rhythm since. Besides, King had a heart attack a few years ago, and had to spent a few days convalescing. Larry just couldn't lunch hurt.

If any reader has a candidate for the title of Washington Lunch Iron Man, please submit a name and list of frequented luncheon establishments to: Iron Man Competition, The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th St. NW, Suite 505, Washington DC, 20036. The winner will be the subject of George F. Will's next book, *Men at Lunch*.

♦

Your Weekly Reader: With the ascension to power of a college professor with a taste for reading lists, the staff of The Weekly Standard will be providing, on occasion, an utterly unscientific reading list of our own favorite books on subjects of interest in the news. First up: a subject near and dear to everyone's heart; four great novels about money you might want to take a look at:

- ***The Financier,*** by Theodore Dreiser. A Mike Milken-like investor is so successful playing the markets in post Civil War Philadelphia that the Old Guard sees to it he is thrown in jail.

- ***The Titan***, also by Dreiser. The businessman arrested in *The Financier* gets out of jail, moves to Chicago, and builds the subway system.

Scrapbook

BOB PACKWOOD IN HIS CALVINS

•***Framley Parsonage***, by Anthony Trollope. In which a yuppie Anglican minister finds himself personally overextended—perhaps the only genuinely great novel about debt.

♦

DON'T HATE THEM 'CAUSE THEY'RE KLANSMEN: When the KKK took their travelling show to the little Wisconsin town of Elkhorn, the hooded ones got their oxes gored in the process. Seems the county board was all set to officially denounce the Klansmen by passing a resolution denouncing "hate groups" when an alert citizen decried using the word hate, because, well, hate is one mean and insensitive moniker. Fortunately, a solution swiftly arrived: The Klan would officially be branded an "unhappy group." What a cross for a hoodlum to have to burn, er, bear—no longer feared, melancholy Klansmen are to be understood

The resolution also included the creation of something called "Project Lemonade," which placed local charities in the very unhappy position of wanting the aforementioned "unhappy group" to stay in town and say unhappy things for months on end. Why? Because the aim of "Project Lemonade" was to make "lemonade out of lemons" by getting Elkhornians to donate a certain sum of cash to a favorite charity for each minute the Kluxers hung around.

♦

SECOND-TIER BLUES: What, do you suppose, is it like to work for a presidential campaign that is going absolutely nowhere? A clue could be found on fax machines across Washington on Sept. 6, when the Lugar for President campaign sent out a press release so bizarre that it cries out for comment and explication. It began: "A powerful special-interest group has rejected Senator Dick Lugar's pledge not to raise income tax rates because Lugar also pledged to defend the United States 'under conditions of war or severe domestic crisis.' "

That must be some evil special-interest group, no? No. Turns out the target of the Lugar campaign's wrath is none other than Americans for Tax Reform, a very, very Republican group. The press release goes on to quote "R. Mark Lubbers, Lugar's campaign manager," who calls ATR's executive director, Grover Norquist, a "petty inside-the-beltway pupeteer." "The President of the United States is not a marionette," thunders Mr. Lubbers, who would get more respect from us if he dropped the "R."

The sad, exquisite irony is that the Lugar campaign has resorted to a public assault on Grover Norquist because he was the subject of a front-page piece in the *Washington Post* two days earlier about his role in the Republican revolution. So Dick Lugar is seeking press attention by going after a solitary political operative because that operative is getting more press than Lugar, a senator and presidential candidate. Yeow.

♦

HOW TO 'MOVE RIGHT': Bob Dole's efforts to appeal to conservatives are gaining momentum, as this schedule of Dole's activities this week, purloined from Dole for President headquarters, proves:

Monday, Des Moines. Call on Pulitzer Prize committee to revoke 1931 prize given to Stalin-loving *New York Times* reporter Walter Duranty.

Tuesday, Concord. Recognize Taiwan as the one true China; demand action on Quemoy and Matsu.

Wednesday, Manhattan. Apologize to the descendants of Douglas MacArthur for the Truman firing.

Thursday, Washington. Demand President Clinton pull U.S. from International Olympic Committee in order to prevent world government.

Friday, Ames. Accuse Evian of putting flouride in bottled water.

Saturday, Boca Raton. Insist that *Bartlett's* include more quotations from Ronald Reagan.

Scenes from a Speakership

By David McClintick

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 1995

"You've lied!" Newt Gingrich rails. "You've cheated Bud Shuster!" The Speaker of the House is sitting on a blue leather sofa in a closed office across the street from the Capitol berating Rep. William Thomas, the chairman of the sensitive Oversight Committee, which manages the internal affairs of the House of Representatives. Majority Leader Dick Armey and Rep. Jim Nussle, who chaired the Republicans' transition to majority status in the new Congress, listen in stunned silence, along with several staff members.

Glancing over a spreadsheet, Gingrich is furious at the way Thomas has computed the 30 percent cuts the Speaker has ordered in the $223 million budget of the 19 House committees. The cuts, which are being disputed by several committee chairmen—including Transportation and Infrastructure's Bud Shuster—are central to Gingrich's determination to control and streamline the House. He is convinced that the Ways and Means Committee, to take one example, can fashion welfare and tax legislation as efficiently with a budget of $10 million as it has with $16 million. But it appears to him that Thomas has derived the cuts from false assumptions and that he has been unfair to Bud Shuster. Shuster complained to Gingrich in an "urgent alert," "Bud to Newt" memorandum early this morning.

Gingrich and Thomas have a complex relationship. Only a year and a half apart in age, they came to Congress in the late seventies, became friends, and shared an apartment for a time. But two years ago, when Gingrich was the Republican whip in a Democratic-controlled House, he tried to remove Thomas as the ranking Republican on the Oversight Committee for being too accommodating to the majority party. Thomas bested Gingrich's candidate for the post and thereafter mended his ways. Now that the Republicans control the House, Gingrich has surprised insiders by appointing Thomas chairman of Oversight, even though the post's power has been considerably diminished; he is now, for all intents and purposes, Nussle's subordinate.

"You're getting to your numbers, but you're getting there by lying and cheating Bud Shuster!" Gingrich shouts.

"No, sir! No, sir!" Thomas says, flabbergasted and uncharacteristically deferential. "That is not true!"

"You do this every time!" Gingrich stands and moves away from Thomas.

"Those are good numbers," Thomas insists. But he promises to review them. He and his staff leave Gingrich, Armey, and Nussle in private. Armey finally speaks, suggesting that Gingrich might want to let Thomas and the committee chairmen try to resolve their differences before the Speaker invests the prestige of his office in any dispute.

The Speaker, whose temper cools as quickly as it flares, acknowledges that Armey may be right.

The Republican high command—Gingrich, Armey, Whip Tom Delay, and John Boehner, who chairs the Republican Conference comprising the full GOP House membership—gathers three hours later at a huge table in the Speaker's conference room overlooking the Mall. They try again to resolve the disputes that sparked the clash between Gingrich and Thomas. Aided by computers, Thomas and his staff have clarified their budget plan, and Gingrich realizes his anger was in error. Shuster will have to live with a reduced budget. However, the results fail to satisfy another chairman, Don Young, who heads the natural resources committee.

A bearded former trapper and boat captain from Fort Yukon, Young is one of only a few Republicans out of 230 in the House who did not sign the Contract With America. "I'm not a joiner," he explained. He is believed also to be the only member of Congress to carry a buck knife in his boot.

Instead of conforming to the 30 percent budget cut that Gingrich has decreed, Young is demanding an 18

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percent increase, in part because his committee has expanded responsibilities, having absorbed parts of two other committees since the last Congress.

"Damn it, Newt, I told you I was gonna go out and do this job," Young says. "I'm gonna have all these hearings. I've got all this travel. We've never traveled before. It only *looks* like a lot because the old committee never spent any money."

"But this is a *huge* increase. Why do you need a $2 million increase?"

Young seethes. "I can't do the job without it. You won't let me do the job."

"Well, we'll find somebody who *can* do the job, Don."

"Don't threaten me!"

"Don't *you* threaten *me*!" Gingrich shouts.

"I'll have to cancel all my hearings!" Young declares.

Both men rise to their feet at opposite ends of the table. Dick Armey and the other leaders try to calm them. "You have asked for too much money, Don," Armey says. "Everybody else has cut by a third. You cannot justify this increase."

Young leaves the room. Gingrich still wants to compromise with the complaining chairmen, but the other leaders insist that he back the cuts—which he ordered. The Speaker reluctantly agrees, his anger ebbing.

"This is not the pleasant part of being Speaker," Gingrich says.

The pleasant part of being Speaker occurs that evening when the House, with Gingrich presiding, approves a bill limiting certain lawsuits. The vote is 325 to 99, with 99 Democrats joining 226 Republicans in voting yes. It is the twelfth consecutive bill in the Contract With America to pass the House.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1995

"Try to look a little less student-like and radical and you might be on the noon sweep on CNN," Newt Gingrich tells the students of "Renewing American Civilization," his 20-hour college course. They are chatting over breakfast in a sleek cafeteria as rain drenches the campus of Reinhardt College in northern Georgia for the seventh consecutive weekend. CNN's Bob Franken and a camera crew have been permitted access to the breakfast. "They're trying to do a background package," Gingrich says, munching strawberries and cantaloupe in atonement for past pancakes and sausage. "We'll be at Day 50 next Wednesday. Everybody and their brother is trying to figure what does *this* mean?"

"I think there's a great sentiment in the country right now to return to something that works, something you can grab hold of," says Terry Terrell, 46, a compact, curly-haired former Navy pilot and writer for aviation magazines who is enrolled in "Renewing American Civilization."

"We're not returning to anything—we're stepping into the future," counters Janet Sanders, 33, a pre-law student. Formerly a Las Vegas dancer, now married to one of the Oak Ridge Boys, the honey-blonde Sanders drives to Reinhardt from Nashville every Friday evening to take the course. "The framers of the Constitution, while fearing tyranny, were also fearing mobocracy," she says, continuing a previous breakfast conversation. "If we step into the Third Wave, as the Tofflers suggest we are going to do, will the Constitution need to be redrafted?"

"Not redrafted, maybe modified," Gingrich says.

"Would it call for a constitutional convention, or could we do it by amendment?" asks Sanders.

"I don't think we know yet. If you remember [pollster Daniel] Yankelovich's argument—there is a difference between public opinion and public judgment. What you've got to do is design a system which does not worship public opinion, but which is ready to have a dialogue that creates public judgment."

"So how do you preserve the stability?" Sanders asks.

"I think you have to have a long dialogue," Gingrich says. "I'm finding myself right now in the debate between six- and twelve-year term limits. Exactly based on your concern, think about how long it takes to reach a judgment rather than have an opinion, and then how long it takes to learn to lead a free people. And my guess is that the people who favor six years totally underestimate and undervalue the difficulty of leading people. It's very hard to educate leadership in four years, which is what you would have with a six-year term—at the end of your fourth year you'd have to be a leader. That's too short a growth curve to deal with the world. It's a direct repudiation of republican government. It's mobocracy. The founding fathers wanted republican government."

"How necessary do you think term limits are if the population exercises their right to vote?" Sanders asks.

"Term limits are a very crude effort, which I support, to rebalance the system. Sometimes in life, you can't make fine gradations. They're the only club that people have figured out. From city council, to county commissioner, to the state legislature to the federal government, you have a class of incumbent politicians that is sickening the system—incumbents rigging the game for their own survival."

"Doesn't the very idea of career politicians go against the notion of government of the people?"

"No, in fact, I would argue that it's silly to think you won't have career politicians."

"Well, I would argue that the whole intent of our Constitution—the reason we have elected officials—is so people like *us* can go to Washington—"

"None of the Founding Fathers would have believed that. Not that people like you shouldn't go, but the minute you go, you become a career politician. This is a very important point. The purpose of elections is to choose between a series of competent people. It is not to pick ignorant amateurs who don't have a clue about a free society. It's a very important difference. Look at who wrote the Constitution. Benjamin Franklin was in politics his whole adult lifetime."

"Well, that's a very inside-the-Beltway thing to say, that ignorant amateurs—I would dare say that Dr. Frist or Fred Thompson—"

"Dr. Frist is a professional politician," Gingrich says. Bill Frist, a Nashville heart surgeon, and Fred Thompson, a Nashville lawyer, were both elected to the Senate in 1994.

"By virtue that he just won an election?"

"No, by virtue of the fact that he systematically mastered the requirements of the profession."

"So, he was an ignorant amateur until he got into the race?"

"No, no. The concept of the ignorant amateur is very important. The concept that you can spontaneously spew up 535 well-meaning citizens who will randomly show up in Washington and magically do good, *totally* undervalues how hard it is for a free people to work together. It is a totally misleading myth. Bill Frist did exactly what he did to become a surgeon. He sat down and, in a highly disciplined, intelligent way, said, look, I want to be an *effective citizen*, and *effective senator*. I don't want to just go and babble. How does an effective citizen learn how to do this? There is a profession of public leadership, just as there is a profession of military command. Every one of the Founding Fathers was a professional. None of them were amateurs who showed up on Tuesday and said, I have this inspiration, let me just do it, because my creative juices are flowing. All of the Founding Fathers would have repudiated that model and said, that's exactly what *you* meant by 'mobocracy.' That's the mob."

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22, 1995

A moral crisis equal to segregation, equal to slavery," Newt Gingrich called the welfare system at his January swearing-in. Despite growing consensus that something must be done, the Republican welfare bill is proving to be the most inflammatory and divisive component of the Contract With America. In addition to proposing the most radical changes in governance since the 1930s, the bill has aroused the pro-life lobby, which worries that the measure's goal of discouraging out-of-wedlock births might have the unintended effect of increasing abortions. A Democratic amendment to strike an "illegitimacy" provision is attracting pro-life Republicans, including the influential Henry Hyde. But the Gingrich-controlled Rules Committee bars the amendment from floor debate, knowing that if it passes, the bill will lose the support of members who believe that curbing out-of-wedlock births is a key to transforming welfare.

The floor battle is rougher, the tactical calculus trickier, than at any time since the crime bill last fall. Passing the welfare bill itself isn't the most immediate of Gingrich's worries. His team first must pass the "rule" governing debate on amendments. Controversial bills sometimes founder on their rule, and Hyde and his allies oppose this rule because it bars the "abortion" amendment from debate. If they pass the rule, the Speaker's men then must defeat a Democratic "substitute" welfare bill; approval would cloud the fate of the Republican measure. Then they must defeat a "motion to recommit," which opponents of bills usually offer at the end of debate. If approved, the recommital motion sends the bill back to the committee that drafted it, effectively killing the bill. Only if Gingrich overcomes those obstacles can he bring the welfare bill itself to a vote.

At noon, with Gingrich across town speaking before the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Whip Tom DeLay's count shows the Republicans narrowly losing the rule and the Democratic substitute bill, offered by Nathan Deal of Georgia, gaining support. The whip team has pushed Republican members as far as it can. Gingrich aide Jack Howard calls his colleague Leigh Ann Metzger in the Speaker's car and asks that she make sure he returns from his speech in time to huddle with undecided Republican members before the vote.

By 1:30 Gingrich is working the House floor. By 2:00 he and Majority Leader Armey are behind the closed doors of Armey's adjacent office listening to Cliff Stearns, Jay Dickey, John McHugh, and a half dozen other pro-life members who believe the welfare bill may foster abortion. The meeting is tense but strangely subdued, more like an academic seminar than the more typical pep rally. Gingrich and Armey tell the dissidents that the abortion amendment has less to do with curbing abortion than with Democratic

tactics for defeating the centerpiece of the Contract With America. One of the amendment's cosponsors, Democrat Pete Stark, they say, is the quintessential rich liberal elitist up to no good.

"Pete Stark isn't pro-life," Armey asserts. "He's just trying to kill our welfare bill. Ask yourself whose agenda he's furthering with this amendment."

A television set glows with the muted image of Minority Leader Dick Gephardt, who is outside on the floor stem-winding the Democratic side of the rule debate to its climax, claiming that the Republican bill "will throw millions of innocent children out on the street."

When Gephardt finishes, Rules committee chairman Gerald Solomon concludes the debate for the Republicans.

A bell sounds in offices throughout the House side of the Capitol summoning members to vote. The undecideds in Armey's office give no hint of their decisions and return to the floor, which is filling with members and the whip teams of both sides.

The Speaker, who normally votes only when the count is close, inserts his card and presses "yes." The electronic scoreboard shows a dead heat as the numbers mount. It's clear that Gingrich's and Armey's private entreaties were only partly successful. Stearns and McHugh vote yes on the rule, Jay Dickey no.

Gingrich corners Marge Roukema of New Jersey, who has just voted no. Roukema is the senior female Republican in the House; in 1989 she backed Gingrich's opponent in his race for whip. Now, it isn't clear why she opposes the rule. Could it be she just wants some attention? After an extended conversation with Gingrich, she switches to a yes.

The Speaker also confers with Jay Kim, the Korean-American from California, who has voted no on the rule because he is concerned about the fate of immigrants under the welfare bill. Gingrich promises to address the immigration issue later, perhaps in a separate bill. Kim switches to yes.

Dick Armey listens to his fellow Texan, Joe Barton. "I've never voted against right-to-life in my career," Barton laments.

"And you're not doing it now," Armey counters, contending that a vote for the rule isn't a vote against right-to-life. "A bunch of us are just as pro-life as you are and we're for the rule without the amendment." But Barton doesn't want to mar his 100 percent score with the National Right to Life Committee. He votes no.

Gingrich's entire senior staff works the floor—chief of staff Dan Meyer; senior floor aide Leonard Swinehart; Jack Howard, who specializes in welfare and crime; Arne Christenson, who handles budget and appropriations; and Ed Kutler, who concentrates on health care and liaison with the governors—along with Armey's staff and the regular whip forces. Jack Howard has managed to preserve three yes votes from among two dozen conservative Democrats angry at Republicans over a budget and appropriations controversy.

Don Young, the Alaskan with the buck knife, has been courted by the Democrats on the rule vote but returns to the Republican fold at the last minute.

When time expires, the yes's lead the no's 217 to 211. Six Democrats are absent from the chamber, enough to tie and thus defeat the rule if they all vote no.

Standing next to the podium, Len Swinehart quietly tells Speaker *pro tempore* Michael Oxley of Ohio, "Put down the gavel—let's get this over with." In the past, the House has been leisurely about bringing votes to a close. At the beginning of this Congress, however, Newt Gingrich made clear he would enforce the prescribed time limit of 17 minutes.

Oxley complies, with what has been known since ancient times as a "quick gavel," and the vote is closed. The approval of the rule is one of the narrowest victories to date in the 104th Congress. Some 15 Republicans, most of them conservative pro-lifers, opposed the rule. Had it not been for the three Democrats who supported it, and the Republicans who switched under pressure from Gingrich and Armey, the rule would have been defeated, sending the welfare bill, its future very much in doubt, back to the Rules Committee.

The next major test of the respective strengths of the two sides—the vote on the substitute bill offered by Democrat Nathan Deal—comes tomorrow after several amendments are debated. If Gephardt can get all 204 Democrats and the independent socialist Bernard Sanders of Vermont to support the substitute, he will need only 13 Republicans to pass it. For the first time in the 104th Congress, the Democrats smell blood.

The next day, a dozen Republican governors, including John Engler of Michigan, Tommy Thompson of Wisconsin, and William Weld of Massachusetts, await Gingrich in the basement of the Washington Court Hotel. They are upset with him. They feel he has promised more welfare reform than he is delivering on the House floor next week, and they plan to tell him so. The welfare bill on the floor of the House does

not provide as much independence as the governors want. Many conservatives still want to micro-manage welfare from Washington. It has been decided in recent days that food stamps will not be sent back to the states in the form of block grants at all.

"I did the best I could—I can't control all my people," Gingrich tells the governors after listening to their complaints. "This all may be moot. I think we may lose the bill. We nearly lost the rule, we could lose on the Deal substitute, we could lose on the motion to recommit, we could lose on final passage."

This is a revelation to the governors.

"Newt, are you serious?" asks Tommy Thompson.

"We've got a real problem—I don't know how it's going to turn out," Gingrich replies.

"What are you going to do to solve it?" Engler asks.

"I don't know if I *can* solve it."

The dynamic of the room changes from unhappiness with some aspects of a bill the governors thought a sure winner to fear of losing a bill that in many ways is satisfactory.

"What can we do to help?" Thompson asks.

"You can come over to the Hill and tell your state delegations that this is critical, that you need their help."

The governors cancel a crowded slate of previously scheduled meetings and workshops through the afternoon.

"Who should we see first?" Thompson asks.

"Hyde. You need to see Henry Hyde. If we lose Henry Hyde, we lose it all." Gingrich explains that it's unclear how Hyde, who nearly defeated the vote on the rule yesterday, will go today.

Henry Hyde has never seen so many governors in one place—certainly not in his suite of offices in the Rayburn Building. One of the courtliest men in Congress, Hyde greets Engler, Thompson, Jim Edgar of Illinois (the only one Hyde knows personally), Kirk Fordice of Mississippi, Fife Symington of Arizona, Terry Branstad of Iowa, and Mike Leavitt of Utah.

John Engler takes the lead in explaining how active the governors have been in the fashioning of the welfare legislation and how important they consider its passage.

"I think the bill will pass," Hyde says.

"We're concerned that it will get hung up on this abortion thing," one governor says, "and I say that as a pro-life governor."

Hyde reflects. "Well, I can tell you that I will vote for the bill. You can count on it."

The excitement among the governors is palpable. Republican party chairman Haley Barbour, who is the governors' host, slips out to a telephone and calls Newt Gingrich, whose assistant pulls him from a strategy session of the Republican leadership.

"Henry says he's going to vote for it," Barbour says.

"Well, find out where he's going to be on the motion to recommit."

Barbour returns to Hyde's inner office. Hyde declines to say flatly how he will vote on recommital—in other words, he's agreed to vote for the bill if it comes to that but has not guaranteed that he will not vote to kill it right before then. "It won't be a problem," he says. "You don't need to worry about it."

Barbour calls Gingrich back: "He won't say for sure, but says it won't be a problem."

Back in the meeting with the governors, Barbour says to Hyde: "A lot of people are looking to you for leadership on this."

"I'll help with some people," Hyde says.

Encouraged, the governors disperse to call on their own congressional delegations.

An aide bursts in on Gingrich. "Governor Engler is on the floor. How do we get him off?" Rules strictly bar outsiders from the House chamber, even VIPs, when the House is meeting.

"What's he doing?" Gingrich asks.

"He's beating the s— out of Upton."

"Over welfare?" the Speaker says.

"Yeah."

"Let him do it."

Fred Upton is a moderate Republican congressman from Engler's state of Michigan, who has estranged himself from the new Republican leadership because of a penchant for working on bipartisan projects with the Democrats, who are now urging him to vote for their substitute measure.

The governors and Henry Hyde prove crucial in returning straying Republicans to the fold. While the Democrats are solid for the Democratic alternative, only one of the GOP members who voted against the rule votes for it, and it goes down 228-205 at 7:30 p.m. Newt Gingrich is given the results by telephone in New York.

Having been assured of the result by Armey and DeLay when the effects of the governors' lobbying became clear, he decides to keep a long-standing speaking engagement.

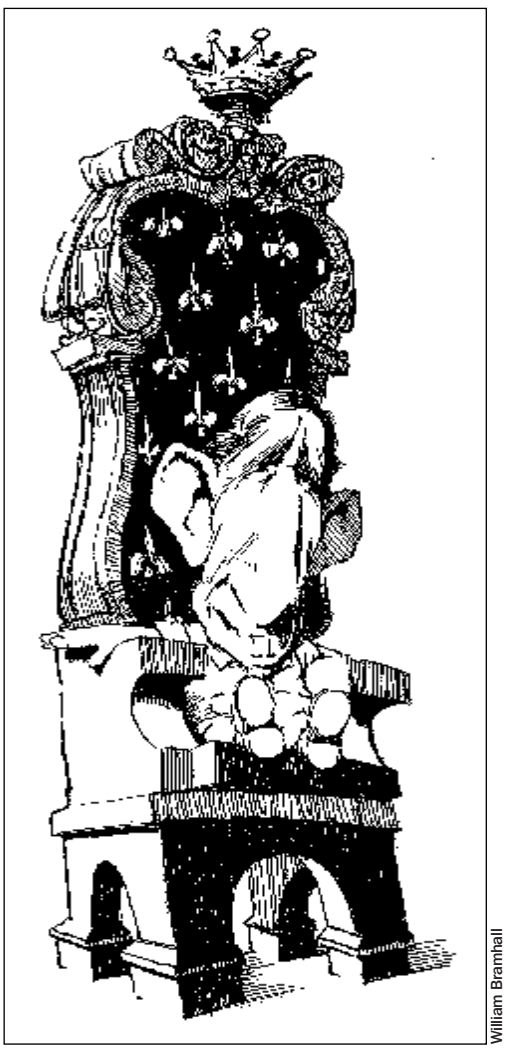
He speaks in Manhattan again Friday morning, and then returns to the Capitol in time for the vote on the motion to recommit and the bill itself in the early afternoon. The motion fails. The bill passes. ♦

Charles, Clinton and the Boomers

By Noemie Emery

Charles, Prince of Wales, has a Character Problem. He whines. He complains. Baring the scars of emotional trauma, he traces his woes to the doings of others, and, so doing, erodes his own case. If he reaches the throne, he may never possess it. He will never, to many, be King. In this he resembles Bill Clinton, his counterpart and contemporary, who, three years into office, has not yet been President.

What does the Prince share with the not-quite-the-president, beyond mothers fond of the races, and marriage to iron-willed blondes? Both belong, it appears, to a Lost Generation done in not by war, but by peace. Born post-war, and post-atom, their wars were either cold or small. Post-Depression, they were spared true privation. Post-penicillin, post-polio, they were borne by medicine past the infectious diseases that had borne off the old, and the young. They had in on a tide of material plenty: inventions, gadgets, and toys. Born safe—born healthy—they were not yet born happy: Into the void cleared by the absence of exterior challenge flowed an intense preoccupation with the self. The generation with the least to complain of became the most intensely self-pitying, the most easily frightened, the most readily fazed.



William Bramhall

In the absence of real ills, small ones became giant, or were invented completely. The generation without struggle invented the Midlife Crisis. The Identity Crisis. The Crisis of Meaning. Age was a crisis. So were Relationships. Normal transitions became awesome hurdles, consuming acres of newsprint. Finding oneself became a life's work. Given the world, the boomers turned inward, defining external events by their personal impact.

War is a metaphor for trial and challenge. It is also a marker, to define generations. It separates Charles from his forebears, who lived through the bombings; separates Bill from Jack and Ike. Near the 50th anniversary of the D-Day invasions, which drained the young blood of three nations, the rock musician, Kurt Cobain committed suicide at 27, having found a soft life too trying to bear. When Andy Rooney remarked that other young victims could have made use of the years he discarded, he was scolded by Anna Quindlen, then the doyenne of the *New York Times* Op-Ed page, for failing to appreciate the stress placed on the sensitive by the strains of American life. Quindlen's place on the Op-Ed page itself was a sign of the *Times*, as a one-time forum for policy matters becomes an encounter session for the sensitive and not-so-very-young. Flora Lewis once wrote of international politics; Quindlen's beat was to discuss herself. With Frank Rich, and others, she was invited by the *Times'* boomer publisher to turn the page into a support group where boomers dissect their impressions, only marginally connected to events.

The differences here merit discussion, for they concern the mood of the age. Lewis, and others, had

Noemie Emery is working on a study of the selling of political families called Sex, War and Wives.

specialized knowledge. When Quindlen and Rich, a one-time drama critic, write of foreign affairs, military affairs, or elections in Oregon, they know no more than their readers, which is somehow the point. What they know does not matter. It is what they feel—or rather, what *they* feel—that counts. The central idea—that history exists in its impact on boomers—was expressed best by Clinton, seen by both Rich and Quindlen as a generational model, when he told a group of military veterans he would have liked to have had their "experience," as if it were another form of Outward Bound.

Older people—FDR and Ike; writers like Lewis and Reston—saw themselves as moving through history, validated by their performance in it. Clinton and his staff (which, one writer said, has more veterans of therapy than military service), and writers like Rich and Quindlen as well, see history as something that earns its importance in the way that it happens to them. Everything thus becomes cause for self-pity; even the absence of struggle. Clinton thinks himself ill-served as a leader in lacking a crisis to rally the country; like hunger, or Hitler, or war. In the same way, the modern young lack the defining prospect of imminent danger, which gave shape to the lives of Anne Frank and young soldiers.

In time, as the boomers approach their fifties, political fallouts ensue. The main traits that mark the boomers—introspection, self-importance—are powerful solvents of moral authority, of the gravitas needed to lead. These attitudes tend to erode both presence and character. They bring adolescence into middle age. Clinton still clings to the role of the student, a role that John Kennedy shunned. Kennedy, when elected, was years younger than Clinton. Teddy Roosevelt took the oath at 42. Charles's grandfather, George VI, was 40 when he became a war leader. He died in 1952 at 53. Martin Luther King was not yet 30 when he began his civil rights protest; 31 in 1960, when he was arrested; 39 when he was shot. All were adult, in ways that the boomers seem unable to emulate.

Some were even adulterers, proving that this is not the key part of the character issue: Their problems are less with Camilla—and Paula, and Gennifer—than with their excruciating efforts to explain. It is not sins of the flesh that keep them less than respected, but failings more subtle in manner. The prime boomer traits, of complaint and exposure, run counter to monarchs, and men. They are the one thread that binds heroes together, uniting as one a diverse group of people, excusing a wide range of sins. Oddly, they rouse, in their disdain for pity, the affections the boomers so crave. Moist boomer pleas bring disgust and derision. The ironic edge of Jack Kennedy, who detested emotion, tapped the gusher of tears at his death. Boomers make crises of life's incidentals.

Leaders make crises small change. Kennedy and Roosevelt, who knew physical pain, did not share it with others. Reagan legitimized himself as a national leader when he made jokes in the operating theater, a response that comes more easily to those who place the focus of the universe outside themselves. The idea was that things were fine; but if not, he would manage to bear them; a promise that proved to be true. In November 1994, when it became clear that the advanced Quindlenization of their putative heirs had brought the House of Windsor and Democrats to the point of extinction, Reagan, nearing his 84th birthday, announced himself in the early stages of a frightening disease. There was in his letter no visible pity, but concern for others, hope for the country, trust in the future, and fate. It was the message of a man who knew himself, knew the world, knew the difference between them.

William Bramhall

It was the mark in effect of the stoic persuasion, essential to presidents, and kings. Which is why Charles will not be king, even if crowned, and Bill Clinton will not be president, even if reelected. ♦

Are the Democrats Going Nuts? An Inquiry

By Andrew Ferguson

Not since Mary Matalin's famous fax from Bush campaign headquarters in 1992—"Sniveling, Hypocritical Democrats," was the demure Miss Matalin's choice of headline—has a political press release seemed so disproportionate to its subject. It was an attack fax, launched in mid-July, from the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. Its hapless target: John Warner, the brick-jawed, silver-maned Republican senator from Virginia. The occasion: Warner's vote against an amendment to the Regulatory Reform Bill regarding meat and poultry regulations.

"DIRTY ROTTEN STINKING . . . MEAT," wrote the DSCC flacks in bold letters. "WARNER TO VOTERS: EAT THIS." The release went on to slam "E-Coli Republicans" for a vote that "literally threatens Americans lives."

"Next time you go to your local supermarket and stand at the meat counter, beware," the fax concluded. "Because what is lurking beneath the cellophane wrapped cut of meat or chicken could literally kill you and your children."

As an example of overcooked rhetoric, this is fine—Matalinesque, even. Tone-deaf and tasteless, it is also a symptom, like the fabled Matalin memo, of something larger and even more entertaining. The Matalin memo revealed a campaign without purpose or intellectual weight. The DCSS memo is evidence of nervous collapse.

Capitol Hill is no stranger to bizarre behavior, of course; 1995 marks Robert Dornan's seventeenth year in Congress. But even B-1 Bob might have found cause to cringe when George Miller, Democrat of California, announced after one Republican legislative triumph: "It is a glorious day—if you're a fascist." Several events this summer, considered cumulatively and examined with the cold eye of the diagnostician, suggest that the Democratic party, the world's oldest and most honorable political institution, the party of Jefferson and . . . well, Jefferson, is cracking up—breaking down, wigging out, caving in, off to see the Wizard, bound for the nuthouse.

"Nervous breakdown" is not a medical term, and according to diagnostic textbooks it can denote any number of varied phenomena: delusions of grandeur, unexpected fits of temper and dyspepsia, a generalized disregard for conventional behavior. Breakdowns tend to strike, the textbooks note, "at times of transition or change, such as adolescence, middle age, entering or graduating from school"—or losing (to extend the list) the chairmanship of a powerful House committee.

This may be the case with Sam Gibbons, for example, who is today the ranking minority member on Ways and Means, though he seems unaware of the "minority" aspect of his role. For years the Florida Democrat labored thanklessly in the shadow of Dan Rostenkowski, whose demise in 1994 left Gibbons briefly at the wheel of Congress's most significant committee. Dethroned prematurely by the Republican Terror, Gibbons has been given to outbursts on the House floor. "You all sit down and shut up," he explained, in a famous exchange with Republicans last March. "I will be as petulant as I want to be."

Like the faded silent-film queen Norma Desmond, alone in her mansion on Sunset Boulevard, Gibbons has dealt badly with the fact that he is no longer a star. As a member of the minority, for example, he has lost the authority to call committee hearings, with which he could command the attention and obedience of junior colleagues, his staff, and the press. So in August he called a committee hearing anyway.

The toy hearing had all the trappings of the real thing. Five Democrats (but no Republicans) gathered with him in the cavernous Ways and Means committee room. Lines of spectators—congressional staff and lobbyists, mostly—snaked out the door. C-SPAN broadcast the proceedings live. Gibbons called the hearing to order, administered the oath to panels of witnesses, and placed before him the official little blue light that glows whenever a witness jabbers overtime. He commanded the room with a chairman's gravitas.

The theme of the hearing heightened the air of unreality. The Medicare trust fund, Gibbons intended to prove, isn't going broke after all, and any intimations to the contrary—including those by the fund's Democratic trustees, who warn of bankruptcy in seven years—are scare tactics. "It is sound today," announced Gibbons, "and we'll keep it fiscally sound."

Several newspapers—caught in a classic codependent relationship—solemnly reported the pretend chairman's vow, without pointing out that he is in no position to keep it.

Other House Democrats have joined Gibbons in purring "Ready for my closeup, Mr. De Mille." Charles Schumer, in happier times the chairman of a Judiciary subcommittee on crime, held his own pretend hearing in July. The subject was the paramilitary groups terrorizing the American outback, and Schumer too deployed the trappings expected of a real hearing called by a real chairman: the little blue light, the panels of witnesses, the opening statements, the whirring cameras and obliging newsfolk, and the crowds of spectators. All that was missing were the little men in white coats, for Schumer, like Gibbons, seemed unaware that he was no longer chairman of anything. Congressmen who selected themselves as members of Schumer's nonsubcommittee contributed suitably incendiary statements during Schumer's make-believe hearing. Congressman Miller described the militias as "the Republican constituency." And Schumer himself called Republicans "mealy-mouthed mollifiers of the militias."

Extravagance of speech, along with uncontrollable alliteration, is symptomatic of nervous collapse, and large numbers of Democrats have succumbed on and off the House floor. The Nazi trope has proved irresistible. "These are people who are practicing genocide with a smile," said New York's Major Owens, of his Republican colleagues. "They're worse than Hitler."

"Nobody knew what was happening to the Jews," said Charlie Rangel, also of New York, "and today when you see what is happening—education being knocked first on the list, health care for the poor as being knocked, welfare checks taken away—it just seems to me that there is a similarity."

To Republicans who opposed the nomination of Henry Foster, Pat Schroeder advised: "Slow down. We don't believe in lynchings. We don't want to see that kind of goose-stepping over women's rights."

"This Republican proposal"—a welfare reform bill—"certainly is not the Holocaust," John Lewis reassured the House in March. "But I am concerned. . . . They are coming for the poor. They are coming for the sick, the elderly, and the disabled."

And what will Republicans do when they nab them? Leon Panetta, discussing the Republican proposal to increase funding for the school lunch program by 4.8 percent, suggested an answer. It "would really take food out of the mouths of millions of needy schoolchildren, toddlers, infants and mothers."

When the Third Reich metaphor seems temporarily exhausted, the Democrats have fallen back on more general imagery. "All this bill does," said California's Pete Stark, referring to welfare reform, "is push poor people off a cliff." Or, in Pat Schroeder's alternative: "The first thing being thrown off the ship are women and children."

But House Democrats in extremis have refused to settle for words alone. They have shown themselves capable of action as well.

John Lewis, for example, was asked by the Congressional Institute in early August to appear with Newt Gingrich and other Georgia congressmen at a Medicare forum in suburban Atlanta. Lewis never responded to the offer, but in the end decided to show up anyway, with a four-bus caravan of union activists in train.

Lewis and his friends popped up at the Stouffer Waverly Hotel in Cobb County just as the forum was getting underway. The activists were outraged at the GOP's plan to increase Medicare spending $1,900 per recipient over seven years. As they stormed the hotel ballroom, they carried signs and shouted: "Where is Newt?" As it happened, Newt was in a back room. But not for long—he quit the hotel altogether rather than battle to be heard. Then the congressman and his colleagues chanted: "Newt is scared!" Lewis's demonstrators marched onto the stage. They raised their fists. And then they left.

"At some point," Gingrich later said of Lewis, "he needs to realize he's a congressman." Lewis does realize this, of course, but as his party collapses, the definition of what a congressman does, and can do, is being endlessly expanded, even to include the task of corralling mobs to shout down a colleague.

Pat Schroeder has learned the lesson as well. Four days after Lewis demonstrated in Atlanta, Gingrich held a book signing at Denver's Tattered Cover bookstore. Hundreds of demonstrators gathered outside, shouting "Down with Newt." Their signs, more inventive than those from Lewis's demonstrators, ranged from "Go Back to Hiding Under a Rock, Ya Lizard," to "Newt, What's Next? Concentration Camps for the Poor?"

A local radio host accused Schroeder of helping to organize the protest—a charge the congresswoman dismissed as "the silliest thing I've ever heard." Hours later she issued a statement declaring herself "proud to have helped organize the protests." Indeed, her staffers had faxed announcements of Gingrich's appearance and even arranged "phone trees" to alert networks of activists. One flyer distributed by her office implored

Denver's activists to match the successful efforts of their Atlanta brethren: "On Monday, Gingrich was met with such ardent protest in his home state of Georgia that the event he was attending had to be canceled. We want to show him that Coloradans are just as involved . . . and just as angry."

Alas, despite the protests, Gingrich's book signing proceeded undisturbed. He was even allowed to talk!

As anger seizes the Democrats and clouds their judgment, as the cracks in the crack-up grow wider and deeper, only one other politician has emerged to rival Gingrich as an object of their loathing and revulsion: their leader, President Clinton.

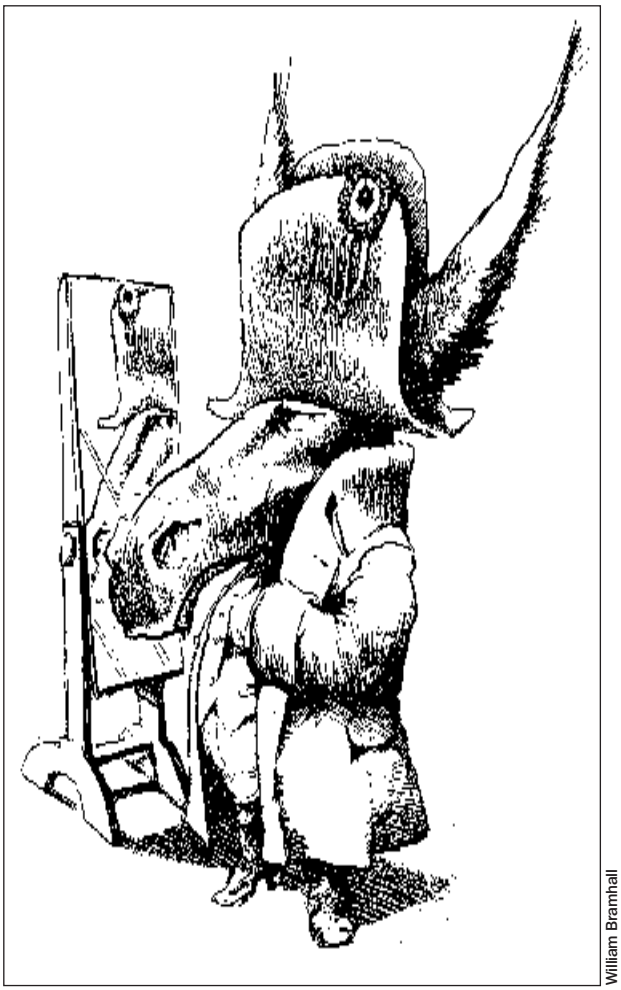
The loathing showed itself most clearly this June, when the President proposed a plan to balance the budget in ten years. Faced with the option of either criticizing Republicans or offering a constructive alternative to their plans, the President went constructive. David Broder and other establishmentarians cooed in admiration, but Clinton's fellow Democratic politicians may never forgive him.

"I think it sucks," said Congressman Fortney "Pete" Stark. "It's a quantum leap backward in social policy, and it will have long-lasting, explosive results," said Congressman Don Payne. "The real losers will be the elderly and the families that support them," said Majority Leader Dick Gephardt.

"There is no way, at this point, for us to deal with it," said Congresswoman Louise Slaughter about Clinton's budget. Dealing with it, of course, is the problem. "I don't want to deal with it," said Rep. Vic Fazio. "He thinks we are like abused children who will come back and ask him to love us again," said George Miller. "We won't."

Rep. Sherrod Brown had the most succinct counterproposal of all: "Maybe we need to reopen Pennsylvania Avenue." Ka-boom.

In nervous breakdowns, there is anger, of course, but the shrinks speak of other symptoms, too: lassitude, a sense of disarray, a feeling of being tugged downward by forces beyond one's control. At meetings of the Democratic House leadership, David Grann reported in *The Hill*, attendance routinely hovers around 25 percent. Only five of nineteen leaders showed up for one recent strategy session. In the cloakroom Democrats snap at one another. When asked by Grann to comment on the performance of the Democratic leadership, Charlie Rangel replied, "Democratic what?"



William Bramhall

In one noteworthy episode, the House Democrats and a rump group of Republican moderates were defeated on a vote they had won just three days before. The reason for the unexpected defeat was that eight Democrats failed to show up for the second roll call. Before long the excuses began floating in. One congressman said he had been attending a Lamaze class with his wife. Several more had left town. Another was home with a sick baby. Congressman Sydney Yates said he missed the vote because he was feeling "queasy."

It's catching. Professional Democrats in Washington glumly admit to feeling queasy, dispirited, and so very alone. One of them has even compared their lot to that of Scott O'Grady, the American airman downed over Bosnia, who subsisted on bugs and the squeezings from his sweat socks.

"The difference between House Democrats and Captain O'Grady," this House Democrat told the *New York Times*, "is that Captain O'Grady had allies." Too true. Plus, Capt. O'Grady managed not to go insane. ♦

The Case for a New 'Do-Nothing' Congress

By David Frum

In Iran or Nicaragua, a revolution occurs when a badly shaven leader harangues a street mob into frenzy, leads them through the streets to sack the palace, guns down the palace guard, writes a new constitution, and invites his supporters to pillage the country's treasury. After a couple of centuries of peace and prosperity, Americans have learned to use the word "revolution" a little more casually. To French or German ears, Newt Gingrich's promises of "revolutionary change" would sound more than a little menacing. Not in happy America, where falling computer prices spark an "information revolution," where improvement in manufacturing standards is breathlessly described as a "quality revolution," and where your local Chevy dealer celebrates the Fourth of July with "revolutionary savings."

Still, if "revolutionary change" means less in the United States than it does elsewhere, it continues to mean *something*—at the least, a substantial and permanent change of direction in public policy. One-third of the way through the Republican congressional majority's mandate, a revolution in that sense has yet to arrive.

Perhaps the word "revolution" is itself part of the problem. Another Republican "revolution" was proclaimed 15 years ago—the Reagan revolution—and its efforts to alter the fundamental nature of Big Government were ultimately unavailing. In fact, the most successful Republican Congress of the modern era was the 80th—the one derided by Harry Truman as the "Do-Nothing Congress." What Harry Truman defined as "nothing" would now be revolution enough, far more like revolution than anything yet to emerge from the 104th Congress.

Certainly, the Republicans have enacted important reforms and courageously voted for large cuts in federal expenditures. The reductions in congressional staffs, the ban on proxy voting in committees, term limits for committee chairman—these reforms, resisted for decades by a Democratic leadership richly meriting Gingrich's abuse of it as "corrupt," are pumping some of the bilge water out of the ship of state.

The House's attack on federal over-regulation likewise represents real change. So does the willingness to be held to account by the electorate on the items of the Contract with America—regardless of the actual merit of those items. So, finally, do the eleven appropriations bills thus far voted out of the House, which collectively contain spending cuts that average 4.4 percent.

But while real, the changes effected by the new Republican majority are also sharply limited. Remember, it isn't the federal budget as a whole that's being cut by 4.4 percent, but only the limited portions of it that must still go through the old appropriations procedure. Not only Social Security, but Medicare, Medicaid, veterans' benefits, and all other entitlements programs will be left unscathed by this round of budget work. Even within the discretionary portion of the budget, grotesque boondoggles that out-of-power conservatives howled against for years escaped the Republican budget-drafters unscathed. Retired Rep. Tim Penny, co-author of the abortive Penny-Kasich budget cut plan in the 103rd Congress, ticks off some of the most egregious examples: the Legal Services Corporation and the Maritime Administration, impact aid to school districts with large numbers of federal employees and the Appalachian Regional Commission.

Every passing week, another increment of enthusiasm seems to leak out of the House Republicans. Talk of abolishing the Energy, Education, Labor, and Commerce departments has subsided. So have hopes for an attack on corporate subsidies: Of the $40 billion in cuts proposed by Budget Committee Chairman John Kasich—$15 billion worth of cuts in grants to business and the elimination of $25 billion worth of favors to specific firms and industries secreted in the tax code—only $1.5 billion emerged from the House Appropriations Committee. And don't pin all the blame on the old fossils who chair these committees: One of the most passionate defenders of the Energy Department, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Economic Development Administration, and the Appalachian Regional Commission has been Zach Wamp, a hot-blooded freshman populist from eastern Tennessee.

The hardihood of business subsidies casts an un-

flattering light on the House's huge reductions in spending on regulatory activities disliked by employers: 30 percent out of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's enforcement budget, 40 percent out of the Environmental Protection Agency's enforcement budget. A House that cuts OSHA but won't cut the Export-Import Bank lends plausibility to the jibe that the Republican Party is animated less by passion for limited government than by a subservience to the wishes of corporate America.

Indeed, on the one important vote where market principles and business interests collided, the House emphatically put business first: The Contract with America's pledge to defend property rights against regulatory takings was distorted by a last-minute amendment that defined federal water subsidies as a form of "property." The business interests that dominate the great spending committees—Agriculture, Transportation—have already learned to pay their protection money to Republicans rather than Democrats, and the well-rewarded House committee chairmen of the 104th Congress in return are transfusing cash from the taxpayers to favored industries and firms almost as enthusiastically as the committee chairmen of the 103rd.

As for the Senate—well, there the news is nearly all bad. Stephen Moore, director of fiscal policy at the Cato Institute and the editor of the House Republicans' latest manifesto, "Restoring the Dream," complains, "It's as if George Mitchell still ran the place."

Republican optimists argue that the real revolution remains "one election away"—that true reform will not come to American government until after the election of a Republican president and the strengthening of the Republican congressional majority in 1996. There's a lot to that: Big budget cuts, the redesign of vast programs like Medicare and Medicaid, the reconceiving of welfare probably cannot be accomplished without presidential salesmanship. But the optimistic view contains one fatal weakness: Which of the Republican presidential candidates is going to fight that fight? The most probable nominee, Robert Dole, has shown himself indifferent to—actually mystified by—serious conservatism throughout his career. The Republican revolution may indeed require one more election; unfortunately, the election required is not the one likely to occur in 1996.

And it's equally plausible—perhaps more so—that the optimists are wrong. Just as the strongly liberal Congresses elected in 1974, 1964, and 1932 did most of their damage in their first two years, so the Republican majority elected in 1994 may never be stronger than it is in 1995-96. Which means, that just as we are all urged to live our lives as if we could be summoned tomorrow to meet our Maker, so the Republicans would be wise to proceed as if all they will achieve for a decade will have been achieved by January 1997.

If anything, precedent suggests that conservative Congresses ought to proceed with even greater haste than liberal ones. Twice before in the postwar era, zealous conservative Congresses have stormed Washington, determined to redirect American government. The first brought in the "Do-Nothing Congress," which took the oath of office in 1947. The second was the 97th Congress, seated in 1981. Both were exhausted within two years: the Republicans who won the House in November 1946 were swept out again by Harry Truman's surprise reelection, while the Republican-conservative Democrat coalition of 1980 was shattered by the loss of northeastern GOP seats in the recession year 1982.

But one of those Congresses, that of 1947-48, at least left behind a roster of enduring achievements; the other, that of 1981-82, saw its work erased as soon as it left town. The Republicans of the 104th Congress might want to recall the reasons for the robustness of one legislative record and the evanescence of the other.

Truman may have denounced it, but under the informal but undisputed leadership of Sen. Robert Taft, the Republican House and Senate majority of 1946-48 did the following. It enacted the Taft-Hartley amendments to the Wagner Act, quashing New Deal hopes that America would become a union-dominated polity in the way that Britain, Italy, and West Germany did. It forced the repeal of wartime price controls on food and other consumer products. It put a (temporary) stop to the draft. It slashed military spending. It cut taxes. It scrapped FDR's wartime food-stamp program. It closed down Eleanor Roosevelt's experiments with federally supported day care. It limited Washington's role in the middle-class housing market to financing rather than (as liberals then wanted) construction and management, too.

Perhaps most important, it rejected one after another of President Truman's projects for extending the ambit of Big Government: above all, his hopes to create an American version of Britain's new National Health Service.

Not all these victories proved permanent, of course. But even in retrospect, the 20-year respite from activist government won by the 80th Congress amounted to more than merely a holding action. For liberals, the postwar years represented the best—perhaps the only—opportunity for the construction of a European-style social democracy in the United States.

Thanks to Taft and his Republicans, that opportunity was lost.

The legacy of the 1980 Congress has, sadly, proven far less durable. Not for lack of ambition: in 1981, the 97th Congress gathered the courage to vote $64 billion in domestic spending cuts, the largest round of expenditure reductions since the Eisenhower era. It merged three separate tax cuts—the Kemp-Roth reductions in marginal tax rates, the indexing of tax brackets to inflation, and a business wish list—in a gigantic reduction in government's demands upon the citizenry.

Not much of that work remains. The business tax cut was substantially retracted in 1982, Social Security payroll taxes were hiked in 1983, the tax on capital gains was hoisted up to 28 percent as part of the 1986 tax reform, and the income tax rates lowered in 1986 were pulled back up in 1990 and again in 1993. As for the spending cuts, they dissipated even faster. The U.S. spent about $5 billion on housing programs in 1983. The government spent less in 1984 than it had in 1983, less in 1985 than in 1984, less in 1986 than in 1985, less in 1987 than it had in 1986. Then, suddenly, all gains evaporated: Between 1987 and 1988, housing spending nearly sextupled, to $14 billion. By 1990, the federal government was spending more than $25 billion on housing programs. Housing is an unusually dramatic example, but in area after area of domestic discretionary spending, the restraint imposed in 1981 disappeared after 1986, and sometimes sooner.

What made the difference? The 1980 Congress contented itself with trimming, limiting, and containing existing programs. Between 1980 and 1988, only two federal programs were eliminated—revenue sharing with the states and the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act. The latter was promptly replaced by a new training program led through the Senate by future Vice President Quayle.

The 1946 Congress, though it left much of the New Deal alone, struck decisively when it moved at all. Price controls were not lifted gradually; they were abolished outright. The closed shop was not tampered with; it was prohibited. The formula for eligibility requirements for food stamps was not made more stringent; food stamps themselves were junked. Texans joke that it's useless to chop mesquite down with an ax; it will just grow back the next day. You have to blast it out of the ground with dynamite. The same holds true for federal spending programs. Leave even a smidgen of root in the soil, and within a year or two it will have regained its old size, plus some.

So far, the 1994 Congress has followed the example of 1980 rather than that of 1946. Even programs that rank at the top of its "must eliminate" list, like the National Endowment for the Arts, are not scheduled to disappear until after the next election. That's a fair guarantee of their ultimate survival. Other programs will absorb budget cuts that can swiftly be reversed if political fashions change. Future Congresses will also find it easy to circumvent the Republicans' major regulatory changes—the restrictions on unfunded mandates upon states and the stricter protection of private property rights—with technical-sounding procedural changes unlikely to excite much public indignation.

It's possible that more substantial achievements are still to come. If welfare is transformed into a block grant and handed over to the states, that would represent a reform as dramatic as anything that happened in the 1940s. If the Republicans redesign Medicare to bring its convulsively growing costs under control, that too would represent reform. But the portents are not especially favorable in either case. Especially not for Medicare. It is increasingly apparent that the complexities of reform—and its political risks—are flummoxing Republicans. "Restoring the Dream" strikes a distinctly nervous note whenever the topic comes up:

> Given the sheer magnitude of Medicare's financing shortfall, bipartisan cooperation is essential to establish needed, lasting reforms to keep the promise of Medicare to future generations. . . . We must begin to put Medicare on a sound financial footing, and we ought to do this on a bipartisan basis. . . .
>
> [We will] solicit broad participation from a variety of experts and the public. . . . There must be a dialogue that permits as much participation by the public as possible. By the end of the entire process, we will propose the changes necessary to preserve Medicare's solvency.

I doubt that's how Senator Taft talked when he was drafting Taft-Hartley.

Today's Republicans believe that the best guarantor of the irreversibility of their reforms is a political one: their confidence that the 1994 election signals the long-delayed arrival of the often-sighted permanent Republican majority. Because they trust that the electorate will not soon turn against them, they are not bothering to cast their new policies in ways that will be difficult to repeal. The possibility that today's cutback will regenerate under some future liberal majority seems to them far-fetched. That's quite a gamble. Even if the Republicans do hold the House of Representatives indefinitely, there's no certainty that the conservative faction within the Republican party will retain the upper hand—and no certainty that "conservatism" in the next century will go on defining itself as necessarily opposing expensive government.

In the 1996 polls, Pat Buchanan is again demonstrating what he demonstrated in 1992: the potential

appeal of a free-spending, nationalistic conservatism entirely different from the conservatism of Goldwater and Reagan. Who can predict confidently that Buchanan-style conservatism will not soon carry far greater weight within the GOP?

More ominously, by betting the permanence of the 1995-96 reforms on the electorate's remaining in a conservative mood, the Republican majority is hobbling itself. If the legacy of the 104th Congress will evaporate the moment the Republicans lose power, Republicans will quickly—and not unreasonably—come to regard holding onto power as the most urgent of all their responsibilities.

Unfortunately, the surest way for conservatives to hold onto power indefinitely is to delete from the definition of "conservatism" anything that might conceivably prove unpopular. A populist party will seldom long remain a principled party.

The achievements of the 104th Congress as yet appear both incomplete and disturbingly fragile. For all the excitement and commotion of the past nine months, the real work still lies ahead. ♦

The Asbestos Gospel of Baseball's St. Peter

By Eric Felten

When the baseball players' strike threatened to scuttle two seasons' worth of ball, the whole sordid battle between petulant millionaire infielders and petulant millionaire owners produced only one hero in the public consciousness—Peter Angelos, the owner of the Baltimore Orioles, the owner who refused to field a team of replacement players. "An Owner Who Won't Play Ball With the Other Boys" was the *Newsweek* headline. *U.S. News & World Report* waxed a bit more messianic: "Everyone wants to hear [Angelos's] answers to baseball's problems, as if the words of one honorable, outspoken man might wipe out decades of avarice and mismanagement."

Missing from these valentines, however, was any description of the shady political moves that facilitated Angelos's noble posture. Peter Angelos may have played hardball with the other owners, but he went to the plate with a corked bat.

Angelos is a profile-writer's dream, the working-class kid made good, the son of Greek immigrants who never forgot his Baltimore roots. As a young man, he worked at the steel mill for a dollar an hour, and pulled the tap at his father's tavern. A local boy, he graduated from the University of Baltimore's law school in 1960. After losing a bid to become mayor some seven years later, Angelos turned his copious energies to the law, building a practice that made him very, very rich.

Eric Felten is an editorial writer for the Washington Times.

The law office of Peter Angelos was a modest affair to begin with; his main client was the local steelworkers union. It wasn't the sort of legal work that makes one wealthy; he handled mostly a mundane stream of workman's compensation.

Those cases alone were not where the money was, and so Angelos built a solid personal injury practice as well, litigating claims of medical malpractice and negligence, auto accident injuries and the like. By the 1980s, according to the *Washington Post*, Angelos was taking home more than $1 million a year—well short of the staggering riches needed to buy a major league baseball franchise. That wealth was not far off, however, thanks to a fortuitous convergence of Angelos's main lines of business. He combined his labor and personal injury experience to mine one of the richest shafts ever prospected by the plaintiff's bar: asbestos.

Angelos likes to claim that his union friends came to him and begged that he take on the asbestos companies. "I didn't want to do asbestos litigation because I knew it would be all-consuming," Angelos told the *Washington Post*. "I just got sent the cases." True enough, Angelos was sent an abundance of clients. But it was neither a surprise nor an imposition: Angelos arranged for local unions to send their members through his asbestos litigation mill.

"Most of the asbestos lawyers are deeply associated with the unions," says Albert Parnell, who gives seminars for the Defense Research Institute on how to fight

asbestos cases. "If you're not a union guy, you have to advertise." Angelos was able to solicit clients at union meetings and soon had officials of the locals sending their members to his expanding number of law offices—offices located next door to union halls. Adjacent to those offices were clinics called Medical Resources Management, shops that catered almost exclusively to the pre-trial needs of Angelos's potential clients. According to one lawyer involved in the Baltimore asbestos cases, the exams performed by the doctors at MRM were largely paid for under union health plans. Indeed, the lawyer says that to receive the free examination, Baltimore union members signed forms authorizing the locals' business offices to hand their cases over to the unions' attorney—Angelos.

But Angelos didn't just wait for clients to show up at his door. A mobile medical van plastered with the MRM logo went on fishing expeditions at union halls outside of Baltimore, from Cumberland, Md., to Pennsylvania. Medical personnel were always accompanied by a lawyer from the law offices of Peter Angelos.

Had Angelos only lined up clients with serious asbestos ailments, all of this elaborate recruitment would have been unnecessary and over-burdensome. The most serious—and undisputed—disease caused by asbestos is mesothelioma, a cancer caused exclusively by asbestos fibers in the lungs. The cancer is aggressive and deadly, and is held up as the reason that companies trafficking in asbestos should be punished. But the disease accounted for only a small number of the 8,500 clients that Angelos ultimately recruited. Instead, most of Angelos's clients suffered from little more than what are known as pleural plaques, tiny scars on the lungs that neither lead to cancer nor inhibit breathing. Doctors providing expert testimony for the plaintiffs gave these scars a menacing name: "asbestos lung disease."

The "asbestos lung disease" sufferers would not have won much money if their cases had gone to trial individually. But the avalanche of cases produced by the Angelos-union connection led the city of Baltimore to consolidate over 9,000 asbestos claims in one colossal class-action lawsuit. Even then, the meritorious cases might have been sifted from the frivolous: There were supposed to be individual "mini-trials" to evaluate solitary claims after the single main trial had established who was liable for what. But most of the companies Angelos sued chose to settle rather than gamble on being bankrupted with punitive damages. That left it to Angelos to divvy up the winnings

among his clients, an arrangement that advocates of asbestos victims say shortchanged the few who were really sick. "Since everyone was lumped together, personal circumstances were not considered," says Deborah Addis, who worked for years with the Asbestos Victims' Campaign of Massachusetts. "The whole situation has been horrible."

Suspicions abound that among those with dubious health claims who nonetheless received settlements were family and friends of the some of the union officials who helped guarantee the client stream. "Angelos gets most of his cases by referral from the unions. Presumably he rewards the union folk, which is traditional," says Lester Brickman, a professor at the Cardozo School of Law at Yeshiva University in New York and an expert on asbestos litigation. "I know of several ways in which that is done. Primarily one includes family members of union officials as plaintiffs." Perhaps there are other ways of fulfilling obligations, too: In the last several years, Angelos has hired a number of union officials to work for his firm. (Angelos did not return repeated phone calls and faxes.)


Le'Herman Payton

Most appalling to Brickman, Addis, and a host of others, however, is not the issue of how the plaintiff's share was divided, but the question of how much of the booty was reserved for the lawyers. Angelos has never said exactly how much of the $750 million settlement actually went to his 8,500 clients. The conservative estimate of the lawyers' cut is $250 million—the standard one-third contingency fee. But in lawyer-friendly Maryland, contingency fees of up to 50 percent are allowed. Many believe that Angelos extracted something in the range of 40 percent of the settlement. That would have allowed him to pay litigator Ron Motley, who actually argued the cases in court, a cool $100 million while still pocketing over $200 million for himself. "The fees that the lawyers have taken are horrendous," says Addis. "People are getting screwed."

Angelos shrugs off such criticism. Asked about his huge fees by the *Washington Post*, his answer was as simple as it was coy: "I didn't invent the system."

"He's much too modest," says Brickman. Not only was Angelos one of the pioneers of mass litigation—and thus in a position to help set precedent for acceptable legal fees in those peculiar circumstances—he has been an active lobbyist in Maryland's capitol, winning changes to state law that helped keep his mammoth class action alive. A Maryland Court of Appeals ruling in 1987 would have blocked Angelos from bringing claims on behalf of people who had been dead for more than three years. The ruling would have purged Angelos's class action of many of its most compelling individual cases: deadly mesotheliomas. With those cases excluded, the vast body of dubious "asbestos lung disease" cases would probably have lost in court. Angelos pushed for legislation introduced by a senior state senator, Democrat Norman Stone, that extended the statute of limitations in asbestos cases to seven years after death. Interestingly, though remaining in the Maryland Senate, Stone has since gone to work for the Law Offices of Peter Angelos.

Stone is not the only state senator in Annapolis officially on the Angelos payroll, a fact that brings us back to the matter of baseball. In the last several years, Angelos has acquired legislators for his legal team much the same way he has bought up expensive free agents for the Orioles. Two of the 47 senators in the Maryland state capitol work for Angelos: In addition to Stone, Angelos four years ago hired another experienced lawmaker, Democratic Senator John Pica, Jr. The son of an old-school Baltimore politician, Pica first took a seat in the Maryland House of Delegates in 1979; since 1983 he has been a state senator. When he first started with Angelos, Pica was put on the asbestos litigation team, which even after the mass settlements still has about 2,000 cases pending. "Now I'm doing mostly medical negligence cases," Pica says. Because of his obligations as a state senator, he didn't have time to keep up with the asbestos work load.

That doesn't mean that Angelos hasn't got his money's worth out of Pica. Though Angelos is the sole partner of his firm, he has more than 60 attorneys working for him as associates, enough to handle the client load whether a given employee, such as Pica, is able to devote himself to the job or not. The obvious question is why a notoriously tough boss like Angelos would hire and retain an associate who doesn't have the time to do the job he was hired for. Many who have tangled with Pica in Annapolis think the answer is simple: While the legislature is in session, Pica may not be working at Angelos's Baltimore offices, but he may be working for Angelos just the same.

Take Senate Bill 719, emergency legislation passed by the Maryland legislature in late March and immediately signed into law by Governor Parris Glenden-

ing. Titled "An Act concerning Professional Baseball—Camden Yards," the law made it illegal to play replacement players at the Orioles' stadium of the same name. Had the strike worn on into the regular baseball season, Angelos would have faced a number of unpleasant consequences from his celebrated refusal to hire non-union ballplayers. The American League might have tried to seize the Orioles from him, fielding a team of the league's choosing in Baltimore's ballpark. And if Angelos fell afoul of the league, it would have meant defaulting on the terms of his lease at the stadium, which requires Angelos to "maintain the Baltimore Orioles as an American League baseball team in good standing." Default could have made him liable for millions in damages. This was averted by the emergency baseball act: As long as it was illegal to play replacements, the American League couldn't bring in its own team, and Angelos couldn't be held liable for not fielding a team. The sponsor of the law? Sen. John Pica. Co-sponsor? Sen. Norman Stone.

At least one Republican lawmaker, Delegate Bob Flanagan, took the trouble to question the ethics of this cozy arrangement, and nearly received a beating for it. "The bill was greased," Flanagan says. "The result of Pica's bill was to relieve the Orioles of the risk of a breach of contract." Flanagan calculates that such a breach would have cost Angelos $5 or $6 million. Concerned about a "sweetheart deal," Flanagan took to the floor of the House of Delegates on a Monday night in March to ask that the emergency bill speeding through the legislature be held up for a few weeks to give the Ethics Committee time to investigate.

By the time word made it to Pica that Flanagan was challenging him and the baseball bill, Flanagan had already left the chamber. And a lucky thing it was, too. A furious Pica stormed from the Senate to the House and charged at the first Republican he could find, minority whip Richard La Vay. "Pica comes flying onto the floor and gets within a snot's length of my nose, saying he would beat the living crap out of me," La Vay says. "I told him he had the wrong guy."

Pica is unrepentant about his outburst—indeed, he seems to relish his reputation as a hothead. "I don't regret it at all," Pica says when asked about his confrontation with La Vay. "I regretted that I didn't do more." Nor is he looking for any conciliation with Flanagan. "He's an a—hole," Pica declares.

Pica can afford to be unrepentant because of the legislature's notorious laxity. The Ethics Committee did not hold up the baseball bill, didn't chide Pica for pushing legislation favorable to his employer, and ignored his threat to pummel fellow lawmakers.

Pica had satisfied Maryland's ethics requirements by filing a simple form disclosing that the legislation he had proposed would affect his boss. He did not have to say how it would affect Angelos, and did not: notably absent was any mention of the millions of dollars at stake. Then again, Pica maintains there were no millions of dollars at stake: "It wouldn't have made a penny for Mr. Angelos," he says. "It would have cost him money. He would have been fined if he had fielded a team." It's a curious argument, given that Angelos had no intention of fielding a strike-breaking team.

Pica's place on the Angelos roster helps his boss with more than just baseball. Having won the hearts and minds of sports-crazed Baltimore by keeping the Orioles in the city, Angelos has set out to solidify his place as "Mr. Baltimore" by bringing a National Football League team to the city that lost the Colts in 1984. To do it, he needs the state to build a new football stadium next door to Camden Yards. The seed money is there, about $10 million in the Maryland Stadium Authority's football fund. But Angelos has not been able to lock it up yet because he hasn't been able to get his hands on an NFL team. He's still trying, but in the meantime those millions have become a tempting pot of cash in fiscally strapped Maryland. Efforts have been made to use the money to build schools and prisons. And now there is a move to build a football stadium for the Washington Redskins in D.C.'s Maryland suburbs. To date, all of these attempts to get hold of the football fund have been blocked by Pica. He has said he will do whatever it takes to reserve the money for a Baltimore stadium—a potent threat from a senator willing to use his filibuster.

Asked whether his political actions don't make it look like he's wallowing in egregious conflicts of interest, Pica is as arrogant as he is terse: "Too bad."

The stand Angelos took against replacement players has made for boffo box office (with an undeniable assist from Cal Ripken). Attendance at major league ball games has been in a well-deserved slump almost everywhere except Baltimore. Breaking with the owners was good public relations for Angelos, both personally and professionally. Who knows how many other owners would have liked to make the same stand but didn't have Angelos's legislative bullpen? It takes significant resources to be a folk hero.

Angelos got rich with a savvy, modern take on a hoary legal tradition: ambulance chasing. With his dubious fortune, he bought more than just a baseball team. These are facts the profile writers might want to keep in mind next time they are looking for the new Mr. Deeds to come to town. ♦

A Critique of Pure Newt

By Charles Krauthammer

In the United States at this time," wrote Lionel Trilling in 1950, "liberalism is not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition. For it is the plain fact that nowadays there are no conservative or reactionary ideas in general circulation. . . ." Times change. Forty-five years later, in the world of practical politics (as opposed to the otherworldly outposts of academia), nothing but conservative ideas are in general circulation.

As Michael Dukakis learned, no candidate for president can win under the label of liberal. As Bill Clinton has learned, no president can govern as a liberal. On what grounds are both parties contending these days? Tax cuts, welfare reform, "family values," shrinking government, controlling immigration, curbing racial preferences, building prisons, adding cops, even balancing the budget by a fixed date. The other party has adopted every one of these goals, some more ingenuously than others, and for good reason. Bill Clinton's frantic repositioning towards the center is the sign of an astute politician who knows when the ground of debate has shifted. And on every issue except possibly abortion it has.

The problem for conservatives, however, is that while the new national consensus is decidedly, undeniably anti-liberal—the word can hardly be spoken without disdain or embarrassment—it is not yet conservative. There is no new conservative consensus. Instead we have a field of several conservatisms in serious contention—Christian Coalition social conservatism, Nixon-Dole traditional conservatism, Cato Institute libertarianism, Buchanan's reactionary populism (nativist, protectionist, anti-"finance"-capitalist)—and no one to adjudicate between them.

And now, a new entrant in the field, authored by Newt Gingrich. It does not so much adjudicate between the factions as try to transcend them with a new forward-looking, indeed futurist, vision. Having brought about, by extraordinary tactical skill and strategic vision, the most remarkable conservative victory since World War II—potentially far more significant than Ronald Reagan's—Gingrich has set out to endow it with theory. *To Renew America* (HarperCollins, 260 pages, $24.00) is the attempt, a grander attempt than his critics have given him credit for. Nonetheless, the book fails.

There are two possible views of the meaning and mission of the conservative upheaval of November 1994. Isaiah Berlin drew a famous distinction between negative liberty (being left alone) and positive liberty (the "truer" freedom of finding and fusing with some higher purpose). Using this terminology, one might call the first conservative vision "negative": Its purpose is to, if not abolish, then delimit, deflate, defund, radically reduce the welfare state. Leave the people to their own devices and virtues, unencumbered by the lumbering, grasping, interfering state, and they will flourish as of old.

Dick Armey makes this the centerpiece of his less celebrated, though quite substantial, book outlining the goals of the new conservative majority. *The Freedom Revolution*, the House majority leader's entry in the Bible-of-conservative-revolution sweepstakes, even gives this goal a number: Cut the federal government in half. Today it takes 22 percent of GNP; it should take no more than 11 percent.

Cutting even a fraction of that is a very ambitious mission, one that could take a conservative Congress a generation to achieve. Indeed, the newest conventional wisdom—that the conservative revolution of November 1994 has "stalled"—is based on the alleged disappointment that the Republicans have not, since November 8, brought about a significant transformation of the welfare state. This after half a year in power, against the opposition of the executive and with only tenuous control of the Senate. The very expectation is absurd, a merely clever way of damning conservatives by holding them to an impossible standard.

Yet even given the magnitude of the task and the decades required, there is a deep feeling among conservatives that this vision of merely delimiting the state is too, well, negative; that a mini-welfare state, a reformed—even radically reformed—version of the status quo, is simply not enough for conservatism to offer; that without a broader, more "positive" vision, conservatism will fail because it will fail to inspire.

Enter Gingrich and *To Renew America*. The book is unsystematic, but its underlying vision is easily discerned. It is positive. It is visionary. It is optimistic. It is non-divisive. And it does not hold up.

Gingrich's vision is of an American civilization socially restored by individualism and a sense of personal responsibility, economically restored by a freed-up, unstifled

market. So far so good, but still conventionally "negative." Something more is needed to turn this prosaic vision of pre-welfare state America into the shining city of the 21st century. Newt has found it: high technology.

Wed the free individual and unfettered market to the emerging power of information-based technology (Third Wave, in Tofflerese, emerging from the hidebound Second Wave industrial technology) and you get the "opportunity society," an America of boundless prosperity, opportunity, mobility, harmony, and order. The new technology, he promises, in the chapter titled "America and the Third Wave Information Age," will in and of itself overthrow the great obstacles to growth and freedom: the guild-like legal system, the monopolistic educational establishment, hierarchical medicine, the giant corporations, Big Government itself.

The book is a catalogue of the combinative powers of freedom and technology, of how tele-education will democratize learning; how tele-medicine will solve our medical cost dilemmas; how software and e-mail will make lawyers obsolete; how, in effect, the single mom with laptop will find her way out of dependency. As Gingrich once said, "There has to be a missionary spirit that says to the poorest child in America, Internet's for you."

To be sure and to be fair, there are myriad other prescriptions for reorganizing this and reforming that in *To Renew America*, not at all tied to technology. But what is new and unique about Gingrich's conservatism—what lifts his above its merely "negative" anti-welfare-state counterpart—is precisely this marriage of conservative values and digital technology.

It is also what makes it so appealing. Confronting and deconstructing existing social hierarchies—educational, legal, governmental, corporate—is generally assumed to require politics, a politics of destruction, a hard, divisive, traditional "negative" politics of the kind practical politicians (like Gingrich and Armey) have to engage in daily in Congress. Gingrich yearns to rise above this. In this book he does. By assigning the task of politics to the painless and miraculous workings of technology, Gingrich manages to escape the negative and sail his techno-conservatism, unsullied, into a bright and shining future.

Why does this vision not convince? At the broadest level, because it is as naively optimistic about the social and political possibilities of technology as thinkers 50 years ago were naively pessimistic. In the same way that Orwell and Huxley were fascinated and seduced by the totalitarian potential of technology—convinced that as technology became more powerful, it would become increasingly centralized, a means of social atomization and political oppression—Gingrich is fascinated and seduced by its potential for liberation. It is as if Gingrich's entire philosophy hinged on the famous Apple commercial (shown once, during the 1984 Super Bowl) that had the individual, armed with the Mac, destroying the Big Brother telescreen. Having seen the PC and the Internet, Gingrichism, a post-totalitarian creed, shows no appreciation for the darker side of technology.

Take, for example, the central contradiction of capitalist democracy pointed out by Daniel Bell: the way in which the constant churning and change of capitalism undermines the social structures of society. Like all conservatives, Gingrich recognizes the decline of intermediate institutions (churches, clubs, charities, other voluntary associations), the kind of associationism so celebrated by Tocqueville. We all know that Americans are, as Robert Putnam has put it memorably, "bowling alone."

For Gingrich, the solution lies at hand in the free, fluid, associative virtual communities of the Internet. Perhaps. Perhaps there will be a slice of society that will interact on the Internet, though how real this kind of community is remains very much open to question.

But what he ignores is the far more important influence of high technology. Why are Americans bowling alone? Because technology enables everybody to spend all night (and much of the day) cocooned in front of the wide-screened "home entertainment center." Those who do go out move zombie-like through the streets, hard-wired to Walkmans, as oblivious and unavailable to society as the voice-plagued schizophrenic. And the TV and Walkman are far more common than PCs with NetScape.

Even the 500 channels celebrated by the high technologists as liberating have their largely ignored, atomizing underside. The more channels, the more fractionated the audience. The more every individual can order up the kind of self-stimulation that suits his particular taste, the less his need for social association. In the old days of three channels, the audience could be shepherded into some kind of shared national experience—moon shots, *Roots*, presidential debates—that helped knit together a country of suburbanites and ex-urbanites. The cultural onanism of movies-on-demand-by-fiber-optic-wire may be personally satisfying, but it does nothing for community.

This is not to deny the liberating effects of digital technology. But it is to question the view that these effects are uniformly good. And it is to deny the view

that they somehow finesse the central contradiction of democratic capitalism: the atomization that threatens social cohesion. Information technology may, in fact, make it worse.

The most dangerous cultural contradiction of capitalism, however, involves not the form but the content of mass communication: the corruption of culture and values by debased, corporate controlled mass media.

When even Bob Dole denounces Hollywood—to general applause—we have achieved a national consensus that there is a problem. And it is not the work of liberals in the Education Department, Pat Buchanan's fanciful bureaucrats in "sandals and beads." It is the work of the great corporations of America, as Calvin Klein's latest outrage, its withdrawn kiddyporn ad campaign, reminds us.

What to do? In normal, "negative" politics, you fight, denounce, threaten, and, as a last resort, censor. (Yes, censor: We already have, for example, all kinds of censoring conventions that distinguish broadcast TV from cable TV from pay-per-view TV.) The coarsening effects of mass culture present conservatives with a difficult choice: freedom of expression and free markets on the one hand, versus the preservation of public morality on the other. It forces conservatives to choose often unpopular anti-libertarian stands.

Gingrich would transcend these contradictions and avoid the unpleasant choices with technology. And this particular case does offer Gingrich some vindication. For a part of this problem, there is indeed a magical technological fix: the V-chip, the computer chip placed in televisions at manufacture that allows parents to automatically screen out violent or other unsuitable programming. It permits some control over the corrupting mass media without preventing entrepreneurs from producing and disseminating as they please.

The problem for Gingrich is that the V-chip solution is a rarity, not the rule. Even regarding this narrow problem—controlling the corrupting influence of media—it solves only a piece of a part. The V-chip will shield no one from the bus-shelter posters and looming billboards of the next Calvin Klein campaign. The Internet shields no one from gangsta rap. However much kids ride their Macs, they still spend most of their day bathed in the influences of music, movies, TV, and advertising. There is no escaping them. And therefore no escaping the hard, divisive, political choices required to curb them. V-chip conservatism, leaving so many contradictions unaddressed, is at best a niche ideology.

There is a second aspect to Gingrich's belief in the Tocquevillian, associative, liberating direction of technology. He believes that the dissemination of information technology will democratize knowledge. And, when everyone can access everything, the knowledge priesthoods will dissolve. The great industrial age hierarchies—legal, medical, educational, corporate, governmental—now obsolete, will break down, "leading us back to something that is—strangely enough—much more like de Tocqueville's 1830s America."

The opposite, it seems to me, is far more likely. The explosion of knowledge in all fields makes for more specialization and more alienation of knowledge. Medicine, for example, is hardly democratized by high technology. I am a doctor, board certified in psychiatry and neurology. I cannot even *read* journals of immunology. Technology does not, as Gingrich suggests, make it possible for any Joe to become, at his will, a "specialist in some obscure medical procedure." I doubt Gingrich would go to Joe for the removal of an obscure bone tumor. He'd go to the Mayo Clinic. Technology is making medicine so specialized that even specialists need specialists. The resulting structure is not more horizontal. It is more pyramidal.

It is typical of Gingrich's belief in the power of technology, however, that he sees it as solving not just the hierarchical structure of modern medicine, but also the more prosaic and pressing problem of its bankrupting costs. Gingrich's solution? Even higher tech. Telemedicine, for example, will allow remote diagnosis and treatment, reduce costs, and allow the exportation of medical services to other countries—turning medicine from a financial drain into a vast new source of wealth for the United States.

This is nonsense on stilts. Telemedicine—assuming it ever becomes feasible, a large assumption—is decades away from making any significant impact on medical practice and cost. Meantime, the unrelenting impact of high technology on medicine is to *increase* cost. And not just because machines are expensive. Better machines, whatever their cost, make for better medicine. Better medicine means people live longer. People who live longer suffer, over time, more disease and disability.

Good medicine does not reduce the percentage of people with illnesses," explained Willard Gaylin in a brilliant essay on this theme in the October 1993 *Harper's*. "It *increases* that percentage." Good medicine keeps sick people alive, people with heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, and other chronic diseases. Sick people are expensive. The dead are a burden to no one. Fifty years ago there was whooping cough and diphtheria.

"The child either lived or died, and, for the most part, did so quickly and cheaply," noted Gaylin. Now that child "will grow up to be a very expensive old man or woman."

People used to die young of heart attacks. Now we save them, expensively, so they can die later, even more expensively, of more chronic diseases like cancer. It is technology's very success that occasions its ruinous cost.

There is no way out of this dilemma. Ultimately, the only answer is some kind of rationing, under whatever guise. Gingrich the politician understands that. He proposes to help reduce the explosive growth of Medicare, for example, by inducing the elderly to join HMO's, which is a form of rationing (as Elizabeth McCaughey made very clear in savaging the Clinton plan, which was designed to herd us *all* into HMO's). But Gingrich the visionary will hear nothing of such conventional negative thinking. *To Renew America* trusts in the bounty, the yet to be believed wonders, of technology.

Gingrich does so because he is a revolutionary. And revolutionaries believe in brave new worlds, brought about by irresistible agencies. Each revolutionary has his own particular agency—Reason, History, the proletariat, technology—but they all share a belief in its unremitting power, ultimate benignity, and absolute necessity.

At root, the problem with Gingrichism is not its belief in technology, but its belief in revolution. Technology is just the means. Revolution is the end—and for conservatism, a very odd end. Technology is how Gingrich gets there. "There," however, is a strange place for a conservative to be.

Gingrich, who sees a new society about to be born with technology as midwife, really is that oxymoron, the conservative revolutionary. He wears the label proudly. And it will do as an ironic, slightly self-mocking slogan. The problem with *To Renew America*, however, is that it takes the oxymoron seriously as a political program.

The revolutionary vision is not just confined to the book. It occasionally finds expression from Gingrich the politician, particularly at times when he believes high politics demands the expansiveness of a "positive" vision. In his acceptance speech as Speaker, he proclaimed the goal of the conservative revolution of 1994 as not just political—"Our challenge shouldn't be to balance the budget, to pass the Contract. Our challenge shouldn't be anything that's just legislative"—but meta-political: the manufacture of a new society, an America where, for starters, random violence, child abuse, poor education, and chronic unemployment have been abolished.

Conservatives can't promise that. Conservatives shouldn't promise that. It is not the business of conservatives to offer utopias. Utopia is the business of liberals and socialists. It is the business of conservatives to debunk such visions, not just as impractical but as inimical to liberty. It is the business of conservatives to oppose such expansive visions and the great statist apparatuses by which they are to be legislated into existence. The business of conservatives *is* to balance the budget, to pass the Contract, and leave social transformation to liberals.

At the heart of conservatism's argument with liberalism is its rejection of the notion of human perfectibility, with or without technology. That is the other guy's game (and why his failures, when juxtaposed with his promises, appear doubly abysmal). Conservatism cannot be revolutionary in anything but the more limited "negative" sense of radically stripping away the encumbrances of the welfare state. Conservatives do not need a more "positive" vision other than the faith that, with these encumbrances removed, native American genius will flourish, and civil society, freed from the grip of the state, will renew itself. What new society this will yield, we do not know. Conservatives believe such things unknowable.

I grant that this conservative conservatism is less inspiring than Newt's. But it is bound to be more durable because it will be less disappointing. Delimiting Leviathan is work enough without promising nirvana. The "optimists" mock this caution as root canal conservatism. But reforming Medicare, arresting cultural decline, curing the federal debt *require* root canal work. Nitrous oxide won't do.

Even from the point of view of practical politics, one doesn't have to promise the moon. The anti-liberal sentiment in the country is so broad and deep that offering a vision of America freed from liberalism's welfare statism is appeal enough. It is what won the conservatives control of Congress. It can win them the presidency. Moreover, to win the other way, with the promise of revolution, is to lose from the start.

Finally, a conservative conservatism is more honest. We don't know what comes after the welfare state. Even Reagan promised just three things—lower taxes, strong defense, less government—and left the rest to our imagination, and to the truly Tocquevillian American genius for then freely, unpredictably ordering society. No need—no conservative call—to order the result from above, nor to believe its shape inevitably determined by technology or any other agency of history.

Cynics might say that Gingrich has latched on to technological Tofflerism just for that reason, as a way to endow his conservative vision

with a sense of historical inevitability. All serious revolutions produce theories of history to explain why their triumph is inevitable. It inspires the troops. There is nothing like being on the winning side. (Though there is always the odd skeptic asking: Why join the revolution if it is going to happen anyway?)

But the cynics are wrong. Yes, technology is Gingrich's *deus ex machina*, the means by which he finesses the dilemmas of modern capitalism and conveniently bridges its philosophical and political divides. But his techno-conservatism is no construct of convenience. He believes in its power, and believes in it deeply. It is not by accident that he once suggested tax credits for the poor to buy laptops. He later retracted. But the original suggestion, blissful and wild, was the real Newt, the one who wrote *To Renew America*. ♦

Show Business

Mumia Dearest

By Tucker Carlson

After 29 years as a patrolman with the Philadelphia police department, Jim McDevitt isn't easily shocked. But he sure seems surprised to learn that Ben Cohen of Ben and Jerry's ice cream is one of the 110 actors, writers, and intellectuals who signed an August ad in the *New York Times* calling for a new trial for Mumia Abu-Jamal, the black death row inmate convicted of shooting a white Philadelphia cop in 1981. "The ice cream guy?" he asks. "Are you kidding?"

Nope. And if it seems unlikely that the inventor of Chunky Monkey ice cream would be weighing in on matters of Life, Death, and American Justice, consider this: Casey Kasem signed the ad, too. So did Alec Baldwin, Oliver Stone, and Sting. From an undisclosed location, Salman Rushdie faxed his signature. Even Norman Mailer chimed in, back in the trenches for yet another convicted murderer.

Not since Jean Harris, the ill-tempered headmistress of the Madeira School for girls, emptied her .32 into diet guru Herman Tarnower have so many well-known people worked so hard on behalf of an imprisoned killer. Over the past 14 years, pro-Jamal support groups, solidarity commissions, and emergency defense committees have formed in nearly every major American city and across Europe. Several weekly fanzines and a 20-page quarterly tabloid keep enthusiasts up to date on the case, while providing plenty of head shots of the dreadlocked hero, smiling toothily at the camera, or looking pensive and revolutionary.

Mumia Abu-Jamal, whose last regular job was driving a cab, is now a bona fide celebrity. Indeed, with a book in print, regular public-radio commentaries, at least two Internet sites devoted to his case, and a CD-ROM of his reflections on questions of the day, Jamal has become more famous than many of the Big Names who have worked to get him off death row.

One of those 110 names on the *New York Times* ad belongs to political columnist Molly Ivins. Reached at a hotel on Martha's Vineyard, Ivins sounds like she's been spending her vacation thinking about the Jamal case. "I'm convinced that he did not get a fair trial," she says without hesitating. "I thought the circumstances of the trial were so outrageous that it really had to be spoken out about. I felt that even before I knew there was a movement or something."

And what, specifically, was so outrageous about the trial? "You know, I cannot right now remember the circumstances. But," she says hopefully, "I think anybody who remembered them would reach the same conclusion."

Gloria Steinem, another signer of the $56,000 ad, freely admits she knows little about the case, though she does say she saw William Styron "reading something about it on TV." Not one to let lack of knowledge dampen her moral outrage, Steinem remains adamantly convinced *something* went wrong at the trial. "Wasn't there some question about his brother? And weren't there no witnesses?" Actually, there were several. "Oh. Well, I don't really know. I don't have the clips in front of me."

As an indictment of a corrupt legal system, Steinem's comments aren't exactly *J'accuse*. But then, she isn't the only celebrity Jamal supporter who comes up a little light when asked about the specifics of the case. Movie critic Roger Ebert says he didn't even try to learn much about it before giving the case against Jamal a public thumbs down: "Basically, my position is, I'm opposed to capital punishment, so it was a real easy call for me because I didn't even have to think about the merits of the evidence."

According to Bob Stein, president of The Voyager Company, a CD ROM publisher, supporting Jamal has been an easy call for a lot of other people, too. Stein, who helped to recruit names for the *Time*s ad, admits that apart from a few well-informed writers, like Styron and E.L. Doctorow (whose oped supporting Jamal was reprinted in the ad), many of the celebrities

involved in the case know little about it. And that's okay: "If you asked them about the particulars of the case, they might not know enough about them to feel comfortable speaking about it. But people feel like they know enough."

Jamal himself thinks they do. In a recent handwritten letter from prison, the incarcerated "journalist" expressed gratitude to his supporters, sending "thanks far and wide—on the winds, like a winged prayer of Love."

Even those to whom he should offer his most ardent thanks on the winds seldom claim Jamal is innocent. "We're not taking a stand on his guilt," said David Goehring of Addison-Wesley, the publishing house that paid Jamal $30,000 for his stupendously banal memoirs, *Live From Death Row*. Likewise, former *M*A*S*H* actor Mike Farrell, who recently appeared on *Larry King Live* to plead Jamal's case, admitted to *People* magazine, "I don't know if he's innocent."

The non-committal language is not accidental. From time to time, death row inmates make claims of innocence that sound plausible, or at least deserving of another look. Mumia Abu-Jamal is not one of them. Actually, it's hard to see how the facts arrayed against him could be any stronger than they are: At least four other people were present when Jamal shot Officer Dan Faulkner; three of them testified against him at trial. His gun, from which five bullets had been fired, was found at the scene. And if Jamal has always maintained his innocence, he has never explained it. Neither he, nor his brother, who was present at the murder, has ever testified on the matter. In fact, Jamal's first public statement on the subject, yelled in front of two witnesses on the night he was arrested, hardly qualifies as exculpatory: "I shot that m—f—," he said, "and I hope he dies." As the *New York Times* put it, "The case for his innocence is not unimpeachable."

Don't those who sign ads claiming "there is strong reason to believe . . . Mumia Abu-Jamal has been sentenced to death for his political beliefs" have an obligation to know what they're talking about?

Not really, says Nadine Strossen, president of the ACLU. She cites herself as an example: "I'm very, very careful about this myself. Because I don't pretend to and don't have knowledge of the actual facts, I made very, very sure that [the ad] read in a way that would not be committing the signers to a particular view of the facts."

The Reverend James Parks Morton, dean of the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York, doesn't have the "actual facts" at his fingertips, either, but like other signers of the Jamal ad, he doesn't let that slow him down. "It sounds like the man is innocent, from what I've seen," Morton says with clerical gravity. But, he admits, "I haven't been privileged to go deeply into the stuff."

How does somebody who hasn't gone "deeply into the stuff" end up making a judgment about something as complex as a murder trial? Well, for one thing, says Morton, "I was very moved by some of the people who had signed [the advertisement]. I mean, there were a lot of black scholars, which to me was very important. I mean, Skip [Henry Louis] Gates I find a very heavy person. I consider him a very serious scholar of the black scene—and as a black man, the black scene from the inside."

As if the endorsement of Harvard's own Skip Gates weren't enough, Parks has other reasons to think Jamal got railroaded: "It's the reality of black people in America. There is still a huge reality of institutional racism that determines the way a whole lot of people act." As an example he cites "the way we're moving nationally, I

mean the strong forces against, uh—oh, I can't even think of its name. What's the phrase, the doctrine of giving people, you know, a special chance?" Affirmative action? "Yeah. I think the way that's moving is a racist direction."

Morton may come off as a little confused, but he's a beacon of clarity compared to Ben Cohen, the ice cream mogul, whose mind is also made up on the Jamal case. "His trial was unjust," says Cohen flatly. And when did he first come to this conclusion? "I think I might have been at some conference and I saw something on a table. And I think I might have been, you know, maybe at some festival and, you know, signed a petition."

But that's not all; there were other epiphanies as well: "I think I saw something about how he and his lawyer didn't get along." But, says Cohen, "The biggest influencer was that both Amnesty [International] and Human Rights Watch consider him to be a political prisoner, and his trial was unjust."

Actually, neither group has ever described Jamal as a political prisoner, nor has either taken a position on his guilt. Not that such details would likely have much effect on Ben Cohen. Asked if he feels a responsibility to know something about the case before lending his name to Jamal's defense, the maker of Peace Pops pauses. "I have a responsibility to convince myself," he says, with the sound of someone who has done just that.

Jamal's celebrity supporters may approach the case with a certain nonchalance, but to the true believers who congregate on the sidewalk outside of Philadelphia's City Hall each day, Jamal's innocence is a matter of religious conviction. This is ground zero in the Jamal defense, and Sean O'Neill, a 38-year-old salesman from South Jersey who is passing out flyers on his lunch break, clearly has been affected by the blast. "During the day I come out to do what I can to save Mumia, an innocent man," he says.

Several feet away, members of MOVE, the black nationalist cult best known for getting blown up by the Philly police in 1985, man a table crowded with Jamal-related trinkets: buttons, posters, cassettes, T-shirts. Loudspeakers blare an address by Jamal. Someone has turned the amplifier up to full capacity, giving the words a re-education-camp sound. Jamal is saying something about the System and the "Jewish intelligentsia." It's hard to hear, but O'Neill presses on, oblivious. "Even if someone thought he was guilty," says O'Neill in an intense, unblinking manner, "just what the judge is doing shows that Mumia is innocent."

O'Neill is a long way from Hollywood, but his reasoning isn't. One hears the same refrain from Jamal's celebrity supporters: The judge—or the cops, or the press, or the country generally—was (or were, or are) racist. Therefore Mumia Abu-Jamal did not shoot a policeman in 1981. There are a number of advantages to using this line of argument, the main one being that it requires only feelings.

Gloria Steinem has plenty of those. A few years back, Steinem recalls, William Styron came to the defense of "some guy in Connecticut who killed his mother." Did she sign an advertisement in that case? "I really don't know. You know, you go through life signing things you think you should sign." ♦

How-To

Having Moral Sex?

By David Brooks

You buy a brand of ice cream that sends proceeds to benefit the rain forest. You channel your savings into socially responsible investment funds. Your bath products do not rely on animal testing and you rarely go to a rock concert that isn't sponsored by Amnesty International. Yet every other day, after the credits roll on *Charlie Rose*, you and your partner engage in an activity that has no social implications. For nearly an hour every week, you are expending energy in a way that will aid neither the endangered rain forests nor the oppressed women on the Indian subcontinent. Of course this puts a strain on a consciousness so finely tuned as your own.

Thank Gaia, the forces of social concern have enabled us to mobilize our commitment to larger moral questions every second of every day, including in our sex lives. In the back of magazines such as *Mother Jones*, *Harper's* and the *New Republic*, there are advertisements from organizations that can help us put our phallus in touch with our consciousness. Some of these organizations, such as Good Vibrations, sell the tools that allow "thinking persons" to experience sexual energies in enlightened ways. Journals such as *Blue Moon* and *Libido* merge sex and sensibility, and offer turn-ons that fuse with larger concerns, such as environmental degradation and income inequality. Finally, there are many how-to guides that offer exhaustive advice on performing sex acts in high-minded ways.

To take full advantage of these resources, you must first understand that sex is the most important aspect of your life, the node for

personal liberation, and that exploring this inner world will take time. In her guide to enlightened lesbian sex, JoAnn Loulan offers the following exercises, which apply to heterosexuals as well:

"Look at your genitals every day in the mirror. . . . Draw a picture of your genitals. . . . Write a letter to your genitals. . . . Spend an hour of uninterrupted sensual time with yourself. . . . Look at yourself in the mirror for an hour. Talk with all parts of your body. . . . Spend an hour stroking yourself all over your nude body. . . . Spend an hour touching your genitals without the purpose of having an orgasm. . . . [Gratify yourself] for an hour . . . "

Having quit your day job in order to complete these exercises, you will have ample time to talk about your own sexual feelings. Communication is vital, all the guides, journals, and catalogues agree. While none is specific, it seems that for every hour you spend actually having sex, at least 12 hours should be spent talking about it.

Most of this communication should be done with your partner(s). But don't stop there. If you have a sexual feeling, you should immediately describe it at length on the Internet or with the instructors of your pottery class.

Conventional notions of beauty have oppressed generations of men and women whose own appearances have constituted a challenge to prevailing aesthetic norms. Thinking persons can pursue positive social change by eradicating received ideas of beauty and ugliness. The rule in the literature is: Ugly people having sex is highbrow. Pretty people having sex is lowbrow.

It has to be admitted that not all the catalogues and journals are completely liberated in this regard. For example, a recent issue of *Libido* carried dozens of photographs of naked people who are young and attractive. Fortunately, the articles were more mature, and depicted sex that is admirably gloomy. The lead story by Lydia Swartz depicts lesbian scenes in which one of the women is in the advanced stages of AIDS: "She bites my neck (carefully) . . . while I gel my hands and fumble into my own gloves. She lies on her partially paralyzed right side, propping herself with pillows so that she's not increasing the pain in a damaged nerve, and so she can touch me with her good left side." Later in the same issue, K.J. Barrett contributes a poem entitled "Adult Children of Sex-Addicted Parents" on that long neglected social group.

In Sweden, as is well known, people do not enjoy sex, they do it because they think it is good for them, like jumping jacks. Americans have not reached that level of matter-of-factness. But socially principled people do not get so carried away by sexual pleasure that they forget that certain groups are disempowered in our culture.

Indeed, one of the most delightful things about sex is that it can serve as an ethnicity substitute for white people. You may be a white, upper-middle-class Protestant, but if you are a compulsive nudist you automatically count as a member of a scorned group, and thus deserving of support. In its sexual empowerment manifesto, "Coming to Power," the Samois Collective includes a chart of various sexual ethnicities—and the handkerchief colors they could use to identify each other. These include foot fetishists (mustard tone), uniform fetishists (olive drab), Victorian scene aficionados (white lace), piercists (purple), and 15 other categories.

The favored group in the literature remains Persons of Gender, otherwise known as "women." Female sexuality is described in this literature as natural and Earth Motherish. Male sexuality is described as something artificial, like the Grand Coulee Dam. Female sexuality is considered in light of the wider feminist empowerment movement. The authors have a harder time ascribing political content to heterosexual male desires. As Freud would say, sometimes a penis is just a penis.

The contrast is especially wide on the subject of masturbation. That which Portnoy did in the bathroom is not considered a positive political act. But put a woman in the same bathroom and suddenly we have social activism on the order of, say, Dorothy Day.

There is as much writing in the enlightened literature about female self-knowledge as about any other act. Indeed, many of the movement's major figures began as self-love pioneers. In 1973, the National Organization for Women held the "Women's Sexuality Conference: To Explore, Define and Celebrate Our Own Sexuality," which placed emphasis on sexual independence for women. Joani Blank attended the conference and two years later founded Good Vibrations, the equipment catalogue. She is the author of *I Am My Lover*, one of the many books that show how the most personal act can be the most revolutionary.

The basic theme of this branch of sexual activism is that self-esteem should not be Platonic. In fact, by practicing self-love, women will develop the self-confidence to make their way in a world that is arrayed against them. Anthropologist Martha C. Ward was once asked by a large national foundation how it could set up a program in Louisiana to increase the self-esteem and empowerment of young women. "I replied that given their goals and limitations," Ward writes, "the best strategy would be to teach teenagers creative masturbation with a view toward feminist consciousness raising."

Betty Dodson participated in the

1973 NOW conference, presenting a slide show of 100 photographs of what used to be known as "private parts." She received a standing ovation. Ever since she has led "Physical and Sexual Consciousness Raising Groups," or, as she now calls them, "Sexuality Seminars," now for both women and men.

She describes the seminars (she has not yet taken to calling them colloquia) in an article in *Libido*. The participants sit in a circle and, well, give themselves self-love.

At first some people may feel uncomfortable with the notion of gathering with a group of people, and then focusing entirely on one's own concerns. But consider the dinner parties you've attended in New York City—isn't the same principle at work?

The image of a group of socially concerned people, in which each individual tends to his own concerns, seems somehow to capture the enlightened aspirations of the age. As the community of those who pursue social change grows more mature, it has discovered that formal political mobilizations are only part of the answer. Many of the challenges that face our living planet have to be solved within; no aspect of our personal lives can neglect larger issues.

The socially enlightened realize that the things we do on our futons can make a tremendous difference to powerless peoples in the developing world and even in our own troubled nation. And, astonishingly, it's always the case that when you set out to do something for humanity, you usually end up giving pleasure to yourself. ♦

Books

John Grisham's Mill

By Eric Burns

In the Bible, Shem begat Arphaxad, Salah begat Eber, Serug begat Nahor, and Terah begat Abram. On the bestseller lists, King begat Koontz, Clancy begat Brown, Wambaugh begat Caunitz, and Scott Turow begat John Grisham. This last is by far the most interesting genealogy.

In 1987, when Turow published *Presumed Innocent*, no one could have guessed a genre would follow. Yes, the book was a legal thriller, its climax as surprising as it was logical, but it was also a work of literary ambition—elegantly written, and rich in both psychological and legal insight. And so it remains when read again today, eight years later: a unique book, not a type.

But no sooner had *Presumed Innocent* soared to number one on the *New York Times* hit parade than the marketing people at every publishing house in the United States had the same thought: Let's *create* a type. If a seriously intentioned novel about the attorney's trade can sell hundreds of thousands of copies, think how many copies pop fiction will sell. If the mass audience is willing to read a lush volume about lawyerly tribulations, think how much more willing it will be to read pruned-down prose. Same make, just cheaper models. Thus was the road paved—and widened into a superhighway—for the likes of Steve Martini, William J. Coughlin, Nancy Taylor Rosenberg, and, most notably, John Grisham.

In 1989, Grisham wrote a novel called *A Time to Kill*. It was earnest, derivative, a poor man's version of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. It was worth reading. No one did. Two years later, Grisham turned out a potboiler called *The Firm*. The rest is commerce. On the average American beach these days, there are more John Grisham novels than sand castles. On the average American airplane, there are more John Grisham novels than flight sickness bags. In the average American health club, there are more John Grisham novels on the newspaper racks of exercise bicycles than copies of *USA Today* and the *Wall Street Journal* put together. Now it seems as if Grisham invented the genre, and Turow is this guy who comes around every few years with the publishing equivalent of an overpriced luxury sedan.

Some pop sociologists now speculate that Grisham's popularity is due to his scathing portraits of fellow lawyers. In *The Firm*, for example, the boys at Bendini, Lambert & Locke are a bunch of two-faced, three-piece-suited, four-flushing Mafia henchmen. In *The Pelican Brief*, the partners at White and Blazevich represent a man who ordered the murders of two justices of the United States Supreme Court. In *The Rainmaker*, the aging yuppies at Trent & Brent are so pompously vicious that one assumes they are best dealt with by a stake through the heart.

But authors have been vilifying lawyers, catering to prejudices against those who hold specialized knowledge, at least as far back as William Shakespeare's "The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers." In this regard, Grisham is just another marksman sighting a fat target—no explanation here for the breadth of his appeal.

Nor is the explanation to be found in the poignancy of his endings, a tactic unusual by the standards of contemporary pop fiction.

Eric Burns is the author of Broadcast Blues.

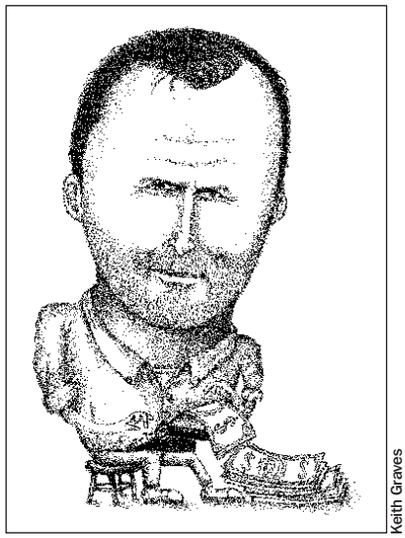
The Rainmaker concludes with young, idealistic lawyer Rudy Baylor hitting the road, vowing "never to return" to the city in which his legal career began, and never to resume the career once he reaches his eventual destination. *The Firm* signs off with young, idealistic lawyer Mitch McDeere hitting a longer road, fleeing the country as well as the ruination of his dreams about the glories of jurisprudence. *The Client*'s 11-year-old hero, Mark Sway, and his family are forced to take dubious refuge in the FBI's Witness Protection Program, leaving behind all connection to the only lives they have ever known.

But the denouement of a novel is no more than a few pages. Grisham has trapped readers in the web of his tales long before this. And so this, too, cannot explain the phenomenon. Characters? A few are vivid, but most run the gamut from cardboard to plywood. Wordsmithery? None at all. Grisham is seldom more than functional. Exotic locales, his sexy dust jacket photos? No and no. Grisham's main literary setting is Memphis, Tennessee; his pictures always show him with a week's worth of stubble; and his novels now cost 30 percent more than they did just four years ago.

Not only is the reason for Grisham's success not immediately apparent, a pattern begins to emerge that, by all rights, should have led to his failure.

Exhibit A, *The Firm*. At the beginning of the book, the hero learns that Bendini, Lambert & Locke *may be* in cahoots with the mob. In the middle of the book, he learns that they *are* in cahoots with the mob. At the end, he learns that they *have been* so cahooted. Between the initial foreshadowing and the final confirmation there are no surprises, no second thoughts, no suggestions that the reader should more closely examine the original premise. It is as if Grisham has decided to apply to the writing of fiction that old public speaker's adage: Tell them what you're going to tell them; tell them; tell them what you've told them. As a means of achieving clarity, the system is virtually foolproof. As a means of creating dramatic tension, it leaves more than a little to be desired.

To a lesser but still noticeable extent, the same puzzling directness is apparent in *The Pelican Brief* and *The Client*. That is why these three books have translated so well to the big screen. If a two-hour movie is going to be made from a



Keith Graves

novel, that novel had better be short or simple or both. Movies are hard on long, intricate works of fiction; a well-chosen word may require a thousand pictures. There is no better example of this than John Irving's *The Hotel New Hampshire*, the cinematic version of which, in attempting to cram in most of the book's fantastical occurrences, turned out to be the visual equivalent of Cliff Notes.

And that brings us to Grisham's latest offering, on its way to being his biggest seller of all, *The Rainmaker.* The lack of plot complication here is positively breathtaking. Donny Ray Black has leukemia. His parents are too poor to afford the bone marrow transplant that would probably save his life. His mother took out an insurance policy on Donny Ray long before the leukemia developed; in her opinion, the policy covers bone marrow transplants. In the opinion of the Great Benefit Insurance Company, it does not. Ditto the opinion of Trent & Brent, the insurer's counsel. An impasse not only develops but lingers; as a result, Donny Ray dies at the all-too-tender age of 22. By this time, Rudy Baylor, fresh out of a Memphis law school and rejected by the city's more prestigious firms, is already on the case.

There ought to be moments in *The Rainmaker* when the reader believes that a single rookie lawyer cannot possibly compete with an entire firm of veterans. There should be moments when the reader fears that Rudy will blow the case on a technicality, or that Trent & Brent will at least suborn a witness or two. There should be moments when the reader wonders whether Donny Ray will really die, or whether leukemia is really the culprit, or whether a bone marrow transplant really would have been effective, not to mention a variety of moments when the reader thinks that maybe the insurance company was right—the procedure *wasn't* covered by the policy. Someone at Great Benefit should appear ethical, someone at Trent & Brent noble, someone on Rudy's side less than saintly. But none of this happens. Grisham writes no sleight-of-hand, permits no ambiguity; *The Rainmaker* has all the texture of a coat of high-gloss enamel.

What Grisham has done is transcend his genre. He has written a suspense novel without any suspense. And why not? Most of his readers are so familar with the genre's conventions—the twistings and turnings of plot, the missteps and deceptions—that they have begun to seem false.

Rather than adding interest to a novel, the red herring simply delays gratification. And few of us

have the patience for that kind of thing anymore. Time is money, we believe; chases are for cutting to. John Grisham's books have captured the spirit of our times no less than the pace.

Yet the question inevitably arises: If the suspense has been eliminated from the suspense novel, why read it? Why not read a horror novel without monsters or a romance without bodice-ripping or a historical epic set in present-day Omaha? Why not read the Yellow Pages?

Consider a sports analogy for the answer. You're a diehard fan of the Dallas Cowboys. This Sunday they play the hated San Fancisco Forty-Niners for the conference championship and a probable berth in the Super Bowl, and your emotional well-being for the rest of the winter depends on a Dallas victory. You turn on the television. Do you hope for squeaker or a rout?

You want a rout, of course, because a squeaker would stretch your nerves to the breaking point. You want the Forty-Niners to fumble the opening kickoff and the Cowboys to recover and run the ball into the end zone so quickly that Dallas has seven points on the board before a like number of seconds have ticked off the clock.

You want the score at the end of the first quarter to be so lopsided that it seems the Cowboys' opponent is the junior varsity team at your local high school. Your passion for Dallas is so great that all you care about is results, not art. Of course, you will revel in a Cowboys' victory under any circumstances, but only a rout will permit you to relax enough to delight in the actual experience of spending three-plus hours in front of the TV.

Same with Grisham. His heroes, in the main, are startlingly, implausibly good—call them Cowboys. His villains are cold-bloodedly, unredeemably bad—call them Niners. His readers are impatient. They want virtue to triumph, evil to vanish. Nuance and the prospect of reversal mustn't rear their ugly heads.

And so Grisham defines his characters so starkly that they might be the cast of a morality play, enabling, even forcing, his reading public to take sides early and care far more about ends than means.

In other words, when John Grisham took the suspense out of the suspense novel, he replaced it with the emotional simplicity of a cheering section. For millions of Americans on beaches and airplanes and exercise bicycles, it has been a brilliant substitution. ♦

Magazines

Sports Eliminated

By Christopher Caldwell

Last month, *Sports Illustrated*'s 3.15 million subscribers were treated to a worshipful account of San Diego Charger Kellen Winslow's politicized induction into the Football Hall of Fame. The great tight end accused Clarence Thomas and Newt Gingrich—who was in attendance—of having "targeted affirmative action," and of working to "appease this country's extreme move to the right."

"Whatever one thinks of Winslow's positions," *SI* editorialized, "it's encouraging to see [an athlete] engaging himself in the world of which sports is only a part."

That's not how *SI* felt in February 1991 when several members of the New York Giants collaborated on a ten-minute pro-life video. Back then, the magazine opined:

> No matter how one feels about abortion, it's hard not to be repulsed by the video's inflammatory language. At one point, one of the Giants, Mark Bavaro, says, "Now, with abortion death squads allowed to run rampant through our country, I wonder how many future champions will be killed before they see the light of day?"....Apart from questions of taste, there's one further objection that should be raised. As columnist Anna Quindlen noted in the *New York Times*, no women are heard from in the video.

This political engagement is not exceptional for the magazine. Two years ago, *SI* contributor Ned Zeman blamed racism for the 1993 arrest and conviction of Georgetown University basketball player Allen Iverson for smashing a chair over the head of a middle-aged woman in a bowling alley. "To the people of Hampton, Virginia," Zeman wrote, "the case of Allen Iverson . . . comes down to one odious word: Nigger." (It didn't, as *SI* acknowledged in not one but two apologies for its multiple factual errors.) In December, the magazine implied that former St. Louis Hawks guard Lenny Wilkens had been kept off the 1960 U.S. Olympic basketball team because of racial prejudice (though the *New York Post*'s Peter Vecsey pointedly noted that Oscar Robertson *was* on that Olympic team).

SI can, and has, managed these accusations without breaking a sweat. It even weathered controversy over a May cover story on San Antonio Spurs forward Dennis Rodman, which had a photo of Rodman dressed in drag and a discussion of his sexual fantasies.

It's surely no surprise that the magazine—a mainstream national news organ, after all, owned by Time Warner.—should oppose prolifers or Newt Gingrich or the abolition of affirmative action. What is new is that, in its zeal to cover social issues, *SI* has begun to show a bore-

dom with—even an antipathy to—sports itself. Note what *SI* likes about Winslow: his engagement in "the world of which sports is only a small part." Not "an important part," or even "a part," but "a small part." Note what's newsworthy about Dennis Rodman: that he's obsessed with gay fashion but says, "I don't give a — about basketball anymore." To read *SI* this summer gives you the impression the magazine wouldn't mind if sports were abolished altogether.

An unmistakable sneer creeps into the magazine's tone when it covers sports figures who actually love their sport or appear preoccupied with winning. Of those who criticized Clemson University president William Atchley for too meekly accepting NCAA sanctions in 1982, *SI* writes, "That stand led to his branding as a pointy-head who—hellfire!—valued something more than football." Condescension and implied McCarthyism aside, isn't valuing nothing more than football what football fans are for? Couldn't the accusation also be leveled at many, if not most, of the magazine's subscribers? Indiana University basketball coach Bobby Knight is a favored whipping boy, most recently for his "unbridled" mouth, his "verbal abuse," and his "boorish, bullying behavior."

And there is evidence that, in the interest of damning sports, the magazine will even put its social conscience on the back burner. When University of Colorado football coach Bill McCartney quit his job to start Promise Keepers, a family-values movement, the magazine did describe his rhetoric as "rigid," "harsh," and "to say the least, controversial." Still, it described McCartney as having "quit as Colorado's coach for a greater quest: healing his family."

A key focus of *SI*'s war on its subject matter is the National Collegiate Athletic Association's stringent regulation of athletic recruitment. *SI* is certainly the nation's most loyal supporter of the NCAA's approach. Now, it's quite possible that college sports needs a disciplinary body like the NCAA, but *SI* never seems to reckon the athletic cost of that body's zeal. *SI* will tolerate nothing but the most pristine records for its future stars—provided they're not point guards with a weakness for braining middle-aged white ladies with bowling-alley furniture. Indeed, at times *SI* seems to have been reincarnated as a watchdog publication for NCAA whistleblowers, whose goal is to disqualify as many student athletes as possible for their off-field activities.

It would be inaccurate to call *SI*'s attitude on these matters "politically correct." The magazine, usually in the person of staffer Alexander Wolff, uses the language not of the revolutionary vanguard but of the reactionary bluestocking, and it consistently winds up more Catholic than the Pope on disciplinary matters. Wolff's most notorious effort was his "open letter" urging the University of Miami—a football juggernaut that has won four national championships over the last 13 years—to abolish its football program altogether. Miami's offenses included:

> improper benefits; recruiting violations; boosters run amok; academic cheating; use of steroids and recreational drugs; suppressed or ignored positive tests for drugs; player run-ins with other students as well as with campus and off-campus police; the discharge of weapons and the degradation of women in the football dorm; [and] credit-card fraud . . .

Credit card fraud? Except for the steroids and the gunplay, to be sure, these would be grounds for disbanding almost any college organization, from the Pomona French Club to the Whiffenpoofs.

SI's May 16 cover story was almost Biblical in its moralism. "Tainted Title," blared the headline. "The inside story of how Florida State football players sullied their national championship by taking illicit cash and gifts from agents." The story's most damning piece of evidence was a trip to a Foot Locker store in Tallahassee, where an operator named Nate Cebrun bought jackets and T-shirts for several team members. Given that $6,000 was spent for "half the football team," that comes to an average of $300 per player in sportswear. *SI* suggested in a caption that Florida State should relinquish its title. Cebrun, *SI* sermonized, had come to Tallahassee "to buy not just clothing but also the honor of Florida State."

"Buy their honor," "tainted," "sullied," "illicit"—the hysterical language calls to mind an article Wolff wrote later this summer (August 7) on a Florida junior college where athletes in academic trouble were racking up credits by taking courses in which the final exams could be mailed in. The article described "procurers of talent" looking for "human lucre" at a high school tournament, as if the magazine were covering not the NCAA but the slave trade.

SI has also long had a morbid fascination with child abuse, domestic violence, and the like. May 15 saw Wolff's article on three coaches recently arrested—hellfire!—for doing stupid things while drunk, the worst being Atlanta Braves' manager Bobby Cox's slugging his wife during an argument. When former manager Dave Bristol quipped at a dinner a few weeks later, "If I had [Atlanta's] bullpen, I would have slit her throat," *SI* came back at him: "Bristol set a new standard for tastelessness . . . "

There's something brazen about a magazine setting itself up as the guardian of exploited women even as it busily diversifies the soft-core porn empire that has grown up

around its notorious annual swimsuit issue. In July, *SI* published another long wife-beating article — "Sports' Dirty Secret"—that focused on Vikings quarterback Warren Moon, Chicago Bull guard Scottie Pippen, ex-Celtics center Robert Parish, and a handful of other athletes, with a nod to O.J. Simpson and Mike Tyson. "After his ex-wife's description of how Parish beat her," wrote Gerry Callahan in a follow-up article, "it doesn't matter how many points he has scored or games he has played." Parish has clearly shown himself to be a jerk, but it ought to be possible to recognize the fact without belittling the sport he plays.

Tyson himself had already been the subject of a cover story when he was released from prison. "Should We Root for Mike Tyson?" *SI* asked with exquisite hypocrisy—what was it doing, after all, but using the former champ's name and image to sell magazines? And yet *SI* felt free to dress up its question in full stentorian regalia with a paragraph-long quote from the Gospel According to St. Luke. The question sums up the *SI* attitude towards sports, one neatly captured by columnist Ellen Goodman, who told *SI*, "Saying you separate Tyson the man from Tyson the boxer is saying, I don't care about his raping Desiree Washington."

No, it isn't. Mike Tyson didn't become the heavyweight boxing champion for his rapine behavior, any more than William Faulkner won the Nobel Prize for routinely getting tight and engaging in lewd antics. If Tyson is despicable, it has nothing to do with sports. There's nothing wrong with a sports magazine covering the unsavory side of sportsmen, but one has to wonder why it does so to the exclusion of its ostensible subject. The answer surely lies somewhere between self-importance and self-aggrandizement. Just read *SI*: It's easy to tell the writers who really love sports from those who consider themselves such princes of prose that it's a vile humiliation for them to be discussing something so fluffy.

SI has long believed its editorial mission included writing about the larger questions raised by the American fascination with sports and the behavior of stars, teams, and owners themselves. Ray Cave, who helped run the magazine in the seventies before taking over *Time*, mentions a pair of 5-part series on women and blacks in sports that the magazine ran as long ago as the late sixties and early seventies. He likes the coverage of issues on sports' periphery: "It's a responsibility of a magazine to broaden the scope and interest of its readers," he says. "*Sports Illustrated* would not have had the reputation it built if it confined itself to stories on shortstops and offensive tackles."

Cave is right, but one is reminded of a competent waiter who tells you he's "really a writer": When *SI*'s editors and defenders call sports a "small part" of the wider—i.e. the political—world, what they're really saying is that it's a small part of their own majestic vision. Under cover of this false modesty, *Sports Illustrated* has arrogated to itself an inadvertently comic role as one of our moral guardians. ♦

Movies

The Matter with 'Kids'

By Lynne V. Cheney

Kids, the hotly debated film about underage teenagers, casual drugs, and even more casual sex, should be required viewing for the House and Senate conferees who will shortly decide the fate of the National Endowment for the Arts. The movie and the story of its director, Larry Clark, help explain why government funding of the late-20th-century art world produces so much public consternation.

In the 1970s, Clark received an NEA grant of $5,000 following publication of *Tulsa*, a collection of photographs featuring underage teenagers in various stages of nudity, shooting and sniffing amphetamines and other substances. Clark himself, then in his 20s, appeared in one of the photographs, eyes closed in a drug-induced stupor.

The NEA grant, the "imprimatur of excellence," as Endowment supporters call it, did nothing to change Clark's behavior. He himself has described how he drank, injected amphetamines, lived off prostitutes, and was arrested for numerous offenses (including various assaults, a knifing, and a shooting). Well into his 30s, Clark continued to hang out with 15-year-olds, photographing them as they took drugs, had sex, and prostituted themselves.

While the grant money itself went to lawyers to try to keep him out of jail ("So there goes the NEA, thanks a lot," Clark wrote), he managed to finish a book of photographs and publish it in 1983 under the title *Teenage Lust*. Clark's photographs show, among other things, teenagers having sex in the back seat of a car, a close-up of a

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prostitute performing oral sex on a teenager, and a teenage boy raping a drugged-out teenage girl while one of his friends awaits his turn. A picture captioned "brother and sister" shows a naked boy with an erection pointing a gun at a naked, tied-up girl. Several photographs include Clark, naked along with the teenagers. In what seems to be an attempt at an explanation, Clark writes in *Teenage Lust*: "Always wished I had a camera when I was a boy. F——g in the backseat. Gangbangs with the pretty girl . . . Albert who said 'No, I'm first, she's my sister.' . . . A little rape."

Director Gus Van Sant liked Clark's work so much that he gave it a credit in *Drugstore Cowboy*, his movie about a merry band of drug addicts. The arts community is also enthusiastic about Clark's images of the *demimonde*. They exemplify the attraction to the underside of life that has often been a part of art but that since the 1970s has become an obsession. As standards of every kind—aesthetic, intellectual, moral —have come under postmodern attack, sordid subjects presented as sordidly as possible have been increasingly admired for the way that they undercut "oppressive" notions of beauty, truth, and goodness. Clark's work is very much of a piece with John Miller's excremental sculptures, Joel-Peter Witkin's photographs of corpses, and Ron Athey's performance art, which involves slashing bloody designs into the flesh of fellow performers.

It's one thing to slash an adult's flesh, but all 50 states now prohibit the distribution of materials showing children engaged in sexual conduct, no exceptions allowed. There are no loopholes for artistic merit, and the Supreme Court, citing the state's "compelling interest" in protecting children, has ruled that there do not have to be.

It is a measure of the chasm that has grown up between mainstream society and the art world that in every part of the country selling Larry Clark's NEA-sponsored book of photographs could land you in jail, but in galleries here and around the globe, he has for more than a decade been regarded with something approaching reverence. Magazines like *Flash Art* encourage him to talk about the erotic quality of his photographs of minors ("I like my work to look sexy," says Clark) and to discuss his ambitions to photograph a teenager murdering his parents ("The first thing I wondered . . . was if the kid had an erection when he was killing them. I said, God, what a f——g image! I'd like to do a film where that happened"). By the 1990s, Clark had the clout and connections to put together a deal to make *Kids*, a film version of *Teenage Lust,* complete with reprise of the rape of a drugged-out girl. But this version can be distributed since, according to the producers, the stars only *appear* to be underage.

The Motion Picture Ratings Board, not much impressed with this argument, slapped an NC-17 rating on *Kids*, citing "explicit sex, language, drug use and violence, all involving children." Several critics have attacked the decision. Kids should see *Kids*, they say: The lives of the teens that the film shows skateboarding around downtown New York, drinking, stealing, lying, smoking pot, assaulting strangers, and having sex are so squalid that they provide a cautionary tale, particularly since the upshot of what these kids are doing is that many of them will die of AIDS.

But this is a little bit like arguing that Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs of leather-clad sadomasochists ought to be printed in popular magazines in order to encourage safe sex. Someone happening across the photographs might find the activities they show disturbing in the extreme, but those in the photographs do not. None of Mapplethorpe's "leather people," as he liked to call them, seems anxious to live otherwise, and neither do most of the kids in *Kids*. There's not even any sense of what "otherwise" might be. This film presents a world in which the postmodern assault on standards has succeeded, leaving behind no measures or models for what it means to be responsible or compassionate.

Larry Clark understands this and even revels in it. The long French kiss between adolescents with which *Kids* opens and its lingering shots of young bodies are not accidents. Asked by *New York* magazine what *Kids* is about, Clark had an enthusiastic three-word answer: "Sex, sex, *sex*." Fifty-two years of age now and still obsessed with pubescence, he can be seen skateboarding with the 14- and 15-year-olds in Washington Square Park or at Brooklyn Banks. He is the one with the graying ponytail and the custom skateboard. As *New York* magazine describes it, the customization includes a picture of a young girl, naked, her rear in the air, her genitals exposed.

The point for the House and Senate conferees is not that the NEA made a mistake in giving Larry Clark that long ago grant. It did undoubtedly provide a boost to his career, lending him a cachet he would not otherwise have had; and it may even be that without the grant, *Kids* would never have been made. But the real point is a larger one about the distance that has grown up between the art world and the rest of the country. So long as there is a federal agency putting money into a subculture that holds Larry Clark in esteem, there is going to be trouble. Taxpayers are going to be livid about the way their money is being spent.

Are they wrong? ♦