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the weekly Standard

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What the Kemp Tax Commission Won't Say

The final report of the Kemp commission—the tax reform panel appointed by Newt Gingrich and Bob Dole—was supposed to be unveiled in Washington last week with all three big shots present. But snow stranded Jack Kemp on the ski slopes of Vail, and so the event was held up, maybe until this week. So what's the commission going to say?

It's what it won't say that's more interesting. Kemp wanted to name a specific flat-tax rate that would be a starting point for future discussions and could be thought of as "the Kemp plan." Dole and Gingrich wanted to avoid specifics, with both explicitly following the principle that it's foolhardy to put forward a program ripe for attack before the intellectual groundwork has been laid for the general public. Dole, who'll have to defend the commission's report on the hustings, was more adamant on the matter than Gingrich.

The result? A supply-side document that names no specific rates anywhere but insists that the government should "tax income once at a single low rate, with a generous exemption." This exemption would take the form of a floor below which no taxes would be paid. That would ensure the tax system would still be progressive; nobody poor would pay at the same rate as, say, Steve Forbes. Deductibility of payroll taxes is urged as an additional sweetener for working people. And the document urges a legislative guarantee long sought by conservative tax protesters: "These changes, once in place, should be sealed with a guarantee of long-term stability requiring a supermajority vote of the U.S. Congress to raise the tax rate."

Kemp's introduction to the report is called "Setting the Eagle Free," and he uses it as an opportunity to make a wildly heterodox claim about the size and strength of the American economy: "An economic growth rate of 2.5 percent is unacceptable to the American people." Take that, Alan Greenspan.

School Choice is Back!

With the overwhelming defeat of California's ambitious school-voucher initiative in November 1993, it became clear that progress toward school choice would have to occur incrementally. Middle-class parents who had scraped and saved to move to neighborhoods with good public schools were unwilling to throw everything up for grabs with some sort of across-the-board choice program. But the case for choice for parents whose kids are in miserable public schools has always been a winner, and Governors Thompson of Wisconsin and Voinovich of Ohio were able to move ahead with targeted choice programs for low-income students in Milwaukee and Cleveland. (Both are, needless to say, under legal attack from the teachers' unions and the ACLU.)

Now California governor Pete Wilson has joined the parade. In his annual State of the State speech last week, he proposed a school-voucher program that would pay tuition in public, private, and religious schools for pupils currently enrolled in the state's worst performing schools. Wilson argued that "no child should be trapped in these failing schools because their parents can't afford an alternative."

Wilson's plan would make students eligible if they attend schools that score in the bottom 5 percent of public schools on national standardized tests. State aid would simply be transferred from one public school to another if parents wished to have their child switch schools and remain in the public education system. Parents who wished to transfer their children to private nonsectarian or religious schools would be eligible for as much as $4,500 for each pupil.

Now we can look forward to the imaginative arguments of the education establishment defending the proposition that parents shouldn't be helped to liberate their kids from schools that are manifestly failing—just because it might inconvenience those whose incompetence and cynicism have made these reforms necessary.

Stop Me Before I Do Something Good

During the balanced-budget stalemate, Newt Gingrich and Bob Dole have often wistfully said they just wish they could get Bill Clinton alone for a few hours because they were sure they could wrap up the whole business among themselves. The White House doesn't want to let that happen, perhaps because chief of staff Leon Panetta and others think Gingrich and Dole are onto something. Case in point: Dole and Gingrich arranged for a meeting last November about Medicaid between Clinton and three governors—Republicans Engler of Michigan and Leavitt

Scrapbook

of Utah and Colorado Democrat Roy Romer. During the meeting, Clinton surprised and delighted the three men by offering to let them work out a transfer of Medicaid to the states that he can sign. The so-called "block-granting" of Medicaid is one of the centerpieces of the Republican budget plan. The next day, Panetta called Romer and told his fellow Democrat, whoa there: The president didn't mean what he said. And so an opportunity for meaningful entitlement reform was lost.

Bob Dole, Take Note

An unlikely ally for those who worry that Washington policy wonks make it impossible for ordinary people to understand politics: John Kasich, the chairman of Wonk Central—i.e., the House budget committee. Kasich fears that the argot he calls "Washington-ese" turns important political battles into an incomprehensible swamp. He has even come up with what he considers the ultimate Washington-ese sentence: "When the CBO disagrees with the OMB over the BLS estimate of CPI and GDP, then we'll be forced to pass a TA after the reconciliation bill affecting FY '96 by UC." CBO=Congressional Budget Office. OMB=Office of Management and Budget. BLS=Bureau of Labor Statistics. TA=targeted appropriation. UC=unanimous consent. This is the way Bob Dole talks when he tries to describe what's going on with the budget. He should stop. Now.

The Reading List

Ah, Petruschka, this week the Reading List goes for a dance in the snow. (Remember: Every Reading List now contains a deliberate error in search of correction by an alert reader.) Herewith, some works featuring *les neiges d'antan*:

Call of the Wild, by Jack London. Now mostly forgotten, London was the most popular American writer in the first two decades of the 20th century. *Call of the Wild*, written from the perspective of an Alaskan sled dog named Rover, is his best novel.

Ethan Frome, by Edith Wharton. This is Wharton's tenderest and most hauntingly gloomy book—set, for once, not in the fashionable drawing rooms of New York and the Continent but in the snows of western Massachusetts.

One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich, by Alexander Solzhenitsyn. His first, shortest, and possibly greatest piece of writing, the unforgettable portrait of a "good day" in the Gulag—below zero temperatures, harsh treatment, but a little more bread and soup than usual and some pleasant conversation.

Notice

The Weekly Standard is looking for an assistant art director, and since we don't have a classified section, we thought we would mention it here. The job requires proficiency with Macintosh computers, the ability to use a scanner, and familiarity with the design programs QuarkXPress, Photoshop, and Freehand. The pay is modest, but you do get to spend quality time with a happy band of right-wing maniacs. Please do not call about the job; rather, send a résumé and samples of your work to: Art Director, The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th St., NW,

Casual

India by Car and Taxi

In Bombay, the most cosmopolitan of Indian cities, one rarely even sees the road. The streets are covered by a thick carpet of taxis, trucks, and people—and bereft of lanes or signals. Traffic is a free-for-all resulting in what my teenage brother calls NDEs (for "near death experiences"), what with cars and trucks continually swerving around people, beggars, and animals. Libertarians ought to pay the city a visit, because one day there is sure to give any anarchist a healthy appreciation for the rule of law, especially when it comes to traffic signals.

Traveling from my grandmother's apartment in northern Bombay to the city's southern tip takes over an hour, although the distance is less than 10 miles. The average citizen navigates the traffic by bus, but since I was forbidden by my Indian-born mother to ride the buses (she feared pickpockets, pinchers, and kidnappers), I became very familiar with taxis and their drivers.

Each cab starts with the same base, a squat yellow and black Fiat comfortable for four, but often used as transportation for eight or nine. Lap space, seat space, it's all the same. Each taxi celebrates the driver's religious or cultural passions. One driver had a small plastic model of a temple attached to the dashboard and surrounded by red and green blinking lights. Another had zebra-print velour upholstery in the entire car, ceiling included. Many have the names of film heroes, movies, or gods painted on the back window.

Driving through Bombay with words like "Love Goddess" screaming out in fluorescent orange from the back of my taxis, I spend hours staring at shiny billboards advertising cellular phones, fax machines, JP Morgan, and of course movies, ranging from James Bond's *GoldenEye* to something called *Lady Terminator* ("She mates and then she terminates"). Only 10 years ago, the only show on television was *I Love Lucy*. Now Indians are treated to *Baywatch*, *Beverly Hills 90210*, and *The Bold and the Beautiful*, not to mention CNN, BBC, MTV, and ESPN. In the past, bashful media heroines only kissed behind bushes. Now they are all Madonna prototypes, baring their midriffs in dance videos reminiscent of Michael Jackson's "Beat It."

From Bombay we travel to Baroda, a city of about 3 million (and considered small!) in the prosperous state of Gujarat. My mother's family has lived in Baroda for several hundred years. On my cousin's Honda Kinetic (a two-wheeler), I pass prominent buildings erected by my ancestors and the crocodile pond where my parents went during their courtship to hold hands away from inquisitive neighbors.

My aunt, an accountant with a degree from the London School of Economics, takes to the roads with a real sporting spirit. In Baroda one has to avoid not only the trucks, taxis, and crowds, but also three-wheel rickshaws carrying 12 children, families on scooters, cows, oxen, and sheep.

We decide to take a road trip to the town of Dohad, where my mother spent her first nine years. And so I have my first experience of Indian highways and their large, hulking cargo trucks—trucks with the words "Please, Horn, OK" painted on the back to indicate that those wishing to pass should just "horn."

One frequently needs to slow down to pass bullock carts, camel carts, and farmers pushing carts. The lush country alongside us is a riot of wheat, corn, castor, sunflowers, and tobacco. We stop at what my aunt and uncle assure us is a respectable snack bar and eat hot fried *bujyas*. Amazingly, no one falls sick.

After several hours, we reach Dohad. In this small place, I am unquestionably a foreigner, and people stare at me intently, despite the fact that I am dressed in Indian attire identical to my cousins'. A wedding party of about 30 men dancing to the bride's house interrupts their song and begins improvising a new one, which translates to "Pale, pale face, with dark, dark glasses." Only in Dohad would I be called a "paleface."

My mother takes me around St. Stephen's school, where she learned from Catholic priests in a classroom of thatched mud walls (they now have several very respectable concrete structures). We also visit Maya Talkies, the movie theater owned by my family—a scene right out of *Cinema Paradiso*. Could the residents of Dohad imagine the world my mother has emigrated to—specifically, the Detroit suburb of Bloomfield Hills? Only from a movie. But then, Dohad is itself unimaginable to most Americans, accustomed as we are to cleanliness and order, supermarkets and strip malls.

My road trips allowed me to see as never before the confusion of India, but also the warmth, community, and hospitality that our more individualistic culture lacks. After a few days in the smaller cities, one gets accustomed to the mayhem, and perhaps even begins to believe, as a friend's grandmother said, that "in Bombay, we have excellent traffic control."

Neomi Rao

Gen Xers, Free and Responsible

I am a bit taken aback by Andrew Peyton Thomas's comments on libertarianism in "Dear Generation X: A Letter to My Cohort" (Jan. 1/Jan. 8). Perhaps unknowingly, Thomas echoes the know-nothing left on conservatism. Doesn't that ilk routinely argue that conservative thought is no more than a rationalization for class interest? I think this sort of reductionism of libertarianism is no more appealing coming from the neo-con right, which should know better.

Why is Thomas appalled that one of these libertarians asserts that the individual is the most basic unit of society? It strikes me as a banal observation. Most people who assert this recognize the significance of families, and also understand that families are made up of individuals. If Thomas wants to argue with Max Stirner's ghost, he's welcome to it, but he shouldn't pretend that his argument is with contemporary libertarians, most of whom are decidedly conservative on family issues.

The cause of our social breakdown is not individualism, but the willingness of the state to subsidize individual immorality and encourage a state-fostered culture that promotes moral, aesthetic, and intellectual cretinism.

John A. Kelleher
Summit, NJ

As Generation Xers, Andrew Peyton Thomas and I share "an almost eerie ability to recite dialogue from *The Brady Bunch*," but not much else.

Thomas believes that the wish of Generation Xer's to be free from "higher taxes and restrictions on sexual liberation" has destroyed families, unleashed social pathologies, and increased women's role in the work force. He could be forgiven for his hyperbole if he weren't so far off the mark.

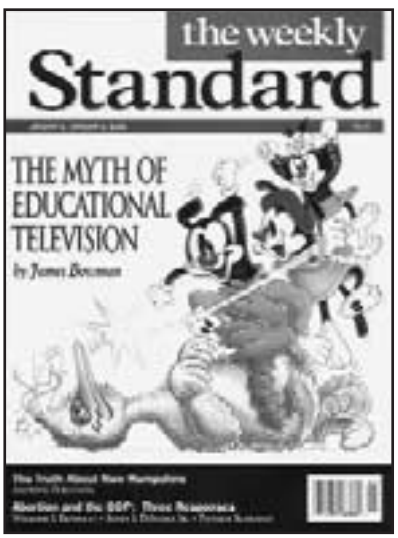
It's not freedom from personal responsibility that Generation Xers are seeking, but freedom from government excess. There's no correlation between coming from a loving family and believing that taxes are too high and that morality ought not be legislated.

Lee Kessler
Palatine, IL

Pro-Life Not Abandoned

I believe Phyllis Schlafly's response to Noemie Emery ("Abortion and the Republican Party: Three Responses," Jan. 1/Jan. 8) seriously mischaracterized Emery's position and offered a weak defense of the pro-life movement's traditional legal approach.

Emery's strategy is not a call for the Republican party to "abandon the fight to make abortion illegal," as Schlafly contends. True, her moral approach would *postpone* a direct attack on the legal status of abortion, but it need not require pro-life Republicans to abandon this goal altogether.



Schlafly insists that the moral venue concerning abortion is complete because it "exists in the holy books of the world's great religions." Thus, the pro-life movement should try to turn these principles into legal reality. This overlooks the fact that we live in a democracy, where consensus must be reached among citizens, not religions.

We also need to focus on a moral approach in order to win protection for the unborn in the future, *and* to stop the number of abortions being performed in the present. How can anyone quarrel with our political successes? The answer is simple: They have not reduced the number of abortions. To achieve that kind of success requires a new strategy that seeks first to win the hearts of Americans.

Tracy Locklin
Charlottesville, VA

Martha Stewart, Grinch

Christopher Caldwell misses the nail and hits his thumb when he says, "What really bothers Stewart's detractors is that she cares about the home" ("In Praise of Martha Stewart," Jan. 1/Jan. 8).

The American home lost its soul when women turned their backs on family and hearth in the 1970s to pursue some ethereal sense of greater personal worth and stature. Now the art of homemaking is lost to fast food, impersonal decor, and psycho-babble about child rearing.

Americans are feeling this loss and some are turning to Stewart to rekindle the flame that feminism extinguished. What really bothers Stewart's detractors is that this flame is being rekindled by a Grinch in mother's clothing.

Jan Krauss
Annapolis, MD

The Personal Isn't Political

Let me get this straight: You approve of the fact that Newt Gingrich is one of those people who "burn with the knowledge that everything is political—that every decision they must make, every thought they think, is laden with ideological meaning" ("In Defense of Newt Gingrich," Dec. 25).

Excuse me? Since when did "the personal is the political" become conservative doctrine? The last time I looked, it was a left-wing slogan with totalitarian implications.

Maybe your editorial writer needs to take a couple of weeks off and spend them outside the Beltway, talking to non-wonks about non-policy. He might even consider joining a support group: Enthusiasts Anonymous.

Terry Teachout
New York, NY

The editors respond: We were being ironic.

Jeffords, GOP Detractor

Thanks to Matthew Rees for his portrayal of the perfidious Sen. James Jeffords ("How Jeffords Obstructs," Jan. 1/Jan. 8). Jeffords's crimes are not confined to inveterate liberalism. Since

Correspondence

at least 1980 he has exhibited a perverse delight in sticking it to his own party.

He was the only Republican to sign a pledge to support Kemp-Roth in 1980 and then renege on it. He supported John Anderson over Ronald Reagan for president in 1980. He was the only Republican in the House to oppose Reagan's tax bill. He provided the sole Republican vote for a Democratic budget bill that passed by one vote.

On recent trips back to Vermont, Jeffords made a special point of blasting Newt Gingrich and the Contract with America. It seems the first thing that comes to this man's mind every day is "How can I revile fellow Republicans?" Except when he is up for reelection, of course, when he preaches "party unity."

The school-voucher caper offers another example of Jeffords at his worst. At least he has enough integrity to repay the NEA for backing him in 1994.

JOHN MCCLAUGHRY
KIRBY, VT

In Defense of Cochran

In "Cochran of the Walk" (Dec. 25), Matt Labash bashes the Olender Foundation for giving Johnnie Cochran the Advocate for Justice award. He further erroneously asserts that as "Washington's medical malpractice king," my ads seek out "brain dead babies." My ads are aimed at the parents of brain-*damaged* babies. I have pioneered their representation, obtaining the first multimillion-dollar verdict for such injuries in 1976.

I expected that some might disagree with my choice, so I made myself available to explain why I believe Cochran is one of the great lawyers of this generation. But Labash was less interested in hearing why I, along with many others, respect Cochran. He stalked around our event looking for someone who would say something bad about our honoree.

Since that didn't happen, Labash decided to take a few whacks himself, referring to some of my guests as "crows'-footed atrophied socialites." Did I say his article was about Cochran? Well, let's just say it meandered a bit to sneer at just about everyone who wasn't able-bodied, white, and young, or, for that matter, like-minded.

JACK H. OLENDER
WASHINGTON, DC

Third Parties Are Shut Out

Contrary to your editorial ("The Vanity of Third-Party Politics," Jan. 1/Jan. 8), there are significant structural barriers to independent parties operating in the U.S.

In Florida, the ballot-access laws for new parties are so severe, there has not been a third-party or independent candidate on the ballot for governor since 1920. Florida requires parties with less than 5 percent registration membership to submit 196,788 valid signatures to be on the ballot for statewide office.

In addition, third-party and independent candidates must also pay candidate filing fees, which are over $10,000 for congressional candidates.

Except for the Henry Wallace Progressive Party in California in 1948, no third-party or independent candidate has ever managed to overcome a petition hurdle greater than 135,000 signatures, in any state, in the history of the United States.

The Florida petition requirement of 196,788, on top of huge filing fees, is prohibitive. If you think it is easy to obtain 196,788 valid signatures, please note that two days ago, the Rhode Island secretary of state announced that Pat Buchanan, Phil Gramm, and Steve Forbes all failed to qualify for the presidential primary because they failed to submit 1,000 valid signatures.

RICHARD WINGER
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

Child-Abuse Complications

In his profile of *Wall Street Journal* editorial-page writer Dorothy Rabinowitz ("America's Foremost Muckraker," Jan. 1/Jan. 8), Tucker Carlson wrote that Boston's "local alternative paper implied that Rabinowitz was in league with the North American Man-Boy Love Association."

I wrote the article Carlson cited, and I dispute his characterization. I have never questioned Rabinowitz's integrity, although I believe she misconstrued the evidence against the Amirault family in her commentaries on the Fells Acres child-sexual-abuse case.

I did write that Rabinowitz was relying in part on research pioneered by a controversial psychologist, Ralph Underwager, who in 1992 gave an interview to a Dutch pedophile magazine with ties to NAMBLA in which he appeared to endorse pedophilia. (Underwager later said that he'd been misunderstood and that he opposes pedophilia.)

Underwager's findings, that children repeatedly asked leading questions about sexual abuse may report they were abused even if they were not, may well be true. But by applying those findings to Fells Acres, Rabinowitz and others ignore evidence that most of the children who testified against the Amiraults disclosed what had happened to them spontaneously, or disclosed specific details of abuse in response to general, non-specific questions.

As with all child-abuse cases, Fells Acres is immensely complicated. A judge's decision last summer to overturn two of the three convictions because the children who testified were allowed to face the judge and the jury rather than the defendants raises an important constitutional question: the right literally to face one's accuser.

What's crucial to keep in mind is that not one piece of new evidence has emerged in the decade since the Amiraults' two trials took place.

Every issue raised by Rabinowitz was explored at length by the Amiraults' talented, aggressive defense lawyers. There is no reason to believe that anyone reviewing the case today is more likely to arrive at the truth than the 24 jurors who sat through those trials.

DAN KENNEDY
BOSTON, MA

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the weekly Standard

Conservatism After the Budget Battle

It was nice while it lasted. The GOP owned sole bragging rights to credibility on the balanced budget. It was a hugely popular goal and issue. It was an apt shorthand slogan for limited-government conservatism. Then, too (don't tell anyone), it was a convenient roof under which to shelter and tinker with that broader agenda until Republicans were ready to unveil it in the full light of day. What did it *mean* to be a conservative in national politics for most of the past year? Simple: It meant support for an end to federal deficits by 2002, a goal Democrats and liberals opposed.

Poof. For all practical purposes, that clear, easily explicable partisan and ideological distinction has disappeared. It vanished on Saturday night, January 6, when President Clinton played his trump card: a budget plan, certified by the Congressional Budget Office, that gets to zero (in theory) in seven years. Just like Newt's. Except that Clinton's version of this budget preserves existing federal commitments to the elderly, the poor, the young, and God's green earth, while the GOP proposal relaxes those commitments in favor of more generous tax relief for families and job-creating businesses. Or at least, that's the story Clinton will tell—and it's a story he can back up using the same rhetoric as the Republicans: seven years, CBO-certified.

So the basic question—balanced budget, yes or no?—is now obsolete. That question had worked to Democratic disadvantage by margins of three- and four-to-one. A troublesome development, indeed, for Republicans and conservatives. And to deal with it, Republicans need to shift the focus of their energy away from number-drenched budgeteering and toward, instead, a presidential campaign in which ideological conservatism might (and should) still carry the day. And the sooner they do it, the better.

CLINTON HAS NULLIFIED THE BALANCED-BUDGET ISSUE FOR 1996. THIS MEANS THE GOP MUST NOW FOCUS ITS ENERGIES ON PROMOTING CONSERVATIVE IDEAS.

Wait, wait, conservatives will say: no fair. And they're right. The credit the White House claims for good-faith budget bargaining these past few months is wholly undeserved. The newspapers are dutifully printing boxed charts purporting to show how "far" the president has "moved" toward the GOP since his original spending request for fiscal year 1996. But that first Clinton budget featured $200-billion annual deficits into the next century. By the standards he now, belatedly, demands to be judged by—perfect balance in seven years—the president has only just come to the table. He hasn't "moved" an inch.

Nor has he offered a budget that can with justice be mentioned in the same breath as the admirably sturdy and serious Republican plan. Until the year 2002, Clinton proposes to squeeze only the tiniest droplets of necessary cash from the entitlement programs that are spending themselves and the country into insolvency. He is willing to accept none of the major structural reforms required to salvage those programs—or ensure overall federal fiscal health—much beyond that date. Most of the savings with which the Clinton budget is scheduled to totter over the finish line will be achieved all at once, at the very last moment. Or so we're supposed to believe. And his middle-class tax cut, which is stingy to begin with, expires one month before election day in the year 2000, as if the laws of politics might somehow magically be suspended in the future. This will force whoever is president on Jan. 1, 2001, to find some more money in the budget to reach balance.

So the Clinton budget is something of a political scam. That doesn't matter. It is not the job of the Congressional Budget Office—which is now, at the GOP's insistence, the final arbiter of such matters—to determine how well a given budget comports with political

reality. Nor can CBO pronounce with confidence on the implications of a current spending proposal for fiscal balance 15 or 20 years from now. "Seven years and CBO" has been the loudest Republican demand since November, and it has, however narrowly, been met by the White House. President Clinton is gleefully waving around a letter from CBO director June O'Neill that proves it.

As the budget battle stands, the president and Congress are divided by policy differences that involve less than 1 percent of total federal spending. The numbers mislead, each side proclaims; those policy differences are "profound" and "fundamental." And they're right. But are there more than a few thousand people in the entire country who could understand exactly why? The Republican plan would "block-grant" Medicaid, incorporate medical savings accounts into the Medicare program, and open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil exploration. President Clinton would not. This is not the stuff of a stirring national election.

This leaves Republicans and conservatives with limited options in the short term. None of them is all that attractive. Swallowing hard and forging a deal would help Republican congressional candidates in the fall; the GOP would have kept its promise and balanced the budget. But that deal would disappoint conservative policy principle and help Clinton's reelection chances, too.

Alternatively, Speaker Gingrich and Senator Dole might attempt to engineer a more favorable compromise with congressional Democrats. This is an unlikely scenario; even if the votes are there to pass such a bill, there's no chance this odd coalition could successfully override a Clinton veto.

A third option is to refuse a deal, on grounds that wimpy half-measures would fatally wound the momentum of further conservative reform in the future. That might once have worked—before the president submitted a balanced budget. But now, instead, it might just as likely help delay that future, by making Clinton look good in contrast to the Republican "ideological intransigence" he is sure to mention at every whistlestop.

Any way you cut it, getting to zero, green-eyeshade style, has suddenly and dramatically receded in importance for the rest of this year. The GOP had better dust off the meatier, limited-government conservatism it has submerged in months of budget horse trading and remind the country—and itself—why Bill Clinton shouldn't be reelected in November, whatever the budget outcome might be.

At his press conference last week, the president said he was unwilling "to fundamentally change the commitment of the Medicare program to the health of senior citizens" or "to fundamentally change the commitment of the Medicaid program to senior citizens, to poor children, to the disabled." Take away the loaded rhetoric, and that's essentially true. Democrats are still unwilling to "fundamentally change" the commitment of the federal government to *anything* that has ever been identified as a social or economic problem—which is why the federal government continues to maintain its commitment, in crude and counterproductive fashion, to *all* such problems.

Conservatism means to replace this ubiquitous federal presence in American life with a revivified private sphere, by returning some significant portion of current government authority (and tax dollars) to individual citizens. And it means to continue that effort whether or not there's a balanced budget along still realistically achievable lines in the next few months. At least that's what you'd expect and hope the Republican party's overarching, relentlessly promoted message to be. Pollster Fred Steeper told us, in the wake of the 1994 election, that cultural conservatism was the Republican revolution's primary cause. The issues that move the electorate are still the natural province of the GOP. Seize the year. Time's a-wastin'.

—David Tell, for the Editors

Advantage: Bill Clinton

by Fred Barnes

Republicans have put President Clinton in a politically enviable position. He's now poised to say something like this in his State of the Union address on January 23: "I've produced a balanced budget, using the conservative assumptions of the bipartisan Congressional Budget Office. I've met all the Republicans' demands. But they're so rigid they're willing to pass up this historic opportunity to balance the budget if we don't make dangerous cuts in Medicare, Medicaid, education, and the environment, and approve an enormous tax cut."

In fact, Clinton has already said roughly this, both when the budget talks collapsed on January 9 and at his press conference on January 11. He just hasn't said it to a national TV audience during prime time. Now

he will, and Republicans are hard pressed to come up with a strong response. The reason is there may not be one, given the way they have inadvertently set the stage for Clinton's speech. "I'm worried about how we're going to rebut it," says Senate Whip Trent Lott.

House Speaker Newt Gingrich and Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole changed their tactics in the budget battle with the White House at an opportune moment for Clinton. The press was finally figuring out that the president, having failed to present a seven-year balanced budget certified by the CBO, wasn't bargaining in good faith. And poll numbers were beginning to turn against Clinton. Republicans threw him a lifeline: If Clinton merely *offered* a seven-year budget—he didn't have to agree to a final deal—they'd call off the partial government shutdown.

That wasn't all. The GOP plan was to end the talks flatly if Clinton wasn't receptive to their latest budget proposal, which was a big step closer to the White House position. By announcing the talks were off, it would put pressure on the president to reopen them by making a new offer, closer to the Republican budget. Well, he wasn't receptive, but he asked Republicans to announce the talks are only in short recess. They did. This reinforces the myth that Clinton is being flexible on the sticky issues—Medicare, Medicaid, taxes—though he isn't.

"I'M WORRIED," SAYS SENATE WHIP TRENT LOTT, "ABOUT HOW WE'RE GOING TO REBUT" CLINTON'S COMING ATTACK ON THE GOP'S BUDGET STANCE.

Clinton and congressional Democrats were gleeful. "Congressional leaders and I have agreed already to far more than enough reductions in government spending to balance the budget within seven years," insisted Clinton. "The debate is no longer one about balancing the budget," said Senate Democratic leader Tom Daschle, happy that issue has been neutralized. "Basically the issue is now the size of the tax cut and who gets it."

So what do Republicans do about the State of the Union, given the new situation? A few small things, such as having the House and Senate vote again on a Balanced Budget Amendment just before the president's speech, have been recommended. Or Dole, whose turn it is to choose the Republican who responds on TV to Clinton, could pick Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell of Colorado. Campbell could explain that he quit the Democratic party and became a Republican last year precisely because of the politics and practices that Clinton and congressional Democrats continue to pursue. Gov. John Engler of Michigan thinks Republicans should pass their revised balanced budget and send it to Clinton the day before the speech.

But there's agreement among GOP leaders that these things aren't enough. They need to broaden the issue beyond a squabble over whose budget is better, theirs or Clinton's. The president wins that argument, if only because he's willing to distort the Republican position on Medicare, Medicaid, and taxes.

The best idea is for a Republican summit of governors, local officials, and members of Congress a day or two before Clinton's speech. The event would be outside Washington and, if Lott has his way, before a live audience and with full TV coverage. It will take a major event like that to "compete with Clinton," says Lott.

The summit scheme was first proposed by GOP pollster Frank Luntz. He urged several House and Senate Republicans to organize the summit around "the broader message" that "Washington is our enemy" and Clinton is protecting it from change and reform. Luntz's script calls for the keynoter of the summit to declare: "This is a historic debate about the role and scope of Washington; whether Washington will continue to tax more, spend more, regulate more and control more . . . or whether we will begin to reduce the size, scope and power of Washington."

"If fought on the bigger vision, we win," Luntz says. "We have tested this theme across the country, and it is the only message we know of that beats the current Clinton effort."

Engler, the governor most involved in the budget talks, has a slightly different version of how to frame the debate, with Clinton representing the status quo, Republicans change and reform.

At best, Republicans will take the edge off Clinton's speech. At worst, they'll look silly or irrelevant. But they are not likely to put any pressure on Clinton to revise his budget. That is largely out of Republican hands. The consensus among Republicans is that it will take external pressure—a large dip by financial markets or a Clinton tumble in opinion polls—for the White House to move.

The one tool Republicans have is the Hillary Rodham Clinton issue, but it's a two-edged sword. Engler, for one, believes the president might be more eager for a deal if the Hillary scandal worsens. But the opposite is just as plausible. If Hillary's troubles are damaging the Clinton presidency, then Clinton will need the support of as many Democrats on Capitol Hill as possible. He won't get them by lurching toward Gingrich and Dole in the budget talks. ♦

Buchanan's Unlikely Fans

by Matthew Rees

In the space of 10 days around New Year's, one Republican presidential candidate was treated to cover stories in insider Washington magazines the *New Republic* and *National Journal* as well as a front-page profile in the *New York Times*. But the subject wasn't front-runner Bob Dole or insurgent supply-sider Steve Forbes. Instead, it was Patrick Buchanan, who is stuck in single digits in the polls and actually is getting *less* popular with voters, not more. The flurry of coverage of Buchanan is evidence that he is on the verge of becoming the Bruce Babbitt of 1996—a presidential candidate more loved by the media (see Babbitt in 1988) than the masses.

Were Buchanan showing signs of knocking off Dole, the attention might be justified. But an early January CNN/*USA Today* poll has him mired at 6 percent, down from 9 percent in mid-December. This should annoy someone like Forbes, whose surge (he's running second in most polls now and leads in Arizona) has forced a new emphasis on free-market economics and the flat tax into the GOP's once-dour debate. While he was recently the beneficiary of a *Vanity Fair* profile, Forbes has yet to receive the amount of coverage devoted to the sinking Buchanan, who in addition to the pieces already mentioned, has scored a profile in *GQ*, a November cover story in *Time*, a 10,000-word write-up in the *Village Voice*, a June profile in the *Nation*, and short pieces in *Newsweek* and the *Economist*.

One theme that runs through many of these pieces is that Buchanan's views are "driving the GOP race" (as the January 15 *Newsweek* puts it). Yet there's no evidence that Buchanan is having *any* influence on Dole or any other candidate with regard to major issues. On trade, Buchanan is the lone protectionist. On immigration, he's the only one who wants to close the borders (for five years). And on foreign policy, he's the most ardent isolationist in the field. Buchanan's opposition to deploying American troops to Bosnia is shared by other candidates but not by Dole.

The absence of a "Buchanan factor" was evident when six Republican candidates debated in Columbia, South Carolina, on January 6. The main issues discussed were the budget, Bill Clinton, taxes, welfare, and foreign policy. There was only one candidate—Buchanan—thundering against the Mexico bailout and NAFTA. Similarly, Buchanan's negative emphasis on the "New World Order" and his attacks on the Republican Congress for Medicare reform haven't found any takers among GOP candidates. "I don't think he's changed the ideological debate one iota," says pollster Frank Luntz, who worked on the Buchanan campaign four years ago.

As remarkable as the quantity of Buchanan's press coverage is the tone. His positions on hot-button issues such as abortion, homosexuality, and race make him anathema to most reporters. But reading excerpts from some of the Buchanan profiles, you get the impression you're rereading swoon pieces written about Bill Clinton in 1992: "Buchanan is the closest thing to a genuine populist in the 1996 race so far" (the populist-friendly *Nation*); "He has perfected a cathartic language that taps voters' economic frustrations but deflects their attention away from painful solutions" (*Time*); "His ability to bond with the economically distressed people he meets on the campaign trail is unmistakable" (*New Republic)*; "He may be the best pure campaigner in the Republican field. . . . He also has a unique—and coherent—message" (*Newsweek*). After Tom Carson of the left-wing *Village Voice* tagged along with Buchanan in Iowa, he told the candidate, "I've been waiting my whole life for someone running for president to talk about the Fortune 500 as the enemy, and when I finally get my wish, it turns out to be you."

Media sympathy for Buchanan would undoubtedly taper off were he ever to mount a serious challenge. In the meantime, Buchanan's unorthodox economic nationalism appeals to many reporters who don't support the GOP's free-enterprise agenda. "He's a populist and that resonates with a lot of the press," says Tom Edsall, a national political reporter for the *Washington Post* who has covered Buchanan. The admirably honest Carson even writes, "To a progressive's ear, a great deal of Buchanan's conglomerate-bashing populist rhetoric has a familiar, disconcertingly alluring ring—the kind that is capable of bringing out the old socialist firehouse-dog slumbering in many of us, and that no contemporary Democrat this side of Jesse Jackson ever feels at liberty to indulge in." Proof of this came in a January 8 *New York Times* op-ed by an economist with AFSCME, the major public-employees union, *praising* Buchanan for putting "the interests of workers first" and criticizing Bill Clinton for "showing little concern for the anxiety workers feel."

Yet Buchananomics alone doesn't explain the candidate's success with the press. Even when he was running against George Bush four years ago, Buchanan received 48 percent positive coverage from the three networks, according to an analysis by the Washington-based Center for Media and Public Affairs (Bush's was only 16 percent positive). Other factors at work are Buchanan's talent for soundbites (he says the Japanese

target American industries "as well as they targeted Pearl Harbor;" Bob Dole is "our Walter Mondale") and the fact that he caters to a constituency that is red meat for journalists. Edsall also sees similarities of outlook between the candidate and the scribes. Buchanan's "a king killer," Edsall says. "Reporters are king killers. There's a commonality of interest." Finally, Buchanan stands out as a free spirit in a field dominated by programmed candidates. He is "enjoyable to be around," writes John Judis in *GQ*, adding, "Unlike many politicians, he doesn't have a profane or cynical side that comes to the fore once the camera's glare recedes."

One sinister theory interprets the Buchanan boomlet as a way for the media to undercut viable Republican candidates to benefit Bill Clinton (*Newsweek*'s decision four years ago to put Buchanan on the cover is cited in support of this scenario). That may or may not be true, but there's a problem in focusing so much attention on a bit player: It presents a highly distorted picture of the GOP primaries.

Buchanan has supporters, and they include some real loons (as *GQ* and the *Village Voice* report), but the bigger story is that the same national poll clocking him at 6 percent put Dole at 49 percent. The solid performance of a conventional front-runner may not be exciting, but boredom with Dole is hardly a reason to boost a candidate with no chance of winning the Republican nomination—especially one with so little influence on the debate. ♦

Runaround Suharto

by Joshua Muravchik

Thanks to Ayatollah Khomeini, I found myself clawing through the muddy Indonesian jungle to catch a glimpse of feeding orangutans. This was a brief diversion, a two-hour detour from the city of Medan, in northern Sumatra. Our group was in the country to meet with Indonesian human-rights advocates. Khomeini's role in all of this? The bitter lesson absorbed by Americans that it is foolish to neglect the opposition in countries governed by friendly dictators.

Indonesia may be the most important of such countries. It has been ruled by General Suharto for 30 years, since he led the suppression of a communist power-grab. With over 200 million people, it is the fourth most populous country in the world, and the largest Islamic one. Its economy has been growing at an annual rate upward of 6 percent for the last decade, giving it a per-capita income of about $3,000. Thus, it is following in the path of Asian prosperity blazed by the "little tigers"—but with a population mass that could give it major weight in global economics and politics.

Although Indonesia scored 13 out of a worst-possible 14 in Freedom House's survey of worldwide freedom last year, it vividly illustrates the distinction publicized by Jeane Kirkpatrick (and for which she was lacerated): that between authoritarian and totalitarian states. There is no doubt that in Indonesia power flows from the top down. But there is also a good deal of "social space." Indeed, the regime seems very much on the defensive under the combined pressures of its economic success (which has generated a burgeoning middle class, thirsting for freedoms), the anticipation of change as Suharto grows old, and the collapse of communism as an ideological threat used to justify authoritarian controls. Indonesia, like the rest of Asia, may yet have to contend with China; but it will be with China as a power, not as a model.

Signs of restlessness abound. During my visit, the Indonesian bar association was holding its convention. The losing candidate for chairman complained that his opponents had resorted to "cheap tricks" by characterizing him as a "government candidate." Meanwhile, the chief judge of the State Administration Court—a new court created specifically for the adjudication of grievances by citizens against government officials—admonished new justices as he swore them in: "If we rule against a government official's policy in favor of the people, we will be accused of lacking nationalism. We will be branded as judges who are not aware of consensus, family values, and development. We must be ready to be blamed."

The official, state-run labor organization was also holding its convention, opening with a speech by President Suharto and closing with a speech by Vice President Sutrisno. The convention's dutiful fealty to the government notwithstanding, the outgoing chairman criticized his own organization for having "done only little for workers since its establishment," adding that "workers are reluctant to join because they know they will gain nothing from it"; therefore, "many workers want to set up their own labor unions."

On trial for insulting the president was a former member of the (rubber-stamp) legislature, who had organized demonstrations by Indonesian expatriates in Germany during a visit there by Suharto. The legis-

lator, Sri Bintang, was stripped of his seat, but was fighting back with lawsuits of his own, challenging his expulsion.

The ordeal of Bintang was not the only reminder of Indonesian authoritarianism. Seven Western human-rights advocates arriving in East Timor to commemorate a massacre of five years ago were detained and promptly deported "for their own safety." And a "national discipline campaign" was launched in Jakarta by 15,000 volunteers empowered to ticket jaywalkers and litterers—even to mete out on-the-spot punishment, such as push-ups. (The military commander in charge was reported as acknowledging, however, that discipline had "yet to catch on.")

Neil Shigley

One activist joked that, in Indonesia, "general elections mean elections by the generals." The press is still cowed following the forced closing in 1994 of three weeklies—including the nation's most popular, *Tempo*—for their critical reports about government activities. The closings prompted the creation of an independent journalists association, which enrolled 300 members. The regime has struck back by barring these members from belonging simultaneously to the official journalists association—a prerequisite for employment by all licensed publications.

Still, while lashing out at Sri Bintang and *Tempo*, the regime is giving ground on many fronts. The administrative court has shown genuine independence, for example ruling that the closing of *Tempo* was illegal, though the journal remains shuttered while the government appeals the decision.

Three years ago, a national human-rights commission was created by presidential decree. To the surprise of many, it has issued reports critical of the government with regard to *Tempo*, the case of a murdered labor organizer (which has attracted much attention), and the killings of civilians by soldiers in Irian Jaya. The commission is growing increasingly bold and is gradually winning the respect of independent human-rights advocates.

Among these activists, views of the United States are a curious mix. On the one hand, they resent their government's close ties to Washington; on the other, many of their own groups receive grants from the U.S. Agency for International Development. Another AID effort sent a bevy of young Indonesian economists to American schools. The knowledge they acquired there became the basis for the economic liberalization now powering Indonesia's growth.

With President Clinton, Indonesian human-rights advocates have had their share of disappointment. They were given to believe that, to punish Jakarta for human-rights abuses, the U.S. trade representative might lift Indonesia's favorable status under the General System of Preferences. But when Clinton visited Indonesia for the 1994 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit, Suharto presented him with a batik shirt, and this, they joked bitterly, led the United States to back down.

The Indonesians' mixed feelings extend not only to the U.S. government but to some Western activists as well. The Scott paper company had announced plans to initiate foresting in the primitive reaches of Irian Jaya. But protests by Western environmentalists impelled Scott to withdraw, perhaps chastened by the bitter controversy enveloping the Louisiana-based Freeport company over its mining operations on that island. The upshot is that the foresting concession has been taken over by a Portuguese firm—which Indonesian environmental advocates fear will prove a tougher adversary than the U.S. firm would have been.

During our meetings, ambivalence toward America was best reflected by some labor militants in Medan. In response to a sharp expression of anti-American anger, I asked for a list of grievances. They were three: the supposed sellout on trade; America's "silence" about the mistreatment of East Timor; and finally, and it seemed most importantly, "You have closed your consulate in Medan." (The consulate was a recent casualty of cuts in the State Department budget, which had left only one post, other than the embassy, in this archipelago of 17,000 islands.) The reason for the militants' anger over the closing? American diplomats had been interested in human rights, and this had stayed the hand of government repression. "A very big protection came from the U.S. consulate," explained the Indonesians, lamenting their loss—and perhaps ours, as this sprawling Islamic nation lurches toward the post-Suharto era.

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Abortion and Cancer

by Judith E. Koehler

QUIETLY AND WITH LITTLE NOTICE from the press, state legislatures have started requiring that women be informed of the cancer risk associated with abortion. As a result, it may soon be common knowledge that having a baby at a young age modestly reduces a woman's lifetime risk of breast cancer, while having an abortion may increase it.

In September 1995, Louisiana became the first state to require that women considering elective abortion receive information about the association between abortion and breast cancer, known as the ABC link. At least 24 hours before an abortion is scheduled, the woman must be given a booklet prepared by the state. While acknowledging that "several studies have found no overall increase in the risk of developing breast cancer after an induced abortion" and that "this issue needs further study," the booklet warns that "several studies do show an increased" long-term medical risk. The warning is even stronger for women who have a family history of breast cancer or who themselves have breast disease. Louisiana urges those women to seek medical advice before they consider an abortion.

Montana has followed Louisiana's lead, and the Pennsylvania legislature was sufficiently interested to commission a review of the scientific research. That "meta-analysis" was performed by Dr. Joel Brind, professor of biology and endocrinology at Baruch College of the City University of New York, in collaboration with specialists associated with the Hershey Medical Center, an affiliate of Pennsylvania State University. Their work is currently undergoing peer review. Its publication is expected early this year.

Conveniently for the layman, Brind—whose own research has explored the connections between reproductive hormones and human disease for over a decade—summarized the state of medical knowledge in the December 25, 1995, issue of *National Review.* By his count, 22 relevant studies have appeared in the peer-reviewed medical literature, of which 11 found a statistically significant link between induced abortion and increased incidence of breast cancer, and another 6 found an increased risk, though below the level of statistical significance (a measure indicating 95 percent certainty that a discerned link is real, not simply an effect of random variation). Brind stresses that the evidence for the ABC link has come not only from the United States but also from Europe, Japan, and the former Soviet Union over a period of four decades.

Among the studies that found an increased risk, the magnitude of the increase varies, but Dr. Janet Daling's findings can be taken as illustrative. Her research, published in 1994 in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, suggests that a 22-year-old woman's lifetime risk of developing breast cancer rises from at least 10 percent—the average for women in general—to 15 percent if she has an abortion. If she has a baby, by contrast, her long-term breast-cancer risk drops to 7 percent. Daling's work suggests the risk is highest—indeed, very high—for women who undergo abortions before the age of 18 and who have family histories of breast cancer; of the 1,600 women she studied, 12 fell into this category, and all 12 got breast cancer by the age of 45. The risk-lowering effect of giving birth, by the way, is universally acknowledged. It is explained by the action on the breasts of hormones released late in pregnancy.

Even if the ABC link represents only the modest cancer risk that Daling found, it must affect large numbers of women, for two reasons: The incidence of breast cancer is high and rising; and abortion is the most frequently performed elective surgery, affecting 1.5 million American women a year.

Already breast cancer is the most common cause of death among middle-aged women. Not surprisingly, its rising incidence has prompted legislation in more than a dozen states, mostly to encourage screening, to require that patients be informed of treatment alternatives, or to compel insurance companies to cover particular procedures. Requiring that women be informed of an avoidable likely risk-factor for breast cancer—elective abortion—is in line with this trend.

It is also in line with contemporary standards of informed consent. Even without legislation, courts often hold doctors liable if they fail to inform patients of material risks associated with treatment. Here, it is interesting to note that consumer rights organizations and the American Civil Liberties Union—usually the first to demand that patients be scrupulously informed of all risks—actively oppose requiring informed consent for elective abortion. Even though the ABC risk appears to be highest for minor girls, who are least able to think realistically about the danger of fatal diseases later in life, these organizations suddenly lose interest in protecting vulnerable consumers.

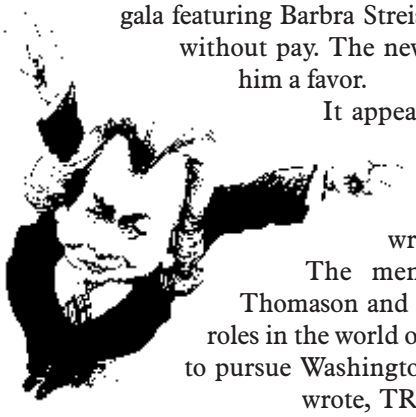
There will always be some women who choose to undergo abortion even if it means their risk of breast cancer rises. But all women, especially the young, should be advised of current scientific knowledge, and doctors have a duty to warn them. Given the reluctance of the normal champions of patients' rights to make this case, lawmakers should step in.

Judith E. Koehler is senior legislative counsel of Americans United for Life.

The Hidden Tale of Travelgate

By Byron York

When a recently released memo placed First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton at the center of the White House Travel Office firings, some called it the smoking gun of Travelgate. Here's the proof, they said: She did it and she lied about it. But students of Travelgate have long known Mrs. Clinton was a major player. What most intrigues them are questions absent from the press coverage in the past two weeks. Questions like: Why was the Travel Office so important to the new administration? What was going on in the White House that led the First Lady and top officials to rush into action on such a seemingly insignificant issue, firing seven longtime officials and siccing the FBI on them as well? What is the bigger picture of Travelgate?



New information obtained by THE WEEKLY STANDARD provides at least some of the answers. According to that information and documents released earlier by the House committee investigating the scandal, the takeover of the Travel Office was just the first step in a much larger plan involving the president, the first lady, and their Arkansas/Hollywood friend Harry Thomason. Under the plan, Thomason and his partner in the aircraft consulting firm TRM, Darnell Martens, would have been given a profitable and permanent role in government—all quite apart from the White House Travel Office. The new information shows just how extensive the plan was.

HARRY THOMASON'S ATTEMPTED TAKEOVER OF THE TRAVEL OFFICE WAS JUST THE FIRST STEP IN A LARGER PLAN.

Thomason performed all sorts of very public services for the Clintons during the campaign and transition. He produced *The Man From Hope*, the treacly if effective biographical film played at the convention that nominated Clinton. And he produced the inaugural events that ushered the Clintons into office. (It is easy to forget just how extravagant it all was—remember the national bell-ringing, the Monticello bus trip, the Lincoln Memorial concert, the Hollywood-style gala featuring Barbra Streisand?) Thomason did it all without pay. The new president certainly owed him a favor.

It appears that the payback began barely a week into the new administration. On January 29, 1993, Martens wrote a memo to Thomason. The memo laid out a plan for Thomason and Martens to play significant roles in the world of federal aviation. "If we are to pursue Washington opportunities," Martens wrote, TRM needed to "obtain some form of official status as advisors [sic] to the White House for general aviation policy matters." Once that was accomplished, the next step was to propose a large-scale consulting project to be done by TRM. Martens's idea was a plan to "review all non-military government aircraft to determine financial and operational appropriateness." He said he could save the taxpayers millions of dollars by running the government's 1,800-plane fleet more efficiently.

In the memo, Martens recommended that he and Thomason visit Washington to meet with officials at the Department of Transportation and the White House to discuss the plan. He also mentioned that they should "determine who controls the scheduling of the White House press corps aircraft. This can be done by TRM, much as the campaign aircraft were handled." Finally, Martens added that TRM should be involved in "FAA Administrator: selection assistance, policy recommendations."

Byron York is a writer and television producer in Washington, D.C. His article "Reelecting Clinton: A Conservative Case" appeared in the Oct. 2, 1995, issue of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

This Jan. 29 document is astonishing in the breadth of its ambitions; Thomason and Martens seemed to be planning to set themselves up as a sort of kitchen-cabinet Federal Aviation Administration. The Travel Office takeover seemed a relatively small part of the plan.

At a February 10 Cabinet meeting, Clinton mentioned that his "staff" had told him that lots of money could be saved by reviewing the operation of all government aircraft. On February 11, citing the president's statement, Martens wrote a second and more detailed memo to Thomason. He proposed a "plane by plane" inventory of the government's fleet. "We've demonstrated our capabilities to the President by coordinating all aircraft activities for the Clinton For President Committee," Martens wrote. "Now we have an opportunity to make a substantive contribution to the deficit reduction plans." He estimated the cost of the one-year audit at $499,000. All that was needed, he continued, was for someone to "put me in front of the right person at the White House and I will prove the value of both the project and Thomason's capabilities."

AP / Wide World Photos

Travelgate producer Thomason

The "right person" turned out to be the one in the Oval Office. A short time later, Thomason discussed the memo with the president. By February 17, the memo had been stamped "THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN." Clinton jotted a few notes in the margins. "These guys are sharp," he wrote, forwarding the memo to chief of staff Mack McLarty, McLarty deputy Mark Gearan, and White House administration director David Watkins for action.

With the president's approval, Martens went to work planning the details. "Based on your discussion with President Clinton of my 2/11/93 memo," he wrote Thomason, "I began the process of obtaining specific information regarding the scope of the work . . .the President believes in it." Martens contacted officials of the General Services Administration, which runs something called the Interagency Committee on Aviation Policy, or ICAP. There is evidence that the officials didn't really like the idea—one wrote "the fact is this is a relatively low priority from a government-wide standpoint . . . we have more important uses for ICAP funds." He also mentioned that the project might have to be put up for competitive bidding. Nonetheless, with White House backing, the idea moved ahead.

Meanwhile, Martens was making incredible claims for the project. "I now believe that TRM can identify savings to the government of several hundred million dollars," he wrote to Thomason on March 12. "A very conservative estimate would be $300 million initially and $150 million per year thereafter." The savings would come from better management of the fleet and a plan to shift much of the government's air business to private companies—like TRM.

On April 7, Martens met with presidential aide Bruce Lindsey to go over the plan. On April 12, he sent a memo to Lindsey. Now that all the preliminaries were taken care of, Martens told Lindsey, the president should (a) issue an executive order giving ICAP the authority to order the audit, and (b) enter into a consulting agreement with Thomason and Martens's firm to do the actual work. In addition, Thomason and Martens came up with yet another reason to do the deal. "In discussing this with Harry Thomason after our meeting," Martens wrote, "he noted the same synergistic opportunities we discussed. Such as regenerating single-engine aircraft production in America . . ." (Thomason also owned an aircraft repair business in California.) Lest any more reason be needed, Martens added that "this project falls solidly under the heading of re-inventing government." On May 6, Martens sent detailed plans of the ICAP project to top officials at the Office of Management and Budget.

The plan to take over the White House Travel Office was moving along simultaneously. During the months of February, March, and April, Thomason and Martens were making a case for the ouster of the long-time office staff. In early May, Thomason told the first lady and others he had a plan in place to have the Travel Office up and running smoothly within an hour of any firings. He was at the White House almost constantly in the days before and after the firings, which occurred on May 19. Information obtained by THE WEEKLY STANDARD indicates Thomason was in the White House each day from early morning until evening from May 10 through May 21. Documents indicate Thomason was in close contact during those days with the president, the first lady, their top advisers, and Mrs. Clinton's friend Susan Thomases, who also seems to have played a central role in the firings. On the 11th, for example, Thomason had a message to call the first lady, a message to call Susan Thomases, a 2 p.m. meeting with Mack McLarty, and a 3 p.m. meeting with Thomases.

What all this reveals is that not only was the first

lady deeply involved in Travelgate, but so was the president himself. On May 12, according to information obtained by congressional investigators, Thomason met with Clinton in the Oval Office from 8:30 to 8:45 a.m.—and though 15 minutes doesn't sound like a lot of time, it's not an inconsiderable appointment with a president, whose day is planned down to the minute. Later that day, Thomason met separately with White House deputy counsel Vincent Foster and the first lady. On the 13th, Thomason met again with the president in the Oval Office—this time for 30 minutes, from 8:45 to 9:15 a.m. On the 14th, according to the newly released account by David Watkins, the first lady "cited Thomason's plan as support for the need for immediate action."

Things were moving very quickly. But on the 19th, it all blew up in the administration's face. The Travel Office firings stirred up a storm of press attention and forced the administration to retreat from its original plans for the office. The heat forced White House officials to conduct an investigation in which they found themselves guilty of insensitivity and slapped their own wrists. Those officials, no doubt, wished the whole thing would just go away. In that atmosphere, Thomason's aircraft project died a quiet death.


Sean Delonas

In the papers that have been released so far, there is little mention of the TRM consulting project after May 1993. Oddly, it resurfaced briefly in August, when at least two officials, deputy chief of staff Roy Neel and White House counsel Bernard Nussbaum, felt the need to write memos saying they never had anything to do with the aircraft project. Nussbaum's August 9, 1993, memo to then-Office of Management and Budget director Leon Panetta reads in part: "I have been advised of a proposal for an audit of federal aircraft by TRM. Although I have been advised of a few meetings and memoranda regarding this proposal, I understand that no government action has been taken with respect to it. I also understand that, several weeks ago, the White House advised OMB that no government action should be taken on this proposal. I want to confirm and reiterate the prior instruction that no government action be taken on this proposal."

The two-track nature of the actions taken by Thomason and the White House is especially baffling. On one track, they were planning a major project that might eventually result in TRM taking over large chunks of U.S. government aviation. On the other, they were plotting to take over the relatively small operation of the White House Travel Office. Why? Why do the small job when the bigger one beckoned? The best answer yet is contained in Martens's January 29 memo.

Martens wrote that if he and Thomason were to "pursue Washington opportunities," they had to "obtain some form of official status." Running the White House Travel Office would have given them that status. It would provide them the institutional base they needed—the office, the letterhead, the White House address—if they were going to run their proposed aviation business out of the White House. They'd be in. To that end, Thomason and Martens each received a White House pass; Martens's security paperwork said he was being considered for a White House staff position, reporting to Harry Thomason and David Watkins.

The aircraft project also helps answer another lingering question: If Thomason is so rich, and the Travel Office is so small, why was he involved? Remember what Thomason's wife and partner, superstar sitcom producer Linda Bloodworth-Thomason, said at the time. They made a six-figure income each week, she boasted. Why would she and her husband say, " 'Ooh, I'm going to like, take my six-figure salary a week and fly off to Washington and see if I can't get those seven little guys out of that travel office in the White House.' It's sort of the equivalent of taking over a lemonade stand." And indeed it was, if one only considers the Travel Office. When one adds the aircraft project, things look a little different.

Add it all together, and it is impossible to understand Travelgate without understanding the aircraft project. But there is a still larger picture: Investigators believe that without an understanding of Travelgate, it is impossible to comprehend the series of events surrounding the death of Vincent Foster that now form the core of the investigation being carried out by the Senate Whitewater Committee. Specifically, why did a sense of panic grip the administration the night Foster killed himself? Despite all the attention given to Whitewater matters, Travelgate may play a more significant role in answering the question.

There is ample documentation to show that Foster

was up to his ears in the scandal. In his memo, Watkins wrote that "once this made it onto the First Lady's agenda, Vince Foster became involved . . . Foster regularly informed me that the First Lady was concerned and desired action." Foster's diary entries indicate he had doubts about the actions the White House took in firing the Travel Office workers; he also contacted a lawyer about what he believed would be further investigation of the matter. And, unlike Whitewater, Travelgate is specifically mentioned several times in the note found torn up in Foster's briefcase:

"No one in the White House, to my knowledge, violated any law or standard of conduct, including any action in the travel office. There was no intent to benefit any individual or specific group."

"The FBI lied in their report to the AG."

"The press is covering up the illegal benefits they received from the travel staff."

"The GOP has lied and misrepresented its knowledge and role and covered up a prior investigation."

Several of Foster's other statements seem to be related to Travelgate—including his statements, "I did not knowingly violate any law or standard of conduct," and "the public will never believe the innocence of the Clintons and their loyal staff" (some observers believe the last phrase actually reads "their *legal* staff"; the handwriting is unclear).

Congressional investigators believe that critical Travelgate documents were in Foster's office when he died and that the White House may still be withholding them. For example, the administration has said that Foster's briefcase contained drafts of executive orders, but it will not release the executive orders, claiming they are privileged material. The papers were taken out of the briefcase by Nussbaum and later placed in Foster's "Travel" file. Investigators have inquired whether they included a draft executive order—never signed—to implement the Thomason/Martens aircraft project, as outlined by Martens's memo of April 12. The White House says the files did not contain such a document. Congressional investigators have also asked the White House about a memo described to investigators as a compilation of the allegations of wrongdoing in the Travel Office gathered by Thomason, Martens, and Travelgate figure (and Clinton cousin) Catherine Cornelius.

The presence of more Travelgate documents in Foster's office would help explain the first lady's actions in the wake of Foster's death. Notified while at her mother's home in Arkansas, she made three long-distance calls that night. The first was to her chief of staff, Maggie Williams. The third was to her closest adviser, Susan Thomases. And the call in the middle was to . . . Harry Thomason. Both Williams and Thomases have described the conversations as outpourings of grief. But what about Thomason? He didn't really know Foster, unlike some administration figures who had known Foster for decades. Yet one of the first lady's first reactions when she learned of Foster's death was a desire to talk to Harry Thomason. It seems only reasonable to ask whether they were talking about Travelgate, which was bigger than any outsider knew at the time.

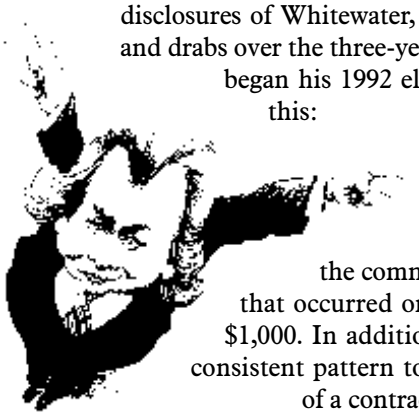
The new evidence uncovered by both the House committee investigating Travelgate and the Senate Whitewater Committee suggests the two scandals merged in Foster's office. He had the documents. His suicide shocked the White House to the core and sent top officials scurrying to collect those papers the Clintons considered most sensitive. If you want to know why they did what they did, the answer may not be Whitewater. It may be Travelgate. ♦

Whitewater in Washington: A Scandal Journeys North

By Tod Lindberg

What was once an almost indecipherable set of weird financial shenanigans involving the tiny elite of a small Southern state is now a full-blown White House story involving, most recently, long-missing billing records suddenly found in a drawer in the First Lady's offices. Those bills completed Whitewater's journey north from the Ozarks to Washington, its transition from an impossible-to-fol-

low land deal to an inside-the-Beltway scandal. And this is extremely bad news for Mr. and Mrs. Clinton. After all, the very Arkansasness of Whitewater has been of immense help to them. The Gordian knot of financial transactions involving a large cast of characters and an array of institutions centering around Little Rock during the Decade of Greed has proved as complicated as the plot of the movie *Chinatown*, and almost as hard to follow. And just like the friendly cop at the climax who tells the morally shattered Jack Nicholson to ignore the depravity he sees around him with the words "Forget it, Jake, it's Chinatown," so the sophisticated, pragmatic political view around Washington has been to say "Forget it, Jake, it's Arkansas" whenever the word "Whitewater" is mentioned.



IT'S NO LONGER ENOUGH TO SAY "FORGET IT, JAKE, IT'S ARKANSAS" IF WHITEWATER IS MENTIONED.

That view can be summed up as follows: *Maybe the Clintons were in some proximity to some sleazy business practices. Who cares? Grow up, this is politics. And, for God's sake, what does any of this admittedly regrettable stuff, much of it dating back 15 years, have to do with Washington? Those who are harping on this ancient history are transparently doing so for partisan political reasons. Sure, we can fault the First Couple for their lack of total candor and lapses of judgment, but let us just say "mistakes were made"—and leave it at that.* As with many other self-consciously moderate, worldly assessments that exude a distinct air of self-congratulation, however, this one seems to tilt not toward the worldly middle, but distinctly toward the Clintons. White House counsel Mark Fabiani, the spin doctor on the Clinton scandals, loves it, since it assumes his conclusion about Whitewater: There's no there there.

The evidence, such as it is, adduced in support of this position is that when you come right down to it, what's come out so far isn't really that bad—nothing more than a little political embarrassment. How can you say the Clintons or their pals obstructed justice when you've got an independent counsel investigating Whitewater to death, as well as a number of regulatory agencies and the hounds of Congress? And when you look at all the details that have emerged, they haven't exactly brought down the administration. The Clinton problem, then, is supposedly aesthetic: Whitewater looks bad because the Clintons themselves are overly cautious, overly concerned with damage control. If they had only told all, released all, sooner, they could have put this matter to rest.

Maybe so. On the other hand, the revelations and disclosures of Whitewater, which have come in dribs and drabs over the three-year period since Bill Clinton began his 1992 election campaign, look like this:

¶ The Clintons' 1978 and 1979 tax returns show a $100,000 profit on trades of cattle futures on the commodities exchange—a profit that occurred on an investment of a mere $1,000. In addition, there was an unusually consistent pattern to the trades—the purchase of a contract came at or near the day's low, a sale came at or near the day's high. And, as it happens, Mrs. Clinton didn't really make the trades herself. She relied heavily on lawyer James Blair, counsel to Tyson Foods, the Arkansas poultry giant. The tax returns also show that the Clintons failed to report some $6,000 in commodities-trade gains on their 1980 income taxes—equivalent to about one-sixth of the governor's salary at the time.

¶ The Whitewater partnership was an investment in which the Clintons put up little cash, and a number of loans for which they were responsible were repaid entirely by their supposedly equal partner, James McDougal. Also, the Clintons improperly deducted on tax returns interest they did not pay.

¶ Hillary Clinton had an ongoing relationship with McDougal's Madison Guaranty Savings and Loan, whose failure cost the federal government $50 million. There was a $2,000-a-month retainer for the Rose law firm. She received $6,000 in fees (at $125 an hour), while the firm received $21,000 in all. There were some 50 meetings and phone calls she participated in concerning Madison, including an hour-long call to the state's chief S&L regulator, who had been appointed by her husband. Had the feds or the state shut down Madison when they first found it insolvent—before Hillary Clinton's representation of it began—it would have cost taxpayers $10 million or so, but when the shutdown she delayed finally did occur, Madison had racked up an additional $40 million in losses.

¶ Then there is the matter of Hillary's participation in the legal work for Castle Grande, a trailer-park development that was the project of James McDougal and Seth Ward, the father-in-law of Hillary's law partner Webster Hubbell—a project whose financing, federal investigators believe, was a sham designed to

allow Madison to circumvent rules against S&Ls investing in real estate.

¶ Then there is the fact that the Rose law firm failed to disclose to the federal government its potential conflicts of interest when it undertook action against bank deadbeats on behalf of Madison's new owner, Uncle Sam. One of those deadbeats from whom the feds hoped to recover was Seth Ward—yes, the father-in-law of the currently jailed Hubbell who was also Hillary's phone buddy on the Castle Grande project.

¶ There are the possibly irregular unsecured personal loans Bill Clinton was able to take out at Arkansas financial institutions and the uncertain terms under which they were repaid. Also, the maximum-level campaign contributions garnered at a Madison fund-raiser from people who deny having made them.

There's more, but let's stop here because the other stuff is even more turgid. And let us ask those sophisticated analysts so bored and uninterested in the details of Whitewater: Would the Clintons indeed have been better off dumping this whole load at once, so that of a Monday morning, we could read the whole story in every newspaper in the country? No, to any reasonable adviser, at any time from the beginning of the Clinton presidential campaign to any day of his service as president, "full disclosure" would have been another way of saying "political suicide."

What to do, then? Retire from the political arena in disgrace? Not likely. Maybe, upon winning election as president of the United States, you try instead to clean up the mess. Close down dirty relationships as quickly as possible. Put your people in key places to keep an eye on things. Disclose only what is necessary ("modified limited hangout" is the classic term) and spin the bejesus out of it. Be as vague as possible. Throw as many roadblocks as you can in front of official inquiries while professing complete cooperation. Find friendly media and work with them to control the blast of explosive information. Rely on your party's majority in Congress to shut down congressional scrutiny. Make counter-allegations about the partisan motives of your critics. And when the going gets tough, hire the priciest lawyers you can find, and don't hesitate to put as many working on this little project as you think you can get away with on the government payroll in the White House Counsel's office.

These are the elements, then, of the Washington Clinton scandals. Some of them are now indisputably matters of record. Some can be inferred from matters of record. It is certainly possible that there are other elements currently unknown. We have good reason to suspect the candor of the principals and their associates, and thus it seems reasonable to suppose that, should one or more of them decide to be forthcoming, we are apt to learn a great deal more. But here are some of the highlights of what we know now about the way the Clintons have tried to clean matters up:

¶ A document produced during the campaign purporting to show the Clintons' losses on Whitewater, the so-called Lyons report, was prepared by a Clinton partisan and offered an exculpatory gloss based on limited documentation. The Clintons needed out of the partnership; James McDougal would buy them out for

Michael Ramirez

$1,000. But he didn't have the money. James Blair—who managed Hillary Clinton's $1,000 investment in cattle futures into $100,000—lent McDougal the money in December 1992. There is no indication that it was ever repaid. The Clintons insist they were "passive investors" with no knowledge of the loans repaid on their behalf.

¶ Vince Foster continued to work on closing the

books on Whitewater in the months before his suicide. His handwritten notes indicate his worry about the finances of the project and his fears that the IRS might audit the Clintons' old tax returns.

¶ The first criminal referral to the Justice Department on Madison Guaranty's financial malfeasance came from the Resolution Trust Corporation (RTC) during the 1992 general election campaign. Shortly after taking office, President Clinton replaced all 93 U.S. attorneys, and in the process installed an associate of his named Paula Casey in Little Rock. She rejected that first referral after it had languished for a year (although filaments of it have since been used in criminal cases brought by Whitewater independent counsel Kenneth Starr).

¶ Files on Whitewater and related matters gathered by a team at the Rose law firm during the campaign made their way to Washington in the custody of Webb Hubbell and Clinton aide Betsy Wright. Some files remained with Hubbell until November 1993—in his basement—when Hubbell claims first to have learned of an RTC criminal referral to the Justice Department. Although he was then the third-ranking official at the Justice Department, he turned the files over to the Clintons' private lawyer, David Kendall.

The principal RTC investigator of Madison, L. Jean Lewis, taped a conversation in which her Washington colleague April Breslaw stated that Breslaw's superiors wanted to be able to say Whitewater had caused no losses for Madison. Breslaw claimed subsequently there had been no pressure to reach any conclusion.

There was a lot of interest in those RTC referrals, in any case. Treasury Department officials were sending multi-headed "heads up" messages about them to the White House in the fall of 1993, and White House meetings ensued. The administration has mainly characterized this activity as an effort to prepare to deal with press inquiries. In November 1993, however, a meeting took place among associate White House counsel William Kennedy (another former Rose partner), Clinton aide Bruce Lindsey, and one other White House official, as well as the Clintons' private lawyers. Kennedy took notes during the meeting, which included the interesting statement "Vacuum Rose Law Firm files. Never know go out. Quietly." The White House maintains that the notes describe a vacuum *in* the files—in other words, that they are missing, as, indeed, many Rose files seem to be. This interpretation is, in linguistic terms, the equivalent of bending your right leg into the shape of a pretzel. Perhaps exhausted by their lexicographic efforts on behalf of "vacuum," the White House has never offered an explanation of what the word "quietly" refers to.

¶ Hillary Clinton has also tried to downplay her role in representing Madison. She told FDIC investigators that her role was "minimal"—contrary to what the billing records the White House suddenly "found" early in 1996 indicate. Susan Thomases, a New York lawyer close to the First Lady, also produced some notes in which she wrote that Richard Massey, another lawyer at Rose, "will say" he got Rose the Madison business. Last week before the Senate committee investigating Whitewater, Massey said under oath he did not bring in the business.

¶ White House counsel Bernard Nussbaum agreed to allow Justice Department officials to review the documents in the office of Vince Foster following his suicide—and then rescinded. In the interim, there was a flurry of phone calls involving Hillary Clinton, Thomases, and her chief of staff Margaret Williams. Thomases and Williams profess to have absolutely no recollection of what might have been discussed during those calls.

One witness reported seeing Williams remove files from Foster's office the night of his death—which Williams denies. She has said she removed files only after Nussbaum divided them up into piles, one for Foster's personal material, one for White House counsel's files, a third pertaining to the Clintons' private legal matters, including Whitewater. The last pile was to have been turned over to the Clintons' private lawyers. Before it was, however, that file spent some time in a closet at the White House residence.

The relatively bare recitation of facts here fails to do justice to the shifts in various story lines followed by the Clintons and their friends. Thus the billing records at first did not exist, then were missing, then were found—with the White House, the president, and the First Lady insisting all along the way that they had cooperated fully.

The larger picture here is not an Ozarks landscape with the White river running through it. It is, instead, an intimate West Wing interior, wherein are gathered the Clintons' closest friends, lawyers, fixers, and aides-de-camp. What are they doing? Well, they're sitting around a table talking intently among themselves. Some have sheets of paper and file folders in front of them. Some are talking on telephones. Maybe they're just talking political strategy. On the other hand, what *would* a picture of a group of people straightening out their stories look like?

This activity goes well beyond the realm of political damage control. Any rational person can see that.

How much farther? Well, in the case of a sworn statement about "minimal" legal work then contradicted by records showing some 50 hours of billing, the question of what the word "minimal" can be construed to mean is the question of whether perjury charges are in order for Hillary Clinton. It is difficult to imagine that a First Lady could be indicted—but it is a measure of how serious this has become that it is no longer irresponsible to mention the words "indictment" and "Hillary Clinton" in the same sentence.

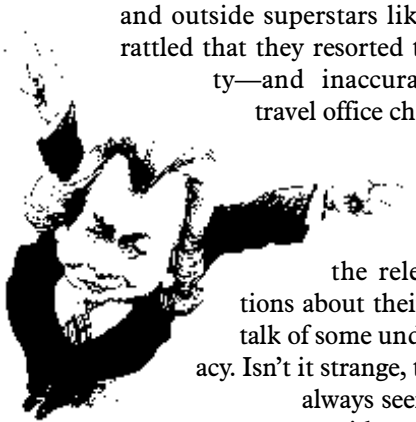
All cover-ups seek to work their mystery through the agency of boredom and obscurity. What happened between Hillary Clinton, the Rose law firm, and Madison Guaranty Savings and Loan happened in the state of Arkansas several years ago. But the word "minimal" was spoken in Washington. The missing billing records were found, in 1996, in Washington. Papers disappeared, and then reappeared, in Washington. Whitewater is not an Arkansas affair any longer, an outgrowth of a small state and its crony elite. It's a Washington story now, and for that reason alone no longer boring and obscure. ♦

As the White House Spins

By Carl M. Cannon

President Clinton ended 1995 on a high note. He was up in the polls. Republicans couldn't shake him loose on the budget, and, for once, official Washington was fixated on the ethics probes of Newt Gingrich. Then in the first two weeks of the new year, the president and his wife hit a series of jarring speed bumps, on Whitewater, the travel office firings, and Paula Jones's sexual harassment suit. "It gets to the point where you wonder what's coming next," confided one presidential aide.

His was the rare admission. Most White House officials, under instructions to sound confident, sought to project an unworried air. Their actions belied the image, however. Press secretary Mike McCurry, in a calculated attempt at spin control that backfired, opined that if his boss weren't president, he'd lay Bill Safire out cold over a *New York Times* column questioning the First Lady's veracity—which led to three days of stories in which Mrs. Clinton's name and Safire's phrase "congenital liar" appeared in close proximity over and over again. White House lawyers, both in-house folk and outside superstars like Robert Bennett, were so rattled that they resorted to peddling startlingly petty—and inaccurate—stories about former travel office chief Billy Dale.



"IT GETS TO THE POINT WHEN YOU WONDER WHAT'S COMING NEXT," ONE PRESIDENTIAL AIDE SAID.

Ever since the campaign of 1992, Mr. and Mrs. Clinton—and their surrogates—have greeted the release of unwelcome revelations about their Arkansas past with vague talk of some undefined Republican conspiracy. Isn't it strange, they'll ask, how these issues always seem to crop up just when the president is doing well legislatively? Or going up in the polls? Mark Fabiani, the Los Angeles lawyer imported to the White House to handle Whitewater inquiries, bravely sounded that note again this week. "This is 1996," he said to me on Wednesday. "It's no coincidence that the chairman of the Senate Whitewater committee is the chairman of Bob Dole's presidential campaign."

The president, forced to defend his wife, dusted off an old line himself. "I've said before, and I'll say again, 'If everybody in this country had the character that my wife has, we'd be a better place to live.'" A man can

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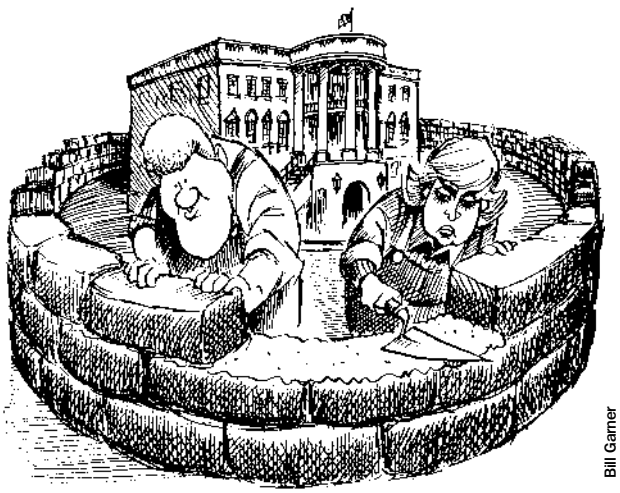
hardly go wrong defending his wife. History suggests this is particularly true of presidents. Yet the damage this time was not coming from enemies of the Clintons, but from past underlings and the First Family's own file cabinets.

The first shoe dropped Jan. 3, in the late-night release of a memo written by Arkansan David Watkins when he still worked in the White House. Watkins, whose association with the Clintons goes back to their days in Little Rock together, was fired for misuse of presidential aircraft, and when he was let go he hinted that he knew where some skeletons were. The Clintons took care of him by putting him on the Democratic National Committee payroll, but it turned out Watkins had left behind a little stink bomb in the form of a memo on the travel office firings. Watkins's memo said Hillary had told him of "her desire for swift and clear action to resolve the situation"—in other words, he says she told him to fire those seven people, a fact she denied yet again to ABC's Barbara Walters last week. Watkins himself called the unusual memo a "soul cleansing." A lawyer in the White House counsel's office was less charitable, referring to it as a "cover-your-ass special." But what few seem to have noted about the Watkins memo is that it appears to have been written with a special prosecutor in mind.



Bill Garner

Two questions keep coming up about the Watkins memo. The first has to do with the reason why this document, covered by a subpoena, was only turned over to Congress in 1996, more than two years after it was drafted. The second is: Is Hillary Clinton really this ruthless towards White House workers of modest standing? After all, not only were the Travel Office Seven fired, they were given just a few hours to clean out their desks, basically called crooks by then-White House press secretary Dee Dee Myers, and subjected to an FBI inquiry to make the firings look kosher.

The White House claims whatever the first lady did—and they say she did almost nothing—she was motivated by worries about the taxpayers' money. Fabiani issued a statement containing the words: "The first lady's concern about financial mismanagement in the Travel Office—a concern that in the end proved fully justified—has already been well-documented." Oh? The concerns of financial mismanagement proved to be "fully justified"—a talking point repeated by McCurry and other White House loyalists? Well, not to put too fine a point on it, but Billy Dale was *acquitted*.

When I reminded a lawyer in the White House counsel's office of this inconvenient detail, as well as the fact that Clinton himself had all but apologized to Dale publicly after the acquittal, the official began volunteering the details of Dale's attorneys' plea-bargaining offers. This same spin was employed by Robert Bennett, Clinton's personal attorney, and by Don Fowler, the president's hand-picked DNC chief. It was a disturbing tactic for several reasons. First, the familiarity of Clinton's lawyers and Democratic party hacks with what are supposed to be confidential negotiations fueled the suspicion, always denied by administration officials, that Dale's prosecution was orchestrated out of the White House. Second, the Clintonites misstated the terms of Dale's plea bargain offer. It wasn't to accept a conviction of embezzlement and four months in the clink. It was to plead to a misdemeanor count of having money in the wrong account and to accept no more than two months' confinement.

Billy Dale is a retired civil servant, with some $500,000 in legal bills, whose career was ruined by the determination of the Clintons to replace him and his staff with Arkansas cronies. Instead of being left alone, he is still being hounded by those eager to divert attention from the first lady. It is instructive behavior from a president who told the American people they have a duty to "respect" the jury's verdict in the O.J. Simpson case.

"This administration is a champion of creating the impression of wrongdoing," Benjamin Ginsberg, director of the Johns Hopkins Center for the Study of American Government, told my colleague Susan Baer. "They're more effective at creating the impression of wrongdoing than they are at doing wrong. They make it so tantalizing, and are so relentless in their efforts to cover-up, that you think there must be many bodies buried somewhere." ♦

Culture Equals Politics

Why Conservative Intellectuals and Politicians Need Each Other

By David Brooks

Pat Buchanan may have made more news, but it was William J. Bennett who uttered the most noteworthy sentence at the 1992 Republican convention: "Plato understood in the end there is only one political issue: how we raise our children."

Bennett took that thought and went on to publish *The Book of Virtues*, which tapped a deep vein of public concern and became one of the decade's bestsellers. Since the '92 convention, and with a vengeance, public attention has focused on the issues Bennett was pinpointing: how to re-moralize society and how to build character in the young. Conservative writers, think tankers, theologians, activists, and foundation heads—from Gertrude Himmelfarb to Arianna Huffington, from the Christian Coalition to the Cato Institute—have focused their energy on issues of character, morality, and civil society.

Republican politicos have traveled a different road. While conservative intellectuals talk of character and virtue, Republican politicians have focused on appropriations, CBO projections, and the perils of federal deficits. Republican presidential candidates are almost as fiscally focused. Phil Gramm declined to campaign for president on moral issues, declaring that he was running for president, not preacher. Bob Dole told the *Meet the Press* audience that the first thing he would do as president "is be consistent with the balanced budget approach in the seven years and send up a budget that would take us to a balanced budget by the year 2002."

What we have here is an amazing disjunction between the concerns of conservative activists and the interests of Republican politicians. It's no wonder that conservative activists and intellectuals have no enthusiasm for the presidential field; the candidates are not pushing their hot buttons. And it's no wonder that Republican nerves on Capitol Hill are so jittery. The conservative support groups in the public arena are not fully engaged in Republican political battles. Republicans had a tough time fighting the budget propaganda war because many of those thinkers and writers who normally define points of principle and rally moral fervor were instead sitting in seminars on the virtues of civil society.

Who's right? The intellectuals can argue that they have correctly identified character as the issue that will dominate public discussion for years and that the politicians are fools for conducting themselves like accountants. The politicians can counter that government gets dangerous when it starts trying to engineer souls, and that the intellectuals are fools to conduct themselves like archbishops. The reality is that the distinction between culture and politics is a slippery one. These days, the controversies that dominate the national conversation and shape the culture emanate from politics. The challenge is to use government to influence culture. That's exactly the task left undone when intellectuals go off and debate culture while politicians don the green eyeshade.

The greatest share of the blame rests on the politicians, whose decision to avoid the character issue represents a major failure of imagination. Remember, it was not inevitable that budget balancing would emerge as the dominant issue for the new Republican Congress. In his new book, *Values Matter Most*, Ben Wattenberg has amassed a mountain of data to show that American voters are motivated by things larger than deficits and interest rates. He cites, for example, a 1994 Harris poll showing that only 5 percent of Americans listed the deficit when asked to name the two most serious problems facing the country. Crime was by far the most frequently named issue, followed by health care, drugs, the economy, employment, and programs for the poor. A *Washington Post*/ABC News poll in 1995 asked voters which set of issues was of greatest concern to them: social issues, economic issues, or foreign policy issues. Fifty-five percent said social issues, 19 percent said economic issues, and 3 percent said foreign policy issues.

In the definitive analysis of the Republican landslide, pollster Fred Steeper concluded that there are two types of conservative, the economic and the cultural, that "cultural conservatism is the newer of the two, and it is likely the reason for the historical result on November 8, 1994." All those people were buying Bennett's *Book of Virtues* for a reason.

But with a few exceptions, such as Sen. Dan Coats, Republicans on Capitol Hill have barely touched the social and cultural issues that are of primary interest to Republican voters and intellectuals. True, Newt Gingrich talked about orphanages, beginning an important discussion about protecting children from the welfare culture. But once the legislative clock started ticking, the Republican revolution settled on pretty traditional concerns—regulatory reform, tort reform, and, above all, budget balancing.

Think back on the major issues of the past year. The Republicans didn't cut big agencies, which would have changed the way the government looks, thereby forcing the nation to confront fundamental issues about which government actions are extraneous. Instead, they trimmed here and there. Indeed, they insisted ad nauseam that they weren't really cutting but merely reducing the rate of increase. Their centerpiece reform involves Medicare. Republicans proposed a system that would have seniors paying $87.60 a month in premiums by the year 2002. President Clinton proposed a plan that would have seniors paying $82.80. That's a difference of *four dollars and eighty cents*—hardly a battle of principle.

And why did the Republicans make Medicare the centerpiece of their budget? Medicare doesn't tear at the fabric of the nation. It doesn't crowd out civil society the way other social programs do. But it is where the money is. And if you care about the deficit foremost, you go after the biggest programs first. If you care about civil society, you go after the forces corroding it.

The Republican budget myopia led to a series of strange debates in which arbitrary numbers masqueraded as the moral high ground. Republicans insisted that the budget be balanced in seven years instead of eight, or nine, or ten. There was a heated dispute over whether the budgeteers should rely on Congressional Budget Office projections or Office of Management and Budget projections, though both sets of figures rely on extremely rough guesses about the growth of the economy. In this eye-glazing effort, it was President Clinton who ended up talking incessantly about values, and the Republicans who ended up talking arithmetic. In a typical exchange, President Clinton declared, "I am acting to protect the values that bind us together." House Budget chairman John Kasich held a news conference and retorted, "The president has no plan to balance the budget."

Somewhere deep down beneath these debates there was an argument about how much would have to be cut from government spending. The CBO numbers would demand larger cuts than the OMB numbers. But the Republicans weren't making the case that the government should be cut—and cut for the benefit of civil society—even if the budget were in balance.

The deficit dominated the agenda in part because some veteran Republicans like Bob Dole and the now-vanished Bob Packwood still seem to believe that government's most fundamental duty is to balance its books. Many of them are openly uncomfortable with all the big talk about values. They found themselves in surprising agreement with the populist freshmen Republicans in the House, who saw the deficit as a symbol of Washington's inability to impose discipline on itself. That in turn played into the belief of some House leaders that government won't have the credibility to tackle values issues until it gets its deficit in order.

And over and above all that was a naked political calculus about what battles to fight and when to fight them: After all, cutting the deficit was an agenda item delightfully free of controversy. The people like it; so do talk radio, Ross Perot, and the prestige press. It was a natural impulse to take concern about the deficit, which has long been a preoccupation in the editorial pages of the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* and in similar quarters, and use it as justification for their efforts to shrink government. This, in turn, put the Democrats slightly on the defensive, because they had to insist they wanted budget balance even as they sought to protect their spending programs.

Still, the strategy came at a cost for Republicans. It cost them moral fervor. It cost them the engagement of their intellectuals and polemicists. The first year of the Republican revolution was dominated by haggling over appropriations. It is hard to get excited by a banner that reads "Reduce the Rate of Increase!"

GOP politicians have shown themselves addicted to the Limited Politics that seemed to have been killed off by the Reagan Revolution. According to the doctrine of Limited Politics, also known as "leave me alone" Republicanism, taxes and guns are manly and important issues, but culture is froth and morals are for religious fanatics. These ideas left the feminists and other leftists an open field when they used politics to influence culture. Whether Republicans take culture seriously even now is still an open question

But intellectuals also deserve a share of the blame

for abandoning politicians at a critical time, when the ideas about how to restore a civil society need embodiment in specific proposals and policies the politicians can take to the floor of the House and Senate. After all, politicians are primarily in the business of turning ideas into legislation, and so far the intellectuals have provided little material for them to work with.

Consider the strangeness of the situation: Republicans have just assumed positions of power in government, and at this important moment conservative intellectuals conclude that the nation's most serious problems are in fact beyond the reach of government. Conservative political action is now more possible than at any time this century, just at a time when conservative thinkers seem sure that politics really isn't sufficient; culture and civil society are key. Far from fighting the last war, conservative intellectuals might fairly be accused of fighting the next before this one is over.

When conservatives were out of power on Capitol Hill, they had more faith in the uses of legislation. During the Bush years, for example, enterprise zones were a hot topic. The assumption was that the problem of the underclass could be addressed by increasing economic opportunity. The levers of the tax code, voucher plans, and various incentive schemes could do that—if only Congress would pass a bill.

Occasionally you still hear a Republican congressman like James Talent or J.C. Watts talking about enterprise zones, but rarely a James Q. Wilson. Intellectuals emphasize character-building institutions—parents, churches, friendship societies (and their descendants), and popular culture. The Heritage Foundation's *Policy Review* has reinvented itself as a magazine devoted to the study of civil society. David Blankenhorn promotes fatherhood. Himmelfarb's essays on the lessons of 19th-century moral revivals are widely quoted. Francis Fukuyama writes a book on how trust holds communities together. Robert Woodson promotes successful charitable groups. Michael Joyce and the Bradley Foundation have created a network of civil society groups. This is where the conservative action is in the mid-1990s.

The intellectuals have argued very persuasively that behavior and character are the key to solving social problems, but so far they haven't translated many of their Big Ideas on character into Big Policies. (The one exception is school choice, which so far lacks a political strategy for enactment.)

Chas Fagan

Many conservative thinkers have simply given up on policy and politics. "To restore civil society, a return to an earlier way of thinking about social problems is needed," writes Don Eberly, president of The Civil Society Project. "The 20th century has traded in moral man for economic and psychological man, subjecting him at every turn to either economic inducements or therapeutic treatments. If society is to recover, the 21st century will have to recover a vision of man bearing inherent moral value and moral agency." Eberly rejects those liberals and conservatives who "talk in cold, rational terms about the programs of government or market systems." He's interested in the space that is neither government nor market—the space in which children are raised, in which couples marry, in which people worship and help each other, and he doesn't hold out any hope that either statist or

capitalist institutions can clean up that space. "The good society cannot be doled out like just another entitlement," he writes. "It cannot be pieced together through government programs, or stimulated into existence by more tax cuts. It must be achieved through the cooperative efforts of individual citizens."

The argument that social problems are beyond the realm of government has always been a strain in conservative thinking (see Robert Nisbet), but it is especially prominent now. Tom Bethell, for one, believes that with the political victory of conservatism at the polls, it may be time to start in on cultural matters—by which he means high culture, literature, the arts. But the problem with the notion that we should now go off and fight for culture is that there's no there there. People no longer have great public controversies about modern novels. Contemporary art is nearly irrelevant to national debate. These cultural fields have become professional fiefdoms removed from the main arguments about America's future.

Like it or not, politics is the realm where national disagreements are hashed out. People have periodically tried to launch television talk shows about literary controversies, but they don't work because few people currently define themselves by their literary views. There were once ferocious arguments about who was greater, Tolstoy or Dostoyevsky. Partisans in both camps could barely be civil to each other.

These days, politics is the one issue on which people in business, the arts, the academy, the sciences, and other walks of life all feel qualified to express a view. Do you root for Robert Novak or Eleanor Clift? Tell me that and I can make some pretty good guesses about many aspects of your life—where you live, how you decorate your house, how you think about homosexuality. We now define the zeitgeist by political events. The 1980s became the "Reagan eighties," with all the attendant cultural associations. The polarized situation of the 1990s is embodied in the phrase "politically correct."

Thus, some intellectuals have abandoned politics just at the moment they are most needed, since the distinction between political and cultural activity is a false one. These days, you shift the culture by shifting politics. Policies and politicians give off cultural emanations that change the way people see the nation. (This was the argument for Colin Powell—he would be such an example of good character that his programmatic failings would be tolerable.) When government sends cultural signals, the effects cannot be measured by social scientists. But the way people think, the whole frame of debate, shifts a little, and the effects are real.

But if there is to be a reunion between Republican politicians and conservative intellectuals, it will have to be initiated by visionary politicians who see politics in the widest terms: as a battle for the nature of the culture. And only intellectuals can set the terms and outline the boundaries within which that battle can be fought.

A hopeful sign is an outstanding book due out in February from the American Enterprise Institute Press called *To Empower People*, edited by Michael Novak. It's a lively look back at the famous essay of the same name published 20 years ago by Peter Berger and Richard John Neuhaus. Berger and Neuhaus anticipated the current thinking about civil society, and in the process coined the phrase "mediating structures." At the heart of the book is a series of very practical essays on how to promote civil society through government.

Liberals thought they were doing that in the Great Society days when the government contracted out social work to private charities. The problem, as we now know, is that the government didn't become more like the charities, the charities became more like the government. Stuart Butler, Douglas Besharov, Marvin Olasky, Novak, and others tackle the thorny question of how government can create, in Novak's words, a "protective umbrella" so that charities are supported but left free to act according to their original mission.

The debate is still open among the contributors to this volume. And of course it is not just a debate for conservatives. But it is a *concrete* debate about *concrete* policy options. When politicians try to talk about morality head-on, or when they hold hearings on moral decline, they are usually so ham-handed and opportunistic they make your skin crawl. They are for all virtues in general and none in particular. But when actual policies are under scrutiny, then the debate is less banal. Different policy options suggest real choices between different value systems (between, say, the the value-neutral Great Society welfare system and a value-laden Robert Woodson-like network of private charities).

Policies reify airy-fairy debates about values. This book shows us the way to argue about cultural decline: centering the argument around policy, not preachment. That way, intellectuals have something real to restrain their flights of utopianism, and politicians have something broad to latch onto, so they don't retreat into the budgetary pedantry so sadly distant from the real concerns of ordinary Americans. ♦

Disney's Desecrations

By Michael Giltz

We've entered a new golden age for the family film. Almost every major studio has a division devoted to creating live-action movies for kids, and 1995 saw the release of at least three such films that will one day be considered classics: *Babe*, *A Little Princess*, and *The Secret of Roan Inish*. Only *Babe* did well at the box office, but all three will make a fortune when they are released as videos. Kids love to hear the same stories told over and over again in the same way, and parents love to plop the kids in front of the TV for an hour and a half of relative peace. So sales are booming; even commercial and creative flops, like the flaccid remake of *Miracle on 34th Street*, can sell truckloads.

Any Hollywood boom features an immense amount of dross along with the gold, and the great irony of the current creative resurgence of the live-action family movie is the fact that not a single good one in recent years has come from the foremost brand name there is: Disney. While studio after studio tries and fails to match the intelligence and craft of Disney's animated films, Disney's live-action movies for children have been abysmal. Worse yet, the studio has faltered by foraging through texts of classic children's literature and wreaking havoc on them. From Mark Twain to Rudyard Kipling, great works have been desecrated, sometimes to ensure they conform to Hollywood ideology, and sometimes just because their makers and producers are remarkably bereft of taste and judgment. *Babe*, *A Little Princess*, and *The Secret of Roan Inish* are also derived from books of some distinction. But while they never shy away from the cold hard truths at the heart of their stories, the Disney adaptations show a level of disrespect for literature that studios usually reserve only for audiences. When filmmakers try to skirt the prickly truths of these stories, they rob the tales of dramatic power and inadvertently hold up a mirror to their own prejudices and failings.

Tom and Huck: *Never Mark Twain shall meet*

Consider *The Jungle Book*. First turned into a cutesy cartoon by Disney in the 1960s—hardly a memorable effort apart from Phil Harris's singing "The Bare Necessities"—Kipling's stories of a boy raised among the animals of India was again made into a movie by the studio last year. Kipling has, of course, fallen severely out of favor because he was unapologetically fond of colonialism and sometimes condescendingly fond of India and its people. Though little of this can be found in his tales about Mowgli, Disney denudes them of their insight and originality anyway.

In the Disney version, Mowgli is a sweet and innocent creature who plays and frolics with his animal friends. White men are evil and stupid or at best benignly foolish. Though he attempts to join human society, it's deeply distasteful to him. Looking at a stuffed tiger in a trophy room, Mowgli says, "The more I learn what is a man, the more I want to be an animal." At the climax, he peacefully faces down the tiger Shere Khan, reporting proudly, "Shere Khan sees me not as a man, but a creature of the jungle."

None of this has a thing to do with what Kipling wrote. Shere Khan, for example, is an almost mythically evil presence in the stories and constantly on the lookout for a chance to murder Mowgli. And at the climax of Kipling's tales, Mowgli gleefully lays a trap for Shere Khan and kills him. Revenge isn't just a fact of life in the jungle to Kipling, it is a noble pursuit in and of itself. Kipling's jungle isn't an idyllic Eden separate and better than the world of man; it mirrors the world of man, complete with pettiness, kindness, anger, friendship, hatred, and sacrifice. Mowgli survives and rules over this world not despite the fact that he's human but *because* he's human—none of the other animals can even look him in the eye for more than a moment. In the end, Mowgli joins the world of man because that's where he belongs.

Disney distorts and dilutes Mark Twain's undeniably progressive

Michael Giltz last wrote for The Weekly Standard *about Andrew Kimbrell's* The Masculine Mystique.

The Jungle Book: *Don't look for Kipling's bare necessities here.*

worldview just as thoroughly as it does Kipling's colonial ideology. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* generally scares the bejesus out of filmmakers, because it deals so forthrightly with slavery and the racial attitudes of the 19th century. But Disney's *The Adventures of Huck Finn* wouldn't even frighten Aunt Polly. Huck hangs out with the slaves and goes to Jim for advice. And who wouldn't? Jim is clearly far more intelligent and thoughtful than Huck, giving little speeches about equality and the evils of slavery. And when the two of them are rafting down the Mississippi, Jim always has a plan in mind or takes the time to teach Huck the difference between right and wrong.

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer is a far less controversial novel, though even here Twain gently and persistently mocks the conventions of society. But *Tom and Huck*, the newly released Disney version of the book, still finds plenty to fiddle with. In the novel, Tom and Huck are basically equals. Still, while Tom takes special delight in Huck's notoriety, he won't go so far as to be seen with him in public. In the movie, Tom is sweet and good, while Huck is generally bad—a selfish and scared coward (though the movie is quick to point out he was abused as a child by his drunken Pap). Tom teaches Huck the importance of friendship with maxims like, "When a friend's in trouble, you don't run away." Even minor characters like Becky Thatcher are perverted out of all reason; a willful, interesting girl-child in the book, Becky becomes a distractingly modern woman in the movie, pushing Tom into a creek at one point and punching him out at another. At the finale of *Tom and Huck,* Twain's intractable Huck jumps at the first opportunity to be "sivilized." Tom is aghast when Huck talks excitedly about going to school before running off to escort the Widow Douglas to a church social. Perhaps the only real surprise in this movie is that they didn't change the name of the bad guy: Injun Joe.

These three fiascos teach a very interesting lesson about the dangers of tampering with the works of significant authors. For when filmmakers shy away from the complex and subtle characters of these classics, they often inadvertently inject the ugly stereotypes they thought needed avoiding in the first place—vulgarities the original authors could never even imagine.

In the recent *Jungle Book*, for example, Mowgli easily outwits the white men. When he's captured, it's always by treacherous and blackhearted Indians. Inadvertent message: The dark-skinned natives are even more wily and evil than the worst white people. Kipling may have coined the phrase "white man's burden," but his ideas about the differences between the races were layered and ambiguous. If there were stereotypes in his works, they were balanced by complex, engaging characters, such as the title role in his masterpiece *Kim*. No such balance exists here.

In *The Adventures of Huck Finn*, Twain's giddily optimistic finale is taken to even further extremes when the slave Jim is dressed to the nines and exchanging pleasantries with his former captors shortly after being freed. And throughout the film, even most of the slave owners are pictured as wonderfully concerned about their property and wracked with guilt about the whole arrangement. Inadvertent message: Slavery wasn't so bad, owners were generally good people, and everyone was relieved when it was ended. This, it goes without saying, is a travesty of the lessons of Twain's novel, one of the deepest explorations of the idea of freedom in literature.

In *Tom and Huck*, the newly modernized Becky endangers the safety of her and Tom by refusing to heed his warnings not to yell at

the top of her voice while they're in the caves outside town. Her willful heedlessness causes a cave-in that traps the two and almost costs them their lives. Inadvertent message: Girls should remember their place, especially when doing dangerous things like exploring caves that are better left to the boys.

Parents looking for "safe" entertainment for their kids should avoid these three movies and, until there's some suggestion the studio has learned the error of its ways, whatever live-action literary adaptations Disney attempts in the future. Mush is never part of a well-balanced diet. And well-intentioned mush is the most unhealthful mush of all. ♦

Books

Story of Their Lives

By Claudia Winkler

In her 1991 book *Feminism Without Illusions*, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese called herself "temperamentally and culturally conservative" but also "a proud feminist." Now, the second half of that paradox has given way. In her new book, "*Feminism Is Not the Story of My Life"* (Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 275 pages, $23.95), she portrays feminists as radicals who see men as the enemy, heterosexuality as a conspiracy, and children as hindrances to be "fit into the nooks and crannies" of lives whose important satisfactions lie elsewhere. For a sometime leftist, it has been a wholesome evolution.

To be sure, this professor of history at Emory University still wanly associates herself with feminism here and there in these pages. And she takes pains to balance her indictments of feminists with parallel charges against "conservatives," those, in her telling, who believe that parents can meet their responsibilities in only one way: by the mother's looking after the children full time. Against these two contrasting foils, Fox-Genovese sets out to describe the way "most women" (and she) think and live. At its best, her method is illuminating, though it fails to camouflage the book's real drama: a sensible woman's disenchantment with contemporary feminism.

The spark from which the book developed was a conversation she had with a young journalist in 1991. After a long telephone interview, the two started talking about children as a social priority. The younger woman confided that she had recently attended the convention of that feminist flagship, the National Organization for Women. "Out of hundreds of discussion sessions," she said, "only one focused on children—and it was on lesbian mothers." Herself near the end of a pregnancy, she realized that her momentous preoccupation was of no concern to NOW.

"Startled," Fox-Genovese began to explore systematically the long-noted reluctance of average women—including educated working women like the young reporter—to call themselves feminists. For two years, she conducted formal interviews with women from many regions and different walks of life. She reflected, too, on her own experience as a happily married professional woman, enthusiastically domestic and family-oriented but "not blessed" with children (her husband is the equally ideologically interesting historian Eugene Genovese). She pondered conversations with friends and relatives, as well, and studied the polling data and relevant scholarship.

The bedrock truth she uncovered, obvious to all but feminists, is that love, marriage, and motherhood remain central to most women's aspirations and to the lives they lead, regardless of whether they also work for pay by necessity or choice; that a predilection for these vital experiences, as for the more mundane manifestations of femininity, is not foisted on women by the patriarchy or any backlash against feminism but passed down from mother to daughter and through other supportive and enriching "webs of female connection"; and that, while most women who work value their economic power, as well as other important gratifications derived from activity beyond the home, most of them, if forced to choose, would put family first. Such women naturally see feminism as irrelevant, or actually hostile, to their most cherished concerns.

If this were all the burden of Fox-Genovese's book, it would hold scant interest outside the intellectual hothouse of college campuses, where feminist radicals still have sufficient sway to require refutation. But she goes on to explore more problematic areas, like women's ambivalence about the sexual revolution and abortion. The most effective part of *"Feminism Is Not the Story of My Life"* is its discussion of how public policy and employment practices could ameliorate the biggest source of conflict in women's lives: not their relations with the opposite sex, but the clashing demands of children and work.

Here Fox-Genovese shows how far she has moved toward apostasy, not just from feminism but from liberalism. Here, too, she nearly abandons the safe stance of empiri-

kent Lemon

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese

cal observer for bolder assertions about the nature of things.

The problem, she writes, is "our collective uncertainty about how to combine opportunity for women, economic stability for families, and the crying needs of children" in an economic and cultural climate that increasingly sends both parents, or the only parent, to work. Fox-Genovese's policy prescriptions start from a premise few conservatives would quarrel with (indeed, Charles Murray formulates it in nearly identical terms): that raising the next generation is the most important thing individuals and societies do. She posits that this essential work is best performed by intact families and that children require considerable parental attention. She notes that, even with the rise of more equal sharing of tasks within companionate marriages, the care of young children is and will remain for the foreseeable future more women's responsibility than men's—then she burns her feminist bridges by failing to decry this reality and instead affirming that most mothers wish to retain their special bond with children.

These assumptions lead Fox-Genovese to endorse policies that respect the "needs and sensibilities" both of women who work outside the home and of those who don't. Thus, institutional day care should never be favored over the home care of children, which most families prefer, whether parents, relatives, or neighbors provide the care. Her suggestions include a large increase in the income-tax deduction for children, tax breaks for at-home mothers equal to those for paid day care, and maternity IRAs.

Since there will always be mothers who must work and who do not have nearby friends and relatives, she favors tax breaks encouraging businesses to contribute to the support of neighborhood day care programs, including those run by churches. Such indirect subsidies, she says, have the advantage of "encouraging people to work together within local communities to promote the values in which they believe."

She calls for expanding Head Start, which especially appeals to black women, but would transfer the program to the states and encourage some local funding and community control. And for the children whose parents cannot cope, Fox-Genovese sees a place for boarding schools and even—yes, she utters the word—orphanages. Above all, the increased availability of part-time and "Mommy-track" jobs with decent pay and benefits, she says, would be the best possible answer to women's employment needs while their children are at home.

Whatever one thinks of the particulars of this agenda, it is an honorable contribution to a debate about matters of utmost importance to Americans, singly and collectively. Yet Fox-Genovese is undoubtedly right when she notes with sorrow, on her last page, that some young women on campuses like her own will see her views as "threatening or oppressive." Taught to overvalue independence and to shrink from the primal connecting acts of life, these daughters of feminism have been swindled. Fox-Genovese would lure them back into the family. ♦

Books

Roll Over, Rushdie

By Daniel Pipes

In March 1989, shortly after Ayatollah Khomeini issued his decree sentencing Salman Rushdie to death for his novel *The Satanic Verses*, London's *Observer* newspaper published an anonymous letter from Pakistan. "Salman Rushdie speaks for me," wrote its author, who explained: "Mine is a voice that has not yet found expression in newspaper columns. It is the voice of those who are born Muslims but wish to recant in adulthood, yet are not permitted to on pain of death. Someone who does not live in an Islamic society cannot imagine the sanctions, both self-imposed and external, that militate against expressing religious disbelief. 'I don't believe in God' is an impossible public utterance even among family and friends. . . . So we hold our tongues, those of us who doubt."

Seven years later, the author of that letter is joined in his heterodoxy by the pseudonymous Ibn Warraq—a man who is identified only as a native of a country that is now an "Islamic republic" and who lives and teaches in Ohio. He too, was outraged by the Khomeini decree, so much so that he wrote a book called *Why I Am Not a Muslim* (Prometheus Books, 402 pages, $25.95) that transcends *The Satanic Verses* in terms of sacrilege. Where Rushdie offered an elusive critique of Islam in an airy tale of magical realism, Ibn Warraq brings a scholarly sledgehammer to the task of demolishing Islam. Such an act, especially for an author of Muslim birth, is so incendiary that the author must write under a pseudonym; not to do so would be an act of suicide.

And what does Ibn Warraq have to show for this unheard-of defiance? A well-researched and quite brilliant, if somewhat disorganized, indictment of one of the world's great religions. While the author disclaims any pretense to originality, he has read widely enough to write an essay that offers a startlingly novel rendering of the faith he has left.

To begin with, Ibn Warraq draws on current Western scholarship to make the astonishing claim that Muhammad never existed, or if he did, had nothing to do with the Koran. Rather, that holy book was fabricated a century or two later in Palestine, then "projected back onto an invented Arabian point of origin." If the Koran is a fraud, it's not surprising to learn that the author finds little authenticity in other parts of the Islamic tradition. For example, he dispatches Islamic law as "a fantastic creation founded on forgeries and pious fictions." The whole of Islam, in short, he portrays as a concoction of lies.

Having thus dispensed with religion, Ibn Warraq takes up history and culture. Turning political correctness exactly on its head, he condemns the early Islamic conquests and condones European colonialism. "Bowing toward Arabia five times a day," he writes, "must surely be the ultimate symbol of . . . cultural imperialism." In contrast, European rule, "with all its shortcomings, ultimately benefited the ruled as much as the rulers. Despite certain infamous incidents, the European powers conducted themselves, on the whole, very humanely."

To the conventional argument that the achievements of Islamic civilization in the medieval period are proof of Islam's greatness, Ibn Warraq revives the Victorian argument that Islamic civilization came into existence not because of the Koran and Islamic law but despite them. The stimulus in science and the arts came from outside the Muslim world; where Islam reigned, these accomplishments took place only where the dead hand of Islamic authority could be avoided. Crediting Islam for the medieval cultural glories, he believes, would be like crediting the Inquisition for Galileo's discoveries.

Turning to the present, Ibn Warraq argues that Muslims have experienced great travails trying to modernize because Islam stands foursquare in their way. Its regressive orientation makes change difficult: "All innovations are discouraged in Islam—every problem is seen as a religious problem rather than a social or economic one." This religion would seem to have nothing functional to offer. "Islam, in particular political Islam, has totally failed to cope with the modern world and all its attendant problems—social, economic, and philosophical." Nor does the author hold out hope for improvement. Take the matter of protecting individuals from the state: "The major obstacle in Islam to any move toward international human rights is God, or to put it more precisely . . . the reverence for the sources, the Koran and the Sunna."

In a chapter of particular delicacy, given his status as a Muslim living in the West, Ibn Warraq discusses Muslim emigration to Europe and North America. He worries about the importation of Islamic ways and advises the

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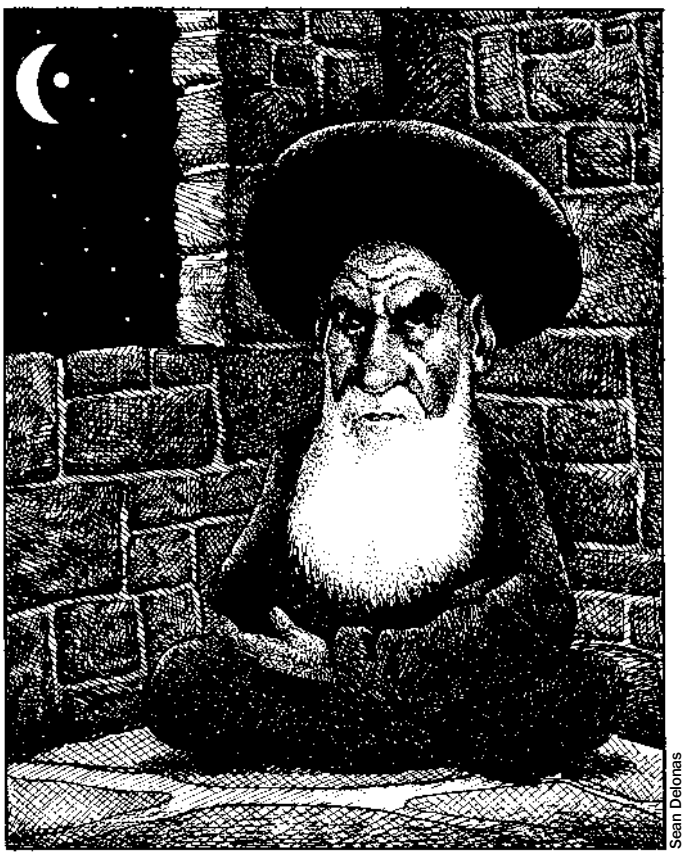
British not to make concessions to immigrant demands but to stick firmly by their traditional principles. "Unless great vigilance is exercised, we are all likely to find British society greatly impoverished morally" by Muslim influence. At the same time, as befits a liberal and Western-oriented Muslim, Ibn Warraq argues that the key dividing line is one of personal philosophy and not (as Samuel Huntington would have it) religious adherence. "[T]he final battle will not necessarily be between Islam and the West, but between those who value freedom and those who do not." This argument in fact offers hope, implying as it does that peoples of divergent faiths can find common ground.

As a whole, Ibn Warraq's assessment of Islam is exceptionally severe: The religion is based on deception; it succeeded through aggression and intimidation; it holds back progress; and it is a "form of totalitarianism." Surveying nearly 14 centuries of history, he concludes, "the effects of the teachings of the Koran have been a disaster for human reason and social, intellectual, and moral progress."

As if this were not enough, Ibn Warraq tops off his blasphemy with an assault on what he calls "monotheistic arrogance" and even religion as such. He asks some interesting questions, the sort that we in the West seem not to ask each other anymore: "If there is a natural evolution from polytheism to monotheism, then is there not a natural development from monotheism to atheism?" Instead of God's appearing in obscure places and murky circumstances, "Why can He not reveal Himself to the masses in a football stadium during the final of the World Cup"? In 1917, rather than permit a miracle in Fatima, Portugal, why did He not end the carnage on the Western Front?


Sean Delonas

It is hard for a non-Muslim fully to appreciate the offense Ibn Warraq has committed, for his book of deep protest and astonishing provocation goes beyond anything imaginable in our rough-and-tumble culture. We have no pieties remotely comparable to Islam's. In the religious realm, for example, Joseph Heller turned several Biblical stories into pornographic fare in his 1984 novel *God Knows*, and no one even noticed. For his portrayal of Jesus' sexual longings in the 1988 film *The Last Temptation of Christ*, Martin Scorsese faced a few pickets but certainly no threats to his life. In the political arena, Charles Murray and Dinesh D'Souza published books on the very most delicate American topic, the issue of differing racial abilities, and neither had to go into hiding as a result.

In contrast, blasphemy against Islam leads not only to threats on the life of Salman Rushdie, but to actual murder—and not just in places like Egypt and Bangladesh. At least one such execution has taken place on American soil. Rashad Khalifa, an Egyptian biochemist living in Tucson, Arizona, analyzed the Koran by computer and concluded from some rather complex numerology that the final two verses of the ninth chapter do not belong in the holy book. This insight eventually prompted him to declare himself a prophet, a very serious offense in Islam (which holds Muhammad to be the last of the prophets). Some months later, on January 31, 1990, unknown assailants—presumably orthodox Muslims angered by his teachings—stabbed Khalifa to death. While the case remains unsolved, it sent a clear and chilling message: Even in the United States, deviancy leads to death.

In this context, Ibn Warraq's claim of the right to disagree with Islamic tenets is a shock. And all the more so when he claims even the Westerner's right to do so disrespectfully! "This book is first and

foremost an assertion of my right to criticize everything and anything in Islam—even to blaspheme, to make errors, to satirize, and mock." *Why I Am Not a Muslim* does have a mocking quality, to be sure, but it is a serious and thought-provoking book. It calls not for a wall of silence, much less a Rushdie-like *fatwa* on the author's life, but for an equally compelling response from a believing Muslim. ♦

Books

Godless in America

By Jeremy Rabkin

In the run-up to the 1994 elections, Democratic spokesmen frequently warned of the sinister influence of the "Christian right" on the Republican party. But warnings about an impending theocratic tyranny did not make much impression on the voters. Such alarums seem to have been quietly dropped by professional politicians. The academy works at a slower pace, however, and professors are less nimble in shifting their direction of attack. Or perhaps it is the vanity of professors that leads them to think that failed appeals just need a bit more intellectual grounding to make their mark.

At any rate, Isaac Kramnick, professor of political theory, and Laurence Moore, professor of American history, try to gain some new traction in *The Godless Constitution: The Case Against Religious Correctness* (WW Norton, 224 pages, $22). They employ the term "religious correctness," as they explain, "to turn the tables on those who imagine that the only danger to our free institutions lies in something they, pejoratively, call political correctness." Take that!

The bulk of this book is a tour—a carefully guided tour—of early American history. The authors remind us in one chapter that Roger Williams, founder of the renegade Puritan settlement in Rhode Island, had already sought to implement a complete separation of government from religion in the mid-17th century. Williams, an intensely pious man, feared the corrupting effects of worldly political concerns on true religion. The Philadelphia Convention endorsed a similar view, as Kramnick and Moore tell us in another chapter, when the framers offered a constitution that makes no mention of God but does include a blanket prohibition on religious tests for any federal office. Successive chapters then trace the way Jefferson's demand for strict separation of church and state was carried forward in national politics, in the early 19th century, by ornery Baptists (suspicious of other church authorities) and by insistent Jeffersonian democrats (eager to purge government of any taint of partiality or mystical sanction).

To give the authors their due, they highlight some little known and quite interesting episodes in each chapter, and they move their story along at a very readable pace. But what does it all mean? Kramnick and Moore acknowledge at the outset that there has always been an opposing tradition that emphasizes the need for governmental encouragement of religion. They disclaim any intent to "prove that the tradition we oppose never existed in the mind of any respectable or learned American." They do not trouble to explore what the "respectable or learned" defenders of the "opposing" view actually thought or said, however. Instead, they tell us about various evangelical clergymen, bigots, and cranks who battled the Jeffersonian creed at the founding and through much of the 19th century. In a concluding chapter, they take aim against Pat Robertson, Ralph Reed, and Pat Buchanan, suggesting that their professions of tolerance are merely tactical ploys and lambasting these figures for their continued intolerance toward gays and unwed mothers.

The Godless Constitution does score points against the claim that America was founded as a "Christian order" by a generation of intensely pious Christians. Focus on the Family's James Dobson and Mississippi governor Kirk Fordice are cited as making this claim, and one should grant that Kramnick and Moore are better historians than they.

But Kramnick and Moore are hardly scrupulous historians themselves, even on the selective sampling of American history they choose to rehearse in this volume. If it is telling, as the professors say, that the framers omitted any mention of God from the Constitution, it should be noted, too (as they fail to do), that George Washington himself (after presiding over the constitutional convention) remedied this defect by inserting "so help me God" into the prescribed presidential oath in Article II. Every one of Washington's successors as chief executive (coached by successive chief justices of the Supreme Court) has followed this informal amendment as if it were an unalterable part of the text.

The professors might also have noted, as they fail to do, that even

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Jefferson, the staunchest advocate of secular government, frequently graced his presidential speeches with religious appeals and Biblical allusions (as in his Second Inaugural address, which concludes with an appeal to "the favor of that Being in whose hands we are, who led our fathers, as Israel of old, from their native land and planted them in a country flowing with all the necessaries and comforts of life").

But all this is beside the point. What Kramnick and Moore want to demonstrate is not that Christian conservatives are poor scholars but that their ambitions are beyond the bounds of what our constitutional traditions can tolerate. In a more forthright era, this charge was described as "un-Americanism." Kramnick and Moore settle for saying that religious conservatives today are in a direct line of descent from the people who denounced Jefferson. But in the end, their charge against the contemporary religious right is not really a matter of history but of ideology. To make the charge plausible, they must ignore history and present today's religious conservatives without any reference to the immediate historical background of present-day controversies.

First, the authors never acknowledge the constitutional novelty that has helped to provoke the contemporary "religious right." The peculiar wording of the First Amendment—"*Congress* shall make no law *respecting* an establishment of religion"—was quite deliberately crafted to appeal not only to Jeffersonians, but to those of "the opposing tradition." The prohibition applied only to the federal government, and the phrasing was designed to prohibit Congress not only from establishing a national religion but equally from interfering with existing religious establishments in the states (which endured in some states well into the 19th century). It is only since World War II that the Supreme Court has decided to enforce the "non-establishment" prohibition on states and localities. The rationale for doing this (that the Fourteenth Amendment had somehow intended to apply the whole bill of rights to the states) is quite weak on historical grounds. The court itself has never ventured any serious justification for this approach. Yet, since the late 1960s, it has lowered standing barriers to legal claims against "establishment" in a way it has prudently declined to do for any other constitutional claim.

In recent decades, therefore, the Jeffersonian outlook has been given an intrusive legal reach it simply never had in all of previous American history. It is one thing to dispute whether the federal government should deliver the mails on the Sabbath (as Jeffersonians insisted it should in the early 19th century). It is rather a different thing to unleash federal courts on every schoolhouse in the land that posts the Ten Commandments in the hallways or against every local public park that accommodates a Christmas display in December. It may be true that what the courts are enforcing parallels, in some sense, the strict separationism endorsed by Jefferson. But Jefferson never thought to urge that central authorities be brought in to correct the failings of every little village in Virginia.

There is a much deeper point, however, about which the authors are equally silent. Even strict separationists like Jefferson never doubted the authority of government to enforce basic moral norms. Contemporary liberalism has challenged traditional understandings about a whole range of moral norms, on the grounds that they are improper impositions of religious belief or unnecessarily repressive. Abortion is, of course, the most notorious example. Kramnick and Moore say that "in a democratic society abortion advocates and abortion foes can legitimately debate the issue."

In the contemporary United States, however, the issue cannot be settled by ordinary democratic debate. The "abortion advocates" have their views enforced by judicial edicts—so that, at one stroke in 1973, the United States was given the most permissive abortion laws in the Western world. And Kramnick and Moore, while treading lightly around the basic fact, do seem to endorse this system: "In light of the godless Constitution," they say, it is "unacceptable . . . for government policy in any way to privilege or codify religious belief in ways that preempt pluralist democratic process."

In other words, for the sake of "pluralist democratic process," policy preferences of religious believers may need to be forcibly withdrawn from democratic process. Kramnick and Moore cannot quite bring themselves to attribute this remarkable doctrine to Jefferson, but they do not acknowledge how far it stretches anything that Jefferson could actually have endorsed. Kramnick and Moore want to rescue Jefferson's anticlerical enthusiasm and leave the rest of his liberalism back in the 18th century.

The Godless Constitution keeps insisting that Christian conservatives are wrong to imagine that America was more Christian or more wholesome in the past. But it is Kramnick and Moore who seem to display the greatest longing for a simpler past—those good old days when a liberal knew that religious intolerance was the enemy and freedom the answer. And only naughty religious demagogues would disturb their complacent slumbers. ♦

Review & Outlook

Who Is Socks? (II)

What do convicted Justice Department official Webb Hubbell, assassinated Drug Enforcement Agency informant Barry Seal and fugitive Bank of Credit and Commerce International head Agha Hassan Abedi all have in common? Answer: They all seem to have peculiar ties to a central member of the Clinton inner circle. We refer to Socks, the Clinton family cat, whose shadowy role in the Whitewater affair has been one of its most intriguing and unexplored aspects.

In 1983, Clinton crony Susan McDougal approached then-kitten Socks with a no-lose proposition—an investment in what federal investigators would later describe as a Provision 10(b)-5 option swap violation of the Land Exchange Futures codicils of the Glass-Steagall Act of 1934. Rogue BCCI head Abedi had already enlisted feline superstar Morris the Cat to front a muni-bond currency arbitrage fund whose liquidity was entirely derived from the now-notorious international transfer protocols that later trapped financier Robert Vesco.

Socks Rodham Clinton

Abedi chose Morris and Socks to head up his financial instrument, with an infusion of Euro- and petrodollars brought to America from Colombia on secret airflights piloted by Barry Seal. Seal was later killed by the Cali cartel, thereby carrying the true story of Arkansas's Mena airstrip to his grave. The deal was sealed in a meeting with then-Grey Eminence Clark Clifford, manager of the rogue First American Bank. And who was the lawyer who jogged by when Morris and Socks came out of Clifford's office on their way back to the White House for lunch with First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and Eddie, the dog from "Frasier"? None other than Webb Hubbell.

The Socks-Morris-Abedi-Hubbell-Clifford-Seal-Mena-Eddie connection was first uncovered by federal banking regulator Jean Lewis following the collapse of the Madison Guaranty Bank. In February 1993, Mrs. Lewis reported the inconsistencies to her superiors. When she arrived at work the next morning, she found her office chair had been mysteriously used as a scratching post by an unnamed rogue feline. "I was terrified," Mrs. Lewis told the House Banking Committee, "but nothing could stop me in my pursuit of the truth."

According to a source on the Banking Committee, when investigators believed that some of the missing papers from Vince Foster's office had been secreted in Socks' litter box, the contents of the box were immediately shredded and brought to Hillary Clinton's office in the East Wing of the White House, where her chief of staff, Maggie Williams, was found sobbing over them later that night. (In sworn testimony, Ms. Williams later declared that she had not seen the documents, that she had not been crying, that her tear ducts had been removed years earlier, and that she had never been to Washington, D.C.)

Readers of this space will remember the questions we raised ("Who is Socks?" May 15, 1995) about the refusal of the White House to release a photograph of Socks to us. At the time, White House chief of staff Leon Panetta accused us of harboring a grudge against "every member of the Clinton family, including its animal companion." While we vastly prefer the un-P.C. word "pet," we certainly hold no brief against cats in general or Socks in particular. We do believe, however, that the free-floating ethics Socks brought with him to the White House deserve closer scrutiny than they have received thus far.

For a fuller treatment of the above, order "Whitewater: An Epic Poem," a 750,000-line rendering of Journal editorials in iambic pentameter. Copies available at $23.50 at 1-800-555-MENA.