the weekly
Standard

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John J. DiIulio, Jr.
diagnoses America's
TICKING CRIME BOMB

William Tucker
HOW CIVIL COURTS HAVE GONE WILD

Andrew Peyton Thomas
DEFEND YOUR TOWN, GET A TAX BREAK

Pat Buchanan, Leftist • DAVID FRUM
Bill Clinton Overplays His Hand • FRED BARNES
Memo to GOP: No Need to Panic • THE EDITORS
When the Media Gather to Blather • MATT LABASH

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Casual

Giving Thanks

It is mid-November, and every aficionado of presidential speechcraft knows what that means: the issuance of the Thanksgiving proclamation. This is a rare and wondrous species of rhetoric. It is homiletic and hortatory; historical and political; admonitory and prayerful. In it, the president has a chance to honor some aspect of the past; take stock of the present; press a partisan point or two; and—without controversy—wax unabashedly religious. Many of the proclamations still astound for their beauty and power; others are more perfunctory and forgettable. But they never fail to be interesting, and to reveal something of their times and their authors.

The first proclamation came from the first president, at the behest of the first Congress. Here, as elsewhere, Washington set the standard. He invited Americans to "unite in rendering . . . sincere and humble thanks" for, among other "signal and manifold mercies," the "course and conclusion of the late war." John Adams continued the custom, with long and erudite proclamations, resonant of the *Book of Common Prayer*, with dashes of the *Federalist Papers* thrown in. Jefferson demurred entirely, believing the proclamations beyond the purview of his constitutional powers. This might be expected from a man wracked with guilt over the Louisiana Purchase, but, still, the Jefferson proclamations would be among the glories of the form.

Lincoln's are indeed glorious. They recall everything that was sublime and ingenious about that president. Remarkable about the proclamation for 1863 is that it celebrates the ordinary rhythms of American life, ongoing despite a "civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity." ("Needful diversions of wealth and of strength . . . have not arrested the plough, the shuttle or the ship; the axe has enlarged the borders of our settlements. . . .") The 1864 proclamation begins, "It has pleased Almighty God to prolong our national life another year"—quaint-seeming now, perhaps, but no certain proposition then. The Reconstruction proclamations—of Andrew Johnson, of Grant—appealed fervently for the healing of grievances.

Proclamations of Thanksgiving Day reflect, appropriately enough, the presidents issuing them. Theodore Roosevelt's are like him: virile, learned, no-nonsense. ("We live in easier and more plentiful times than our forefathers, the men who with rugged strength faced the rugged days.") Wilson's are quintessentially Wilsonian, the work of a master rhetorician—the minister's son, the Princeton wizard—in full command of language religious and political. ("God has in His good pleasure given us peace. . . .It has come as a great triumph of Right. Complete victory has brought us, not peace alone, but the confident promise of a new day as well, in which justice shall replace force and jealous intrigue among the nations.") Hoover's are models of spare eloquence. In the teeth of the Depression, the former food administrator, vilified as indifferent, poignantly implored Americans to "remember that many of our people are in need and suffering from causes beyond their control."

FDR used the proclamations of his first two terms to spread the gospel of his new civil religion. We can fairly hear that matchless voice as it speaks the locutions of the day: "the goal of mutual help"; "the new spirit of dependence one on another"; a "closer fellowship of mutual interest and common purpose."

Kennedy's most memorable proclamation came in 1963; it had to be read by the new president, Lyndon Johnson. Possibly the sauciest line of any proclamation occurs at the beginning of Johnson's for 1968, that ghastly "year of the ramparts": "Americans, looking back on the tumultuous events of 1968, may be more inclined to ask God's mercy and guidance than to offer Him thanks for his blessings."

A Carter proclamation tends to bring to mind the worst of the Carter style: reproachful, guilt-mongering, malaise-infused. With Reagan, the theme is freedom. Here is a dose of pure Gipperism from 1981, amid the budget wars: "Long before there was a government welfare program, th[e] spirit of voluntary giving was ingrained in the American character."

Bill Clinton? It will shock no one that last year's proclamation was pointedly political, well beyond the norm for this forum. It featured a plaintive call for "meaningful work experience" (i.e., not "McJobs") and "protective health care" (i.e., the sprawling, repudiated plans of the first lady).

The Thanksgiving proclamation has entered its third century. In recent decades, it has become a little more ordinary, a little less stirring, a little less compelling. That may have to do with the loss of religious rhetoric, once a prized art; it may also have to do with the diminution—sometimes belittlement—of eloquence generally. But, taken together, the proclamations make for a feast—of history, of the presidency, of speech. And all who dine there, do so with pleasure.

Jay Nordlinger

We Don't Need No Flag Amendment

Richard Parker's piece in praise of the flag-protection amendment ("Old Glories in Tandem: Flag and Constitution," Nov. 13) is illustrative of what is wrong with our modern perceptions of self-government. In his heralding of a "give the people what they want" populism, Parker would have us believe that the Constitution entrusts each of us to weigh everything with calm, calculated, reasoned thinking. Yet if history has taught us anything, it is that men are often overwhelmed by passion.

It is not that those opposed to the flag-protection amendment fear an "empowerment of ordinary people" and their exercising of popular sovereignty, as Parker contends. Those in opposition do not think big-brother government knows best, nor are they fearful of Americans' exercising their right of popular sovereignty. But they do fear the ever-increasing tendency to govern from a base of clamorous emotions and elevated passions.

The fact is that the Constitution is full of "auxiliary precautions" to try to prevent this kind of irresponsible and unreflective practice from infecting the governing of our polity. Even the most rudimentary reading of the *Federalist Papers* indicates the Founders' fear of such a position.

In the event that these precautions fail, as they appear to be doing in this case, it falls upon responsible citizens to elevate the debate above emotion and passion. And while patriotism—the issue at the core of the flag-protection debate—is an emotional and passionate thing, we ought not govern from the gut. To do so is to practice mobocracy.

Madison's warning is clear. If we fall into the well of governing by polls and the loud, impassioned wails of factions, whether they be minority or majority, we will have subscribed to "the indelible reproach of decreeing to the same citizens, the hemlock on one day, and statutes on the next." While flag burning may be a difficult pill to swallow, it is hemlock that is sure to kill you.

William Albert Smith
Washington, DC

All the impassioned debate over amending the Constitution to make flag desecration a crime could be avoided by enacting some creative state legislation.

One of my favorites was the legislation proposed in Tennessee and Louisiana, which imposed a $5 fine on anyone convicted of pounding lumps on a flag burner.

For those offended by this approach, I offered an alternative in the Vermont Senate. My measure proposed that the act of burning a U.S. or Vermont flag constituted a presumption that the perpetrator intended to relinquish any claim to benefits from the respective government. If enacted by Congress, touching a match to the flag would become the equivalent of touching a match to

one's food stamps, welfare payments, Social Security benefits, Medicaid, Medicare, VA pensions, etc.

This admirable approach was unfortunately rejected by liberals hung up on arguments about the First Amendment, and conservatives intent on lodging flag burners in jail at public expense.

John McClaughry
Concord, VT

Richard Parker's article on the flag burning amendment is a reminder that democracy does not equal freedom. Two hallmarks of a truly free democratic society are the right not to vote and the right to burn the flag. Both acts make strong, important, and perfectly appropriate political statements and do not threaten a "populist" regime. The legal system has far better things to do than make a crime of flag burning.

Randy E. Barnett
Boston, MA

The flag is our national symbol, and no one should be permitted to desecrate it. Richard Parker makes a good case for a constitutional amendment against desecration of the flag, but I remain ambivalent. I can see such an amendment providing a life's work for a whole generation of activist lawyers. There would be an endless series of test cases working their way up through the judicial system. The country needs less litigation, not more.

Let us take the arguments of the anti-amendment community. The "thoughtful commentators" and "opinion leaders" say that desecrating the flag is a form of self-expression and, as such, is protected by the First Amendment. People who feel the need to protest something or other in this way should be free to do so. Well and good.

There are other means of self-expression. If someone who witnesses a flag burning is offended and wishes to do something painful to the burner, his actions should be equally protected by the First Amendment. Everything would be settled on the spot. Both parties would be able to freely express themselves. The flag burner would get the media attention that he sought, although not exactly as he intended. There would be no lawyers and no test cases.

W. T. Furgerson
Louisville, TN

Playing the Publicity Game

In explaining how my law students and I have been successful in bringing legal actions against illegal discrimination, pollution, and other problems ("Banzhaf's Game: How to Give Lawyers a Bad Name," Nov. 13), Tucker Carlson professes to be shocked to learn—and eager to breathlessly report—that we issue press releases. But even a fledgling

publication should realize by now that this is the way most information of potential public interest is sent to the media, and that thousands of individuals and organizations—yes, even universities—issue press releases every day.

While my opponents frequently purchase full-page newspaper ads or employ large PR firms to get their point across, I can do little more than make information available to media outlets. They, in turn, in the great American tradition of the marketplace of ideas, freely choose what they feel will be of interest to their own readers or viewers.

When newspapers like the *Washington Times* or the *Wall Street Journal* choose to report on my activities or quote my comments, it is certainly not because of any liberal bias on their part.

Moreover, when, as the article describes in great detail, newspapers across the country quote me on a wide variety of law-related topics, it is not because my little fax machine and I have bamboozled the national media with press releases issued only in the Washington area.

A far more likely explanation is that, when they want legal information and insight in lay language from knowledgeable sources not directly connected with pending litigation or representing some advocacy group, newspapers tend to call law professors like Alan Dershowitz, Arthur Miller, A.E. Dick Howard, Paul Rothstein, and, yes, John Banzhaf.

JOHN F. BANZHAF, III
WASHINGTON, DC

No German Empire-Building

Irwin Stelzer's article ("They're Ba-a-ack," Oct. 9) has no reasonable basis from which to criticize the current German economic policies within the European Union. That organization is an entirely voluntary alliance of sovereign, democratic states.

Germany represents the largest economic entity, but by no stretch is it a domineering political influence. Necessarily, German economic interests and problems are strongly represented in the multilateral bureaucratic administration of the Union. However, to liken the role of Germany in the European Union to the attempted formation of an "empire," in a political sense, is clearly a misrepresentation of the relations among the partners of the European Union.

Whether, or to what extent, a nation should curtail domestic social programs in order to deal with the external competition in the labor market is an issue that has no bearing on a hypothetical "German Question" as theorized by Stelzer. Instead, those are common problems confronting all nations that are striving to maintain social stability and fiscal balance while opening their economy to free trade.

Ultimately, any lasting economic cooperation among nations with varying natural resources and different cultures will be a result of negotiation based on practical mutual benefit and the recognition of established international relations among sovereign states.

RUPRECHT SCHULTE
JULIAN, CA

Justice Thomas, Victim?

The opening lines of Justice Thomas's article ("The Benevolent State and the Need for Heroes," Oct. 23) and the closing lines ("keep in mind that all of us are easily tempted to think of ourselves as victims") are startling in their hypocrisy, despite their truth.

Does Justice Thomas think we do not remember his falling back on a victim defense—being persecuted as "an uppity black man," I think were his words—during his confirmation hearings?

It is perhaps unrealistic to expect him to acknowledge his use of that tactic, but we could have then taken his thesis more seriously and thought better of him as exemplifying the heroic virtues he says our culture discourages: "fortitude, character, courage, a sense of self-worth."

RICHARD PRINCE
ESSEX, CT

An Immigrant's Education

Albert Pyle ("The Next Million Men: How to Save the Children," Oct. 23) advises parents, "No-nonsense boot camp discipline is what you have to keep in mind . . . That's the immigrant way." Has Pyle ever met any immigrants?

My own parents were Polish Jewish immigrants. Theirs was a typical immigrant success story: They worked hard, opened a business, and succeeded. Their son liked school, continued his education until he got a Ph.D., and remained in school to teach and study.

My parents were curious about the world and its people, in all their complexity and variety. Somehow, they must have conveyed to me their own enthusiasm for study. Never once did they say to "stay inside and crack the books," as Pyle advises. Instead, they told me not to read too much. "Go outside like a normal child," they said. "Reading will make you pale, near-sighted, and hunchbacked."

Education is neither punishment nor a tool; it is an end in itself. Boot camp discipline, on the other hand, is a good way to make children think that God's universe is a dull and nasty place.

GEORGE JOCHNOWITZ
STATEN ISLAND, NY

THE WEEKLY STANDARD

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Memo to GOP: No Need to Panic

You're feeling sorry for the Republican congressional leadership, aren't you? Last week they rushed their beautiful football—the first legitimate budget-balancing plan in living memory—headlong into a few presidential vetoes. And it looks to you like they got knocked on their cans. The government "shutdown." The Treasury Department was forced into bookkeeping maneuvers to pay its bills and keep entitlement money flowing. And Republicans, who have been dominating 1995 politics to an extent that makes them "responsible" for almost everything that happens in Washington, took the blame in public opinion polls.

The chickens are roosting. The conservative revolution is unpopular and sputtering. Right?

Nah. Save your pity. Congressional Democrats may soon need it. The spending battle's fundamental partisan calculus hasn't changed a bit. Presidential campaign politics still probably favor ultimate enactment of a 1996 budget very much like the one Hill Republicans are insisting on. And despite the polls, the current "train wreck" could actually *help* achieve that result.

Our "triangulating" president has, until recently at least, talked a phony middle path between "the extremes" of both congressional parties. He makes a great, exaggerated show of defending his own pet initiatives and decrying cuts in popular federal programs. At the same time, he endorses the Republican bottom line: fiscal balance through spending reductions, middle-class tax relief, and welfare and Medicare reform. In sum, Clinton betrays his party's time-honored liberalism. It isn't a winning platform anymore.

Had recent events not conspired to alter White House rhetoric, then, the budget process would have looked something like this:

The president would have signed a half-dozen or so of the 13 appropriations bills that fund most federal programs. He'd have first vetoed and then bargained on a few others, the better to protect some random billions. And one or two appropriations bills might yet be unresolved, which would suspend some programs. But not for long. Republicans do not care a whit about most such programs, after all. Mr. Clinton's leverage there was always limited; time was a Republican advantage.

Time was *not* a Republican advantage on taxes and entitlements. Those programs never "shut down." Even the federal debt ceiling can't stop them; the ceiling was reached last week—and promptly eluded by government accountants, without so much as a burp from Wall Street. So Medicare, the central controversy here, was always going to be the last nut cracked. But White House and Republican Medicare proposals are not really all that far apart: $10 billion a year. However this dispute might finally have been settled and spun, we would have a Republican budget. And the Democratic New Deal would be entering its coda.

There's been a scheduling interruption, as you know.

Congressional Republicans are behind in budget legislation. When the government's spending authority lapsed at midnight Nov. 13 and the famous shutdown began, only three appropriations bills had been signed into law. One other had been vetoed. Nine hadn't been sent to the White House at all. By now, President Clinton should be deeply implicated in domestic spending cutbacks. But he isn't. And his argument against cutbacks *generally* has been strengthened as a result.

Then, too, that argument is louder than it would be had Clinton not committed a couple of amazing gaffes: acknowledging in public that he thought his 1993 tax increase was too large, and phoning columnist Ben Wattenberg to endorse *tougher* welfare reform. Those were two triangulations too many for embittered liberals in the president's party. They finally broke into open revolt, forcing him to tack sharply left in his rhetoric.

And finally, there've been Republican debating blunders. The president has been handed excuses to oppose a balanced budget. Most notably, the GOP's vetoed stopgap spending measure contained an unnecessary Medicare technicality that fairly begged for presidential demagoguery. By the middle of last week, after Speaker Gingrich let slip his annoyance over a

snub on Air Force One, Republicans were looking a bit parochial and peevish, and their case for limited government was obscured.

Now what? Is White House triangulation out the window? Can the defense of the spending status quo succeed? Is a genuine, seven-year balanced budget dying?

Probably not. Don't panic.

The last thing Bill Clinton wants to face in next year's campaign is the accusation that he blocked a balanced budget to protect non-entitlement domestic spending. An ABC News/*Washington Post* poll last week showed almost half the country inclined to blame Republicans for a government shutdown. The same poll had *more* than half the country, a healthy 54-40 majority, saying that budget balance was more important than maintaining current levels of federal service. A zero deficit in seven years, without smoke and mirrors, is the GOP's one non-negotiable demand. The president has never rejected it. On Oct. 19, in fact, he explicitly okayed it in theory—provided, of course, that it incorporates assumptions about future economic performance that would give him about $68 billion more to spend each year.

He'll never get it all. But he doesn't really need or want it all, either. Even if Republicans conceded *everything* on Medicare, again, it would "only" cost $10 billion. And the president's very fondest budget dreams involve just a minuscule amount of additional cash. He wants to preserve his beloved AmeriCorps boondoggle. He wants some more education, welfare, and environmental money. Fine. Republicans should be careful not to go overboard—baby steps in Clinton's direction ought to be enough—but a few billion here or there shouldn't be a deal-killer. Those concessions can always be withdrawn in future years. It'll be something to look forward to.

Welfare reform? In his post-Wattenberg retreat, the president has talked himself into a pretty tight box, and he may now be forced to veto a bill that three weeks ago he'd have loved to sign. In which case Republicans might not even bother attempting an override—so that their presidential nominee can spend next year scoring Clinton for having blocked an overwhelmingly popular, bipartisan initiative.

And the rest of domestic spending? Conventional wisdom has it that the current shutdown makes the entire Republican budget-cutting project appear hamfisted and "ideological." Guess again. For example: There are 11,900 HUD employees nationwide. Last week, the Clinton administration *itself* declared 11,800 of them "non-essential" and sent them home. Details like that—the shutdown puts a giant magnifying glass on all of them—destroy the Democratic argument that Republican proposals will cut government to the bone. The shutdown has temporarily sliced far deeper into the federal carcass than anything contemplated in the Contract with America. And the worst of it seems to be inconvenienced tourists and passport applicants.

By the time this magazine reaches your hands, more than a quarter of last week's 800,000 furloughed federal employees will have returned to work, and all will get back pay. Republicans will likely be passing limited legislation to reopen those few government offices that *do* matter to the general public. And the budget debate will have shifted back toward other discretionary programs, at HUD and elsewhere, that . . . well, have somehow never seemed less necessary.

President Clinton, therefore, may be tempted to drop his current uncompromising line much sooner than most observers expect. His Republican opponents have already recovered their bearings. Gingrich has them back on a strict balanced-budget message. And the president's position will shortly devolve to this: He will be attempting to preserve higher spending levels for a series of federal programs on which only a small minority of Americans depends—by blocking *all* spending on those programs. It won't make sense.

Anything can happen, of course. Apparently favorable instant polls are opium to a politician like Bill Clinton. He may actually have started to believe his own talking points. And the White House may yet conclude that it can dig in its Old Democratic heels and produce so much public disgust with gridlock that a Perot-style independent candidacy will siphon crucial support away from the eventual Republican nominee. But that's a very big gamble. Campaign guru Dick

Morris's New Democrat strategy is still much the safer bet for Clinton. And the budget deal it requires—cosmetic, face-saving alterations to what will remain a very conservative, very Republican plan—is still within reach.

So don't be too quick with sympathy for Republicans. Think of the poor Democrats. Sure, they're momentarily gleeful in those minority caucus rooms on Capitol Hill. But there's a better than even chance that liberalism is soon to suffer another triangulated Clinton betrayal. And this one will be a whopper.

— David Tell, for the Editors

Shutdown I: Clinton

by Fred Barnes

President Clinton's intuition was wrong. He thought House Speaker Newt Gingrich would go for a quick budget deal that averted a government shutdown. Still, when Gingrich proved unwilling to compromise, Clinton and his aides were ready. For once, they had out-planned Gingrich. They put congressional Republicans on defense. By early November, the White House was preparing for a shutdown, developing themes (the GOP budget is "bad for America") and political tactics, and trying to create a crisis atmosphere in which Gingrich would cave. When Republicans proposed to raise Medicare premiums slightly, Clinton pounced. And when Gingrich said he'd been snubbed on the Air Force One trip from Israel after Yitzhak Rabin's funeral, the White House reacted in mock disbelief at Gingrich's gaffe, then handed out photos showing Clinton had spent time with Gingrich and Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole on the plane. Also, during the shutdown, Clinton made sure he couldn't be criticized for keeping the full White House staff on the payroll. Only 90 of 400-plus staffers stayed. Even Doug Sosnick, the White House political director, was furloughed.

Good as his tactics were, the president made a mistake: He overplayed his hand. It happened November 15, the third day of the shutdown, during Clinton's interview with CBS News anchor Dan Rather. He vowed to veto a stripped-down Republican bill that would resume government operations on the condition that the president agree to balance the budget in seven years and to use economic projections by the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office as the basis for doing so. Rather than sign this, Clinton said he'd let the shutdown last "90 days, 120 days, 180 days . . . right into the next election." Why? Because the seven-year/CBO requirement meant accepting the Republican budget with its deep cuts "in Medicare and Medicaid, in education, in the environment, and a tax increase on working people," Clinton insisted. The next day, he made things worse by failing to back off. "I will still veto any bill that requires crippling cuts in Medicare, weakens the environment, reduces educational opportunity, or raises taxes on working families," he declared.

The problem for Clinton is his argument isn't true. The seven-year/CBO requirement is a goal, not a mandate for particular cuts. It could be satisfied by tossing out all the GOP spending cuts and substituting reductions in Pentagon spending and changes in tax rates, or by accepting some of the Republican cuts and shrinking the size of the GOP's proposed tax cut. It could be satisfied an infinite number of ways. Clinton all but conceded this point—unintentionally, I suspect—when he was asked on Nov. 16 why 48 House Democrats had voted for the GOP measure. He said they weren't endorsing the Republican budget. They have their own budget, with smaller spending cuts and no tax cut. They wanted "to own up to the fact," Clinton said, that their budget met the seven-year/CBO standard. Well, if theirs did, so could others'. Republicans weren't really imposing their budget priorities by insisting on the seven-year/CBO requirement.

The upshot: Clinton had adopted an indefensible position and declared himself inflexible. This was a shift from a few days earlier when he harped on the GOP scheme to boost Part B Medicare premiums from $46 to $52 a month. Clinton's rhetoric on this was cynical (he favored a premium increase, too) and demagogic ("sharp hikes in Medicare premiums"). But at least there was a factual basis for his claim. This wasn't the case once Republicans had jettisoned the Medicare and other amendments and asked the president only for a commitment to a balanced budget in seven years, CBO-style. Clinton was unbending across the board. When he met with Republican leaders on November 13, he brushed aside Gingrich's suggestion that CBO officials confer with White House experts over possible adjustments in economic projections. And he later rejected the idea of summoning Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan to mediate the dispute over projections.

Clinton's position may be unsustainable, but it will serve his purposes for a while. There was method in his madness. If an early deal with Gingrich on

favorable terms for Clinton wasn't possible, the president was better off politically by prolonging the fight, at least past December 15. That's the filing date for presidential candidates in New Hampshire. Clinton wants desperately to avoid a primary challenger. An early settlement on Gingrich's terms might provoke one. But dragging out a fight with Gingrich keeps the president on good terms with the liberal base of his party, indeed with practically all Democrats. As the shutdown lingered, Clinton adviser George Stephanopoulos gushed that the president "received the same standing ovation from the Democratic Leadership Council that he received from the Democratic caucus in the House." The one thing DLC and congressional Democrats agree on is hatred of Gingrich.

Clinton knows the acclaim, from liberals particularly, can't last. He's not looking for the struggle to end the same way as the movie *The American President*, which many at the White House saw. Stephanopoulos, among others, helped director Rob Reiner, a Clinton fan, on the film. In it, a slick, non-ideological president is transformed into a liberal crusader. The fictional president makes no deal with the devil. In real life, though, Clinton wants a budget deal with Gingrich. He wants to be able to claim, while running for re-election next year, that he overcame gridlock and cut taxes, cut spending, put the country on a credible path to a balanced budget, saved Medicare, and reformed welfare. Liberal Democrats won't like the accord Clinton ultimately reaches with Gingrich. But Clinton will have thrilled them temporarily by touting social spending programs and thwarting Gingrich.

Nothing delighted them more than Gingrich's discomfort after making the childish complaint he'd been treated rudely on Air Force One. Clinton didn't set Gingrich up for embarrassment, but it worked as if he had. On the flight from Israel, Gingrich expected to have budget discussions with the president. Mike McCurry, the White House press secretary, had said talks would occur on the flight home. Clinton was ready to talk. But he'd been put off by a long chat with Gingrich and Dole three days before the trip. "They're just dug in," the president told an aide after that session. On the plane, he sent Leon Panetta, the White House chief of staff, to check whether Gingrich and Dole had softened their position. Panetta reported back that they hadn't. So Clinton slept, Gingrich fumed, and the government shut down. ♦

Shutdown II: The Hill

by Matthew Rees

On November 9, the Senate considered linking the abolition of the Commerce Department to a debt-limit extension soon to be sent to the White House. A whip count showed that 14 GOP senators would oppose the measure, ensuring its defeat. This infuriated a group of House GOP freshmen, who marched over to lobby senators. The offbeat ploy not only failed (Republican senators had never warmed to the idea of abolishing Commerce), it also fomented the very disarray that Speaker Newt Gingrich had been lecturing his House colleagues to avoid. Then in private, Gingrich himself slipped: At a leadership meeting on November 13, he complained that senators didn't want the government to close because their visiting constituents wouldn't be able to go into the Washington Monument. Denny Hastert, a deputy House Republican whip, was less discreet. He told the *Wall Street Journal*, "The Republican senators are irresponsible. They've got their heads in the sand." Meanwhile, conservative Republican staffers were privately blaming obstinate House GOP freshmen for the party being "off message."

The divisions persist below the surface, but the infighting subsided as Republicans coalesced around one idea. On November 16, they announced that they would send the president a continuing resolution with a single condition: that Clinton agree to balance the budget over seven years using Congressional Budget Office assumptions. The beauty of this simple resolution, Republicans reasoned, was that the promised veto could mean only one thing: Bill Clinton wants to keep government big, while Republicans want to shrink it. By the end of the week, any talk of GOP compromise on the seven years was heresy. Republicans had recognized what should have been self-evident a week earlier: As Sen. John McCain put it, "If we can keep the debate focused on a balanced budget, we're going to win."

That focus was decided at the morning meeting of the Speaker's Administrative Group on November 13. Gingrich, House majority leader Dick Armey, House whip Tom Delay, and Gingrich loyalists Bill Paxon, Bob Walker, and Hastert, were there, as well as senior Senate aides Kyle McSlarrow and Dave Hoppe. They could see that Republicans were getting slaughtered by the White House for linking government funding to an increase in Medicare premiums. They needed to

streamline their message. The group agreed to drop all extraneous issues and mobilize around the clean, simple theme of balancing the budget in seven years. Missionary work followed, with staffers fanning out to convey the new theme, and by November 14 nearly every House and Senate Republican had embraced it.

GOP solidarity further crystallized after a presidential speech on November 14. That morning, Sen. Pete Domenici and Rep. John Kasich, representing Congress, and Chief of Staff Leon Panetta and Budget Director Alice Rivlin, from the White House, met on the sixth floor of the Dirksen building. Some GOP senators feared that Domenici might repeat his performance from the 1990 budget summit, where he advocated tax hikes. The meeting modestly narrowed the differences between the two sides and was mostly good-natured (at one point, Domenici jokingly referred to Clinton as "the Big Potato"). The two sides agreed not to demagogue to the media, and Domenici and Panetta kept the bargain, appearing together at a press conference and describing their efforts as productive.

The goodwill, and any chance of a pre-emptive surrender by Domenici, evaporated a few hours later. Clinton's speech blamed Congress for the government shutdown and excoriated Republicans for "sharp hikes in Medicare premiums and deep cuts in education and the environment." In the five-minute address, he managed to repeat this line of attack seven more times. "That speech brought home the depth of the problem," said a Senate aide, who described Clinton's rhetoric as "mendacious." Domenici captured the mood change in an uncharacteristically livid statement shortly after the president spoke: "You stand before the American people and fill the airwaves with half-truths, absolute statements that are inconsistent with anything that anybody else is saying." When Domenici, Kasich, Panetta, and Rivlin met that evening in the Capitol, no progress was made and no joint press conference was held. The stalemate precluded meetings between the administration and Congress for the next two days. But the speech also unified Republicans. "I think every time President Clinton opens his mouth it brings Republicans together," says Hastert.

Yet GOP strategic unity did not resolve lesser legislative disputes. Republicans outside the leadership spent much of the week ironing out their many differences on appropriations bills. With the government shut down, others didn't have a lot to do. "I was answering mail this morning," said Mississippi senator Thad Cochran at midweek. Cochran's modesty obscures the serious effort he was making to rally his colleagues: Instead of getting bogged down in fights over stopgap spending measures, Republicans should be striving to complete their appropriations work (only four of 13 appropriations bills had been enacted). Cochran told me, Republicans "run the risk of spreading our net so wide that our achievement [balancing the budget] will not be clearly appreciated."

By the end of the week, the appropriations bills were still unfinished, but the bigger news was that the apocalyptic scenarios predicted by the White House hadn't come true. Default was not an immediate threat, and the markets were humming (the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 50 points on the second day the government was closed, and bond yields held steady). The GOP's arguments about the need for smaller government were unexpectedly bolstered by the White House Office of Management and Budget, which announced that 99 percent of the workers at the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and 89 percent of those at the Department of Education, were non-essential. It didn't hurt to have both Jay Leno and David Letterman joke about the shutdown being no big deal.

And, while Republicans were taking a drubbing in the polls (a November 14 CNN/*USA Today* poll found the GOP blamed for the shutdown by a 49-26 margin), they were still expecting their single-minded focus to pay off. "We figure there's light at the end of the tunnel," said Hastert, who by the middle of the week was sounding much more conciliatory toward the Senate. Smart move. ♦

I Made Hazel's Enemies List

by Irwin I. Stelzer

At last. After missing my chance during the Nixon years, I've finally gotten myself onto an enemies list. True, this is a relatively trivial one, consisting merely of journalists and "sources" who have somehow antagonized Secretary of Energy Hazel O'Leary. But a "source" has to take such crumbs of hostile recognition as fall from the table of the mighty.

And mighty Secretary O'Leary is. Her $18 billion budget permits her to travel widely and in style, more widely than the secretary of state, according to Democ-

ratic Sen. Harry Reid, and "with a larger entourage," in the words of the *New York Times*. And to hire consultants to identify anyone who sees in her the Peter Principle at work. The geographic spread of her empire permits her to threaten senators from New Mexico (Sandia and Los Alamos National Laboratories), California (labs managed by the University of California), and New York (Brookhaven National Laboratories on Long Island) with the economic devastation of facilities' closures if they trim her budget. And the 100,000-plus contract workers beholden to the Energy Department constitute a private army with a strong incentive to protect her from budgetary harm.

But they apparently cannot shield her from the adverse publicity that so nettles her. Or protect her from the view of many reporters that she has a tendency to substitute charm for hard work. Or generate the favorable publicity that her P.R. staff would garner by (as they put it in a memorandum leaked to the *Washington Times)* emphasizing her "very interesting persona" and keeping her in the spotlight "to the exlusion" of her staff: "We need to abandon the players in order to promote the coach."

Sean Delonas

All of this, of course, has nothing to do with the real issues that surfaced when the *Wall Street Journal* revealed that the Energy Department had engaged consultants to monitor the press and other commentators, an exercise that seems to this "enemy" quite a proper one for any large organization that wants to know whether it is getting its message across.

The first real issue is New Orleans, whence the secretary was forced to defend her department's excursion into media monitoring. Why New Orleans, the home of mardi gras and jazz? Because that's where Mrs. O'Leary was when the story broke, on one of her fabled trips, this one to "discuss aid to the oil and gas industries." So reports the *New York Times*, an organ so appalled at the thought of having its reporters' work studied that it called for O'Leary's resignation, something the secretary's botching of her job never prompted it to do. In this age of budget stringency, when the government is closed down because the president does not find it possible to cut costs sufficiently to balance the budget by 2002, why is his energy secretary dashing off to New Orleans to find ways to give money to the oil and gas industry? Answer: because her department is in the habit of lavishing money on energy producers. Its Office of Fossil Energy, in a continuous hunt for what the department describes as "innovations in [oil] exploration and production technologies," has spent $2.5 billion developing techniques for making coal more environmentally acceptable and for improving extraction techniques for natural gas. Why the oil, coal, and natural gas industries have insufficient means or incentives to engage in such research is a mystery. As is the reason Energy "continues to develop technologies in which the market clearly has no interest," to borrow the words of a recent Congressional Budget Office report.

Equally important is the self-condemnation contained in Mrs. O'Leary's defense of her department's decision to spend $46,500 for consultants to separate the good media guys from the bad ones. That sum, O'Leary explains, is a pittance compared with what it would have cost the taxpayers if the department had undertaken the chore itself—$170,000, or three and one-half times as much as the private-sector consultants charged. Think of it: The secretary of energy defends her department by proclaiming that it is only one-third as efficient as the private sector. Surely this is a new highwater mark for candor on the part of a cabinet officer. After all, the secretary is inviting the conclusion that we could save two-thirds of her budget, some $12 billion per year, if her department would simply go away and turn its work over to the private sector.

Of course, the Department of Energy won't go away. It spends too much money, in too many places—most notably Senate Budget Committee chairman Pete Domenici's New Mexico—for Congress to dismantle it. This, despite the fact that authorities ranging from Vice President Al Gore's National Performance Review to the General Accounting Office, the Office of Management and Budget, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Office of Technology Assessment have repeatedly criticized the department for its inability to meet its obligations with at least minimal efficiency.

Take its weapons cleanup program, one that is continually behind schedule and over budget. It is, said Sen. J. Bennett Johnston early in O'Leary's tenure, "a

grand and glorious mess. . . . No function of government has been as mismanaged as our waste cleanup." O'Leary has continued that tradition of mismanagement. Earlier this year the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee charged that much of the money Energy spends at its largest cleanup site is being "squandered . . . . There is almost no aspect of the current approach that can withstand close scrutiny."

All this adds up to an expensive mess. The Army Corps of Engineers, after a detailed evaluation of spending at the Department of Energy, found that its costs were "higher than the amounts the Corps would expect to pay for the same work by 42 percent." Al Gore's review group agrees, but predictably stops short of suggesting that the Energy Department be "reinvented" out of business. After all, O'Leary agrees with our very green vice president on the need to spend taxpayers' money on energy sources dear to the hearts of environmentalists, but so costly as to be of no interest to producers or consumers.

Such a terminal "reinvention" wouldn't make all of the problems now in the Energy Department's bailiwick, such as cleaning up nuclear waste, go away. But it would get the government out of the energy business, put the research labs in the private sector, and transfer responsibility for the cleanup job to a new, more competent, pair of hands. And perhaps to someone less concerned about image than about performance.

***Irwin I. Stelzer last wrote about the British Labor and Tory party conferences in* THE WEEKLY STANDARD.**

Poor-Mouthing Uncle Sam

by James Higgins

AN UNEXPECTED PLAYER made a last-minute entry into the federal budget debate on November 10: The rating agency Standard & Poor's announced that investors' faith in the U.S. government had already "diminished" because of the budget deadlock and that, if the United States were any other country, the agency would already have put it on "Credit Watch" for a downgrade from triple-A.

While this made superficial sense, a closer analysis reveals that Standard & Poor's either had lost touch with the meaning of creditworthiness or had entered a partisan debate on the Democratic side, or both. There are strong theoretical and historical reasons for discounting Standard & Poor's comments.

First, it has never been clear what a credit rating is supposed to mean when applied to the sovereign debt a country issues in its own currency. A Standard & Poor's credit rating is supposed to evaluate a borrower's ability to repay principal and interest. One of the distinguishing characteristics of a sovereign borrower is its ability *to print money.* While there may be some doubt about the ability of, say, Mexico to repay its dollar-denominated obligations, there should be no doubt about the ability of Mexico to repay its *peso-denominated* obligations. The same reasoning applies to dollar-denominated U.S. debt.

One may object that printing money to repay debts—literally monetizing the deficit—is inflationary and should therefore result in a lowering of the sovereign borrower's credit rating. This is a fair objection; but raising it must lead one to ask why Standard & Poor's never threatened to downgrade U.S. government obligations in the 1970s, when the debt *was* being monetized aggressively and inflation was spinning out of control.

Second, if Standard & Poor's does not have a partisan agenda, then it is hopelessly confused about the difference between lack of *solvency* and lack of *liquidity.* Solvency involves the wherewithal of the issuing entity to pay principal and interest on its obligations: Does the issuer have the resources—the assets or the cash flows—to make the needed payments? There is not the slightest doubt that the federal government, the ultimate taxing authority in the land, has both the resources and the willingness to assure payment of all its obligations. Nor has there been the slightest consideration of repudiation of or compromise on any portion of the federal debt. So the budget confrontation has had no impact whatsoever on the solvency of the federal government. Liquidity involves the availability of funds in the short run: Is there enough cash in the till to pay the bills today, or will it be necessary to wait until tomorrow, next week, or next month?

Standard & Poor's intervention at this time necessarily implies a bizarre focus on liquidity and an utter unconcern with solvency. All the emphasis is on the ability of the government to pay bills this week versus next week; no consideration is given to whether perpetual deficits will drive the government to ultimate financial ruin. If these peculiar priorities are not actually those held by Standard & Poor's, why did the agency never raise the slightest objection as presidents proposed one budget after another projecting losses

(deficits) forever? This sudden obsession with liquidity and simultaneous indifference to solvency smacks of partisanship.

Third, there has been no indication that Standard & Poor's would actually be willing to follow through on the implications of its ominous warning. If the obligations of the U.S. government are downgraded, what are the consequences for companies that hold large quantities of U.S. obligations—bonds, notes, bills, and cash? Has Standard & Poor's come to terms with the number of companies that would be candidates for downgrades if the U.S. obligations on their balance sheets were deemed to be of diminished credit quality? It would be rank hypocrisy to ignore this implication of the downgrading of U.S. obligations and cash.

Fourth, moving beyond theory, credit rating agencies do not have a stellar reputation for grasping the "big picture." Rating agencies do a reasonably effective job of evaluating the *relative* financial strength of companies within the same industry. If you want to know which companies in an industry are more or less likely to have financial problems in a prolonged downturn, credit ratings are not a bad guide. But if you want to understand whether the emperor is wearing any clothes at all, don't call Standard & Poor's for help.

A recent and notable example: Japanese banks. By 1990 virtually every bond trader, salesman, and portfolio manager in the United States understood that the Japanese banking system was a house of cards; that purportedly ample capital ratios were built on ludicrously inflated asset values. All the market participants had gotten the joke, but the rating agencies hadn't. They were focused on nominal compliance with Bank for International Settlements capital ratios and other statistics that turned out to be irrelevant; so they were still giving triple-A ratings to a number of Japanese banks. The rating agencies apparently had not a care or a clue about the business practices that were leading these banks to hold at least $370 billion of bad loans.

I particularly remember trying at that time, as a mortgage trader, to sell one bond that was rated triple-A by virtue of a supporting letter of credit issued by the U.S. branch of a prominent Japanese bank. My colleagues and I knew from the outset that the deal would be a tough sell because of the undesirable letter of credit. One sales call was to a prominent west coast money manager. "In what trailer," came the money manager's withering reply, "is that branch located?" Other money managers were less caustic but equally—and correctly—dismissive of the triple-A rating. So it's not particularly surprising that a rating agency that didn't understand what was financially wrong with Japanese banks wouldn't understand what's financially right about a serious effort to balance the federal budget.

Finally, one must note the similarity between Standard & Poor's pronouncement and Treasury Secretary Rubin's rhetoric. Even the *New York Times* observed that Standard & Poor's warning "almost exactly parallels warnings issued recently by Mr. Rubin." Secretary Rubin wasted no time showing up on the network talk shows, waving Standard & Poor's "objective" caution.

Coincidence? Perhaps, but perhaps not. Mr. Rubin's former firm, Goldman Sachs, must deal with rating agencies every day. Perhaps Secretary Rubin's direct and indirect contacts at Standard & Poor's haven't all disappeared. The secretary should be called before Congress and asked under oath whether he took any steps, direct or indirect, to encourage Standard & Poor's to issue this warning. Telephone records should be subpoenaed if necessary. If it is established that Secretary Rubin did encourage Standard & Poor's statement, he should pay the same penalty that any other chief financial officer would pay if found encouraging a negative rating-agency report on his employer: He should be fired.

James Higgins has worked for eight years for primary dealers in U.S. government securities, most of that time trading securities rated by the major rating agencies.

Democratic Complex

by Andrew Ferguson

"Welcome, my fellow Democrats!" hollered Mayor Marion Barry. It was meant to be an applause line, but the audience fell silent. Several of them looked as though they didn't want to be on the same planet as Marion Barry, much less in the same party.

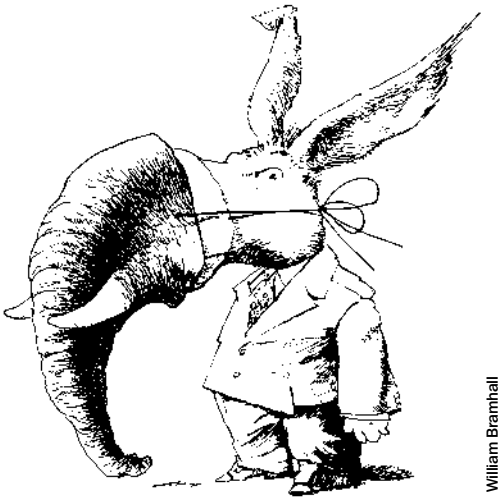
Washington's mayor forged ahead anyway, welcoming last week's conference of the Democratic Leadership Council to the Washington Convention Center. He shouldn't have been surprised by their "What do you mean *we*, Kemosabe" response. DLC members are the New Democrats, seekers after the Third Way, moving beyond the tired categories of Left and Right. Barry is Mr. Old Democrat, the Tradi-

tional Liberal, a walking exemplar of the Worn-out Bureaucratic Model.

But he's learning, as a good host should. "Here in the District," the mayor went on, "we're going to transform our old-fashioned liberal government into an enabling government—that's the wave of the future." He paused again for applause that didn't come. "We're very into self-help."

Self-help! You could almost feel the assembled New Democrats cringe. Self-help is a simplistic term, plucked from the rightward side of the old outmoded liberal-conservative spectrum, and by tossing it out this way the mayor merely confirmed his cluelessness. As the New Democrats wrestle with the complexities of the challenges of a new era, Barry remains mired in an either/or dichotomy. It was, as one DLC member told me, "paradoxical" that he should appear at the start of their annual convocation.

But no matter. For the New Democrat, life is incredibly complex. Politics is incredibly complex. New Democrats are comfortable with paradox, fluent in the language of oxymoron. The New Democrat spits out the epithet "simplistic" as if it were a chunk of gristle. Speak of nuance and subtlety and a smile of pleasure floats across his face. Rise before a New Democrat convocation and call for a new politics that moves us as a people and a nation beyond the orthodoxies of the past, and you will see members of the movement swoon into rapture.



William Bramhall

Maybe *swoon* is too strong a word. So is *rapture*. Come to think of it, so is *movement*. New Democrats are earnest but not numerous. Founded 11 years ago (by, among others, Al Gore and Bill Clinton), the DLC considered this year's conference a landmark. Turnout was nearly double last year's showing. Hard on the heels of the 1994 debacle, almost 1,500 Democrats registered to attend—nearly one out of every 27,000 Democrats in America. But still.

"I'm here to get new ideas for my campaign," said Tracey Vance, an Iowan who plans to run for Congress next year, and as he scurried from panel to plenary he was not disappointed. Along with its affiliated think tank, the Progressive Policy Institute, the DLC fairly fibrillates with ideas. "Because Ideas Matter," is the council's (mysterious) slogan. And where are ideas found? In "The Idea Book," a three-ring binder issued to all particpants, stuffed with briefing papers, mission statements, manifestoes, magazine articles, and talking points—for New Democrats, a Thanksgiving Day feast, served a week early.

The ideas are, as you'd expect, incredibly complex. They contain more paradoxes than a book of koans. They represent the Third Way: progressive and ambitious but not liberal, cautious and skeptical but not conservative. The Democratic party's problem, according to the DLC diagnosis, is that, as the left-leaning party in America's two-party system, it leans to the left. Why, they ask, doesn't this bull have teats?

"The beginning of wisdom," says PPI president Will Marshall, "is to reject the either/or dichotomy." Thus: "The Gingrich revolution goes too far, but doesn't go far enough." New Democrats reject "the command and control model" of regulation in favor of the "opportunity and outcome" model. Taxes? "Neither the liberal nor conservative approach meets the true goal of tax reform." Ditto health care: "Traditional left-right remedies sidestep the all-important goal . . ." Job creation: "Traditional liberal and conservative answers are not much help." On the touchy issue of teen pregnancy, policymakers must "distinguish between young teens" who shouldn't do it, and "older teens" who will do it anyway but should use a condom when they do. New Democrats walk through gray areas, swim in deep waters. This may be why there are so few of them.

At first blush all this complexity could mean trouble for New candidates like Tracy Vance. Electoral campaigns demand bright, bold colors; the DLC offers a palette of pastels. Many participants I spoke with described themselves therefore as "raging moderates" or members of the "radical middle"—currently fashionable oxymorons meant to jazz up something unexciting (moderation) by twinning it with a self-cancelling opposite. You might as well speak of a "horny Pat Boone."

It is difficult to see how the DLC agenda could sell as a campaign platform. "Take the issue of regulation, like OSHA," Tracy Vance said. "I can tell voters that we need devolution, to move power out of Washington, down to the lowest possible level of government decision-making." But isn't that what his Republican opponent will be saying? "Oh no," he said. "Because New Democrats don't see regulation as evil. These

radical Republicans do. We want devolution, *and* we want national standards, too. The main thing is, people don't want Washington telling them what to do." Or, as DLC talking points put it: We need "accountal devolution" rather than "wholesale national divestiture." This is how you get moderates raging.

Their protests to the contrary notwithstanding, New Democrats remain Democrats first and foremost, at least rhetorically. Every panel I saw over the two-day DLC conference, every plenary, every speech, offered ritual denunciations of Republican extremism, harshness, cruelty, and intellectual poverty, even as the speaker pushed an idea—say, market-based environmental regulation—conceived and advocated by Republicans.

The "New" in New Democrat allows innumerable strategic advantages like this. You can condemn plutocrats *and* the bureaucrats who harass them. You can advocate a massively expensive "Workers' GI Bill" for people who were never GIs. You can showcase Americorps, which pays kids to volunteer (talk about paradox!). You can condemn the instrusiveness of government while finding new things for it to do. You can, in short, have it both ways: PPI's budget plan is called "Cut and Invest."

And best of all, you never have to become a Republican, avoiding association with such vulgarians as Helms, Buchanan, and Enid Waldholz's husband.

Still, the DLC is a pretty thin reed from which to build a movement. "I have seen the future of the Democratic party," DLC chairman Joe Lieberman told the audience, "and it's right here in this room." He meant it as a compliment, but he could be righter than he knows. If they can't do better than this, we may indeed have seen the Democratic party of the future: a roomful of 1,500 people. ♦

Why Newt Must Run

by Arianna Huffington

Last week, Newt Gingrich spoke a few surprising words—words that went astonishingly unnoticed, given their ominous ring. "We may lose next year," he told the annual meeting of GOPAC, the political-action committee he ran for nine years, "but in 11 months, working as a team, we made the tough decisions and laid our careers on the line." Wait a moment: lose next year? Was that Newt Gingrich, the leader of the political realignment, slayer of the New Deal, the most powerful congressional politician since Henry Clay?

It was, and he was reflecting a mood that is spreading throughout Republican Washington. Losing the budget battle, losing the White House, losing the House—losses that would have been inconceivable a few months ago, all of a sudden are part of the Republican conversation.

The inconceivable could happen only because most Republicans have been addressing the nation more like accountants than leaders. Conversations with your accountant are never something you look forward to, even when the news is good. "Yes, we are going to balance the budget in seven years, save the Medicare trust fund, and cut billions of dollars from federal programs," the accountants say, but they offer nothing to fulfill the public longing to live in a better nation, one in which compassion and community are at least as important as economic efficiency. To judge from the latest polls, the nation seems to be replying, "Fine, but the other guys are going to do similar things, and they have a bigger heart." In a recent CNN/Gallup poll, the president is leading Republicans in public confidence by 48 percent to 42 percent.

What's going on here? How can a president who only last month backtracked on his proudest achievement—the 1993 tax increase—and who is held in contempt by his own troops on the Hill have a 52 percent approval rating? And how can the speaker of the House, who has delivered on the legislative agenda of the revolution more decisively than even his most ardent supporters thought possible, have a 49 percent negative rating? Most important, how can the revolution move forward when Republicans have allowed its opponents to define it?

There are those who believe that, given his combative nature, Gingrich might as well give up on personal popularity, and that his best bet is to continue to concentrate on maintaining the coalition on the Hill and shepherding the legislative agenda. If the Republican nominee ends up being Bob Dole, they argue, and if either Dole bests Clinton next November or Clinton is reelected, Gingrich will continue moving the revolution forward as speaker of the House.

But where is it written in stone that Gingrich will still be speaker in January 1997? The upcoming presidential race will be a referendum on the Republican agenda. If the nominee turns out to be unable to articulate the vision of the revolution, he will not only fail to win the White House, he could drag others to defeat

with him—putting the House, and the revolution itself, at risk.

If we are confident in the revolution, how can we continue to sleepwalk through the nominating process, and wake up, when it's too late, with a nominee using the megaphone of a presidential campaign to explain to the nation a revolution he does not understand? The prospect is as painful as hearing a Schubert song warbled by Roseanne.

Running for president would undoubtedly be the biggest gamble of Gingrich's political career. And there is absolutely no self-interested reason for him to do it. He has said that he would run only if there were a clear moral imperative for him to do so. As he and his wife contemplate the decision over the Thanksgiving break, here are not one but two moral imperatives, and, for good measure, a strategic imperative as well.

Sean Delonas

The first moral imperative was expressed by Gingrich in his first speech as speaker: "How can any American read about an 11-year-old buried with his teddy bear because he killed a 14-year-old, and then another 14-year-old killed him, and not have some sense of 'My God, where has this country gone?' How can we not decide that this is a moral crisis equal to segregation, equal to slavery, and how can we not insist that every day we take steps to do something?"

The Republican message so far has been expressed not in terms of a moral crisis but in terms of dollars and cents. The connection between balancing the budget and turning lives around has simply not been made; neither has the connection between the level of pain in America that Gingrich has spoken about and the legislative agenda on the Hill.

Precisely because Gingrich is right about the moral crisis the country is facing—millions of lives and entire communities destroyed by drugs, alcohol, gangs, and violence—there is a moral imperative for him to fill the leadership vacuum and address the growing devastation.

The second moral imperative was again identified by the speaker in his speech on the night of the Million Man March: "I don't think that any white conservative anywhere in America ought to look at Louis Farrakhan and just condemn him, without asking yourself where were you when the children died, where were you when the schools failed, where were you when they had no hope, and unless we're prepared to roll up our sleeves and we are prepared to reach out and to say, 'I'll give you an alternative . . .'" There is a moral imperative to articulate the alternative not every now and then but with a sense of urgency, day in and day out, in full-length speeches and in answers at press conferences, on talk radio and on *Oprah* and on *Live with Regis and Kathie Lee*, until this becomes a revolution with a human face and Americans recognize it as their own.

The presidential race provides an ideal opportunity to use the bully pulpit to paint vivid pictures of how we will rebuild our communities and renew American civilization. There is a moral imperative not only to demonstrate how rotten and full of holes is the celebrated government safety net but to use the spotlight of presidential politics to become part of the solution—to challenge Americans to join in weaving a new and true safety net out of their own actions and compassion, to make a lasting difference in their own communities.

Now the strategic imperative for running. The risks of doing nothing—of following the course of least resistance—are always underestimated. Gingrich today is not the Gingrich of January 1995. He is still speaker of the House, but he is no longer Master of the Universe, with a president who feels compelled to remind the press corps that he is still relevant. And the speakership is going to decrease further in value if the message of the revolution continues to be communicated so poorly. While Gingrich is trapped in the role of combative legislator, and there is no ideological standard-bearer to rally 60 percent of the electorate behind the agenda, both the leader of the revolution and its legislative achievements will continue to lose support.

Politics, like life, is paradoxical. And the same strategic arguments that are used to dissuade Gingrich

from running for president—his duty to finish the job on the Hill and his very high negatives—may be the most compelling arguments in favor of his candidacy. After all, the greatest obstacle to completing the job will be public opinion, and the most direct way for Gingrich to turn around both public opinion and his numbers may be to delegate the daily combat on the Hill to a team of his most able lieutenants and take the message to the valleys.

Is it not worth the sacrifice if Gingrich can be liberated from his coalition-building job in the House to build consensus in the country? And wouldn't the House freshmen be far more grateful to him if he helped create a national climate that would make it easier for them to defend their voting records when they're fighting for their seats next November?

Freshmen are looking carefully at the disappointing results of the November 7 elections and are not assuaged by the official GOP spin—that Republican candidate Larry Forgy lost the governor's race in Kentucky only because he failed to respond to personal attacks by Paul Patton, his Democratic opponent. Don Ringe, who was the media consultant on Forgy's campaign and personally read over 4,000 responses to nightly tracking polls, is convinced that the Patton campaign's attacks on the Republican agenda were what really hurt Forgy. "Forgy's unfavorables," Ringe told me "were exactly the same as his opponent's right up to election night—a relatively low 29 percent. It was not until the Democrats began running ads hanging Gingrich and Medicare around our necks that our numbers began to sink." Come next fall, Dick Morris will hang Gingrich and Medicare and school lunches and tax cuts for the rich and a whole lot more around the Republican candidates' necks. Gingrich nationalized the election in '94; Clinton will nationalize it in '96.

But just as the Gingrich of November 1995 is different from the one who assumed the speakership, so too the Gingrich of November 1996 could be a far different, far more inspiring public figure. Gingrich may be a lightning rod, but he also embodies the revolution like no one else. He is its most articulate, self-confident, and unapologetic voice, and he burns with conviction that America can and will be a better place because of it. And if he's sufficiently freed up from the punishing legislative schedule of the last few months, he can rediscover the youthful realization that drove him to dedicate his life to politics in the first place: that at certain critical moments in history, effective leadership is all that stands between a civilization and its collapse.

There are times in life when risking everything is more prudent than protecting what you have. For Gingrich, this could be one of them. And if Gingrich fails to accept the mission, the mission does not go away. The hole in the heart of the Republican revolution remains, waiting for a leader to fill it.

Arianna Huffington is a senior fellow of the Progress and Freedom Foundation, where she chairs its Center for Effective Compassion.

Mediscare Tactics

by Christopher Caldwell

The usual pattern is for Republicans to win a squeaker election, while Democrats moan about the dirty tactics used to pull it off. That pattern was reversed with this November's races, when Democrats employed a campaign of "scare calls" over Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security to halt Republican advances for the first time since 1992. The same week, a scandal broke around Democratic campaign tactics, focusing Republican outrage on that preeminent moral preener, Florida governor Lawton Chiles.

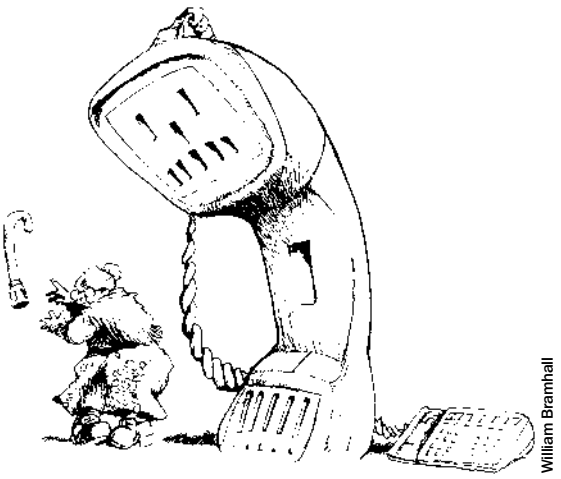
A lowdown election trick came back and bit Chiles on the anniversary of his 63,000-vote win over Jeb Bush in the closest governor's race in Florida history. Thanks to subpoena threats from Republican state senator Charlie Crist, we now know the following: National Telecommunications Systems, Inc. (NTS), a phone-bank company, made at least 70,000 (and as many as 684,000) calls to senior citizens in the last three days of the November 1994 campaign. The cold-callers passed themselves off as members of two groups: the Florida Association of Senior Citizens (which is run by a Republican) and Citizens for Tax Fairness (which does not exist). They told voters that (a) Bush's running mate favored eliminating Social Security, and (b) Jeb Bush was a tax cheat. Neither was, strictly speaking, true.

The Chiles campaign denied all knowledge of the scheme until Crist's subpoena loomed. Then campaign manager Jim Krog stepped up to take the fall. But not *really* take the fall. As Chiles spokesman Ron Sachs says, "Jim Krog acknowledged he made a bad decision. He is one of the great political strategists in the state." (No argument there.) "And frankly, he's the

Republicans' worst nightmare." In other words, he's staying.

So is Scott Falmlen, who served for five years as vice president of the offending phone-bank company before going into Florida politics in 1990. He has been rewarded for his efforts on the Chiles campaign with the executive directorship of the Florida Democratic party. Says Sachs: "He'll continue to serve as executive director." Even with the two most liberal newspapers in the state—the *Gainesville Sun* and the *St. Petersburg Times*—raining abuse on Chiles, the governor grudgingly apologized only on November 14. The message of the non-firings and semi-apology is that this kind of campaigning is okay with at least one of the Democratic party's arbiters of what is in-bounds and what out.

Nor are Republicans above such wiles: Virginia's Joint Republican Caucus has owned up to mailing 6,000 postcards urging Democrats to vote for an independent assembly candidate, Donal Day, in order to draw votes away from Democrat Emily Couric (Katie's sister), who won anyway. The cards were mailed out under the name of a group called "Dems 4 Day" (a dead giveaway: Only Republican activists refer to Democrats as "Dems"). In neither the Florida nor the Virginia case were laws violated. Florida has no sponsor-identification law. Virginia has one but it wasn't broken: Republicans actually went to the trouble of *founding* Dems 4 Day—it's a real organization.



William Bramhall

Similarities between the Florida scare calls and the Medicare tactics used by Democrats this fall only heighten Republican fears that a new campaign style is emerging nationally. In Kentucky, a wacky campaign-finance reform that strangles candidates while allowing untrammeled "independent" expenditures may have interacted with scare tactics in a way that led to illegalities. The husband of a staffer for Republican senator Mitch McConnell received two calls within two minutes from near-identical numbers (606 491-9533 and 606 491-9522). The first caller identified himself as an AFL-CIO operative. The second claimed to work in the office of Republican candidate Larry Forgy and said, "We would like you to get out and vote for our candidate. We think that he's the biggest thief ever." The state's Registry of Election Finance is investigating.

Such attacks constitute the worst kind of dirty campaigning. Yet Chiles spokesman Sachs is half right when he says that they are part of the ordinary give-and-take of politics. Republicans (and the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page) have been too quick to use the fraudulent conduct in Florida to besmirch all Democratic rhetoric designed to scare the bejabers out of voters over social-service cuts. True, some of these messages bordered on the moronic: Kentucky voters were warned that Republicans, in their zeal for privatization, wanted to "sell" the state's lakes, as if someone were going to load them onto cargo planes and ship them to Japan. Virginia Republican activists piecing together Democratic phone appeals say that one of the Medicaid calls contained the line, "Republicans want to take away your home . . . ." It's a bit pathetic, as Newt Gingrich, unsurprisingly, has remarked.

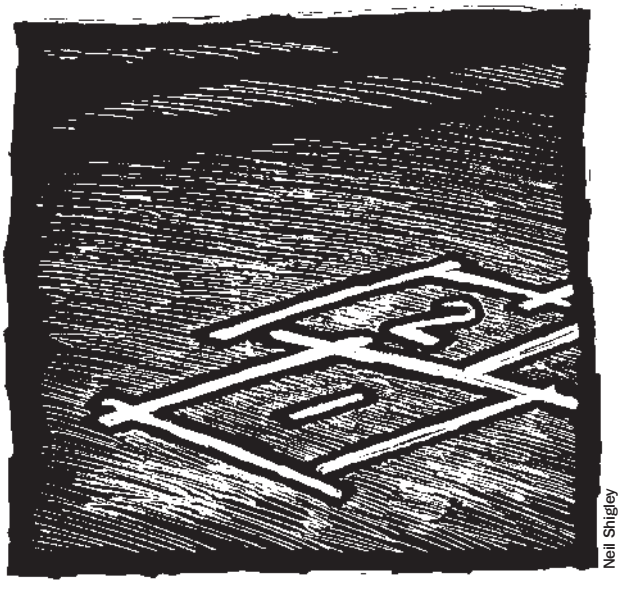
But it's not a threat to civilization as we know it. No one should confuse Chiles's sleazy tactics with his message—which may be sleazy, too, but is up to voters to parse. It's not illegitimate to "scare" senior citizens about benefits, any more than it'soff-limits to scare city-dwellers about crime. Certain Republicans seem inclined to police such Democratic "distortions" as describing the slowing of Medicare increases as "cuts." In fact, this is not unlike the language Republicans used to rail against tax "increases" through bracket-creep in the late 70s. The Democrats may be taking advantage of a tilted rhetorical playing field on Medicare and Social Security, but it's up to the Republicans to even it out.

Republicans at the National Republican Senatorial Committee are making sure a Florida-style phone scheme doesn't happen again. The committee's executive director, John Heubusch, favors an investigation of several state races and has put Democrats on notice that selected seniors' homes in Oregon will be equipped with call-tracing machinery during the mail-in special elections to fill Bob Packwood's open Senate seat. That's good. Such measures address the really serious issues that have arisen out of Florida '94 and the recent elections. They should be sufficient to prevent a repeat of the con job in Florida last year, which gave Chiles the governorship but cost him the thing he always so self-righteously professed to care about most. ♦

The coming of the Super-predators

By John J. Dilulio, Jr.

Lynne Abraham doesn't scare easily. Abraham is the no-nonsense Democratic district attorney of Philadelphia. The city's late tough-cop mayor, Frank Rizzo, baptized her "one tough cookie." The label stuck, and rightly so. Abraham has sent more mafiosi to prison than Martin Scorcese, stood up (all 5′2″ of her) to violent drug kingpins, won bipartisan support in this Congress for wresting control of the city's jail system from an ACLU-brand federal judge, and, most recently, publicly shamed the know-nothing literati who want to free convicted cop-killer Mumia Abu-Jamal. Today various of her colleagues at the non-partisan National District Attorneys Association describe her as "suite smart and street smart," "a genuine law-and-order liberal," and "probably the best big-city D.A. in the country."



Neil Shigley

All true. So pay attention, because Lynne Abraham is scared.

In a recent interview, Abraham used such phrases as "totally out of control" and "never seen anything like it" to describe the rash of youth crime and violence that has begun to sweep over the City of Brotherly Love and other big cities. We're not just talking about teenagers, she stressed. We're talking about boys whose voices have yet to change. We're talking about elementary school youngsters who pack guns instead of lunches. We're talking about kids who have absolutely no respect for human life and no sense of the future. In short, we're talking big trouble that hasn't yet begun to crest.

And make no mistake. While the trouble will be greatest in black inner-city neighborhoods, other places are also certain to have burgeoning youth-crime problems that will spill over into upscale central-city districts, inner-ring suburbs, and even the rural heartland. To underscore this point, Abraham recounted a recent town-hall meeting in a white working-class section of the city that has fallen on hard times: "They're becoming afraid of their own children. There were some big beefy guys there, too. And they're asking me what am *I* going to do to control *their* children."

I interviewed Abraham, just as I have interviewed other justice-system officials and prison inmates, as a reality check on the incredibly frightening picture that emerges from recent academic research on youth crime and violence. All of the research indicates that Americans are sitting atop a demographic crime bomb. And all of those who are closest to the problem hear the bomb ticking.

To cite just a few examples, following my May 1995 address to the district attorneys association, big-city prosecutors inundated me with war stories about the ever-growing numbers of hardened, remorseless juveniles who were showing up in the system. "They kill or maim on impulse, without any intelligible motive," said one. Likewise, a veteran beat policeman confided:

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"I never used to be scared. Now I say a quick Hail Mary every time I get a call at night involving juveniles. I pray I go home in one piece to my own kids."

On a recent visit to a New Jersey maximum-security prison, I spoke to a group of life-term inmates, many of them black males from inner-city Newark and Camden. In a typical remark, one prisoner fretted, "I was a bad-ass street gladiator, but these kids are stone-cold predators." Likewise, in his just-published book, Mansfield B. Frazier, a five-time convicted felon, writes of what he calls "The Coming Menace": "As bad as conditions are in many of our nation's ravaged inner-city neighborhoods, in approximately five years they are going to get worse, a lot worse." Having done time side-by-side with today's young criminals in prisons and jails all across the country, he warns of a "sharp, cataclysmic" increase in youth crime and violence.

WHAT FRIGHTENS EVERYONE IS NOT WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW; IT'S WHAT'S JUST AROUND THE CORNER—A SHARP INCREASE IN YOUNG PREDATORS

To add my own observations to this pile, since 1980 I've studied prisons and jails all across the country—San Quentin, Leavenworth, Rikers Island. I've been on the scene at prison murders and riots (and once was almost killed inside a prison). Moreover, I grew up in a pretty tough neighborhood and am built like an aging linebacker. I will still waltz backwards, notebook in hand and alone, into any adult maximum-security cellblock full of killers, rapists, and muggers.

But a few years ago, I forswore research inside juvenile lock-ups. The buzz of impulsive violence, the vacant stares and smiles, and the remorseless eyes were at once too frightening and too depressing (my God, these are *children*!) for me to pretend to "study" them.

The numbers are as alarming as the anecdotes. At a time when overall crime rates have been dropping, youth crime rates, especially for crimes of violence, have been soaring. Between 1985 and 1992, the rate at which males ages 14 to 17 committed murder increased by about 50 percent for whites and over 300 percent for blacks.

While it remains true that most violent youth crime is committed by juveniles against juveniles, of late young offenders have been committing more homicides, robberies, and other crimes against adults. There is even some evidence that juveniles are doing homicidal violence in "wolf packs." Indeed, a 1993 study found that juveniles committed about a third of all homicides against strangers, often murdering their victim in groups of two or more.

Violent youth crime, like all serious crime, is predominantly *intra*-racial, not interracial. The surge in violent youth crime has been most acute among black inner-city males. In 1992, black males ages 16 to 19 experienced violent crime at nearly double the rate of white males and were about twice as likely to be violent crime victims as were black males in 1973. Moreover, the violent crimes experienced by young black males tended to be more serious than those experienced by young white males; for example, aggravated assaults rather than simple assaults, and attacks involving guns rather than weaponless violence.

The youth crime wave has reached horrific proportions from coast to coast. For example, in Philadelphia, more than half of the 433 people murdered in 1994 were males between the ages of 16 and 31. All but 5 of the 89 victims under 20 were non-white. In Los Angeles, there are now some 400 youth street gangs organized mainly along racial and ethnic lines: 200 Latino, 150 black, the rest white or Asian. In 1994, their known members alone committed 370 murders and over 3,300 felony assaults.

But what is really frightening everyone from D.A.s to demographers, old cops to old convicts, is not what's happening now but what's just around the corner—namely, a sharp increase in the number of super crime-prone young males.

Nationally, there are now about 40 million children under the age of 10, the largest number in decades. By simple math, in a decade today's 4 to 7-year-olds will become 14 to 17-year-olds. By 2005, the number of males in this age group will have risen about 25 percent overall and 50 percent for blacks.

To some extent, it's just that simple: More boys begets more bad boys. But to really grasp why this spike in the young male population means big trouble ahead, you need to appreciate both the statistical evidence from a generation of birth-cohort studies and related findings from recent street-level studies and surveys.

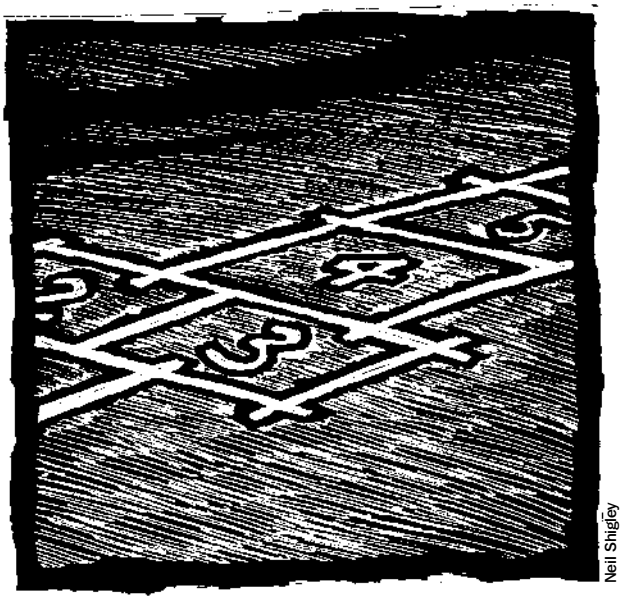
The scientific kiddie-crime literature began with a study of all 10,000 boys born in 1945 who lived in Philadelphia between their tenth and eighteenth birthdays. Over one-third had at least one recorded arrest by the time they were 18. Most of the arrests occurred when the boys were ages 15 to 17. Half of the boys who were arrested were arrested more than once.

Once a boy had been arrested three times, the chances that he would be arrested again were over 70 percent.

But the most famous finding of the study was that 6 percent of the boys committed five or more crimes before they were 18, accounting for over half of all the serious crimes, and about two-thirds of all the violent crimes, committed by the entire cohort.

This "6 percent do 50 percent" statistic has been replicated in a series of subsequent longitudinal studies of Philadelphia and many other cities. It is on this basis that James Q. Wilson and other leading crime doctors can predict with confidence that the additional 500,000 boys who will be 14 to 17 years old in the year 2000 will mean at least 30,000 more murderers, rapists, and muggers on the streets than we have today.

Likewise, it's what enables California officials to meaningfully predict that, as the state's population of 11 to 17-year-olds grows from 2.9 million in 1993 to 3.9 million in 2004, the number of juvenile arrests will increase nearly 30 percent.


Neil Shigley

But that's only half the story. The other half begins with the less well-known but equally important and well-replicated finding that since the studies began, each generation of crime-prone boys (the "6 percent") has been about three times as dangerous as the one before it. For example, crime-prone boys born in Philadelphia in 1958 went on to commit about three times as much serious crime per capita as their older cousins in the class of '45. Thus, the difference between the juvenile criminals of the 1950s and those of the 1970s and 80s was about the difference between the Sharks and Jets of *West Side Story* fame and the Bloods and Crips of Los Angeles County.

Still, demography is not fate and criminology is not pure science. How can one be certain that the demographic bulge of the next 10 years will unleash an army of young male predatory street criminals who will make even the leaders of the Bloods and Crips—known as O.G.s, for "original gangsters"—look tame by comparison?

The answer centers on a conservative theory of the root causes of crime, one that is strongly supported by all of the best science as well as the common sense of the subject. Call it the theory of moral poverty.

Most Americans of every race, religion, socio-economic status, and demographic description grow up in settings where they are taught right from wrong and rewarded emotionally or spiritually (if not also or always materially) for deferring immediate gratification and respecting others. Most of us were blessed to be born to loving and responsible parents or guardians. And most of us were lucky enough to have other adults in our lives (teachers, coaches, clergy) who reinforced the moral lessons that we learned at home—don't be selfish, care about others, plan for the future, and so on.

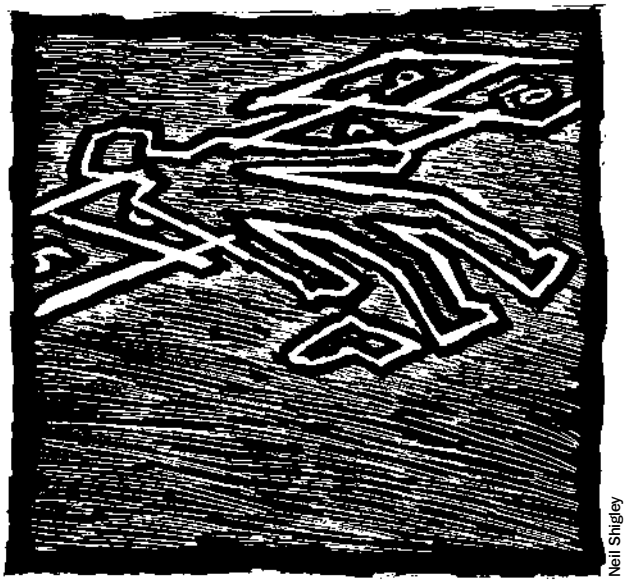
But some Americans grow up in moral poverty. Moral poverty is the poverty of being without loving, capable, responsible adults who teach you right from wrong. It is the poverty of being without parents and other authorities who habituate you to feel joy at others' joy, pain at others' pain, happiness when you do right, remorse when you do wrong. It is the poverty of growing up in the virtual absence of people who teach morality by their own everyday example and who insist that you follow suit.

In the extreme, moral poverty is the poverty of growing up surrounded by deviant, delinquent, and criminal adults in abusive, violence-ridden, fatherless, Godless, and jobless settings. In sum, whatever their material circumstances, kids of whatever race, creed, or color are most likely to become criminally depraved when they are morally deprived.

Most predatory street criminals—black and white, adult and juvenile, past and present—have grown up in abject moral poverty. But the Bloods and Crips were so much more violent, on average, than their 50s counterparts, and the next class of juvenile offenders will be even worse, because in recent decades each generation of youth criminals in this country has grown up in more extreme conditions of moral poverty than the one before it.

The abject moral poverty that creates super-predators begins very early in life in homes where uncondi-

tional love is nowhere but unmerciful abuse is common. One of the best ethnographic accounts of this reality is Mark S. Fleisher's 1995 book on the lives of 194 West Coast urban street criminals, including several dozen who were juveniles at the time he did his primary field research (1988 to 1990). Almost without exception, the boys' families "were a social fabric of fragile and undependable social ties that weakly bound children to their parents and other socializers." Nearly all parents abused alcohol or drugs or both. Most had no father in the home; many had fathers who were criminals. Parents "beat their sons and daughters—whipped them with belts, punched them with fists, slapped them, and kicked them."


Neil Shigley

Such ethnographic evidence is mirrored by national statistics on the morally impoverished beginnings of incarcerated populations. For example, 75 percent of highly violent juvenile criminals suffered serious abuse by a family member; nearly 80 percent witnessed extreme violence (beatings, killings); over half of prisoners come from single-parent families; over one-quarter have parents who abused drugs or alcohol; nearly a third have a brother with a prison or jail record.

Among other puzzles, the moral poverty theory explains why, despite living in desperate economic poverty, under the heavy weight of Jim Crow, and with plenty of free access to guns, the churchgoing, two-parent black families of the South never experienced anything remotely like the tragic levels of homicidal youth and gang violence that plague some of today's black inner-city neighborhoods.

It also explains why once relatively crime-free white working-class neighborhoods are evolving into white underclass neighborhoods. The out-migration of middle-class types, divorce, out-of-wedlock births, and graffiti-splattered churches have spawned totally unsocialized young white males who commit violent crimes and youth gangs that prefer murder to mischief. (Anyone who doubts it is welcome to tour my old Catholic blue-collar neighborhood in Philadelphia.)

Moral poverty begets juvenile super-predators whose behavior is driven by two profound developmental defects. First, they are radically present-oriented. Not only do they perceive no relationship between doing right (or wrong) now and being rewarded (or punished) for it later. They live entirely in and for the present moment; they quite literally have no concept of the future. As several researchers have found, ask a group of today's young big-city murderers for their thoughts about "the future," and many of them will ask you for an explanation of the question.

Second, the super-predators are radically self-regarding. They regret getting caught. For themselves, they prefer pleasure and freedom to incarceration and death. Under some conditions, they are affectionate and loyal to fellow gang members or relatives, but not even moms or grandmoms are sacred to them; as one prisoner quipped, "crack killed everybody's 'mama.'" And they place zero value on the lives of their victims, whom they reflexively dehumanize as just so much worthless "white trash" if white, or by the usual racial or ethnic epithets if black or Latino.

On the horizon, therefore, are tens of thousands of severely morally impoverished juvenile super-predators. They are perfectly capable of committing the most heinous acts of physical violence for the most trivial reasons (for example, a perception of slight disrespect or the accident of being in their path). They fear neither the stigma of arrest nor the pain of imprisonment. They live by the meanest code of the meanest streets, a code that reinforces rather than restrains their violent, hair-trigger mentality. In prison or out, the things that super-predators get by their criminal behavior—sex, drugs, money—are their own immediate rewards. Nothing else matters to them. So for as long as their youthful energies hold out, they will do what comes "naturally": murder, rape, rob, assault, burglarize, deal deadly drugs, and get high.

What is to be done? I will conclude with one big idea, but my best advice is not to look for serious answers from either crowd in Washington.

Earlier this year, I was among a dozen guests invited to a working White House dinner on juvenile

crime. Over gourmet Szechwan wonton and lamb, the meeting dragged on for three-and-a-half hours. President Clinton took copious notes and asked lots of questions, but nothing was accomplished. One guest pleaded with him to declare a National Ceasefire Day. Wisely, he let that one pass. But another guest recommended that he form (you guessed it) a commission. In mid-July, the president named six members to a National Commission on Crime Control and Prevention. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

Meanwhile, Republicans have made some real improvements on the 1994 crime bill. But it is hard to imagine that block-granting anti-crime dollars will work (it never has before). And it is easy to see how the passion for devolution is driving conservatives to contradict themselves. For years they've stressed that drugs, crime, and welfare dependency are cultural and moral problems. Now, however, they talk as if perverse monetary incentives explained everything.

True, government policies helped wreck the two-parent family and disrupted other aspects of civil society. But how does the sudden withdrawal of government lead automatically to a rebirth of civil society, an end to moral poverty, and a check on youth crime? It doesn't, not any more than pulling a knife from the chest of a dead man brings him dancing back to life. Liberal social engineering was bad; conservative social re-engineering will prove worse.

My one big idea is borrowed from three well-known child-development experts—Moses, Jesus Christ, and Mohammed. It's called religion. If we are to have a prayer of stopping any significant fraction of the super-predators short of the prison gates, then we had better say "Amen," and fast.

Why religion? Two reasons. First, a growing body of scientific evidence from a variety of academic disciplines indicates that churches can help cure or curtail many severe socioeconomic ills. For example, a 1986 study by Harvard economist Richard Freeman found that among black urban youth, church attendance was a better predictor of who would escape drugs, crime, and poverty than any other single variable (income, family structure) and that churchgoing youth were more likely than otherwise comparable youth to behave in socially constructive ways. Likewise, a study by a panel of leading specialists just published by the journal *Criminology* concluded that, while much work remains to be done, there is substantial empirical evidence that religion serves "as an insulator against crime and delinquency." And we have long known that many of the most effective substance-abuse prevention and treatment programs, both in society and behind bars, are either explicitly religious or quasi-religious in their orientation.

Second, religion is the one answer offered time and again by the justice-system veterans, prisoners, and others I've consulted. With particular reference to black youth crime, for example, it is an answer proffered in recent books by everyone from liberal Cornel West to neoconservative Glenn Loury, Democrat Jesse Jackson to Republican Alan Keyes.

In a recent forum at Trenton's Mount Zion AME Church, Isaac "Ike" Ballard, executive director of education for the New Jersey prison system, spoke the big truth: "The church is the most potent establishment in every black community. It is the single entity that can take on the mission of economic development and give people, especially young people, an alternative to drugs and crime." To be sure, black churches are in decline in many needy neighborhoods. They are straining to stay open despite lost membership, near-empty coffers, and increasing community demands. Still, they remain the last best hope for rebuilding the social and spiritual capital of inner-city America.

We must, therefore, be willing to use public funds to empower local religious institutions to act as safe havens for at-risk children (church-run orphanages, boarding schools, call them what you please), provide adoption out-placement services, administer government-funded "parenting skills" classes, handle the youngest non-violent juvenile offenders, provide substance-abuse treatment, run day-care and pre-school programs, and perform other vital social and economic development functions.

> MY ONE BIG IDEA IS BORROWED FROM THREE WELL-KNOWN CHILD-DEVELOPMENT EXPERTS—MOSES, JESUS CHRIST, AND MOHAMMED.

Although many government officials are reluctant to admit it—and while data on how much of each government social-services dollar already goes through religious institutions are incredibly sparse—in some places churches are already performing such tasks with direct or indirect public support. We should enable them to do even more.

Obviously, even with increased public support, churches could not come close to saving every child or solving every social problem. But I'd bet that the marginal return on public investments that strengthen the community-rebuilding and child-protection capacities

of local churches would equal or exceed that of the marginal tax dollar spent on more cops, more public schools, and more prisons.

Such proposals raise all sorts of elite hackles. But most Americans believe in God (90 percent) and pray each day (80 percent). The trouble is that our faith in God and religion is not reflected in federal, state, and local social policies, courtesy of the anti-religious and non-religious liberal and conservative pseudo-sophisticates of both parties. Let them argue church-state issues (anyone remember the Northwest Ordinance or what the Founding Fathers really said about religion?) all the way to the next funeral of an innocent kid caught in the crossfire. Let these theoretic politicians, as Madison would disparagingly call them, trifle with non-issues concerning which level of government ought to take the lead in protecting lives and property. (Answer: all.)

No one in academia is a bigger fan of incarceration than I am. Between 1985 and 1991 the number of juveniles in custody increased from 49,000 to nearly 58,000. By my estimate, we will probably need to incarcerate at least 150,000 juvenile criminals in the years just ahead. In deference to public safety, we will have little choice but to pursue genuine get-tough law-enforcement strategies against the super-predators.

But some of these children are now still in diapers, and they can be saved. So let our guiding principle be, "Build churches, not jails"—or we will reap the whirlwind of our own moral bankruptcy. ♦

The Case for an American 'Frankpledge'

By Andrew Peyton Thomas

In recent years, the alarming increase in violent crime rates has proved resistant to the best efforts of police and politicians. These trends have also given us reason to reconsider the tried and true crime-control strategies that once kept American streets safe. In particular, it is time that American tax policies begin to reflect the age-old presumption that private citizens, rather than the government, are primarily responsible for the defense of their neighborhoods from criminals.

Accordingly, the federal government should offer a tax credit or some other comparable financial incentive for Americans to participate in Neighborhood Watch programs or similar community crime-control organizations. By giving each participating household a credit of, say, $250 a year, the federal government could do far more to deter crime than spending the same amount for more police officers and prisons.

To receive this tax benefit, citizens would be required to patrol their neighborhoods without weapons, armed only with walkie-talkies and other communications gear capable of informing police of any criminal activity discovered. Their sole duty would be to inform police of crimes in progress.

Such a system would not be some untested anti-crime proposal born of frustration with the current crime problem. It is, rather, a return to the system of community self-protection that the Founding Fathers inherited from Great Britain. Under the system called the "frankpledge," men without property were organized for community self-defense and required to serve as night watchmen. This arrangement served for centuries as an effective deterrent to crime. It was not abandoned until the 1800s, when Americans became confident that the new police departments being created could singlehandedly deter crime.

By offering tax credits for community crime-control service, the government would not be making such service mandatory. This is an important distinction from the classic frankpledge and is more consistent with the ethos of our time. Rather, the American frankpledge would enlist volunteers for defense of their own territory, modestly compensating them and thereby demonstrating government's support for this indispensable service.

It would also be a better investment of federal money than simply sending more funds to police

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departments. While policemen cannot be everywhere at once, neighbors, in a sense, can. Now, the probability of arrest for a crime in progress is about 33 percent, while a mere 15-minute delay in giving chase reduces the probability to 5 percent. One prominent criminologist, Herman Goldstein, has estimated convincingly that a 5 to 10 percent increase in citizen anti-crime involvement could "possibly prove of much greater value in combating crime than a 50 to 60 percent increase in the number of police officers or an equally large investment in technical equipment."


Neil Shigley

An example of the kind of dramatic success to be reaped from such widespread citizen involvement was evident recently in Detroit's reaction to the annual real-life Halloween horror of Devil's Night. In response to the local tradition of an arson festival on the nights preceding All Hallows Eve, Detroit residents in 1991 banded together with fire extinguishers, flashlights, and radios in a massive display of community deterrence.

With the help of police helicopters and a dusk-to-dawn juvenile curfew, the 4,000 volunteers cut the number of fires from 141 the prior year to 62. In the following years, there was less community involvement and more fires, thus proving the reverse point as well.

Active governmental support of such community efforts is crucial. There is only so much that private citizens can do without a coordinated governmental strategy for fighting crime, one that issues a common call to civic duty supported by proper financial incentives. We must recognize that our duty to defend the community against criminals does not end when we pay our taxes to fund police squads. Ultimately, the people must be willing to roll up their sleeves and help out more actively.

As crime rates continue to rise ominously among juveniles, especially white juveniles (among whom crime rates are rising at more than double the rate of growth among black juveniles), we must all be prepared to assist our beleaguered police forces in the daunting task at hand. Tax incentives for community anti-crime service are a sensible place to start. For without the help of the currently disengaged masses, America's police officers will continue to languish in a siege that promises to end unpleasantly. ♦

Why We Should Decriminalize Crime

By William Tucker

The same week that O.J. Simpson got off, the U.S. Supreme Court was considering *Gore* v. *BMW*, the case of an Alabama doctor who found that his car had been partially refinished after suffering slight damage on the boat trip from Germany. An Alabama jury awarded $4,000 in compensatory damages and $4 million in punitive damages.

The juxtaposition illustrates perfectly the yawning dichotomy that has developed between the two halves of the justice system. On the criminal side, it seems impossible to convict anybody of anything. Certainly, the jails are filled with offenders. But when really important cases arise and the criminal defense industry marshals its forces, it seems less and less likely that the prosecution will secure a conviction—or, equally important, make one stick in the appeals process. Next thing you know, it is being argued that the system is "unfair" because every criminal does not get the same kind of legal defense.

The degeneration of race relations in Los Angeles and across the country, for example, has been charted by a series of bizarre acquittals in what seemed to be transparent cases of guilt. First there was the acquittal

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Neil Shigley

of five Los Angeles police officers in the beating of Rodney King. (The subsequent conviction of two of them on federal charges, a blatant violation of double jeopardy, has done little to mend the damage.) Then there was the acquittal of two black rioters, on charges of attempted murder and felonious assault, for pulverizing a truck driver on national television. (One defendant is serving 10 years for felonious mayhem.) Finally there was O.J. Throughout, there has been the running sore of the inability to secure a conviction of the Menendez brothers, who have admitted to killing both their parents with repeated blasts from a shotgun.

On the civil side of the bench, on the other hand, everybody seems guilty of everything. McDonald's must pay millions because somebody spilled a cup of their coffee. Parents pay damages because they took part in assembling a nursery-school jungle gym. Burglars win judgments against property owners for injuries incurred while breaking into the premises. "Punitive damages" in these suits are so bizarre that they would easily be recognized as "cruel and unusual punishment" were they being administered on the criminal side. As O.J. Simpson is about to find out, the civil courts—supposedly set up to resolve disputes—have in effect become more a forum for administering punishment than the criminal courts themselves.

How has this come about? Most significant is the huge gulf in procedural matters that has opened between the criminal and civil divisions since the era of the New Deal. At one time, the criminal and civil systems were governed by recognizably similar principles. The burden of proof has always been different. Civil cases are decided by the "preponderance of evidence," while criminal charges must be proved "beyond a reasonable doubt." But the procedures by which evidence was brought into the courtroom were at least somewhat the same.

Today, criminal and civil procedures might easily be mistaken for the justice systems in two different countries. On the criminal side, police and prosecutors are so hemmed in by procedural rules that "putting the prosecution on trial" is the standard method of criminal defense. Any peccadillo in evidence gathering immediately becomes the central issue of the trial. These "violations of the defendant's rights" are treated on a par with whatever murder or mayhem the defendant is accused of. As Justice Benjamin Cardozo put it, "The criminal goes free because the constable has blundered."

On the civil side, there are no such restrictions. Plaintiff attorneys have been given such enormous powers of search and seizure that they regularly refer to themselves as "private attorneys general," scouring the countryside, rooting through people's private lives and personal papers in search of real or imagined wrongdoing. Far from filtering evidence, many states have adopted an attitude of "let it all in," no matter how peculiar or irrelevant it may be. (The recent *Daubert* decision in the U.S. Supreme Court has set a higher standard at the federal level, but this is not binding on states.)

The most obvious place where the two systems have diverged is in the area of personal interrogation. The 1966 *Miranda* decision has made it extremely difficult to obtain criminal confessions—or even to elicit denials and alibis that might otherwise be disproved. A suspect must be so persistently advised of his right to retain an attorney that if he does not take advantage, the warning itself may be judged insufficient. Once an attorney arrives, however, he will not allow the suspect to confess or even respond to police interrogation. If he does, he risks giving "incompetent counsel."

Criminals still confess, but these confessions are often suppressed on the grounds that they have been "coerced." In fact, many civil liberties attorneys argue that there is no such thing as an uncoerced confession. Why would a suspect incriminate himself, except if he has been forced to or tricked by the police?

On the civil side, on the other hand, private attorneys have been given wide latitude to extract personal testimony from defendants without the supervision of the court. "Depositions"—once limited to deathbed testimony and other situations where a witness could not appear in court—have been expanded to give private attorneys the right to interrogate anybody, any time, on any matter remotely relating to a case. If your spouse sues for divorce, you can be interrogated by his or her attorney about your personal and sex life and subject to charges of perjury or contempt of court for your answers. There is no "right to remain silent." Wal-Mart was once fined $11 million because its late founder, Sam Walton, failed to show up for a couple of depositions in a case where someone had slipped and fallen in one of the company's stores.

The same divergence has occurred in the area of physical evidence. Since the 1961 *Mapp* case, criminal cases have been subject to the "exclusionary rule," which says that evidence can be withheld from the jury if constitutional procedures are violated in gathering it. These procedures are subject to endless hair-splitting and will almost certainly never be resolved. The evidence gathered from O.J. Simpson's mansion, for example, was supposedly "tainted" because police entered without a warrant. But what if they had obtained a warrant? According to the Fourth Amendment, a warrant must describe "the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized." The courts have often interpreted this to mean that if the warrant does not specifically say "socks" or "glove," such discoveries are inadmissible. On the other hand, warrants have also been held unconstitutional because they were "overbroad" and described too many things. A few years ago, the Supreme Court decided the police had violated a burglar's Fourth Amendment rights because, after legally entering his apartment in search of drugs, they turned a television set in order to read the serial number and determine if it is was stolen (it was). Turning the television set, the court said, exceeded the scope of the legal search.

Neil Shigley

On the civil side, once again, things have gone in the opposite direction. Fifty years ago, in order to obtain evidence in a civil suit, plaintiffs had to bring specific charges and list specific information that they sought, much as is done in issuing criminal search warrants. Today, "discovery" proceedings have been so vastly expanded that plaintiff attorneys can claim access to virtually any corporate record or personal paper. Plaintiffs routinely write up scattergun complaints and demand information by the truckload. Charges are then constructed after the fact. Defendants can be punished for withholding information—a standard definitely not applied to criminal defendants, even though the penalties in civil cases are often much more severe.

In criminal cases, laws against hearsay evidence have been tightened. In civil proceedings, they have been loosened. In the criminal cases, forensic DNA identification is still excluded in several states. In the civil courts, DNA identification is standard procedure in paternity cases. While criminal courts have gagged on DNA evidence—now supported by the entire scientific community—the civil courts have swallowed every sort of "junk science," from "loss of psychic powers" to the "trauma theory of cancer," which says you can get cancer from being hit on the head with an orange-juice bottle.

How did the two systems come to divide so remarkably? It is almost impossible to look at the situation without confronting the personal and financial interests of the lawyers themselves. Quite simply, the defense of criminals has become a very lucrative profession. There is a vast drug industry, as well as organized-crime and white-collar offenders, all ready and willing to shell out enormous amounts for legal representation. O.J. and Claus von Bülow are only the tip of the iceberg.

On the civil side, it is the plaintiff's attorneys who are the high rollers, collecting between one-third and half of nearly every class-action award and punitive-damage fee. Coincidentally—suspiciously, even—the law on both sides of the courthouse has steadily evolved in favor of the big-money players of the legal profession.

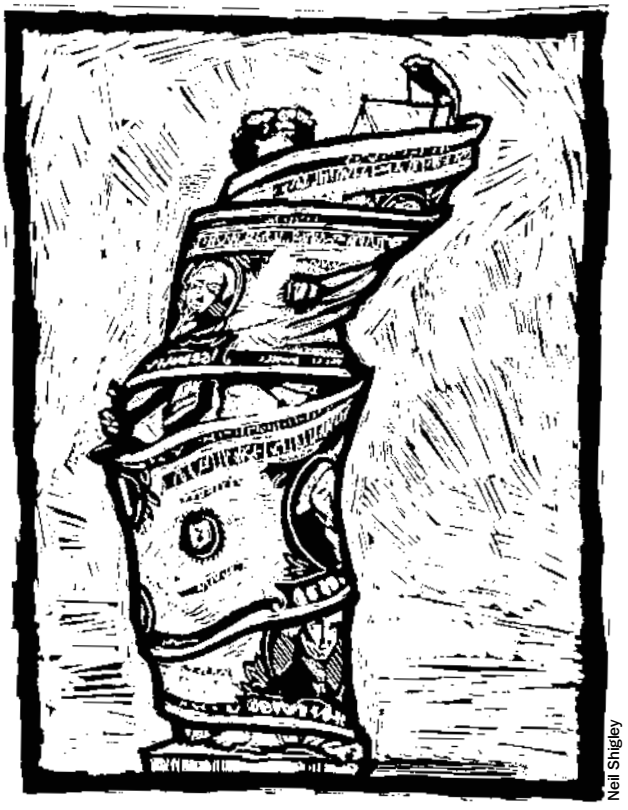
Let's start with criminal justice. The system is based on the underlying theory that the state itself—and not the victim of the crime—is the offended party. At one time, this was crucial in putting the "awesome powers of the state" on the side of innocent victims. In practice, however, it has come to mean that the prosecution of crime is a state monopoly, while defending criminals is a vigorously pursued private enterprise. It's a bit like pitting the post office against the computer industry.

One unfortunate outcome is that prosecutors don't make much money. A handful around the country may have an income in the low six figures, but most are distinctly modest. In the old days, a successful career prosecutor was rewarded by becoming a judge, but with the growth of the public-defender establishment, even this route of reward is subject to competition.

As a result, most young prosecutors—however unwittingly—are actually training to be criminal defense attorneys. The common career path is for law school graduates to sign on with the prosecutor's office to get courtroom experience. Once they have learned the ropes—and are perhaps beginning to take on family responsibilities—they switch, however reluctantly, to the defense.

Make no mistake, this changeover is usually not done without grave misgivings. For many dedicated prosecutors, it is the most painful decision of their entire lives. Yet the economic incentives are overpowering. A friend in Brooklyn was a career prosecutor until he was dumped by a change in political administrations. Reluctantly, he started representing international drug dealers. A few months later, my wife met his wife on the street just as the latter was filing their income tax returns. "Our quarterly estimated payments are now more than our entire annual income used to be," she confided.

All this has filtered back to the law schools, where criminal law is now taught from the "defense" perspective. Granted, there is a certain residue of 60s radicalism at work, but in economic terms, it just makes sense. Alan Dershowitz flies his own Lear jet, while Christopher Darden is hooted out of church. Thomas Puccio may have made his reputation as federal prosecutor in the Abscam cases, but he didn't strike it rich until he met von Bülow.



Neil Shigley

The result is that, in nearly all high-profile cases, the prosecutors appear young and inept, while defense attorneys are seasoned and eloquent. None of the assistant district attorneys on the O.J. trial could have made the fourth string on the "Dream Team." In von Bülow's retrial, Puccio and Dershowitz faced off against a Rhode Island prosecutor who had been in law school while the first case was being tried. Dominick Dunne, covering the retrial, likened it to "a football game between the New York Jets and Providence High School."

On the civil side, it is the plaintiff attorneys who are at the end of their career path, playing for sums large enough to start a foundation with. Defense attorneys are more likely to be corporate drones working on straight salary. There are no multi-million-dollar contingency fees on the side of the defense. There is no Association of the Trial Lawyers of America pushing the interests of civil defendants in Congress. Plaintiff work attracts all the professional excitement, as attorneys constantly mine new ground for malpractice and class-action suits. As usual, the law schools and professional associations follow suit.

How can some balance be restored to both these systems? Tort reform is wending its way through Congress, although whatever progress is made can be

quickly undone by the judiciary and new theories emanating out of the law schools. In criminal matters, however, the solution could be to harness the greed and entrepreneurial instincts of the legal profession to the task of punishing people for criminal offenses. How might this be done?

Here's one proposal. Let's just say to hell with it and decriminalize crime. All muggings, rapes, robberies, and murders could then be treated as civil rather than criminal matters. That would cure all the handwringing about the "awesome powers of the state" and put the alleged criminal and the victim back on equal footing. "Let it all in" would become the standard for admission of evidence. The jury would hear the whole story and the public would be assured of some reasonable facsimile of the truth.

What about punishment? That's no problem, either. A finding of "fault" would require the defendant to pay the plaintiff the usual sky's-the-limit award for punitive damages. Of course, a sober soul might object that while that would do for O.J. Simpson, an indigent defendant wouldn't have a chance of compensating his victim. Simple solution: The state could make a "loan" to cover the damages. The guilty party would then repay this loan by working at the minimum wage at a state workhouse. In other words, a murderer might spend the rest of his life trying to compensate friends and relatives of the victim—the kind of mixture of civil and criminal penalties that the Old Testament, for example, recommends.

Would the best criminal attorneys respond on behalf of crime victims? We already know. The largest civil award ever made in a prominent criminal matter was the $7.57 million judgment against Norman Mailer buddy Jack Abbott in favor of the family of Richard Ardan, the young waiter he murdered while on parole. The Ardan family's attorney in this civil proceeding? F. Lee Bailey. ♦

Patrick J. Buchanan, Left-Winger

By David Frum

In an increasingly conservative America, one political figure defiantly resists the historical tide. This man still denounces big banks and multinational corporations. Still unabashedly puts the interests of the American factory worker ahead of those of the so-called international trading system. Still refuses even to contemplate any cuts in the generosity of big middle-class spending programs like Medicare and Social Security. This man is Patrick J. Buchanan, America's last leftist.

On the airwaves in New Hampshire, it is Buchanan whose ads attack the House Republicans' Medicare reform and accuse his party of cutting off elderly Americans in order to aid the already privileged. As he told ABC's Cokie Roberts in October, "Their [the Republicans'] priorities are wrong. Why didn't they go after foreign aid? Why didn't they go after this $50 billion Mexican bailout which is unraveling before our eyes?"

In his campaign speeches, Buchanan bluntly blames the falling wages of laborers like "the single mom in a textile plant in South Carolina" on "investment bankers on Wall Street" who want her "to compete with Asian workers who have to work for 25 cents an hour."

While Democrats nervously ingratiate themselves with corporate donors, Mr. Buchanan roars his hostility to big business. In the *Wall Street Journal*, he blasted "multinational corporations whose loyalty is only to the bottom line on a balance sheet," and suggested the U.S. government "inform these amoral behemoths they are welcome to bring in their capital and build their plants. But if they shut down factories here to open overseas, they will pay a price for the readmission of their goods to the American market."

Indeed, measured by the traditional New Deal standards—which candidate attacks corporations most violently? which candidate opposes reductions in government most strenuously?—Buchanan has moved to the left of President Clinton. Hey: He's moved to the left of virtually *every* Democrat now holding national office.

Does that sound implausible? Look at the world for a moment through the eyes of a union organizer.

The intense new international competition in manufacturing has forced American companies to be less tolerant of impediments to the efficient use of labor—namely, you. Which presidential candidate is promising to shut that competition down and put you back in the driver's seat? Only Buchanan, who has called for a 20 percent tariff on Chinese exports, a 10 percent tariff on Japanese goods, and an unspecified "social tariff" on exports from Third World countries.

Now imagine yourself an embittered, downwardly mobile ex-auto worker. Who speaks to your grievances more directly than Pat Buchanan, who but he laments a "burnt out Detroit, once the forge of the Great Arsenal of Democracy . . . ghost towns that were once factory towns . . . the stagnant wages of an alienated working class and a middle class newly introduced to insecurity"?


Sean Delonas

Or put yourself in the shoes of a marginal southern tobacco farmer, fearful of what the North American Free Trade Agreement and global agricultural trade liberalization will do to his no-longer guaranteed home market. Who is offering a more convincing solution to your problems than Buchanan, with his attacks on trade deals cooked up in order "to ship Mexico tens of billions to pay off its creditors at Citibank and Goldman Sachs."

The party of Franklin Delano Roosevelt now represents a coalition of blacks, working women, public employees, trial lawyers, college professors, and high-tech industry. The party long ago turned its back on the dwindling remains of President Roosevelt's original farmer/labor/white-ethnic coalition. It's a constituency without a voice, and Buchanan is cleverly attempting to speak for it.

No doubt, Buchanan enlivens his Rooseveltian politics with some spicy condiments all his own. The adoption of the sinister term "New World Order" to describe what is in fact a half-century-old bipartisan free-trade policy is distinctively Buchananesque. True, too, Buchanan advocates a program of flatter and lower taxes on income and capital that mixes uncomfortably with his anticorporate rhetoric: the elimination of inheritance taxes on estates of less than $5 million, for instance. A vestigial Goldwaterism likewise manifests itself in Buchanan's continued championing of the old social conservative single-issue causes: guns, abortion, prayer in the schools.

But even so, compare the Pat Buchanan of today with the Pat Buchanan of 1992. The core issue of his primary challenge to President Bush was the *echt*-Reaganite accusation that Mr. Bush had backslid on taxes. Even the notorious speech to the Republican convention—for all its abandonment of the sunny and generous tone characteristic of Ronald Reagan—bashed Governor Clinton for his indifference to foreign policy, his pro-choice views on abortion, his sympathy to gay rights, his opposition to school choice, and the free-spending ways of running mate Al Gore. All orthodox Reagan doctrines.

Today, Buchanan still forthrightly states his views on abortion and gay rights—if asked. But his campaign speeches stress arresting new themes: the imminent menace of world government, the greed of international banks, the power of tariffs to stop the deterioration in blue-collar wages, the urgency of preserving Medicare in something close to its present form. This isn't anything remotely like the conservative Republicanism of the Reagan era. What it sounds very much like instead is the militant, resentful rhetoric roared by populist Democrats from William Jennings Bryan onward.

The revulsion contemporary Democrats feel for Buchanan only exposes how far that party has drifted from its own past. After all, on the issues contemporary Democrats really care about—abortion, affirmative action, the environment—big business can often

be counted on to cooperate with reasonable grace. The resentments that modern Democrats attempt to appeal to are increasingly sexual ("They just don't get it") rather than economic.

But there's no reason to expect that economic resentment will remain a taboo forever. It's often said that in good economic times, people are willing to tolerate redistribution, but in bad times they hunker down. Maybe. But put aside the 1960s and you see another pattern. During the other prosperous decades of the century—the 1920s, the 1950s, the 1980s—Americans have trusted in the fairness of their economic system and ignored complaints that the game is rigged. When good jobs are plentiful, voters believe, not unreasonably, that the way to get ahead is to go out and work. It's in bad times—the 1930s, the 1970s—that voters grumble against big business and big banks. It's in bad times that voters elect politicians who offer them nostrums to create jobs.

And for one big category of workers—high-school educated men under age 40—times have been genuinely hard for nearly 15 years. In them, a constituency for resentful economics has reappeared. So far, the politicians who have attempted to exploit this constituency have failed either because they were patent phonies (Richard Gephardt in 1988) or because they refused to reckon with these men's conservative racial views (Jesse Jackson in 1984 and 1988) or because they labored under the weight of too much standard-issue Democratic baggage (Tom Harkin in 1992). Buchanan suffers from none of these handicaps, and it may take him far.

The important question for traditional conservative Republicans is how far Mr. Buchanan should be permitted to take the party. The success of Buchanan's 1992 campaign has already begun to redirect the Republican party to a more restrictive position on immigration and a much harder line on affirmative action. More successes in 1996—a new poll has him running a strong second in New Hampshire to Bob Dole—will enhance his influence even more. Should he be welcomed or not?

In 1992, many conservatives suffered excruciating difficulty in deciding. Only a month after William F. Buckley concluded in a powerful cover story in *National Review* that he found it impossible to defend Buchanan against accusations of anti-Semitism, the editors of that same magazine urged a "tactical vote" for him in the New Hampshire primary. This time, though, the choice ought to be easier. Conservatives need to recognize that Buchanan's politics is neither a throw-back to the Taft Republicanism of the 1930s and 40s (Taft would have hacked up Medicare with gusto) nor a renovation of Reaganite conservatism for the post-Cold War world. It is something new: a populism formed to seize the political opportunities presented by strident multiculturalism and stagnating wages for less-skilled workers.

Populism, though, seldom offers answers to the problems it exploits. Cutting off immigration won't unify American culture. It is the alienation of black America from the country's old norms and ideals that is dividing the United States, and on that subject Buchanan has nothing to say.

Nor will restricting imports improve the lot of the less-skilled: Tariffs are a tax that weighs most crushingly on the poorest people in society. The apogee of American protectionism—the years from the enactment of the McKinley tariff of 1890 to Woodrow Wilson's turn to free trade in 1913—was marked by the most extreme income inequality and the most violent labor strife in the nation's history.

As things are going, it is likely only a matter of time before Buchanan himself recognizes the rapidly mounting distance between his politics and those of mainstream conservatism. His friend and fellow columnist Sam Francis, whose ideas Mr. Buchanan has increasingly echoed, has already dropped the word "conservative" outright. The danger is not so much that Buchanan will hijack conservatism as that, even after he charges out of it on his way toward some unscouted ideological destination of his own, his statist and populist ideas will seep backward into it. At least one House freshman, Zach Wamp of Tennessee, seems to have been infected already: simultaneously defending the Department of Energy (a big employer in his district) while buffing up his anti-Washington credentials by denouncing Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin's rescue of the Mexican peso.

Buchanan has never shied from a fight, and neither should those Republicans who oppose him. Republicans who hold fast to the traditions of postwar conservatism that Buchanan is rejecting—small government and American global leadership—should make clear that they understand as well as Buchanan does the immense difference between his politics and theirs. He has turned his back on the fundamental convictions that have defined American conservatism for 40 years, and conservatives shouldn't be afraid to say so. After all, to paraphrase Ronald Reagan, it isn't we who have left Pat Buchanan; it is Pat Buchanan who is leaving us. ♦

Wooden Panels in Washington

By Matt Labash

High atop a glass and steel Tower of Babble in Rosslyn, Va., Freedom Forum CEO Charles Overby welcomed us to "Publish or Perish," a panel discussion on the Unabomber manifesto.

"In 1989, these facilities were built for this very purpose, that we would attract the best minds around the country and the world to talk about issues that are important to the media," he explained. "Today we have some of the best thinkers in journalism around this table. Thank you for being here. You're not only thinkers, but you're doers."

These doers sure talked plenty. Many of them Forum full-timers, they have now graduated from the unsavory rigors of actual news-gathering, and are wise to what most practicing grunts will eventually come around to: Talking about covering events is infinitely preferable to covering them.

Syndicated columnist Carl Rowan denounced the "cliche that it's our duty to disassociate our personal feelings" about the decision by the *Washington Post* to publish the 35,000-word manifesto. Radio and Television News Directors Association president David Bartlett called it "bad journalism as well as bad citizenship," even as he worried that "we will fall into the role of being social engineers and not journalists, and not fulfilling our proper role."

When the moderator asked former *USA Today* editor John Quinn, "Are people sounding too high and mighty about this?" Quinn responded: "I'm not smart enough to take an ordinary news story and escalate it into two and a half months of anxiety."

If that was a heartfelt sentiment, Quinn clearly had no business here. From the Freedom Forum to the National Press Club to the Annenberg Washington Program to the American University, we are living through the epidemic advent of the Washington Media Panel, where every media issue is the Big Issue of the Day and, consequently, warrants exhaustive and regular discussion.

The Media Panel's legacy can be traced to a time well after the era when journalists selected their vocation for the reasons one chose to become a cab driver or millworker: i.e., to get out of the house and earn some extra scratch. The new breed came careening through celebrity's dog door in the early 70s, when the college-educated Boys on the Bus roamed the earth alongside the very New Classist Woodward and Bernstein. As well-to-dos packed the kids off to Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism and the Columbia Journalism School, the occupation was lifted out of its blue-collar origins into a "legitimate" profession and, in some cases, high priesthood. A new generation of journalists was hatched, reporters whose desire to write or broadcast stories was mixed with the idea that they were also analysts, students of the form, defenders of the faith. In addition, the controversies in which the media became embroiled—liberal bias, Janet Cookery, the excesses of power—led to the creation of the cud-chewing organizations listed above, whose purpose is theoretically to examine journalistic problems but practically speaking, to exonerate American journalistic institutions from accusations of bias and misbehavior.

Thus was born the Media Panel, which consists, as one C-SPAN executive suggests, of "journalists talking to journalists about journalism"—or to put it less charitably, a well-lit, over-air-conditioned masturbatory exercise.

The Media Panelist is not present for monetary reasons, since recompense is often limited to lukewarm coffee and a mini-danish. For him, it is the love of the sport, a way to mark his rightful place in the debate, to forge friendships with other journalists, and, most important, to trot the id out for a full jaunt-and-spin down the catwalk of the cerebral.

This, as any C-SPAN watcher knows, does not make for snappy dialogue. And if Oscar Wilde was correct in observing that "dullness is the coming of age of seriousness," it is instructive to note that most panelists are seasoned, solemn people, which gives these symposia an eery scenic uniformity: gray eminences suffering from blandular diseases, chairs pulled snugly around the snoregasbord with Bisquick jowls flailing over Windsor spread collars, never pausing except to sip from beaded water pitchers, convinced that any idea, no matter how small the nub, is worth exploring ad infinitum.

"They're really boring, but [these people] get off on this crap, they love to sit around and talk," says Andrew Rosenthal, Washing-

ton editor of the *New York Times*, who generally detests panel discussions but is recently returned from a "Race and the Media" panel himself. "I'm absolutely amazed that people come to see these things. I mean, what I have to say is in a newspaper you can read any day of the week."

The panels may aspire to grandeur, but usually the conversation turns back to every journalist's favored subject: himself. "There's always brow-beating, the beating of the chest," says Jonathan Salant, who as past president of the Society of Professional Journalists has put on his share of panels. "It's a chance for us to do some self-criticism, which is technically a bad term because it's reminiscent of the Communists."

Indeed, denizens of Mao's China had to write letters of self-criticism—but they were usually in prison and could refuse to do so only under penalty of death. Washington panelists do it for fun, and quite publicly, taking full advantage of any opportunity to erect goppy, verbal diarrhetic monuments to the ransacking of their own profession.

Entire panels have been devoted to these endeavors, such as American University's May program, "Why Does Everyone Hate Us: The Backlash Against the Media." Moderator Sandy Ungar, in a tone as lulling as a dehumidifier or a monologue on NPR (where it was simulcast) offered this view: "It seems now that reporters are regarded about on par with used car salesmen, the media has become so unpopular. . . . Maybe reporters have always been roundly disliked, maybe that's why our mothers didn't want us to become one."

James Warren, the sad sack who often serves as Washington's Conscience for his chronic criticism of speaking fees and other insider practices in his *Chicago Tribune* column even though he now holds a chair on CNN's *Capital Gang*, concurred. "A lot of people do view us as hypocritical, privacy-invading, emotionally and practically remote, paternalistic, prone to frequent error," Warren said, "and I think there's ample evidence to support each one of those beliefs."

NBC's Gwen Ifill joined the moaning: "Your reputation is the only thing you've got going for you, and as you know, everyone hates us, so you don't have much of that."

Much like the Mexican Penitentes, who scourge themselves with mock crucifixions, self-flagellation is a genre staple, part of the worship service—self-loathing as an excuse for navel-gazing. "There's a real climate of apology right now," Rosenthal explains. "It's very fashionable to attack the press, and so if you're in the press, it's fashionable to admit that you deserve to be attacked."

Which is why another hallmark of the media panel is to bring in ringers to play the role of Torquemada. Their job is to take the media to the woodshed and apply a good pasting, and if they have no credentials to do so, so what?

Marion Barry's attorney, the late Kenneth Mundy, assayed the part once on a panel called "Sensationalizing the Sensational." "I get the impression," Mundy said, "that often the news people are right out of Goebbels's school of Propaganda because they were creating things, sensationalizing things, that didn't exist." This from the man who was relieved when jurors thought his client's crack pipe contained baking soda.

But even in a defensive crouch, and with an infusion of natural conflict, it's still a snooze-inducing affair. "They sit around, they chew the fat," says the Media Research Center's Steve Kaminski. "It's all conventional wisdom said how many different ways."

Or one piece of wisdom, repeated endlessly. Take *Washington Post* columnist E.J. Dionne, who used a National Press Club panel in September to try out his neologistic description of the new media age. "The politics of moral annihilation," he called it, retreading a phrase that didn't catch when he first tried it out in '94.

After repeating it two or three more times in the afternoon's course, Dionne succeeded in creating a new cliche. A *Newsweek* reporter picked it up. "I was rather struck by E.J.'s politics of moral annihilation," said Karen Breslau. "If people haven't had enough, will we somehow police ourselves?" A visiting fellow from the Joan Shorenstein Center asked, "We're now in the period where there's an edge [in the tone of press coverage] to the point of moral annihilation." You know they took the phrase home and showed it to all their friends. Kennedy biographer Richard Reeves gave it a workout yet a few days later in his national column: "'The politics of moral annihilation' was the phrase E.J. Dionne . . . used to characterize the new political dialogue."

Which is not to single out the estimable Dionne for abuse, for it was a fine tag line, a ripping little zipper.

But forget that—it's the cliched ideas that spur the deafening echolalia. If you missed James Warren's Dionne-like lament at the Media self-loathers panel—"Exacerbating [the public's] reflexive disenchantment is deep and woeful ignorance . . . of our role in a democracy"—maybe you heard it four months prior at a Freedom Forum panel. There, Jane Kirtley, executive director of the Reporter's Committee for Freedom of the Press, put it this way: "We have a problem in American society and that is most people don't under-

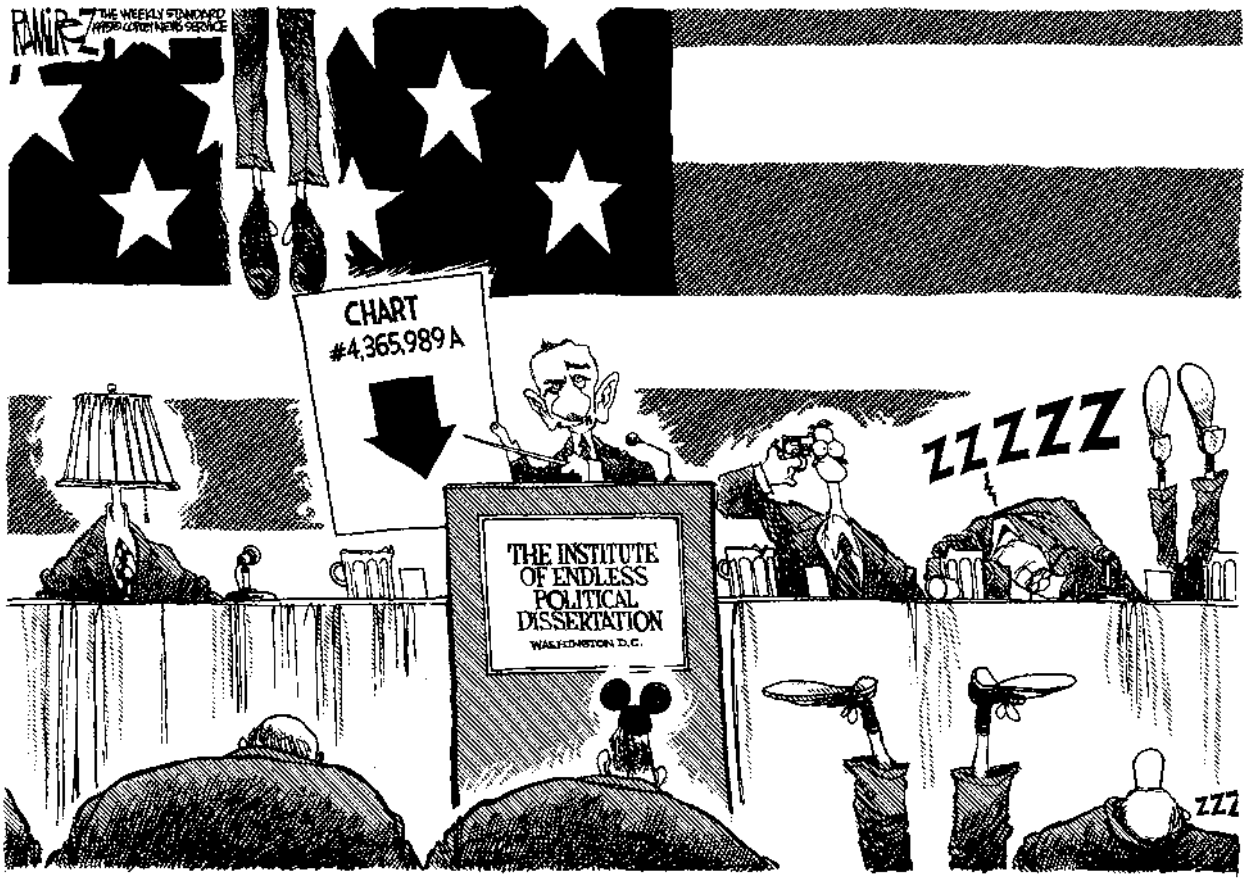
stand the role of the press and democracy." This was no doubt fleshed out at another Freedom Forum panel called "The Media and Democracy"—which had E.J. Dionne as a panelist.

This rampant repetition tends to be the norm, for the only thing the media love better than a media panel is another media panel on the exact same subject. If you missed "Is the Press Out of Control: Can Any White House Survive the Press Today?" (featuring the out-of-control Wolf Blitzer, Helen Thomas, and David Broder) perhaps you could catch the Joan Shorenstein Center's "Clinton's Battles with the Press," featuring—*yes!*—E.J. Dionne as a panelist.

If you had to stay home to watch Must-See TV and so missed the Twentieth Century Fund's "President Clinton's First Year with the Media," not to worry! American University had "Coverage of Clinton One Year Later" to offer. And if you couldn't make "Bosnia and the Bobbitts: The Blurring Line Between Tabloid Journalism and the Mainstream Press," then thank Dame Fortune for "Checkbook Journalism: What Price News?" where Kitty Kelley squared off with Paul Erickson, attorney for castrato John Bobbitt.

Not to be forgotten of course was the American University's November '94 panel on "Newt and the News: Covering Gingrich's Washington," which was surely *nothing* like the Center for Media and Public Affairs panel on "Editorial Coverage of the 104th Congress"—which itself happened to share absolutely nothing with AU's "Media Coverage of the 104th Congress," featuring—*yes!*—E.J. Dionne as a panelist.

Dionne does not own the media-panel franchise. That honor goes to the Kalb family, which just might have the whole game rigged. During one recent lucky stretch, I watched Bernard Kalb host his regular televised panel on CNN's *Reliable Sources* on a Sunday, only to see him show up as a Unabomber panelist on a Wednesday. On Thursday I attended brother Marvin's "Presidency and the Press" panel (not to be confused with the Freedom Forum's "Press and the Presidency" panel) with a cameo appearance by none other than Bernard, which was also attended by three additional Kalb spawn: Deborah, Madeleine, and



Phyllis, relatives all and no doubt in on the fix.

Like the institution of the presidency and John Wayne Bobbitt's member, O.J. Simpson has inspired his share of dialogue. There was the Center for Equal Opportunity's "After O.J." panel, not to be confused with AU's "After the O.J. Trial and the March," which most certainly differed from AU's "Sensationalizing the Sensational: Lessons from O.J. Simpson." (These lessons were drawn, mind you, in September 1994, two weeks before jury selection even began.)

But who could wait? The problem, as Tribune Media bureau chief Cissy Baker put it in the elevator after the Unabomber panel, is that "they don't care." "They" refers to the vulgar herd— known as "readers" to some. "We're sitting here dissecting this and they're onto the next thing. They don't care about anything but O.J. right now—nothing. The government's about to shut down but so what? [They've] got to sleep and wake up and eat breakfast and dinner."

And Cissy's right, too. Those sad, slope-foreheaded proles. After the nine-hour shift, the bus ride home, the Hamburger Helper, the three hours in front of the big-screen before passing out on the couch with the empty Funyuns bag astride their torso, those poor sucks are lucky they have "us," the Über-Gatekeepers, Democracy's Colander, the finest minds from the finest institutions airing it out, stimulating discourse, stimulating ourselves at three-hour midday luncheons.

Who better to lead them than Carl Rowan, from whom pearls of conventional wisdom drop like the waters of the St. Lawrence River over the Niagara? "Great panel, Carl," one fellow journalist told the aged Rowan after his disquisition on the Unabomer.

"Whew," Rowan said. "I could've gone all day."

Of that, there's little doubt. ♦

Media

The Village Idiot

By Daniel Radosh

Earlier this month, the *Village Voice* celebrated its 40th anniversary with an enthusiastic tribute to itself. That's hardly surprising—the New York weekly has always been one of the most self-obsessed publications going. What was almost surprising was the reminder—in the form of dusted-off essays by Norman Mailer, Joe Flaherty, Stanley Crouch, and other old *Voice* hands—that there was a time when it was actually worth reading.

I'm too young to remember those days, but the legend of the *Village Voice* is one of New York's most enduring ones: the newspaper of the counterculture back when counterculture was a dirty word the first time around; the writer's newspaper, where anything that could happen in print did; the muckraker, scooping the city and national dailies; the leftist gadfly that was secretly respected even by those who most hated it. Whether this reputation was ever wholly deserved is a matter for reasonable debate. What is inarguable is that the *Village Voice* today is less a living legend than an embarrassing joke.

I say this not with glee, but . . . well, okay, with a little glee. But also with some sorrow. If ever the left needed a sharp critical voice and the right a worthy sparring partner, now is the time. In the last several years, however, and the last few months especially, the *Village Voice* has abandoned any claim to that title.

There is no space here for a thorough recap of the *Voice*'s tumultuous history, nor for juicy details of the paper's seething office politics—a staple of New York media gossip. Suffice it to say that many backs are bloody with stab wounds, and the editor in chief's office has a revolving door. The current inhabitant of that office, hired last year, is Karen Durbin, a *Voice* writer in the 70s. Two months ago, after a number of ominous signs, Durbin unveiled a new look and new attitude for the *Voice*: shorter articles, peppier design, more generically fabulous. Observers partial to midlife crisis metaphors have been tossed a softball: The *Voice* turns 40, buys a flashy new sports car.

The publication that billed itself 40 years ago as a "newspaper designed to be read" is now designed to be skimmed at best. How much attention do you have to give to topics like rubber dresses, backstage with the supermodels, partying with Divine Brown (of Hugh Grant hooker fame), and folks who collect bubble bath containers and David Letterman paraphernalia? The combination of mid-70s identity politics and mid-80s pop magazine style makes for a confusing mix. Writers are as likely to allude to Alicia (*Clueless*) Silverstone as Noam (no Cambodian holocaust) Chomsky. Praise for labor unions shares space with phrenological readings of Newt Gingrich's head. When an article breathlessly intones that "Body modification is here to stay," you can't help but suspect that the whole thing is a put-on—a counterculture parody of *Seventeen* magazine. Or vice versa.

Then of course there's cyber-

Daniel Radosh writes a weekly column for the New York Press.

everything. Well, not everything, but "Jews in Cyberspace" and "A Gay Chicano Lost in Cyberspace." Meaningless chatter about the Internet is not exactly lacking in current discourse, but the *Voice* seems to believe that it's crucial to have at least one hipster on staff who can write sentences like, "Let's have an f2f with this: Humans would rather interact with each other than with computers. That's why sex is on everyone's hot list."

The good news for people who want desperately to avoid reading such claptrap is that the *Voice*'s new design renders text largely unreadable. In an apparent effort to be eye-catching, a riot of different typefaces in random sizes are scattered across each page. Squeezed into boxes and bubbles are attempts at humor. A list of "statistics to ponder" is a rip-off of *Harper's* Index without the grace; "Reasons why Rudy Giuliani ousted Arafat from Lincoln Center" is a stab at a Letterman top-10 list without, well, funny jokes ("No. 4: beard envy").


Jenny Jones Saved My Life (Cover, p42)
plus Goldstein Makes the Case For Trash TV (p46)
the village VOICE
OUTRAGE IN NIGERIA: DID SHELL OIL HELP EXECUTE KEN SARO-WIWA?
Cinema VILLAGE
BEYOND THE MULTIPLE
24-PAGE SPECIAL SECTION

In an editor's letter accompanying the redesign, Durbin seems especially proud of the institution of wider margins, which she calls "a new 'fifth column' for our editors, writers, and readers to be subversive with." As a reader, I use the fifth column to write, "Boring!" (or worse) next to most articles. Because as annoying as the new graphic design is, the *Voice*'s real problem is an ideology that still adheres to a very tired old design.

To put it simply, there is hardly an article to be found that does not include, if only implicitly, a sentence that begins, As a black woman . . . or As a gay Chicano . . . or, more frequently, As a white man who really doesn't deserve to have an opinion on the matter. . . . After all these years, the *Voice* is still chanting that old mantra, the personal is political. Fair enough, but it's also exceedingly dull. Here's the defining moment of a typical column by Adolph Reed: "A solid majority of attendees at the stewards' conference were nonwhite, and they were largely, if not predominantly black. But Latinos and Asian-Americans were also prominent in number, as were whites." Whoa, you sure you haven't left anyone out?

Census-taking of this nature substitutes for critical thought throughout the paper. In the TV coverage, an article condemns the "ethnic cleansing" of the Fox network, as if shows such as *Sinbad*, *M.A.N.T.I.S.*, and *Townsend Television* were canceled because they starred black people, not because they were awful. In the film pages, a forum on the movie *Kids* focuses on the questions, Is it sexist? Is it racist? Is it ageist? and, for GenX appeal, What if it had starred Alicia Silverstone?

Not that such questions shouldn't be asked per se, but all too often the obsession with identity politics drags the *Voice* into absurdity. In an article titled "The Unbearable Whiteness of Journalism," media critic James Ledbetter devotes several paragraphs to counting the number of people of color at individual publications, including his own. "There are 18 nonwhite staff members out of approximately 80. . . . That includes one black woman as features editor and another as chief of research, about as high as people of color ever get in the industry. In the middle ranks, however, the numbers are less impressive: as of last week, two out of 18 senior editors, two out of 17 staff writers. Breaking those numbers down a bit more, one senior editor is Asian, one black. . ." Okay, I'll spare you the rest. The howler, of course, is not just the fact of the bean counting but the claim that a shortage of minorities is limiting the *Voice*'s perspective. Does this paper really need to be more sensitive?

There is some room to fudge these matters when the occasion demands. In a puff piece about a performance artist, for instance, the unfortunate problem of the man being white is dodged by describing him as "the only child of an Italian immigrant father and Italian-American mother."

The *Voice* is at its most disturbing when it permits ideology not just to replace but actually to obscure facts. In a story about the September murder of a female jogger in Central Park, media critic Richard Goldstein fumed at the way "every white woman in running shoes was corralled for comment" and wondered why this case attracted more attention than nine others in the last five years. "To

answer that question," wrote Goldstein, "we needed to know each victim's race." The clear implication is that September's victim attracted media attention because she was white. No wonder Goldstein goes out of his way not to give her name: Maria Monteiro Alves. In any other *Voice* story, she'd be Latina.

In another crime report, Ed Morales tackled the strange story of 17-year-old Carlos Ariel Santos Ortega (this time we got the full name), who nearly instigated a riot when he claimed that a police officer threw him out a window. Although Ortega later confessed that he had actually jumped in order to escape the cop—who wasn't even coming after him—Morales chose to focus on "the police department's enduring record of questionable practices involving Latino communities." Which does not include, in case you missed it, throwing people out of windows.

On those shocking occasions when people of color come together for a cause antithetical to the *Voice*'s agenda, the paper's conclusion is usually that the masses have been duped. When an inner-city community voted overwhelmingly to expel an Afrocentric youth group called Zulu Nation in favor of the Police Athletic League, the *Voice* sided with the Zulu Nation spokesman who said, "We tried to tell the residents, 'You don't understand what's about to go down: martial law in the projects. . . . Stop being fooled. It's a cover-up.'"

Which brings us to another important element of *Village Voice* politics: paranoia. Sample victims of covert oppression include a Colombian artist whose sculptures were damaged by customs officials ("This is not a coincidence, this is a policy," she claimed. "I was judged and condemned and my work was destroyed") and a radio host who insisted he's been getting more parking tickets since he began denouncing the "Fuhrmanization" of the criminal justice system ("The fantasy I have is that there's an organization not unlike the Aryan Brotherhood whose members are cops, district attorneys, court officers, and prison guards").

Amidst all of this nonsense, it should be pointed out, the *Voice* does have a handful of writers who are either intelligent, witty, or both: essayist Nat Hentoff, political reporter Tom Carson, advertising critic Leslie Savan, and slash-and-burn sex columnist Dan Savage, among others. Their opinions and styles are divergent, but they all know how to think for themselves, an uncommon attribute at the *Voice*. For example, another writer recently offered this reluctant support for Al Sharpton: "In the absence of any strong progressive resistance to the black conservatives riding the Republican wave, I had to admit Sharpton's mission had a sort of loopy appeal." But why settle for an unreconstructed buffoon like Sharpton just because he's there? If strong progressive resistance is called for, it's the job of a paper like the *Voice* to provide it, not to wistfully go along with the next best thing.

It should also be said that this is hardly the first time someone has documented the fall of the *Village Voice*. A 1991 *Voice* cover story was headlined, "Why I Hate the *Village Voice*." That article echoed a 1975 one by Hentoff, who asked, "What's Become of the *Voice?*" In 1969 an aide to Mayor John Lindsay declared, "The *Voice* isn't as important as it once was, five years ago, even three."

Russ Smith, the editor of the *New York Press* (a *Voice* rival to which I contribute a column), likes to say that the *Voice* doesn't keep getting better and then worse, it just continually attracts new readers who inevitably become disillusioned with it. That may be the case, but these days it's difficult to believe that anyone who has never read the *Voice* before would be likely to give it a chance in the first place. When it comes down to it, the *Voice* has nothing left to say. ♦

Design

Year of the Ugly Dollar

By Henry Hope Reed

Only the Russians, it would seem, are concerned about the promised change in the design of our paper currency. The C-note, the first to be altered, is the favorite in the old Soviet Union. There, no less than $15 billion circulate, mostly in $100 bills. By contrast, Americans have been conspicuously silent on the matter.

The Treasury's excuse for the change: easy counterfeiting thanks to laser copiers and improved digital machines. Among the obstacles contrived to discourage counterfeiters are a new large portrait of Benjamin Franklin with lines that smudge when copied and a watermark of Franklin visible when the

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note is placed against a light.

So much for several of the technical changes. What we are being offered is, in actuality, a wholly new bill in terms of design. First, there is the typeface of the numerals and letters, squat in shape, known as Engravers Bold, surely one of the ugliest invented in the last century. Ornamental detail has been reduced. This combination of new factors makes for a very ugly design. Possibly the most puzzling change is placing Franklin off center—with no compensating detail for balance. We are, it seems, still in the Modern Era, where a designer seeks originality, no matter how disturbing, for its own sake.

Probably the high point in the design of our paper currency was the turn of the century. Then, as Pierce Rice, author of *Man As Hero: The Human Figure in Western Art*, has observed, mural painting set the standard. The bank notes "were all conceived in elaborate allegorical terms, with the civic spirit expressed in rich figure composition."

With the passing years the notes were simplified, notably in the loss of the figures. The present designs were fixed in 1929. What remained of the aim to achieve something visually pleasing? Only the use of traditional ornaments once associated with public buildings. The bayleaf with bayberry is one (see the obverse of the dollar bill). Also, the scroll (obverse of the five-dollar and twenty-dollar bills) and the ribbon (obverse and reverse of the twenty-dollar bill). The most decorative device is the acanthus leaf, the central ornament of the classical tradition. In fact, the acanthus has been declared, along with the baby, the signal symbol of Western art.

With the coming of modern art, the acanthus disappeared along with all ornament, surviving only in old buildings, old objects, and . . . our paper currency. It has been a most conspicuous standout, an affirmation of Western tradition overlooked by the modernists. Now, as Treasury has decided to abandon it, we see signs of the classical's return, at least in architecture. Perhaps the best recent example of the grand tradition is to be found in Washington in the United States Department of State. The largest of its diplomatic reception rooms, the Benjamin Franklin State Dining Room, boasts Corinthian columns whose gilt capitals have the customary cluster of acanthus leaves. It is the work of the Philadelphia architect John Blatteau and a splendid augury of our classical future.

To this classical future Treasury is blind. What can Treasury do, on opening its eyes to the ugliness of the new notes? Why not simply redesign them along the lines of the old notes! Let the portraits of our great men, to begin with, be centered on the bills. Why need they be out of kilter? Or the Treasury powers could call for a design competition set within the frame of the classical tradition. Or, again, they might simply call for several new designs, always along classical lines, and choose one.

Certainly, it does seem that, if the process is not corrected, 1995 will be known in the future as the Year of the Ugly Dollar. ♦

"This is petty. I'm going to say up front it's petty and [my press secretary] Tony Blankley will probably say that I shouldn't have said it, but . . . I think, frankly, when you land at Andrews Air Force Base and you've been on the plane for 25 hours and nobody has talked to you and they ask you get off by the back ramp . . . you just wonder, where is their sense of manners?"
—Newt Gingrich, November 15, 1995, speaking at the venerable Sperling breakfast with key newsmakers

Parody

"This is petty. I'm going to say up front it's petty, and my press secretary, Tony Richelieu, will probably say I shouldn't have said it, but I think, frankly, when you land at Elba and you've been on the boat there for 25 hours and nobody has talked to you and they ask you to get off by the back gangplank, you just wonder, where is their sense of manners? You know what? Maybe I should go back and take over France."

Sperling Breakfast with Napoleon Bonaparte
January 12, 1815

"This is petty. I'm going to say up front it's petty, and my press secretary, Tony Trotsky, will probably say I shouldn't have said it, but I think, frankly, when you arrive at the Finland Station and you've been in a sealed train car for 25 hours and nobody has talked to you and they ask you to get off through the dinette car, you just wonder, where is their sense of manners? Let's see how they like it if I surround the Winter Palace."

Sperling Breakfast with Vladimir Ilyich Lenin
September 11, 1917

"This is petty. I'm going to say up front it's petty, and my press secretary, Tony Exodus, will probably say I shouldn't have said it, but I think, frankly, when you climb up Mount Sinai and you've been wandering through the desert for 40 years and nobody has talked to you and they ask you to go down the mountain the back way so you don't interfere with their big golden-calf party, you just wonder, where is their sense of manners? Maybe I should just break the tablets."

Sperling Breakfast with Moses
The Eighth of Nisan, 1125 BCE