FIVE WAYS AMERICA HAS GOTTEN BETTER
CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL, WITH A DISSENT BY JACKIE MASON

the weekly Standard

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DOLE BREAKS FREE

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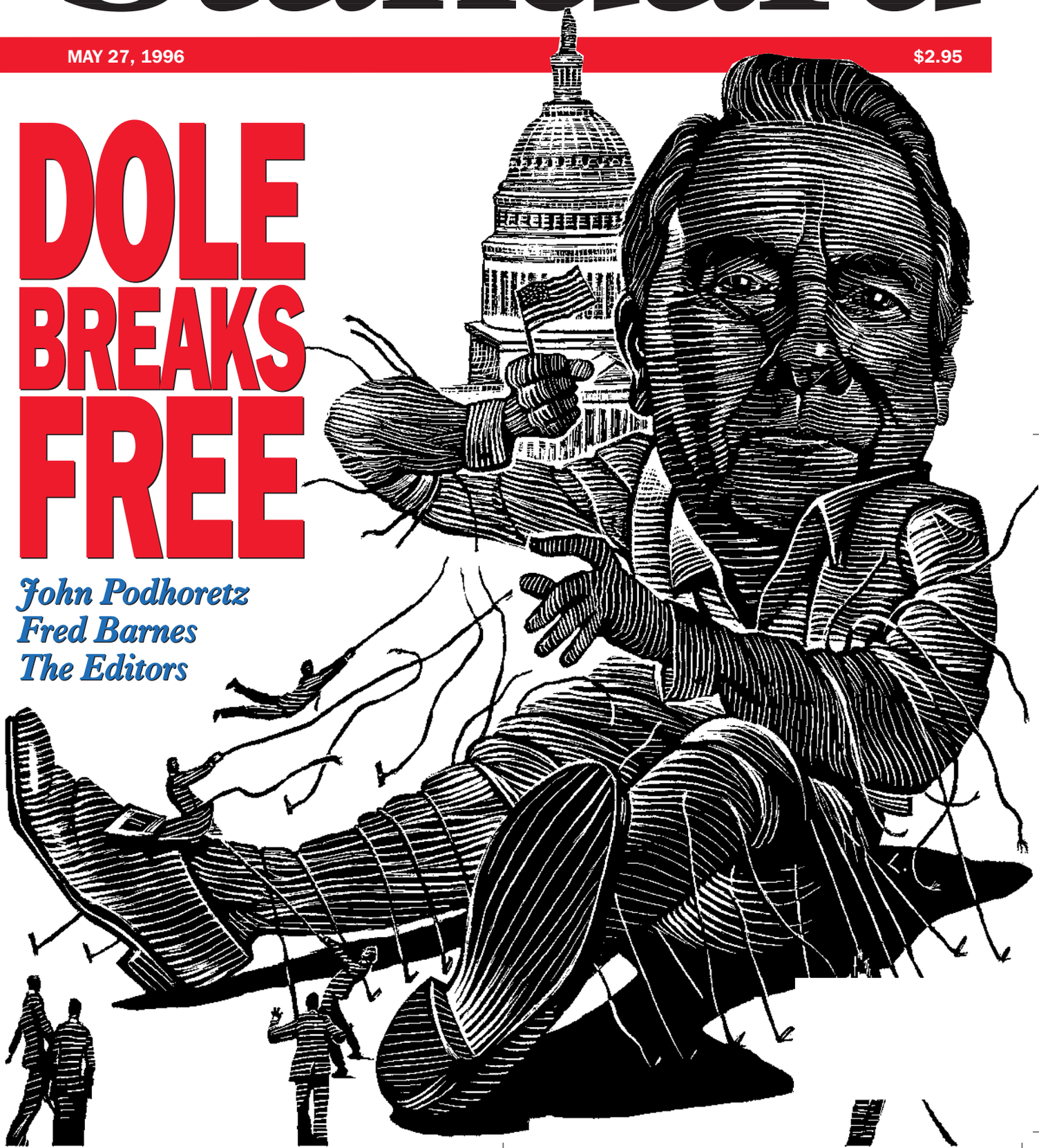

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Cover art
by Kevin Chadwick

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Dole's Secret Leave-taking

May 15 was one of the most intense days of his political life, but Bob Dole remained remarkably calm throughout. Starting with a morning visit to his campaign headquarters, he kept to his schedule as if the day ahead were like any other.

At 11:00, a little more than an hour after NBC first reported his plan to resign from the Senate, Dole had his picture taken with a group of Kansas constituents, a Capitol policeman, and a group of Pentagon tour guides. At noon, he kept his appointment to meet with five top officials from the Bosnian government. The only hint something was up came when a member of the Bosnian delegation asked for help in guaranteeing implementation of the Dayton peace accord. "I'm not going to be around here much longer," said Dole, letting the Bosnians in on something he wouldn't convey to his Senate Republican colleagues for another 90 minutes.

Confucius Say: Smoke Crack

When last we reported on Marion Barry, the capital's mayor, he was skipping town for two weeks of "spiritual recovery" time and quoting "To thine own self be true" as Biblical wisdom. Well, he's blown back into D.C., greeting his subjects with a 25-minute effusion of New Age oratory and psycho-emotional exhibitionism.

"I didn't realize how fatigued I was," he said, pledging "no more 16-hour work days." (That's a common complaint about the District's government: It just works too hard.) He took umbrage at the suggestion that he had taken a vacation: "I was going to work," he said—"on my body, my mind, and my soul. So why be dishonest?" He cited Aristotle; he dispensed dietary advice (no "fast junk food," because "the body needs carbohydrates and proteins and vegetables and fruit in terms of food"); he discoursed on the Greek word *kairos*; he outlined a new personal schedule (including "talk to Cora [Mrs. Barry], if she's there"); he declared himself "powerless over the media" (which have treated his recent difficulties with astonishing gingerliness); and he confessed that the vice that has been tempting him is . . . cigarettes.

He also waxed long on religion. God, he said, "I decided to call Jesus Christ. Some people call Him Jehovah or Yahweh, Elohe or Allah or Buddha, Confucius."

Confucius?

It's Morning in Bill Clinton's America

Not only is Bill Clinton hijacking Republican rhetoric, he is trying to hijack Ronald Reagan's ineffable style. Staffers in the former president's Los Angeles office report that they are getting requests straight from the Clinton White House for material relating to Reagan's triumphant trips abroad as president—schedules, videotapes of speeches, etc. The Clintonites are especially interested in Reagan's 1984 trip to Normandy ("These are the boys of Pointe du Hoc"), as well as other journeys to Japan and Ireland. The requests go from the Reagan office to the Reagan presidential library in Simi Valley. Because a sitting president does not, by law, have to go through the time-consuming formalities of filing a Freedom of Information Act request for such information, horrified Reaganites find they have no choice but to oblige the Clintonites in their ceaseless quest to Xerox Reagan's reelection strategy—not to mention everything popular about Republicanism in general—and superimpose Clinton's face atop it.

Dole's Conventioneers

Michael Deaver is back, helping out with the Dole campaign. In fact, the former Reagan staffer who designed the administration's public "look" will be

Scrapbook

handling the visuals at the Republican convention in San Diego in August. Not the words, mind you, but the images from the podium. Deaver is telling people he will be in charge of "everything but the heads" of the speakers. He'll be working with convention manager Paul Manafort, a longtime Washington political consultant who has privately been letting friends know he has been given an additional assignment—he will, he says, head up the vice-presidential operation after the convention. He has already been interviewing prospective staffers, among them Lanny Wiles, a former advance man for Phil Gramm and Dan Quayle. Message to Manafort: Whoever is chosen as vice president might wish to have his own team, especially after the experience of Dan Quayle in 1988, when Quayle's so-called "handlers" did little except trash the vice-presidential nominee to the press corps traveling with him.

The Rental List

Bob Dole's resignation from the Senate was cinematic in its drama, and put us in mind of several movies involving the Senate that are worth a rental.

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington. The most famous movie about the Senate, this 1939 Frank Capra classic with James Stewart has some very big things wrong with it—do you remember that Mr. Smith ends up being appointed to fill out a dead man's term to the Senate because he is a heroic Boy Scout troop leader? (Enoch Baden-Powell for Senate . . .) Its climax is a filibuster conducted by the idealistic Mr. Smith, a scene that forever glamorized the filibuster even though its primary use in decades to come was the blockage of civil-rights legislation. But listen, when Stewart directs that final speech to the once-great, now-corrupt senator played by Claude Rains—"You remember hopeless causes, Mr. Paine, you said they were the only ones worth fighting for"—and drives him to a shamed suicide, how can you resist?

Advice and Consent. See Walter Pidgeon riding the Senate subway! This 1962 Otto Preminger version of Allen Drury's classic potboiling account of an ideologically charged confirmation hearing not only features some really interesting film footage of the Capitol itself, but also has the first gay-bar scene in modern American film—and the second senatorial suicide, after Claude Rains's (Don Murray does himself in here).

The Seduction of Joe Tynan. A surprisingly ripe 1979 movie about politics from a peculiar source: Alan Alda, who wrote and stars in this account of an ambitious liberal senator who finds himself abandoning his principles when he cheats on wife Barbara Harris with the very young, very sexy Meryl Streep. Very juicy performance by Rip Torn as a Sam Ervin type with whom Joe Tynan engages in a gumbo-eating contest.

Casual

Mom and Deep-Fried Apple Pie

Why, you may have asked yourself (I did), has Kentucky Fried Chicken changed its name to KFC?

The reason, of course, is the firm's decision to flee from America's new "F" word—*fried*. The health-obsessed American equates it with cholesterol-clogged arteries, obesity, death. And yet only recently fried food was universally considered part of our American heritage. Remember when weekend breakfasts were a cornucopia of double-yolked eggs, sausages, bacon, and (for the truly courageous) scrapple?

Remember when food used to taste good?

By eating fat-free foods, Americans believe these days they can remain free of fat. They have bought into this simplistic syllogism, with disastrous results. I now struggle for hours in a grocery store looking for just plain old cream cheese. Instead, new "lite" products hog the supermarket shelves. I have already given up hope of finding Breakstone's lightly whipped and salted butter—it has probably been eliminated from the national diet forever.

As have other delectables. Take, for example, McDonald's apple pie. McDonald's used to sell an apple pie that I would argue rivaled some of the finest pastries in Europe. Within the confines of a deep-fried, golden, crispy crust lay an apple filling bursting with apple slices swimming in a bed of luscious apple syrup. One bite and you were in heaven.

Alas, that great apple pie is gone. One day I walked into McDonald's, ordered my dessert, and discovered it had been replaced by a much smaller apple pie with only a sparse, flavorless filling on the inside and a thick, desiccated crust on the outside.

The American diet had once more been compromised. The great apple pie had been treated like an unwanted member of a family who passed away and was never talked about again. These days, many McDonald's restaurants offer a 2-for-$1 deal on apple pies, in what is doubtless an attempt to improve the dessert's deservedly low popularity.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 Cookie (18 g)
Servings Per Container about 10.763
Calories 40
Calories from Fat 0 (zero—none)

Amount/serving	%Daily Value*
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Taste	**0%**

Instead of the old apple pie, you can now order salads at McDonald's. But for most rational people, setting foot inside a McDonald's or similar franchise means leaving any health-related thoughts at the door. When I dine at a fast-food restaurant, I want to order the *tastiest* and not the *healthiest* offering on the menu. I will unabashedly make known my desire for a four-patty Double Big Mac or an extra-crispy thigh, because I want to eat something pleasing to the palate. I have decided to forget about anything remotely resembling a healthy diet, at least for a while. Nevertheless, McDonald's and other franchises have opted to continue on the path towards "healthier" lives.

When did this happen? Kentucky Fried Chicken became KFC in 1991 only after its customers allegedly demanded it place greater emphasis on its non-fried dishes. These consumers have been driven into a dietary frenzy, in part by studies alleging the horrors of the chimichanga, General Tso's chicken, fettuccine alfredo, and buttered popcorn. Because of the new American diet's firm grip on the national consciousness, scores of restaurants have developed "lighter" offerings to replace formerly sumptuous entrees. Remember: Low-fat means low-taste, and fat-free means taste-free.

Thus, American cuisine has become a victim of the easy-way-out syndrome: Instead of exercising, people go on tasteless diets in the hope of losing weight. Consequently, for many of us who do work out (or simply do not care about our weight), our otherwise enjoyably liberal diets have been curtailed by healthed-up substitutes. In effect, we are witnessing the loss of something Americans have always prided themselves on: flavor.

Once famous for plump hot dogs and thick, juicy hamburgers, American cuisine will soon undergo even more substitutions like veggie burgers and veggie fries. Burger King will no longer carry onion rings. Extra-crispy will no longer be an option at Kentucky (don't say it) Chicken. Is there any hope?

Recent studies suggest that some alcoholic beverages are actually helpful in preventing heart-related ailments. This should come as great news to drinkers. Likewise, I anxiously await the scientific community's report on the benefits of eating fried chicken and deep-fried apple pies. Only then will those of us who still remember what real food tastes like be able to rejoice.

Victorino Matus

Contradictions of the Family Wage

William Tucker's "A Return to the 'Family Wage'" (May 13) is one of the best pieces I have seen on the real reason people are unhappy with the economy in spite of the relatively good economic indicators. When it takes two breadwinners to support a family as well as one breadwinner could a generation ago, people feel that their standard of living has gone down.

I could suggest a number of reasons why middle-income wives have entered the work force in exchange for a relatively small increase in net household purchasing power. But one major factor is the government subsidy of home ownership.

Under Fannie Mae and Freddy Mac guidelines, lenders look at taxable household income in order to determine qualifications for loans. Even if there is no net cash-flow benefit from having the lower-income spouse working, the income of the second wage earner is a necessity to qualify.

The explosion of two-income households corresponds with the pattern of rising housing prices. People bid up the price of homes in expectation that the prices would rise. Also, as Tucker pointed out in his book *The Excluded Americans*, local governments took steps to ensure rising housing prices through land-use laws, zoning, and add-on costs to builders. This benefited high-income and established home owners, but hurt low- and middle-income people. They felt compelled to send a second wage earner into the work force.

I doubt that any of the proponents of government housing policy intended to destroy the family-wage system. It is an example of the law of unintended consequences.

George L. O'Brien
San Francisco, CA

Whenever I see the phrase "serving the greater good," I reach for my wallet. No matter what shine William Tucker tries to put on it, family wage, living wage, and minimum wage add up to an attempt to artificially manipulate the market in labor.

No public policy, no matter how noble its intentions, can substitute for the private contracts between businesses and workers in setting a fair and appropriate value to the myriad jobs in our economy.

Price fixing is wrong when cartels try to keep a floor under prices and is equally wrong in the mandating of so-called fair wages. Countless government programs have done little to wipe out poverty in America, and, as Tucker states, have consequences usually in conflict with intended goals.

Workers must make themselves and their skills valuable to employers but can gain no experience if priced out of the "job training" wage market.

Tucker's argument for paying each according to his family's needs hasn't worked even when coupled with its socialist corollary. The Weekly Standard would do well to leave mush-headed "compassion politics" to the many leftist publications to which it is a welcome alternative.

Richard Weinfeld
Boston, MA

In Duffey's Defense

Jeffrey Gedmin finds two great faults with the Clinton administration's foreign policy ("Clinton's Touchy-Feely Foreign Policy," May 13). First, it feverishly seeks to export "politically correct multiculturalism, feminism, relativism, and globalism." Second, its USIA director, Joe Duffey, believes that the United States has "no business telling others how to behave." These two propositions are contradictory.

But incoherence does not diminish this article's value as an illustration of an election-year challenge taking shape to this administration's foreign policy. To the contrary, this challenge first invokes heroic memories of America's role in World War II and the Cold War, then belittles what the Clinton administration has done from every conceivable point of view.

But what is meticulously avoided is any acknowledgment of what has been happening on Capitol Hill to America's capacities to influence international affairs. Even as nostalgic publicists recount the glories of olden times, our foreign-affairs budgets are being hacked up and "consolidation" measures are being advanced that throw the agencies that serve as our instruments of international influence into turmoil. The voice is that of Jacob, but the hands are those of Esau.

Joe Duffey has defended USIA, international broadcasting, and public diplomacy against determined efforts to eliminate them. He justifiably has warned that post-Cold War religious and nationalist awakenings sometimes require appropriate tone in the American argument. Duffey has argued that, even though we won the contest with communism, there are still some limits to what we can accomplish in the world—and that we can fail at what is important if we strive to do too much.

Penn Kemble
Deputy Director, USIA
Washington, DC

Harlan Not Color-Blind

Although Justice John Marshall Harlan's Constitution may have been color-blind, apparently Harlan was not. Before we join Ralph A. Rossum in extolling Harlan's dissent in *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* ("Justice Harlan's Constitution," May 13), it is well to note the ugly personal sentiment expressed by Harlan in the passage immediately preceding his oft-quoted statement that "Our constitution is color-blind": "The white race deems itself to be the dominant race in this country. And so it is, in prestige, in achievements, in education, in wealth, and in

Correspondence

power. So, I doubt not, it will continue to be for all time, if it remains true to its great heritage, and holds fast to the principles of constitutional liberty."

The cogency of his legal reasoning notwithstanding, I should think Harlan's embarrassing editorial flourish would undermine any interest that conservatives might have in setting up the opinion as a model for modern-day affirmative-action jurisprudence.

T.A. McKinney
New York, NY

A Hero's Religion

I was astonished to read in Noemie Emery's article on Eleanor Roosevelt that Mrs. Roosevelt disliked "lower class, fat, ostentatiously Catholic [Whittaker] Chambers" ("Mrs. Roosevelt, Liberal Icon," May 13). As an ostentatious Catholic myself, I don't doubt Mrs. Roosevelt's distaste, but Chambers's offenses against her did not include religion. His parents were nonpracticing Episcopalians, and after his Communist years, Chambers gravitated towards the Quakers.

Ellen Fielding
Davidsonville, MD

Forget the War on Drugs

Your editorial decries that under Clinton the federal government's efforts to wage a war on drugs have slowed some ("General Clinton, Losing the Drug War," May 13).You also note that since 1992, drug use—especially among teens—is up.

Just where in the Constitution is the federal government granted police power to dictate what substances the citizenry may ingest, inhale, or inject? Another point worth considering is that since 1992 teen use of alcohol and cigarettes also rose quite sharply, strongly suggesting that Clinton's drug policy has nothing at all to do with rising consumption of illicit substances.

Do you have any evidence that the interdiction efforts you commend can prevent, or ever have prevented, more than 10 percent of the flow of illicit drugs into this country? And why do you ignore the many reasonable voices that are publicly asking whether turf-war homicides and other drug-law-induced violent crimes ravaging our urban areas are worth what we gain from prohibition?

Mona Walsh Holland
Niles, MI

I was a trifle confused by your editorial attack on the president. By your analysis, here is a man who has cut federal funding for drug enforcement at a time when Republicans of all stripes are demanding cuts in an intrusive, overreaching federal government, and yet you pillory Clinton for his budget-cutting efforts. I mean, aren't we supposed to be "devolving" power to the states? Doesn't that other conservative magazine think drugs should be legalized?

It's a little inconsistent for a conservative journal to attack the administration for doing what conservatives claim they want to have done—cutting the budget and downsizing government. Or (horrible thought) could it be that Republicans want a less intrusive government only when it plays to—and benefits—their constituencies?

Steve Hulett
Burbank, CA

Still Teaching Shakespeare

After reading Mark Gauvreau Judge's "The Hoya! The Hoya!" (May 6), I predict this misdirected young man has a promising future not as a journalist but as a fiction writer. Rarely are readers treated to such a caricature of the facts as in Judge's description of the changes in requirements for English majors at Georgetown University.

Judge's fictional portrait—based on his three-month stint as an office assistant in the English department—of the 60s radicals nailing shut the coffin on Shakespeare, Milton, and Chaucer just doesn't stand up to scrutiny. For a university of its size, Georgetown offers more than three times the national average of Shakespeare courses. Far from disappearing from the curriculum, Shakespeare courses have tripled in the last 20 years from three in 1977 to the nine sections offered this year.

As an associate professor of English at Georgetown, I teach Shakespeare and Renaissance literature. I am also one of the professors who teach "Cultural Representations of Women," where students do indeed view the film *Thelma and Louise*. They also read Toni Morrison, Freud, and the Bible. Students view the film in its larger cultural context, and we discuss how the mainstream media's treatment of the film revealed deep-seated anxieties about women, violence, and representation.

The issue isn't really about Shakespeare, Chaucer, and Milton, but rather about the nature of knowledge and the nature of students. Our critics would tell us that knowledge is fixed and absolute and, indeed, eternal. They would hand to us their hagiography of authors and have us teach little else.

Their view of students, as Charles Eliot of Harvard University said more than 100 years ago, is equally unenlightened: "The conservative argument is: A college must deal with the student as he is; he will be what he has been, namely, a thoughtless, aimless, lazy, and possibly vicious boy; therefore a policy which gives him liberty is impracticable." At Georgetown, we disagree with the "conservative argument."

Kim Hall
Washington, DC

Mark Gauvreau Judge Responds: ***Professor Hall refers to me as "misdirected" and my article as "fiction," yet she doesn't do much to refute the facts of my piece. She states that the number of Shakespeare courses has increased. But the point is that English majors are no longer required to take Shakespeare, Chaucer, Milton, and other cornerstones of English literature. Instead they can graduate having pondered "Cultural Representations of Women," "AIDS and Representation," and "International Culture and the New World Order."***

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A Bravo for Bob Dole

It had an unusual and impressive *astringent* quality, Bob Dole's big announcement last week.

Right before a sickly presidential campaign goes terminal, it usually gets fat. The better to elude responsibility for failure, the candidate's handlers rearrange themselves—and then summon another layer of consultants to headquarters. "Grown-up help," it's called, though help it almost always isn't. The new men immediately make busy with the press corps, in whispered negotiations over personal credit and blame. In their spare time, they "focus group" and "conference call" and "trial balloon" a million teensy ideas. But it's all just a gooey hill of beans, erected on the same rotten foundation of paralysis and resignation. The campaign "shake-up," all too often, is merely the introductory cymbal crash of a rote, spiritless, time-clock march to death.

Kevin Chadwick

The Bush campaign was like this in 1992: fully barnacled with big-time strategists by the end, but still and always empty at its core. And this year, just about now, you would almost have expected the same fatal process to begin with the Dole campaign, buried double-digit deep in the polls. But Bob Dole does not die easily. There will be no typical shake-up, apparently. His campaign will not bulk up with wiseman "rescuers" as a prelude to inevitable failure.

Instead, the effort will get dramatically *smaller*. The "Senator Bob Dole" part of it, which has always occupied three-quarters of the campaign's mental office space, will be permanently retired. All that will be left in its place is Bob Dole himself: the man, his convictions, and the future he intends for the nation. He, just "Mr. Dole" at last, after 35 years in Congress, believes it will be enough. "I have absolute confidence in the victory that to some may seem unattainable," he promises. And since manufactured emotion—so much that other fellow's franchise—is obviously the weakest weapon in Dole's arsenal, you have to believe he means it.

Wow. Majority Leader Robert J. Dole's retirement from the Senate, four years into his fifth term, would be a momentous event under any circumstances. What was best about last Wednesday's announcement was that it came in a form exclusively of Dole's creation. It was kept a secret; the morning papers gave no hint it was in the offing. And by its pure surprise, Dole's terse, poignant speech demonstrated truly presidential authority: an impulse to bend American politics entirely to his will—an urge to demand and dominate our attention—and an ability to succeed in the effort.

So complete was his success, so riveting was the moment, that no one could initially find anything interesting to say about it. Before they quickly fell fully silent, Democrats embarrassed themselves by violating the unspoken but ironclad rule that an American politician is allowed to retire from office pretty much as he pleases. They were churlish and cold. Sen. Christopher Dodd, as Democratic National Committee chairman, called Dole's speech "an admission of failure." Clinton flack Ann Lewis, always the most robotic of Democratic partisans, accused Dole of irresponsibility: "Faced with the choice between the work of the Senate and his own political campaign, Bob Dole chose campaigning." Nasty to the point of weirdness. And preposterous. Ms. Lewis, after all, works for a man who, in 1991, abandoned a governorship to

campaign for his current job, nine months after explicitly promising his constituents he wouldn't.

The cynic's explanation is that Bob Dole now seeks to separate his reputation from the GOP's Gingrichoid congressional "extremism." If that were really his strategy, it would prove unavailing; Dole is inescapably implicated in his own career and his party's present platform. But it is *not* his strategy, and it shouldn't be. Tieless and flush with excitement in Chicago the day after his resignation announcement, Dole vigorously endorsed the general thrust of the 104th Congress. He was right to do so, in every respect.

Despite its setbacks in recent months, Republican conservatism retains a basic, broad appeal. There are meaningful differences between the two parties. And in the most recent NBC/*Wall Street Journal* poll, on eight of thirteen major political concerns, voters still prefer the Republican prescription. Bob Dole, he seems clearly to understand, does not need fancy new arguments or silver-bullet mini-issues to clarify that winning distinction. He must only find the right words—a *voice*.

It won't be easy. In Bill Clinton he is up against a preternaturally gifted talker who has used that talent, all through a long career, to obscure substantive political distinctions. And Dole is not naturally a man of words. He is fundamentally private, diffident, suspicious of the show-bizzier aspects of public life, smooth speechmaking most prominently among them. And serious, even collaborative, word-work, remember, has been largely beyond him for more than 50 years. Bob Dole was born right-handed. And then his right hand was stolen from him in a war. Even using a pencil is a problem for him.

It does Dole honor that he would attempt this one final public task with such apparent determination. And with so few illusions. The presidency's glories do not interest him, he said last week. He is attracted "rather to its difficulties." "I trust in the hard way," Dole admits. And "I will do it the hard way again." And "God has blessed the hard way."

Genuinely eloquent. And eloquently genuine: the real, unmistakable, citizen Dole. It is a good start to a difficult battle. We wish him well.

—David Tell, for the Editors

Down the Rat Hole

by Nicholas Eberstadt

BRIAN ATWOOD ANNOUNCED the shocking news himself: According to preliminary figures, the United States appeared to have fallen to third place among aid-giving governments in terms of total outlays of "official development assistance." Atwood is administrator of the Agency for International Development and a Clinton appointee, and it was his bitter duty to inform the world that in 1995 America's total expenditures on non-military aid programs were not only lower than Japan's, but a bit smaller than France's as well.

"Now, think about that," Atwood intoned at a special press conference (in Paris) on May 7. "I mean, France is a country of [only] 60 million people. . . . Our economy is five and a half times the size of France's, and yet, in gross terms and absolute terms, they're the number two donor."

Atwood's remarks are indeed cause for thought—although not perhaps the thoughts he intended. For in highlighting the stagnation and decline in American fiscal commitments for foreign aid, he ineluctably drew attention to the most obvious reason for the current program's budgetary woes: namely, its almost total lack of public support.

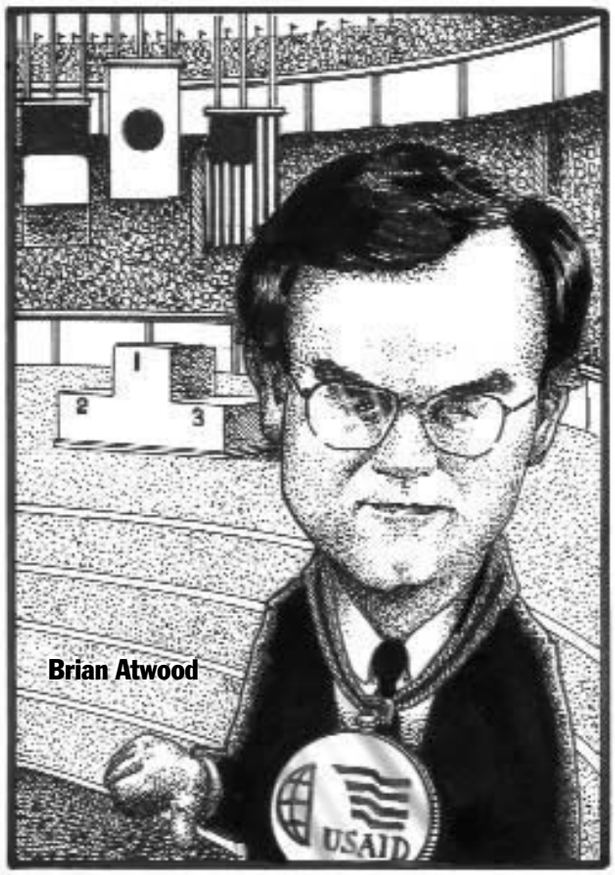
America's foreign aid program is held in extraordinarily low esteem by the people who pay for it. The program is wildly—and if anything, increasingly—unpopular with the average citizen; only the most artfully constructed pollster's questions can elicit public approval for it. Perhaps surprisingly, it does not fare that much better inside the Beltway. Within Congress, a broad bipartisan coalition of skeptics views the current foreign aid program with sentiments ranging from suspicion to disgust. Even within that safe haven for progressive causes known as the Clinton administration, pragmatic officials now discuss their country's foreign aid operations with a thinly veiled contempt.

Why should this be? Why should the lack of confidence in the government's foreign aid efforts be so pervasive and run so deep? When pressed, AID's defenders invariably explain that the answers to these questions are really very complicated. Those in search of a simple answer, however, might begin by examining Atwood's own words in Paris.

His rueful comparison of the American and French programs implicitly posits that the volume of money transferred to recipient Third World governments is the measure of success in foreign aid policy: The bigger the transfer, the better the program. By such reasoning, it is redundant to inquire about the

actual results of aid project spending in a recipient economy—and the amount of money spent *is* the result!

This mindset is by no means peculiar to the current AID administrator. It is deeply entrenched within the culture of the entire global "development community" today. *Development Co-operation*, the annual report issued on behalf of 21 Western aid-giving governments, offers only three indicators of aid "performance" by donor countries: the total amount of aid given, the share of aid in the contributing country's GNP, and the trend in aid spending as against previous years.



Brian Atwood

Sean Delonas

To anyone not specially trained to see steady Western transfer payments to Third World states as proof in itself that aid is "working," however, the record of "development assistance" policies reads like an extended case study on systemic failure—and has for at least a generation.

To be a bit simplistic: If development assistance efforts were actually working, we would expect the recipients to *develop*. If recipient countries were actually developing, at some point they would no longer need or qualify for aid: They would "graduate," as one says in aid-speak.

Over the quarter century between 1970 and 1995, as it happens, there were virtually no "graduates" from America's overall aid program. Instead, the initially lengthy roster of recipients has been lengthened still further, with the sudden emergence of a host of new aid-seeking entities following the collapse of the Warsaw Pact.

Although AID has finally unveiled a plan for shutting down a number of its Third World missions in the years to come, this initiative in practice merely shifts a financial and administrative burden to regional AID offices, or to American-funded multilateral aid offices—or to the aid offices of other governments. Eliciting eventual economic self-reliance in recipient countries was *not* the motivating intent behind this vaunted reorganization: As Atwood's own speeches and testimony have made clear, the main objective of the exercise is to protect existing programs against further congressional cuts.

In the final analysis, the American public's antipathy toward its government's aid policies is neither an unsolved mystery nor the result of some terrible misunderstanding. The plain fact is, American taxpayers—more than their counterparts in any other industrial democracy—detest the idea of underwriting *anybody's* unending financial dependence. If Americans will not tolerate unending dependence upon federal largesse on the part of their fellow citizens, is it really a surprise that they are reluctant to underwrite it for foreign governments?

The American public is generous by nature and, according to poll after poll, strongly supports such international humanitarian objectives as ending world hunger. The United States, moreover, is richer today than ever before: Per capita output in America is now well over twice as high as when we funded the Marshall Plan after World War II. The United States could "afford" to finance a vastly larger foreign-aid program than the one we currently operate. But Americans don't want to. In fact, they want to pare back the one they have, because they view the existing program as unworthy of support.

Until and unless American "development assistance" policies can be credibly demonstrated to assist in development, AID officials had best get used to revising their "ranking" within the "donor community" downward.

Nicholas Eberstadt, a researcher with the American Enterprise Institute and Harvard University, is the author of **Foreign Aid and American Purpose.**

Letting Him Have It

by Tucker Carlson

EVEN BY THE LOW STANDARDS OF ACADEMIC squabbling, a recent attack on Princeton University professor John DiIulio stood out as unusually intemperate. In a story published in the February 12 *Legal Times*, a number of his fellow criminologists described DiIulio as a sloppy, dishonest scholar with unusually low professional standards. He is "dangerous," declared one detractor. "Everything he does is crummy." Academics rarely criticize one another so bluntly in public, and the article quickly aroused strong emotions in the small, hot-tempered world of criminology, in which DiIulio is a leading light.

It did not end there. In April, skirmishes over DiIulio broke out again, this time in the *Nation* and the ordinarily sedate pages of the *Princeton Alumni Weekly*. As they had done in *Legal Times*, DiIulio's critics once more savaged him as a third-rate academic with suspect motives.

Strangely, the attacks for the most part lacked specific examples of DiIulio's allegedly fraudulent scholarship. With a single exception (which DiIulio later described as an honest mistake and apologized for), DiIulio's critics did not accuse him of actually using incorrect data. Kenneth Schoen, head of criminal justice programs at the liberal Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and one of DiIulio's most outspoken detractors, admits as much. "Generally his numbers are right," Schoen concedes. "I wouldn't say they were wrong." He and DiIulio's other critics level a more slippery charge: The tenured Princeton professor is not really a scholar at all, but a right-wing ideologue, a puppet of the Republican Congress whose conclusions about crime cannot be taken seriously by legitimate criminologists.

It is, in some ways, an odd accusation. DiIulio does indeed have influence on Capitol Hill; his studies of prison inmates and sentencing policies have helped shape debate more than once on the House floor. All of which should, by traditional measures, raise the 37-year-old professor's standing among his peers. Unlike many other academic disciplines, after all, criminology is designed to have an effect on the public sphere. The conclusions a criminologist reaches are *meant* to influence politicians.

And for more than a century they have. The British physician Havelock Ellis, one of the first researchers to introduce the budding field of criminology to a wide audience, clearly wrote with the intent of shaping public policy. Ellis's 1890 book *The Criminal*, while ostensibly a scientific survey of "criminal anthropology" (Ellis claimed that criminals had, among other qualities, bigger ears, longer arms, and a more acute sensitivity to weather conditions than the general population), was also a not-so-subtle pitch for prison reform and the abolition of the death penalty. Countless criminologists have followed Ellis's lead, acting as advisers to federal and state governments, from the 1968 Kerner Commission on urban riots to the present. By working to ensure that his views reach the ears of elected officials, in other words, DiIulio has hardly been plowing new ground.

PRINCETON CRIMINOLOGIST JOHN DIIULIO STANDS ACCUSED BY HIS FELLOW ACADEMICS OF BEING NO SCHOLAR, WHICH IS TO SAY, HE DRAWS THE WRONG POLICY LESSONS FROM THE NUMBERS.

Or perhaps he has, because on many questions of crime policy he is dramatically out of step with his colleagues. Most criminologists argue that America relies far too heavily on punitive measures, particularly prisons, to fight crime. A more enlightened country, they say, would work to remedy the social injustices that give rise to criminality in the first place. As Jerome Skolnick, a professor at the University of California at Berkeley who has written widely on the subject, puts it: "If you want to deal with the crime problem, you have to ask questions like, 'What are the conditions under which crime prevails, crime erupts?'" As an example of those conditions, Skolnick points out that the country is ruled by "a Republican Congress that won't even raise the minimum wage to five bucks an hour. You can't really hope to have people working, although plenty of people do." As a result, Skolnick and others say, people commit crimes.

DiIulio appears to have little patience for questions like these, or for their politically loaded answers. Instead, he argues that while some rehabilitation programs may be effective, none serves the primary goal of crime control—protecting the public—as well as prisons. As he wrote in a *New York Times* op-ed piece earlier this year, when it comes to preventing "known convicted criminals from murdering, raping, robbing, assaulting and stealing, then incarceration is a solution, and a highly cost-effective one."

Such statements seem almost designed to irritate

his largely liberal colleagues, and DiIulio, a fantastically prolific writer, has made a lot of them. Between February 1994 and September 1995, for example, DiIulio wrote or edited five books, wrote 18 magazine articles and reviews, and published numerous newspaper op-eds on crime, including eight in the *Wall Street Journal* alone. (DiIulio has published five pieces in THE WEEKLY STANDARD.) And all this in addition to producing piles of scholarly research reports, giving dozens of speeches, and teaching a full load of classes at Princeton. Far from winning praise from his liberal counterparts, however, DiIulio's productivity has been cited by many as an indication of his outsized ego. In an interview with *Legal Times*, Skolnick implied that this sizable mass of scholarship has amounted to little more than a public relations campaign. DiIulio, Skolnick said, is less a criminologist than "the spokesperson for the Gingrich group."

Skolnick's charge is neither fair nor accurate. A lifelong Democrat who was the first in his family to graduate from high school, DiIulio regularly defends social welfare programs in print. Last March, for example, he completed one of the first and most detailed analyses of the Contract with America. His conclusion (published by the center-left Brookings Institution, where he is a fellow) was hardly a product of the speaker's press office. According to DiIulio, the core assumption upon which the entire Republican Contract was built—an idea DiIulio described as the "blame-the-federal-bureaucracy article of devolutionist faith"—is "totally and demonstrably false." Perhaps on the basis of sentiments like these, DiIulio recently received a $250,000 research grant from the leftish Ford Foundation. Indeed, apart from his views on incarceration, it is hard to see how DiIulio finds himself accused of being an agent of Newt Gingrich.

And yet he does. Several years ago, when DiIulio was first invited to join the Brookings Institution, Tom Mann, head of the think tank's government department, received a memorable complaint: "I got a call from one of the criminology types and he just started attacking me for having this ideologue, this right-winger associated with the Brookings Institution. He said it was a disgrace, and how could I do that? I'd never had a phone call like that in my life. It was ideological war."

Or perhaps it's more simple than that. Summing up his disdain for DiIulio, Jerome Skolnick reaches for what is clearly meant to be the ultimate insult. "John," he sniffs, "just doesn't act like an academic."♦

WING NUT

by David M. Mastio

AFTER HALF A CENTURY OF BLOODSHED and tears, you'd think that Palestinian authorities and the Clinton administration would be serious about building a new government. Judging from the "expert" they've hired to help write the Palestinian constitution, they aren't. The Palestinians requested, and Clinton's Agency for International Development agreed to send, an obscure law professor who shills for leftist causes and changes her "expertise" like a suit of clothes.

She is Adrien Wing, who joined the University of Iowa law faculty in 1987, after six years of practice. In keeping with the fashion of the time, she quickly became an "expert" on South Africa. As recently as 1991, when she was part of a lawyers' delegation to that country, Iowa City's *Press Citizen* described her as "a specialist in international [law] and [the] comparative law of Africa." She had produced a grand total of two publications on the subject, in addition to obtaining an M.A. in African studies.

Three years later, suffering from dimming publicity, Wing transmogrified into an "expert" on gangs. Wrote the *Press Citizen*, "Wing, considered by some an expert on gang violence in the United States," delivered an important message about gangs: "Stay out of 'em." This was front-page news. Her credentials in this area were even more dubious—an internship with the L.A. district attorney's office back when Jimmy Carter was president.

Now Prof. Wing is billing herself as an expert on the Middle East. Her scholarship here is slightly more extensive, but still suspect. She claims nine published articles on the subject, the first of which appeared in 1993. These articles have shown up most frequently in journals with a clear anti-Israel record, including *Middle East Policy* and the *Arab Studies Quarterly*. By 1994, she was telling the *Des Moines Register* that she was already in the process of "helping the Palestinians write their constitution."

Her publications and her travel to the Middle East (including a visit to observe the Palestinian elections) have resulted in invitations to the most marginal of scholarly meetings—those held by the Palestinian Human Rights Campaign and the United Holyland Fund, two groups with a well-deserved reputation for

anti-Israel bias. In the last year, this history-making "expert" has not been quoted on the Middle East in national newspapers even once.

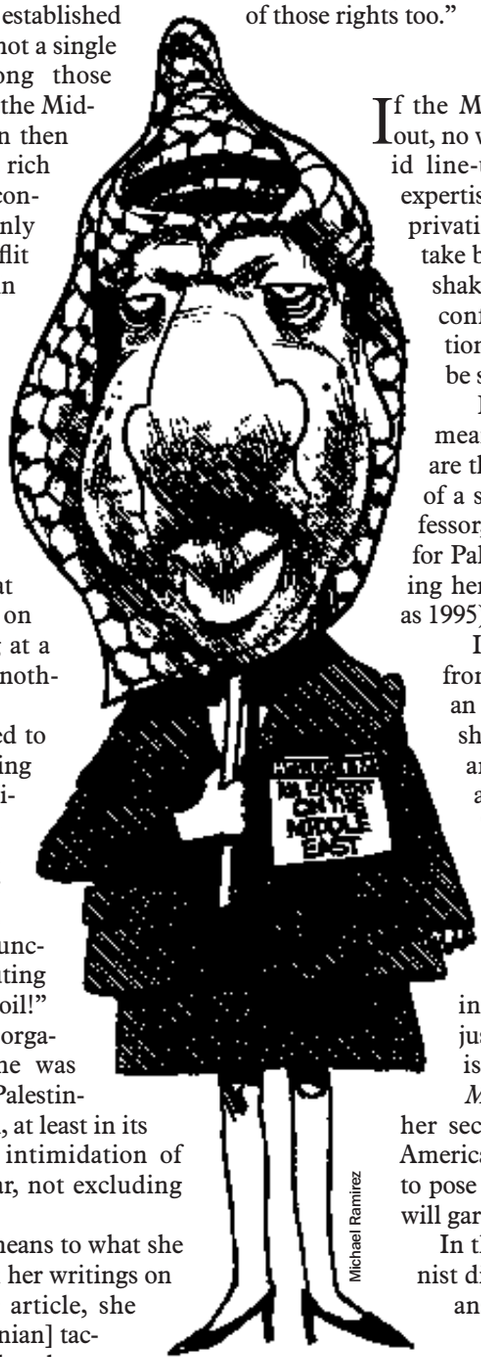
That Wing is little-known in this field is an understatement. In a sampling of a dozen established Middle East scholars and reporters, not a single one knew her name. Only among those involved in the American politics of the Middle East does it ring a bell, and even then the details are sketchy. A country so rich in foreign-policy expertise, and in constitutional experience, can certainly find a scholar who does more than flit in and out of subjects that are hot in the media.

In a March 1996 article (in which she is described as "an internationally acknowledged authority on elections"), Wing wrote, "I have obtained tenure and the rank of full professor on the basis of scholarship on Palestine." That's odd, since she became a full professor in 1993; prior to that year, the extent of her scholarship on the Middle East had been speaking at a handful of conferences, publishing nothing.

And Wing can hardly be expected to know why the peace process is moving so fast in the first place. Most Americans, of varying political stripes, recognize that it was the Gulf War that created the present opportunity for peace (if that's what it is). Not Wing. She actively opposed the war, denouncing "Western imperialism" and shouting that infamous slogan "No blood for oil!" at campus rallies sponsored by the organized hard Left. At the time, she was friendly with the General Union of Palestinian Students, part of the PLO, which, at least in its Iowa chapter, was known for the intimidation of those who spoke in favor of the war, not excluding death threats.

Her acceptance of violence as a means to what she considers just goals is also evident in her writings on the Palestinian "Intifada." In one article, she acknowledges that "coercive [Palestinian] tactics have been well documented by the media." But later in the same piece she characterizes the edicts of thugs as "legitimate" because such edicts came to be obeyed, for the most part, without further resort to violence.

Nor is her thought on constitutionalism much better. In considering the elements of a constitution, she mentions, along with traditional rights, a "right to an education, right to a job, right to housing." "Palestine," she says, "has to decide if they want to give some of those rights too."



If the Middle East thing doesn't work out, no worry: Wing has in reserve a solid line-up of possible future areas of expertise. She has written an article on privatization (in case the Republicans take back the White House and really shake things up), and she's attending conferences on abortion, immigration, and critical race theory, just to be sure.

But all of this academic cover is meaningless anyway. Wing's views are those of an activist, not the views of a scholar. Before becoming a professor, she fancied herself an activist for Palestinian human rights (describing herself as such to reporters as late as 1995).

In 1984, she appeared on the front page of the *New York Post* in an embrace of Yasser Arafat. Later, she appealed for black Americans and Arab-Americans to unite against Israel, charging that "U.S. foreign policy is guided by racism." She further claimed that U.S. policy makers view citizens of the Third World as "niggers."

The conclusion seems inescapable that Adrien Wing is just another politically trendy leftist professor. (She told the *Des Moines Register* that she named her second son, Che, after the Latin American revolutionary.) She is willing to pose as an "expert" in whatever field will garner her the most attention.

In the 80s, she flirted with Communist dictatorships in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Grenada, while producing pointless "scholarship" like "Toward a Multiplicative Theory and Praxis of Being" and "Rape, Ethnicity and Culture: Spirit Injury from Bosnia to Black America." She's in the habit of touting "books in progress"—never published, never read (and which now total five)—with titles like "Bloods v. Crips: Dispute Reso-

lution in South Central Los Angeles" and "Palestinian Democracy" (her latest, to go with her current gig).

The professor recently gushed to Iowa's student newspaper, "It's like helping the founding mothers and fathers of a country with their constitution." Perhaps hers is some help that the much-disappointed Palestinians can do without.

David M. Mastio, an editorial board member of **USA Today***, was a columnist for the* **Daily Iowan** *at the University of Iowa.*

Two Words That Kill

by Richard J. Gelles

WHAT IF, BY CHANGING TWO WORDS in a federal law, you could prevent the deaths of hundreds of children each year and also prevent tens or even hundreds of thousands of abused children from being victimized again and again?

For 16 years, child welfare policies have been guided by two words: "reasonable efforts." One of the cornerstones of the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (PL-96-272) was the mandate that states make "reasonable efforts" to keep or reunite abused and neglected children with their biological parents. This provision was designed to reduce the number of maltreated children placed in foster care. Although reducing the cost of out-of-home placement was certainly a factor behind the reasonable-efforts provision, the major rationale for these two words was the deep-seated belief that children do best when raised by their biological parents and that parents will stop maltreating their children if they are provided with sufficient personal, social, and economic resources.

Neil Shigley

There was bipartisan support for the doctrine of reasonable efforts. Conservatives supported it because it was consistent with a family-values approach to social policy. Liberals supported it because it was in the best tradition of the safety net for children and families in need. Child advocates enthusiastically embraced "reasonable efforts" because they saw taking children from abusive parents as even more harmful than the abuse, because they felt there was subtle racism in the child welfare system that made minority children more likely to be placed in foster care, and because "reasonable efforts" created a new funding stream for a social service system whose funding, in the 1980s, was being restricted or cut.

Soon after the adoption of the doctrine of reasonable efforts, family-preservation programs were developed. These provide intensive services, such as parent education, help with housekeeping, and assistance dealing with the bureaucracy, to families deemed at risk of having their children removed. Financially supported and marketed by private foundations such as the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, embraced by the Children's Defense Fund and the Child Welfare League of America, and ultimately the recipient of $1 billion in federal support, intensive family-preservation programs are touted as able to both preserve families and protect children.

But reasonable efforts and intensive family preservation have been a false promise. Child-welfare-agency directors and workers believe that family preservation and child safety can be balanced. Because they believe family-preservation programs are effective, child welfare agencies and workers often make every possible effort to preserve families, even when what they are preserving could hardly be called a family and even when there is no evidence that the parents can or will change their abusive behavior. There have been nearly a dozen scientifically reputable evaluations of intensive family-preservation programs and not one has found that such programs reduce costs, reduce out-of-home placements, or improve child safety. Similarly, research finds that children need a stable, giving caretaker, not necessarily a biological caretaker.

It is a fiction to believe one can balance preservation and safety without tilting in favor of parents and placing children at risk. More than 1,200 children are killed by their parents or caretakers each year, and nearly half of these children are killed *after* they or their parents have come to the attention of child welfare agencies. Tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of children are re-abused each year after

they or their parents have been identified by child welfare agencies.

It is time to replace the words "reasonable efforts" with two others: "child safety." It is time to face up to the fact that some parents are not capable of being parents, cannot be changed, and should not continue to be allowed to care for children. Of course, the change will be a bit more difficult than merely substituting two words. There will be howls of protest from advocates who will claim that abolishing "reasonable efforts" means that more children will be placed in foster care, thus straining already over-taxed state child welfare budgets. Claims that children are abused or harmed by foster care will also be trotted out, typically without actual research to support such claims. Indeed, some children are harmed in foster care, but research *does* show that abused children placed out of the home do better in the short and long runs than children left with abusive and neglectful parents. Advocates will also argue that child welfare policy should not be based on child fatalities, because such fatalities are rare. Well, child fatalities are not rare enough. Elisa Izquierdo in New York City, Joseph Wallace in Chicago, and hundreds of other less publicized child fatalities were the direct results of unreasonable efforts to keep children with their abusive biological caretakers. A change in two words will force child welfare agencies to take steps to enhance and speed up adoptions and to consider the use of congregate care facilities (or what some have called "orphanages") for some children who have no other safe permanent home.

The 1995 report on child fatalities by the U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect was dedicated to children killed by their parents or caretakers and concluded with a recommendation that all child and family programs make child safety a "major priority." Changing two words in welfare reform legislation now before Congress would go a long way toward achieving that goal.

***Richard J. Gelles is director of the Family Violence Research Program and professor of sociology and psychology at the University of Rhode Island and the author of* The Book of David: How Preserving Families Can Cost Children's Lives.**

Dole, the GOP, and the Genetically Endowed

By John Podhoretz

Last week, a 72-year-old man decisively took the reins of a party that has lately completed a little-noted but stunning transformation. In our time, the Left has monopolized youth, energy, and beauty—or at least the world has thought so. That monopoly no longer exists. In fact, in the United States in 1996, the Republican party has become the party of the young, the energetic, and the beautiful. It has attracted the Genetically Endowed, by which I mean those lucky creatures who have drawn a great biological hand.

For those of us who came of age when Republicanism and conservatism had little cultural or social purchase, the move of the Genetically Endowed into our ranks is more than a little unsettling. Seventy years ago, Evelyn Waugh caustically dubbed such types the "Bright Young Things," capturing with a satirist's eye how a diamond-like glitter can mask a diamond-cold soul. But the Bright Young Things were aristocrats the old-fashioned way—by inherited title and old money. The Genetically Endowed are aristocrats at the most basic, deoxyribonucleid-acid level, and they have effected a change in the character of the conservative cause. That cause less resembles a battle than, let us say, a cocktail party.

Case in point: The best Washington parties of my 10-plus years here have been thrown in the last couple of months—fund-raisers for non-profit groups held in upscale Washington venues and featuring a 15-piece big band headed by a young trombonist who has recorded two jazz albums but makes his living writing editorials for the *Washington Times*. What has drawn hundreds upon hundreds of young Washingtonians to these fund-raisers are invitations listing the names of two dozen young conservative Republican women on the "host committee"—that is to say, two dozen remarkably attractive conservative Republican women who cover the right-wing waterfront from the Hill to the K Street lobbying firms to the non-profit interest groups. Six hundred people came to the first of the fund-raisers, 400 to the second. Throughout these evenings, baby political consultants chewed on stogies and downed martinis (straight up with two olives) while talking free-market health care with blonde lobbyists sporting Rachel-from-*Friends* hairstyles. Think-tankers next to them argued about digital television licenses, while youngish married folk with babysitters minding the kids sat on couches in upstairs areas and wondered just when it was that 22-year-olds began smoking cigars and drinking highballs, and just why they looked so good doing it.

The 22-year-olds look like winners because they are: They are eye-catching, they speak well, they are quick if not deep. They have bestowed their bounty on the GOP in the service of conservatism. And the omnipresence of the Genetically Endowed is testimony to the fact that the party that most closely reflects conventional American views is the Republican party. For the Genetically Endowed are not a leading indicator. They are a lagging indicator—a sign of predominance.

This has gone largely unremarked because the popular culture—usually preternaturally wise in the ways of the young and the beautiful—doesn't seem to know about it. The word "Republican" is, after all, Hollywood shorthand for "pasty-faced white guy who can't dance"; "Republican woman" is a pop-culture oxymoron. And if there is anything the Genetically Endowed cannot abide, it is the GOP's pop-culture image of uncoolness. Its outraged members swing into action. They publish op-eds explaining how cool Republicanism and conservatism truly are. Called by an interviewer from the *Washington Post* or CNN just looking for ways to score a "gotcha" against them, they loudly defend their cool: *I sing in a rock band when I'm not working on the Hill; I dee-jay at a club on my days off*. . . .

For a time, this attitude seemed a little greedy. Wasn't it enough to be a part of a political movement and a political party that seemed to be in the ascendancy? If pop culture was proving slow to acknowledge the political and ideological shift in American life, it would come around eventually—naked commercialism would demand it. And besides, conservatism and Republicanism *aren't* really cool, nor should they be. Their role is, in part, to defend the traditional structures of American life against the sustained attack over

the past four decades *by* cool itself—for it is cool's ceaseless desire for novelty and its loathing of the everyday that have helped atomize the institutions that stabilized and enhanced bourgeois life.

But the Genetically Endowed are conventional, in the deepest sense. They want to be taken account of in American culture, which, to them, means pop culture. They are desperate to be taken seriously. And as nature's winners, they think it is their birthright to be winners at the political level as well.

For the past couple of months, though, one has had this odd sensation, around Washington and at these fund-raisers: that the Genetically Endowed have looked at the party and the cause they proudly joined and have thought nervously to themselves: *Have I gone with a loser*?

Kent Lemon

They were certainly not thinking about Bob Dole specifically—though Dole's lack of energy and frustrating inaction in the face of a resurgent Democratic party has been the primary subject of discussion in Republican Washington for two months. Make no mistake: The elected politicians and party officials may have gone on television and talked about how Bob Dole was where he wanted to be and the race would narrow and that anybody who worried about the bad poll numbers was an inside-the-Beltway sourpuss, but there was no comparable serenity on the part of the people who make their living working in Republican circles. No, the idea that they might have backed a loser went beyond Bob Dole. In fact, given the GOP slide since the budget shutdown and the seemingly sclerotic presidential candidate who emerged from the astoundingly vapid presidential primaries, many wondered if the party and the cause themselves had somehow gotten crosswise of history. All Republicans in Washington had been unwillingly brought face to face with a genuinely sobering idea—the possibility that the Republican Revolution was an illusion, that the results of 1994 did not represent a shift in the political culture but simply another symptom of the instability of contemporary American politics.

Older Republicans and conservatives have long since grown used to this fear. After all, there was a time many thought, like Whittaker Chambers, that they were on the losing side of the Manichean battle against communism. But that was another era, when joining the ranks of conservatives *meant* feeling like a loser much of the time. Now that the Republican party and conservatism have attained ideological and electoral ascendancy, they do not have the pessimist's luxury of the long view. Their troops, the Genetically Endowed especially, have joined up in spite of the popular culture's decision to brand them as uncool because they found they could take pleasure in other things—ideas, certainly, but also the adrenalizing charge of victory.

Victory has its own distinct feel and style, a feel and style just like those of the Genetically Endowed themselves—it is both preceded by and the progenitor of an ineffable self-confidence, cheeriness, and a special brazenness that comes from feeling anointed, charmed.

This is precisely what, in 1996, the Republican party had lost to an enthusiastic Bill Clinton, whose brazen theft of Republican issues and brazen lies about the Republican budget have been delivered with remarkable self-confidence and demagogic good cheer. And that is why what Bob Dole did last week was so important. By seizing center stage with a dramatic and unexpected announcement delivered in the most eloquent words spoken by any American politician this year, Dole last week restored some self-confidence, good cheer, and brazenness to a Republican party desperate for them.

The circumstances surrounding his resignation from the Senate were all these things—self-confident, cheery, and brazen. Not for a moment did he seem to be the Dole Republicans had come to know—the political version of the grandfather you didn't like, the gruff one, the one who muttered things under his breath when your grandmother made a fuss over you. Instead, this deliberate, disciplined, remarkably cautious man proved himself capable of surprise, the scarcest political commodity in the modern media era. He designed, planned, and led a news coup that dominated the political coverage for days. He misled the media into thinking he was taking yet another Dole-like half-measure by letting the story spread that he would give up some of his duties in the Senate but not all, keep the title of majority leader but not really fill the office. The second of the fund-raisers was held the night before Dole's announcement, and the Genet-

ically Endowed greeted the misleading news with wary optimism: "He had to do it, I guess," a House aide told me. "Maybe he can, like, *focus* now or something."

She expected, as did everybody else, that Dole would make the most grudging kind of separation from the Senate—that we would see another version of the hemming-and-hawing Bob Dole whose Beltway reputation for stinging wit was belied every time he appeared on television and spoke some version of his characteristic statement in the face of controversy: "We'll have to take a look at that, see how it works." As a speaker, whether on talk shows or at a podium, Dole usually takes back in one parenthetical phrase what he gave in the sentence before. That's the meaning of his almost tic-like use of the word "whatever" as coda and punctuation—it's almost as if he wants to let us know that the words he has just spoken were merely a speechwriter's blather or the nonsense talking points of a staff aide he barely knows.

So when, in the words he devised with Mark Helprin, one of America's most ambitious and rhapsodically prosodic novelists, Dole said he had "nowhere to go but the White House or home," the surprise was compounded by the fact that it was Dole speaking that well-crafted phrase. And this: "My campaign is about telling the truth, it is about doing what is right, it's about electing a president who's not attracted to the glories of the office but rather to its difficulties. It's about electing a president who, once he takes office, will keep his perspective and remain by his deepest nature and inclination one of the people." And this: "I have absolute confidence in the victory that to some may seem unattainable. This is because I have seen victory and I have seen defeat, and I know when one is set to give way to the other."

It was not only resigning from the Senate and putting all his chips on the final bet of his career that constituted a surprise, but the way in which he did it: by speaking a beautifully conceived speech and delivering it well. By belying his own self-definition as a "doer, not a talker." And these surprises were overshadowed by a metasurprise: the fact that it was Dole pulling off the surprise. You don't expect surprise from a septuagenarian; consistency is what you expect, and mulish consistency at that. One of the reasons that, as Dole himself said, his victory began to seem unattainable is that the Bob Dole we had seen before could not win the presidency. Only a different Dole could, and 72-year-old men rarely change. And despite Dole's message in the speech—"I will be the same man I was when I walked into the room, the same man I was yesterday and the day before, and a long time ago when I arose from my hospital bed and was permitted by the grace of God to walk again in the world"—this was a different Dole. The only question is whether it was a different Dole for only a day, May 15, 1996, and we will know this soon enough.

It takes a weird combination of ideology, timing, competence, good fortune, and sheer stage magic to get elected president. Your ideas must be in sync with the views of the electorate. You must figure out ways to connect your views to whatever is going on in the American consciousness that day, week, month, and year. You need well-designed campaign events, which you can control, and you need good weather for them, which you can't. When these things all come together, you and the people around you will begin to throw away caution and act with almost reckless abandon, so sure are you that your goal is in sight. This is what happened to Bill Clinton when he jumped on that ridiculous bus after the Democratic convention in 1992, and it's what happened to George Bush when he decided to spend every day for three weeks at a flag factory in 1988. You start seeming like a winner.

THE GENETICALLY ENDOWED RARELY BECOME PRESIDENT —THEY HAVE NOTHING TO PROVE, AND THEY NEED NOT BE INTERESTING.

The Genetically Endowed rarely become president for the same reason that they are rarely good conversationalists—they have nothing to prove, and they don't have to work at being interesting, because people gravitate to them naturally. But it is a fact of human nature that the fortunate don't really believe they are fortunate. They don't like to think such things of themselves; like everyone else, they believe they have a tough life. Which is why, finally, Bob Dole truly became their candidate and their leader last week when he said: "This is where I touch the ground, and it is in touching the ground in moments of difficulty that I've always found my strength. I have been there before, I have done it the hard way, and I will do it the hard way once again. . . ."

He certainly has done it the hard way, but most people in the Republican party—most Americans—have not. Still, they like to think themselves part of a great struggle. And if Bob Dole prevails in November, the Genetically Endowed will turn to each other at one of the 25 inaugural balls in January 1997, fall into each other's arms, and say: "That was hard! Remember how we thought we were never going to make it?" ♦

The Born-Again Dole Campaign

By Fred Barnes

Bob Dole can keep a secret. Until the day before he announced his resignation from the Senate on May 15, only five people knew of his decision—Dole, his wife Elizabeth, campaign manager Scott Reed, Republican national chairman Haley Barbour, and writer Mark Helprin. "In order to keep the secret," Dole told Republican senators at a luncheon following his announcement, "I naturally didn't tell any senators." They laughed uneasily.

The question is whether Dole can wage an effective national campaign against a formidable opponent. He's never done it before. In 1980, his candidacy for the GOP presidential nomination fell flat. In 1988, he won Iowa, then collapsed as George Bush grabbed the nomination. This year, he defeated a batch of weak Republican foes in unimpressive fashion. That made him the presumptive nominee. But matched against President Clinton this spring, he steadily lost ground. Dole thought he'd begun to recover by early May, when he began talking about liberal judges and repeal of Clinton's gas-tax increase. But demoralized Republicans felt no better.

Now born again, Dole has one final chance to prove himself nationally. And this time, he has a model: the Bush campaign in 1988. Bush created his own issues against Democrat Michael Dukakis—the Pledge of Allegiance, Willie Horton, Dukakis's ACLU membership—that the media and much of the Republican establishment loathed. Nevertheless, says Reed, "That's exactly what we're going to do." A half-dozen conservative issues have been chosen: a tax cut, ending affirmative action, opposition to gay marriage, cutting wasteful spending, real welfare reform, and crime. "That's the package," according to Reed.

Dole has roughly two months to flesh out these issues and draw sharp contrasts with Clinton. If he hasn't gotten his message through to voters by mid-July, he's probably a goner. The Atlanta Olympic games begin then, and they're sure to drown out politics. August will be devoted to the conventions, and Dole needs the Republican gathering to be a coronation of himself and his vice-presidential running mate, not a vehicle for issue development. And when the conventions are over, it's Labor Day. The shape of a presidential race rarely changes after that.

The good news is that Dole has made serious preparations to trumpet his issues. The most important is cutting taxes. That's the issue that brings the Republican base together, everyone from religious conservatives to pro-choice moderates. Of course, the conventional wisdom in Washington is that Dole, as an austerity Republican devoted chiefly to balancing the federal budget, can't comfortably embrace a big cut in individual income tax rates. But neither Dole nor his advisers agree with that. So developing a proposal for slashing taxes has moved ahead on two fronts.

The first is the campaign staff. Reed strongly favors a large tax cut, and he's met with Steve Forbes, Jack Kemp, and other supply-siders to discuss the subject. Also, Robert Lighthizer, a Washington attorney and ex-Dole aide, has put together a team of experts on economic matters. They've developed revenue estimates of the impact of a 15 percent across-the-board cut in individual rates. Lighthizer, while no friend of supply-siders, likes this proposal as part of a bigger economic plan to spur economic growth.

The same 15 percent cut was outlined by GOP senator Spencer Abraham of Michigan to a separate group of economists who met with Dole in early May. Initial reports suggested the economists were cool to the idea. But John Taylor of Stanford University, who headed the economic group, certainly wasn't. Nor was Gary Becker of the University of Chicago, who's said publicly he's for reductions in marginal rates. Even Martin Feldstein of Harvard University, the former head of the White House Council of Economic Advisers under President Reagan, isn't hostile. Taylor is assigned to report back to Dole with a tax-cut proposal by late May.

A specific proposal is all Dole needs. He's insisted all along he wants to cut taxes. In his only major economic address as a candidate, Dole said last September he wants "a sweeping, pro-growth tax reform" that includes "lower and flatter rates." And in his new stump speech, Dole harps on the tax issue: "With no need for yet another election-year conversion, what new taxes would Bill Clinton suddenly find unavoidable?" Dole says he wants to repeal the gas-tax hike now. "And then, in November, let's repeal the administration that gave us, not just the gas tax, but the

largest tax increase in history," he adds.

Gay marriage and affirmative action are touchier issues for Dole. He's co-sponsor of legislation allowing states to ban same-sex marriage, but he's never released a written statement or made public comments on the subject. Nor is there a speech in the works on gay marriage. But William Bennett suggested to Reed on May 8 a way for Dole to express his opposition. Dole could express mock exasperation, Bennett said: "I don't get this [gay marriage]. Maybe I'm too old. Maybe I'm a fossil. Maybe I come from too small a town." Bennett argued Dole should give a speech on this subject soon.

Dole has a speech already drafted attacking race and gender preferences used by the federal government. He was set to give it weeks ago. But his prepared text kept slipping off the podium, so he spoke off the cuff instead. Now, Dole has given up what may be his best platform for attacking affirmative action, the Senate floor. Dole was sponsor of a bill to outlaw affirmative action. As majority leader, he could bring it to the floor when he pleased. Now he can't. His advisers are looking for a suitable spot for an anti-affirmative-action speech.

What's good politically for Dole about proposing a big tax cut, opposing affirmative action, and barring gay marriage is that Clinton can't co-opt these issues. His liberal base would rebel. True, the president has said he's against same-sex marriage. But he's refused to say if he'd sign legislation giving states the right to block it.

Dole's other three issues—welfare reform, spending, crime—are hardly off limits to Clinton. The president has his own welfare plan, has proposed some spending curbs, and touts his record as a crime fighter. Still, Dole thinks there are grounds for drawing distinctions. He intends to question Clinton's credibility on welfare reform (the president vetoed the GOP budget that included it). On spending, he'll argue that Clinton is a phony, talking conservative while governing as "the rear guard of big government." On crime, Dole thinks his focus on liberal judges is productive.

There's a case to be made on all these issues, but Dole has to make it forcefully, interestingly, and repeatedly. That won't be easy. He's never been a compelling speaker. He'll need a lot of help from his staff in putting his issues across. They'll need to draft provocative speeches and find telegenic settings for Dole to deliver them. They'll need to improve their often amateurish advance work. And they'll have to develop a team to deliver quick responses to Clinton and another to coordinate Republican attacks on the president. "Those things haven't come together as they should have," complains a Dole adviser.

But they've made a start. When Lighthizer heard Clinton was inviting scores of CEOs to the White House on May 16 to talk about corporate responsibility, he sent a memo to the campaign staff. The Dole campaign should respond, he said, noting that instead of yakking with CEOs, Clinton ought to be working to cause faster economic growth, perhaps by cutting taxes. Lighthizer got no response. So he sent another memo. It worked. The campaign put out a statement zinging Clinton. ♦

Senator D'Amato's War

By Tod Lindberg

Even the venue Sen. Alfonse D'Amato picked for the opening salvo of an internecine war against the conservatives of his own party was perfect—Don Imus's shock-jock, politician-larded radio show. D'Amato went off on a tear against the conservative wing of his party, one that he would still be embellishing upon weeks later despite a ferocious counterattack from the conservative wing and a plea from the party chairman for everyone please to shut up.

The highlights of the outburst:

• "Newt Gingrich is a smart man, but he misread the [1994] election entirely. . . . People did not vote to cut funding for the environment and cut funding for programs they care about."

• "People did vote for change, but not for this revolution."

• "Instead of moving conservatively to reduce the scope of government, we moved too quickly in too many areas and created a sense of unease

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about who we were and what we believe in."

• "Less than 10 percent of the people knew anything about the Contract with America."

• "I think we do a great disservice to ourselves if we think that people want a Republican party that is perceived as exclusionary. . . . We should not march to some philosophical ayatollah, . . . an ayatollah like Pat Buchanan."

The counterattack came quickly from House majority leader Dick Armey: "You know, his mom apparently didn't teach him not to bite the hand that feeds him. Newt Gingrich and the Contract with America is why he's Chairman D'Amato now." And, "I would be thrilled if Al D'Amato would get in touch with the Republican message."

From Gingrich: "I don't know why he is wandering around saying these things." From Tony Blankley, Gingrich's spokesman: "[D'Amato's comments] obviously reflect the liberal views of his constituents."

Nothing like a good inside-the-Beltway eye-gouging, of course. But there is much more to the D'Amato Outburst than that. In fact, this dispute actually offers the best window to date on the central substantive conflict within the Republican party: the perpetual tension between the party's conservative ideological wing and what has been called its pragmatic or moderate wing—but might more accurately be called its merely partisan wing.

It is, in a sense, one of those storied "battles for the soul of the party." Except that this battle is unlikely ever to produce a winner. And the issue is not two competing visions of what the party's soul should be, but a determined effort on the part of the party's ideological wing to *give* the party a soul—defined, delimited, and internally consistent—and the resistance of the partisan wing to any such endeavor.

The essential characteristic of the conservative, ideological wing of the party is its belief that it knows, in general, the answers to all the questions that are relevant. Oh, reasonable people will differ on specifics: what kind of tax cut, for example, or where to cut spending first, or how many requirements to impose on states as the federal government devolves certain responsibilities to them. But those are matters for the legislative process to resolve. Previously resolved—thoroughly settled, in fact—are the Big Picture issues: limited government; markets and market solutions; more freedom.

The first serious attempt to codify these principles into a legislative agenda was the Contract with America. To the signatories, the Contract had two meanings. First, its substance; second, the way it differed from the usual pie-in-the-sky promises candidates make. So it was that once the dust settled from the election and Republicans found themselves in charge, the House organized its business along the ideological lines of the Contract. The process came with a fairly rigid enforcement mechanism. Promise-keeping was central in the GOP's pitch to voters in 1994, and therefore any deviation from the agreed agenda would have been (and was) portrayed as an act of self-destruction. One might vote against a particular piece of Contract-related legislation or support this or that amendment to it; but one could neither take a Contract item off the agenda nor construct an alternate agenda that would interfere with the Contract and the Republican budget that emanated from it.

The House in 1995 was, accordingly, a place where the dominant ideology drove the political machinery with a certainty that has not been seen in the body in 20 years or more. Moreover, this ideology truly did constitute a reversal of course, an about-face from the premises that had dominated the body, at times explicitly and at other times inchoately, since the New Deal.

The ideologically driven legislation passed by the House did dictate a large portion of the business of the Senate. But the Senate can hardly be said to have been animated by the same ideological impulses that governed the House. Only nine Republicans were added to the Senate, not the 73 added to the House. The Senate's *character* had not changed from what it had been before the 1994 election, though the balance of power had shifted to the Republicans. Throughout the year, and with a few rare exceptions, the Senate's position was more or less "yes, but . . . "

In practice, the "but" most often amounted to an attenuation of the House legislation. A $500 billion tax cut from the House? Make it $250 billion. Tough provisions against illegitimacy in welfare reform? Let states decide.

After an initial uptick when they took control, Republicans soon saw their poll numbers slip. Many, especially in the House, were unconcerned at first, preferring to ascribe the reversal of fortune to the comparative slowness with which the Senate was acting. They were confident that the numbers would improve once people started to see the results, i.e., the legislation on the president's desk, ready for his signature.

The confidence was a result, at least in part, of the conviction that they were doing the right thing. But it was also a function of the belief that items in the Contract enjoyed popular support ranging from broad to overwhelming. For all the talk of revolution, Republicans in the House did not imagine themselves to be leading the electorate into wholly uncharted territory. In fact, they thought they had it mapped rather well—

through polls, focus groups, and the like. D'Amato's observation that only 10 percent of Americans had ever heard of the Contract with America was misleading. Americans *had* heard of the issues in the Contract—a balanced budget, tax cuts, a line-item veto, making Congress live by the same laws it passes for everyone else, term limits, and so on. Americans liked those things. That's what they have consistently said.

But for some of those less ideologically animated than the House Republicans, that initial downturn in the polls was worrisome. It provided an opening for the Democrats, and it reinforced concerns that had largely been submerged when the polls were rising and the momentum was entirely the GOP's. For example, consider school lunches, the program over which Republicans took a pasting in the first serious Democratic counterattack on the new Congress. The Republican budget proposal featured an increase in school-lunch spending of 4 percent a year, rather than the 5.2 percent directed by existing law. Democrats immediately assailed it as a cut, rather than a reduction in the rate of increase. And the issue, as they say in politics, "had purchase."

For many Republicans, the school lunch program was a harbinger of what might go wrong. But the school-lunch affair had one meaning for ideological Republicans, and an entirely different meaning for their non-ideological compatriots. For the first group, it was an example of the shameless Democratic demagoguery they could expect ahead, served up to the American people by an entirely uncritical media. For the second group, though, it was a warning that House Republicans could go too far. The school lunch program was, after all, very popular with Americans, and it enjoyed broad bipartisan support. Gutting it would be unthinkable. Of course House Republicans were actually doing no such thing, and they had the numbers to prove it; but no one was listening, particularly. The perception of cutting, aided by the fiery rhetoric of revolution, was afoot in the land, and a number of Republicans, especially senators who might have taken occasion over the years to praise the school lunch program to the skies, wanted nothing to do with it.

The Contract makes no mention of school lunches. But of course the Contract was only an outline. How, finally, would the budget be balanced? What would the details look like? And what, really, did Republicans mean by product-liability reform, regulatory reform, unchaining Americans from onerous Washington mandates and the clutches of overweening federal bureaucrats? Even for many of those prepared to concede that the items of the Contract were, in general, popular, the details now forthcoming from those in the House fleshing it out could be startling. This is not what they meant at all; this was not it, at all.

Perhaps it was the substance of the legislative changes that was unnerving. Perhaps the discomfort came as a result of pressure from traditional Washington sources—lobbyists, interest groups, a liberal media culture, etc. Perhaps it was merely poll results, the fact that some of the policy changes being undertaken, in areas such as the environment and education, were meeting with public disapproval—whether or not that disapproval was due in part to the outrageous caricaturing of GOP proposals by the political opposition.

To say that the worries may have been "merely" poll-driven, however, is to impose an ideologue's view on a segment of the political scene that does not share that view. For the ideologically inclined, deteriorating poll numbers indicate not the prudence of retreat, but the necessity to hang firm. Americans will come around once they see that the practical results are nothing like what opponents say; to back off is to agree, implicitly, with opponents' criticism; what Americans like least is politicians who don't keep their promises and stick to their guns; vacillation is death—and a deserved death, one might add. On the non-ideological side, deteriorating poll numbers are an indication that, well, one's positions are out of sync with the public. What else could they mean? And since a practical politician's first obligation is to *please* the electorate—within reason, of course—indications of public displeasure are a powerful signal to change course.

Come the government shutdowns and the immensely frustrating negotiations with the White House over whether and how to reach a budget agreement, public opinion forced the two competing views within the GOP to come to a head. Americans were blaming the Republican Congress for the government shutdown, and the media were thumping its deleterious effects. Once again, the ideologues of the party, especially in the House, wanted to stay the course.

But the non-ideological wing of the party had had enough. It was time to move on, nurse the wounds, try to repair the damage. Bob Dole reached that conclusion first, on behalf of his own presidential aspirations and the non-ideological Republicans of the Senate. He maneuvered the reopening of the government through the Senate at a time when more ideologically inclined senators—most notably his then-presidential rival Phil Gramm—were nowhere near the Senate floor to object. And the House turned around because Newt Gingrich, revolutionist in chief, personally turned it. His change of heart demonstrated that there were limits to ideology even among ideologues. Some remained opposed to the last; others went along bitterly. But in

Sean Delonas

the end, most were not prepared to rip their leadership apart in the interest of pursuing their vision.

D'Amato's "Imus" outburst is testimony to the lingering pain and suffering within the party. The objective correlatives are all there. The president is up, Congress is down; Democrats up, Republicans down; Clinton up, Dole down. From D'Amato's point of view, this was all unnecessary.

Leave aside D'Amato's personal role in voting for much of what he would subsequently attack. Leave aside, also, that his complaints come with the benefit of hindsight. The essence of his assessment is that the relentless effort to impose a conservative ideological vision on American politics and government led Republicans to lose sight of the wishes of the people who entrusted them with power in the first place.

The near-universal belief among ideological Republicans is that the 1994 elections were "nationalized" around the conservative agenda of the Contract with America. This notion, in the D'Amato view, is fundamentally flawed. More people voted Republican this time because they had come to agree, in general and in a very vague way, with Republican criticisms of Democratic governance. Democrats had done little or nothing to please them during the time the party had control of Congress and the White House. Voters wanted to try something new, and that's one of the reasons D'Amato is now the chairman of the banking committee. But he does not believe voters were offering an affirmation of wholesale support for a Republican agenda; they hadn't even heard of the part of it that Republicans had articulated, let alone the aspects of it that only came out once Republicans got power. People *like* environmental protection and safe meat and school lunches and college loans, for heaven's sake.

As of now, D'Amato has the better of this argument, because he is the one with the better answer to the question, "What went wrong?" Why is the Republican agenda not now the law of the land? The answer from the ideological camp is that the message got lost, the president found his missing spine, and Democrats will shamelessly lie in their last-ditch attempt to keep power. All of which may be true, but most of which begs the question: What was the message? How was the president able to find his spine? Is the entire content of the Democratic message a lie? The implication of these answers for the ideologues is clear: Things went wrong for us through no real fault of our own—no important fault, that is. Tactical mistakes, yes—but at bottom, the program was sound.

D'Amato's answer to what went wrong is that Republicans got too far ahead of the American people.

But if D'Amato has managed to articulate the current GOP problem with some acuity—and, let it be noted, with a generous helping of self-aggrandizing, obnoxious braggadocio—his prescription for where to go from here amounts to nothing. The problem with his relentlessly anti-ideological view is that it is little more than a complaint. When the time comes to move on, it offers nothing. It is opinion-poll populism, relentlessly in favor of good things, resolutely opposed to bad things, whatever *they* are. It wishes, somehow, to lead from behind, with the popular will out front.

This disposition has its uses. It can, in principle, serve as a valuable check on an ideological vision in danger of coming unmoored from public opinion—though there is no particular evidence that it performed that function in the 104th Congress; instead, it made its entrance in time for the recriminations. Moreover, many are the senators who have made long careers for themselves by keeping their heads down and their fingers to the wind.

But the merely partisan, anti-ideological persuasion has its limitations as well. Let us not forget what can happen in the absence of "the vision thing." And if it should so happen that you have a vision and your vision proves to be flawed, the solution is not sightlessness. It's finding a better pair of glasses. ♦

A Non-Pocketbook Election

By David Frum

Twenty years ago, Jude Wanniski published a book arguing that the stock market astutely gauged the wisdom (or folly) of the policies being pursued in Washington. It's now 1996; the stock market has recorded its best two-year performance since the early 1960s. What does that tell us about the political wisdom of President Clinton?

Absolutely nothing.

The great economic story of the 1990s is the near-total separation of the U.S. economy from politics. Since 1990, America has made one bad political choice after another. Federal personal income taxes were hiked in 1990. Three huge new regulatory statutes were imposed in 1990-91 (the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Clean Air Act of 1990, and the 1991 Civil Rights Act). Under President Clinton, antitrust scrutiny has revived, personal income taxes were raised again, and the federal regulatory apparatus has turned hostile.

And what happened? American business has taken every punch and kept smiling. A dollar invested in the Dow Jones average five years ago would be worth more than $2 today. In April, as David Hale of Zurich Kemper points out, the U.S. economy entered its 61st month of consecutive growth since 1991—the longest expansion without a single quarter of negative growth since George Washington's presidency. All the excitement of the volatile politics of the 1990s seems to have affected American business about as much as a thrilling World Series: The economy chugged along imperturbably as Bill Clinton kicked George Bush out of office and took Washington on a leftward lurch; it yawned and kept plodding along when Newt Gingrich roared into power promising to yank the country back rightward; and it has since shrugged off with equal lack of interest Gingrich's troubles and the increasing likelihood of a Clinton reelection. It's as if the American economy has collectively decided that it has nothing much either to hope or fear from Washington—as if the Democrats can't hurt it and the Republicans won't help.

Don't misunderstand. Bad public policy is not harmless. Lyndon Johnson's inflation and Richard Nixon's price controls deserve much of the blame for the economic pain of the 1970s. It's certainly not true—as writers like the *New York Times*'s Thomas L. Friedman endlessly claim—that the power of modern markets means the folly of government no longer matters. The folly of government matters a great deal: Every major industrial nation has permitted government regulation and expenditure to grow rapidly since 1970, a weight gain that explains why their economies no longer can run as fast as they used to. The U.S. economic expansion of the 1990s has moved at a weirdly sluggish pace: 2.2 percent growth in 1993, 3.5 percent in 1994, 2.1 percent in 1995, 2.6 percent expected in 1996, a little less projected for 1997. Statist Europe and interventionist Japan are doing even worse. More troubling still, this unexciting expansion has translated into fewer jobs and feebler growth in personal incomes than in past growth spurts. Adjusting for inflation, the median American family earned less in 1994 than in 1990, and only $900 more than it did in 1980.

These disappointments aren't facts of nature. If the savings-and-loan collapse of the 1980s had been averted; if the average American were better educated in math and more proficient in the use of language; if America's airports and highways could move traffic at faster speeds; if saving and investment were taxed less punitively; if interest rates were lower; everyone would be better off. On the other hand, had Bill Clinton actually put into practice the policies he promised in 1992—had he fought a trade war with Japan and massively hiked social spending, had he taxed stock-market speculation and forced every small-business owner in the country to buy a federally mandated health-insurance policy for his employees—we'd all be poorer.

But while sound politics *can* help the American economy, America's politicians seem strangely indisposed to try. In 1996, every politician with a bold plan to improve America's economic performance was either screened out by the primaries—Pat Buchanan, Steve Forbes, Phil Gramm—or deterred from entering them in the first place—Jerry Brown, Jesse Jackson, Paul Tsongas. What we are left with is two politicians whose idea of economic policy is to lower the gasoline tax by 4.3 cents per gallon or raise the price of beef a few fractions of a cent per pound. Just as American business seems to have disconnected from politics, so Bob Dole and Bill Clinton have disconnected themselves from the U.S. economy.

Clinton came to power with a comprehensive

analysis of America's economic problems and a large-scale plan to set things right. Government had to invest more in training and education to prepare American workers for a world in which routine manufacturing was destined to gravitate toward Asia and Latin America. It needed to build an ultra-modern infrastructure of fiber-optic cables and high-speed railways. While Washington ought generally to avoid manipulating the microeconomy, Clinton argued, in order to induce American workers to accept change, a more cushioned welfare state was needed—in particular a national health-care system.

What does the Clinton of 1996 say? Listen to the man himself, via his March Economic Report of the President: "My Administration has reduced the size of government: as a percentage of civilian nonfarm employment, the Federal work-force is the smallest it has been since 1933, before the New Deal. We have conducted a top-to-bottom overhaul of Federal regulations, and are eliminating 16,000 pages of outdated or burdensome rules altogether. We have reformed environmental, workplace safety, and pharmaceutical regulation to cut red tape." And, of course, he boasts he's narrowed the deficit.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME A CHALLENGER HAD SUCH TROUBLE THINKING UP CRITICISMS OF THE INCUMBENT'S MANAGEMENT OF THE ECONOMY?

This Eisenhowerish self-presentation is not, needless to say, entirely honest. The president plainly still hankers to leave his fingerprints all over the U.S. economy. But whatever the man's actual views, he will be offering his supporters only the tiniest little economic inducements in exchange for a second term. A higher minimum wage may be a good idea or it may not—but it's hardly enough reason for an unemployed former insurance broker in Dallas to make a trip to the polls. The rest of Clinton's economic message is essentially the same as that which England's Tory prime ministers gave the country squires 150 years ago: *Change is coming, you won't like it, I can't stop it, but vote for me and I might be able to slow it down a little*.

As for Bob Dole, one has to wonder: When was there last an election in which the presidential challenger has had so much trouble thinking up criticisms of the incumbent's management of the economy? A nickel a gallon off the gas tax—that's what Bob Dole is offering America's overtaxed middle class. Some rude remarks about CEO pay during the New Hampshire primary—that's what he's offering voters worried about their economic security.

Since 1980, Republican presidential candidates have offered voters a clear and exciting alternative to the confiscatory politics of the Democratic party. Ronald Reagan won a huge majority in 1980 by promising to stop inflation and cut income taxes. He kept his word and was rewarded. In 1984, he promised to keep tax rates low—and his successor, who repeated the promise, was rewarded with a convincing win in 1988. Even in 1992, a substantial gap separated the aimless but market-oriented George Bush from the interventionist Governor Clinton. But this year, President Clinton has reinvented himself as the most conservative Democrat candidate for president since John W. Davis in 1924. It is not axiomatically true this year that the Republican nominee—regardless of who he is and what he says (or doesn't say)—by virtue of his party card alone can claim to be the champion of economic freedom. Bill Clinton is promising America's wealth-producers, "I won't hit you again." I can't imagine it excites very many of them very much to hear Bob Dole chime in, "Well, I won't hit you again either."

Oddly enough, this affectless election is occurring at a remarkably hospitable moment for real economic debate. It's generally believed that the American economy has been underperforming for 20 years. A surprising consensus exists across the political spectrum that social programs like Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security need to be rethought, that private-sector saving and investment need to be taxed at lower rates, that governments must not manipulate prices (except of course for that of gasoline), that inflation does not raise incomes, and that protectionism is stupid. The way is open, in other words, for a trenchant debate between intelligent alternatives—between the New Democratic economics Bill Clinton espoused in 1992 and the robust advocacy of economic freedom that won the three presidential elections of the 1980s for the GOP.

Instead, the presidential candidates of the two parties seem interested only in melding economic gimmicks like the gas tax cut and a hike in the minimum wage while acquiescing more or less grudgingly in the major spending programs that make up government as-we-know-it. It would all be horribly boring, if it weren't so damn depressing. And meanwhile, the difference between the growth path America is on now and the path it was on before the advent of the Great Society will represent about $300 billion of forfeited output over the next four years, or enough to put $2,000 into the retirement account of every working American. ♦

Five Ways America Keeps Getting Better

By Christopher Caldwell

Our newspapers are so full of gloomy stories about income inequality, downsizing, destitution, and stagnation you'd almost think they're being generated by a buggy software program that somebody has neglected to de-install. After all, the statistics—on per capita income, unemployment, job creation, income distribution, and the like—haven't supported the gloom for some time now. And yet you can see bookshelves lined with *The End of Work*, *The End of Affluence*, and *Silent Depression* in bookstores crammed with people spending their raises in the fifth straight year of economic expansion. People watch documentaries with titles like "Losers for Life," "The No-Hope Economy," and "The Dead-End Society" on their 45-inch screens in surround-stereo sound.

It seems no amount of statistical refutation will deter the doomsayers, so perhaps we should turn instead to the evidence of our own eyes. Material prosperity is an area of American life in which things have taken a turn for the better. It may even be the *only* such area. While there is plenty to snipe at—computers may cause downsizing, cable TV may be expensive and monopolistic, health-care advances may be eating into our national savings—the material changes in life are so widespread that it's possible to name five *pure* improvements that have come out of the capitalist system over the last decade—absolute, unambiguous, no-doubt-about-it changes for the better—off the top of one's head.

Since this is a magazine, we'll start with books.

1 Borders: Borders Books has now (or will have within the next few months) opened 114 of its enormous emporia. Most of them are in suburbs or rural areas, but some are in cities, like Phoenix and Fort Lauderdale, that had previously been literary wastelands. The typical Borders carries 100,000 titles. This is a larger selection than any bookstore in the country had a decade ago—and in almost every case when a Borders comes to town, it offers readers a larger selection than all the area's existing bookshops *combined*. Borders has university monographs, Michelin maps, and compact discs. There is even a foreign language section, where you can buy *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in Spanish, the *Collected Poems* of Leopardi in Italian, and the occasional Chinese potboiler.

Some critics, like Jean Marbella of the *Baltimore Sun*, suggest that Borders outlets are "pre-packaged, cookie-cutter behemoths that will drive out the independents." But this criticism doesn't really pertain to Borders or the other super-bookstore chains like Barnes & Noble and Bookstop. It is, rather, an old complaint, chiefly about Crown Books, which brought the chain concept to bookselling. Making early use of computer inventorying, the Crown Books people found cost-effective ways of serving the schlock-fiction/self-actualization/home-health junk market that accounts for the vast majority of book sales—while discounting heavily, to boot. When a Crown moved into a neighborhood full of literary bookstores, the so-called independents began losing the segment of the market that was underwriting their less popular, more literary titles. The "independents" then tended to go under, leaving only Crown to serve a book-buying population that suddenly found its book selection radically diminished.

Crown created a classic "Wal-Mart problem," in which consumers had to weigh whether lower prices were enough of a boon to compensate for the dwindling variety of retail outlets. There's no such trade-off with Borders. Should a Borders lead to the bankruptcy of a poetry bookstore, it will be one that has a smaller poetry selection than Borders itself. The old bookstore that "specializes in history" cannot compete with the Borders history departments—some of which carry 10,000 titles.

The *Omaha World Herald* reported last November that 13 local bookstores had banded together to fight off the Borders "threat." Thanks, but no thanks—the smaller bookstores could not do much better than steer customers to other little bookstores that *might* have books they lacked (in Omaha that means saddling up for quite a ride) or get them for customers by special order, which can take weeks.

And where competition fails, can regulation be far behind? The Canadian government's culture ministry barred the opening of a new Borders in Toronto in February, citing a cultural variant of the Wal-Mart problem, specifically that it might be deleterious to Canada's bookstore industry. (Read: to protect Canada's own—and inferior—book giant Chapters, formed last year to take Borders' market while getting government protection from it.)

As significant as any of Borders' innovations is that all of their outlets have café/sweetshop annexes inside, with free newspapers, along with easy-chair sitting areas. This means that Borders bookstores have become social hangouts, among other things places of mating, which is heartening beyond words. It also means that the last five years have seen, in Borders-style bookstores and e-mail, the only two society-wide incentives to literacy since television was introduced at the 1939 New York World's Fair.

National bookstore sales have risen from $7.8 billion in 1991 to $18 billion in 1994. Which leads one, incidentally, to ask: Where are all those little-bookstore owners who were bemoaning the decline of American reading habits 20 years ago? Probably the same place all the people who were complaining about "conspicuous consumption" went when Americans started owning their cars for longer.

Peter Steiner

2 **STARBUCKS:** Until 1990, to get espresso in the U.S. you had to be an incredibly savvy Italophone native of New York City, Cambridge, Seattle, or San Francisco, and what you found was usually something that tasted like aerated pine tar. Only with the growth of the Seattle-based Starbucks café/coffee retailing chain, with its 700 outlets nationwide, has the heartland been able to try the stuff. Is this a mere novelty or an improvement in quality? There's no question it's the latter. Starbucks sells more units of American-style coffee than it does straight espresso, which proves there's more than mere thrill-seeking involved. As for quality, an informal taste comparison (made by me) between one of the best espresso bars in Milan and (nine hours later) a Starbucks on Connecticut Avenue in Washington was a draw.

But all of the chain's products are consistently better than they have to be, because Starbucks invests more money in its product than the average trendy clip joint. The key to Starbucks espresso is its machines, made by Florence-based La Marzocco. Whereas most restaurant-quality four-handle espresso machines cost $3,000, Starbucks' Marzoccos run roughly $8,000 a pop. (They turn out to be necessary, as Americans drink their espresso drinks with so much steamed milk that it puts a strain on all but the best machines.)

No Wal-Mart problem here: Anyone who can make good coffee can prosper. "There's plenty of room for a second tier of smaller chains behind Starbucks," says George Harrop, president of Barista Brava, a fledgling gourmet coffee bar (which also uses La Marzocco machines). The parallel would be to ABC, the British chain of tea-shops that spread like wildfire between the wars and is omnipresent in the English novels of the 1930s. ABC shops provided the backdrop to the conversational life of a hundred cities and towns but did nothing to threaten traditional English tea.

Starbucks chairman Howard Schultz is an outspoken apostle of "third places," a hitherto little-known obsession of the civil-society movement, which believes that people need a venue for "relating" to others that is neither home nor office. There's no disagreeing with the proposition of Christopher Lasch and others that we're in desperate need of institutions to replace (in this health- and discrimination-conscious world) bars, social clubs, and union halls. This Starbucks does amply.

But Schultz's civic project goes further than that, into one of those post-60s amalgams of hippie culture and neo-traditionalism. It's hardly surprising that Starbucks (like Borders) was founded in 1971. Starbucks, which, like any other coffee concern, gets its coffee from ill-paid peasants in Latin America, Asia,

and Africa, plows some of its profits into CARE and other Third World aid organizations. Similarly, Borders was the first business to establish a partnership to help sponsor (privately) the National Endowment for the Arts. Call it exploitative if you will, but I'd rather view it as a victory of common sense over hypocrisy: Who better to pay for the NEA, after all, than a powerhouse of the culture industry that is drawing R&D benefits from it?

3 NEXIS: The Nexis computer database includes 7,100 news and business sources, and is easily accessible on-line. Compare that with the pre-computer *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*, a cumbersome series of volumes that indexes only 240 publications, and you can see what a resource Nexis really is. Nexis is timely: A journalist or scholar can find everything written on, say, Tony Blair, in every major Western newspaper yesterday—as against a wait of several weeks in the *Reader's Guide*.

Nexis has only recently become a concrete boon, after years of being a boon in the abstract. In fact, it had previously been arguable that Nexis exercised an undemocratic influence on journalism—offering a privileged database only to journalists already affiliated with an organ of sufficient prestige to afford it. But now that Lexis/Nexis has instituted flat-rate pricing as low as $120 a month, the service is accessible to any journalist whose career is worth investing $1,500 a year in—which strikes me as a forgiving cut-off point. The *Reader's Guide* is not cheap, either, at $200 per annum, plus $10 shipping. You *can* still trudge down to the library for it (and I know journalists who do).

A Dissent on Starbucks

by Jackie Mason

STARBUCKS IS THE BEST EXAMPLE of a phony status symbol that means nothing, but people will still pay 10 times as much for because there are French words all over the place. You want coffee in a coffee shop, that's 60 cents. But at Starbucks, *Café Latté*: $3.50. *Café Cremiér:* $4.50. *Café Suzée:* $9.50. For each French word, another four dollars.

Why does a little cream in coffee make it worth $3.50? Go into any coffee shop; they'll give you all the cream you want until you're blue in the face. Forty million people are walking around in coffee shops with jars of cream: "Here's all the cream you want!" And it's still 60 cents.

You know why? Because it's called "coffee." If it's *Café Latté*—$4.50. You want cinnamon in your coffee? Ask for cinnamon in a coffee shop; they'll give you all the cinnamon you want. Do they ask you for more money because it's cinnamon? It's the same price for cinnamon in your coffee as for coffee without cinnamon—60 cents, that's it. But not in Starbucks. Over there, it's *Cinnamonniér*—$9.50.

You want a refill in a regular coffee shop, they'll give you all the refills you want until you drop dead. You can come in when you're 27 and keep drinking coffee until you're 98. And they'll start begging you: "Here, you want more coffee, you want more, you want more?" Do you know that you can't get a refill at Starbucks? A refill is a dollar fifty. Two refills, $4.50. Three refills, $19.50. So, for four cups of coffee—$340.

And it's burnt coffee. It's burnt coffee at Starbucks, let's be honest about it. If you get burnt coffee in a coffee shop, you call a cop. You say, "It's the bottom of the pot. I don't drink from the bottom of the pot." But when it's burnt at Starbucks, they say, "Oh, it's a *blend*. It's a *blend*. It's a special bean from Argentina . . . " The bean is in your *head*.

And there's no chairs in those Starbucks. Instead, they have these high stools. You ever see these stools? You haven't been on a chair that high since you were two. Seventy-three-year-old Jews are climbing and climbing to get to the top of the chair. And when they get to the top, they can't even drink the coffee because there's 12 people around one little table, and everybody's saying, "Excuse me, excuse me, excuse me, excuse me . . . "

Then they can't get *off* the chair. Old Jews are begging Gentiles, "Mister, could you get me off this?"

Do you remember what a cafeteria was? In poor neighborhoods all over this country, they

There are side benefits to Nexis. First, royalties are paid to magazines and newspapers that put their copy on-line, a great advance in the protection of intellectual property that makes it theoretically possible for journalists to get paid by their readership. (Not that I've ever seen a red cent.) Second, a computerized system means that every time a paper corrects a mistake, that correction pops up together with the original article—an unprecedented protection for those who wind up on the receiving end of the inevitable mini-libels that creep into daily news coverage.

But the greatest thing about Nexis's preservation of data is the incentives it offers to literary expression. It used to be that news stories and magazine essays were indeed the fish-wrap and birdcage-liners of popular metaphor. Now, thanks to Nexis, a magazine article is *forever*; articles are now, willy-nilly, written "for the ages"—and it would be surprising if the quality of writing didn't very soon begin to reflect that.

4 LENSCRAFTERS: In 1983, when LensCrafters opened its first stores, getting a pair of glasses was still, for most people, an arduous multi-step ordeal: a visit to an ophthalmologist (for which a scheduled appointment was necessary), then an appointment with an optician, then a seven-to-ten-day wait while the lenses were ground, and a considerable expense at each stop.

Nowadays, if you smash your glasses playing tennis 3,000 miles from home, or drop them off a boat, you can go to LensCrafters or some other "super-optician" and have a new pair of glasses made in an hour. Since each LensCrafters outlet leases space to an

went to a cafeteria because there were no waiters and no service. And so poor people could save money on a tip. Cafeterias didn't have regular tables or chairs either. They gave coffee to you in a cardboard cup. So because of that you paid less for the coffee. You got less, so you paid less.

It's all the same as Starbucks—no chairs, no service, a cardboard cup for your coffee—except in Starbucks, the less you get, the more it costs. By the time they give you nothing, it's worth four times as much.

Am I exaggerating? Did you ever try to buy a cookie in Starbucks? Buy a cookie in a regular coffee shop. You can tear down a building with that cookie. And the whole cookie is 60 cents. At Starbucks, you're going to have to hire a detective to find that cookie, and it's $9.50. And you can't put butter on it because they want extra.

Do you know that if you buy a bagel, you pay extra for cream cheese in Starbucks? Cream cheese, another 60 cents. A knife to put it on, 32 cents. If it reaches the bagel, 48 cents. That bagel costs you $312.

And they don't give you the butter or the cream cheese. They don't give it to you. They tell you where it is. "Oh, you want butter? It's over there. Cream cheese? Over here. Sugar? Sugar is here." Now you become your own waiter. You walk around with a tray. "I'll take the cookie. Where's the butter? The butter's here. Where's the cream cheese? The cream cheese is there." *You* walked around for an hour and a half selecting items, and then the guy at the cash register has a glass in front of him that says "Tips." You're waiting on tables for an hour, and you owe *him* money.

Then there's a sign that says please clean it up when you're finished. They don't give you a waiter or a busboy. Now you've become the janitor. Now you have to start cleaning up the place. Old Jews are walking around cleaning up Starbucks. "Oh, he's got dirt, too? Wait, I'll clean this up." They clean up the place for an hour and a half.

If I said to you, "I have a great idea for a business. I'll open a whole new type of a coffee shop. A whole new type. Instead of 60 cents for coffee, I'll charge $2.50, $3.50, $4.50, and $5.50. Not only that, I'll have no tables, no chairs, no waiter, no busboy, and you'll clean it up for 20 minutes after you're finished."

Would you say to me, "That's the greatest idea for a business I ever heard! We can open a chain of these all over the world!" No, you would put me right into a sanitarium. Starbucks can only get away with it because they have French titles for everything, Nazi bastard son-of-a-bitches. And I say this with the highest respect, because I don't like to talk about people.

Jackie Mason is currently starring in "Love Thy Neighbor," a one-man Broadway show.

optometrist, you can have your eyes examined for about $45.

As examinations have become easier, prices for frames have come down. True, if you choose, you can pay hundreds of dollars for Italian designer eyewear that wasn't on the market 15 years ago (particularly at LensCrafters' upscale Optique outlets), but high-end products haven't driven the low-end ones off the market.

Frames start under $50, and at some other quickie eyeglass places can be as low as $29.95. What's more, the huge volume of sales they do has made possible a whole range of side benefits. First of all, with dozens of patients filing through each day to amortize the cost of machinery, tests for cataracts and glaucoma are becoming more and more routine. That is not to mention new high-turnover optical products, such as disposable contact lenses, now available at $50 for a three-month supply.

Even though LensCrafters is the largest of such operations, doing $750 million worth of business a year at more than 600 locations, it's still only taking up 6 percent of a $13 billion market. There are dozens of other super-opticians—Hour Eyes, Four Eyes, and the like—and 65 percent of the market is still made up of mom-and-pop opticians and optometrists. So again: Traditional outlets have survived to the point where we can dismiss the Wal-Mart problem.

We can dismiss a second problem as well, which might be called the "hamburger-flipping problem." The most innovative retail outlets all require special skills and pay above minimum wage for most jobs. LensCrafters requires its employees to know their way around prescriptions, ultraviolet resistance in sunglasses, fashion trends, etc. Similarly, Borders gives a test of literary knowledge to its incoming employees, while George Harrop of Barista Brava considers the superior training of his individual coffee baristas the single greatest competitive advantage his coffee outlet has. Contrast this with the we'll-hire-anyone-who-blows-in-off-the-street service philosophy of an establishment like Hechinger's hardware. We don't have to glorify these jobs, but at none of the best new retail outlets is the labor, strictly speaking, unskilled.

What's more, in the wake of the recent brouhaha over "downsizing," the Council of Economic Advisers and the Department of Labor issued a joint report with stunningly good employment news: that 68 percent of the net growth in full-time employment in the last two years has been in industries that pay above median wages, and over half of new jobs are in the top 30 percent of job categories. Our hamburger-flipping problem, if ever there was one, is coming to an end.

5 THE CHEESECAKE FACTORY: In 1975, the United States ranked with Australia and Ireland as one of the worst countries to eat in in the industrialized world. Today, it is arguably the best—*not* excepting France and Italy. "We've gone from Chicken Kiev to raw fish in about 15 years," says Stan Bromley, regional vice president and general manager at Four Seasons Hotels. John Mariani, restaurant critic of *Esquire* magazine, goes so far as to say that if you were able to transport any outlet of the Cheesecake Factory restaurant or the Bennigan's chain back to the Atlanta of 1977, it would, with no exaggeration, qualify as the best restaurant in the city.

Mariani is doubtless thinking of the actual present-day Atlanta branch of the Cheesecake Factory. It's something of a flagship outlet, located as it is in a disused airplane hangar, but all of the Cheesecake Factory's outlets are elegant and unique. (The Washington, D.C., outlet has French tiles and Italian pillars, stone tabletops, and cherry Art-Deco wall fixtures.)

Founded in 1978 in Beverly Hills, the Cheesecake Factory has now expanded to 15 locations. That's too slowly for its customers, who line up for incredible waits (two hours on Mother's Day). Yet the company, now headquartered in Calabasas, California, adds only five restaurants per year and designs all of them individually; like all of the best new retail/service outlets, it is refusing to gouge and cut corners. For example, even with patrons lined up at the door, the Cheesecake Factory retains *enormous*, square booth tables, which allow customers to luxuriate. This means the chain serves only about 75 percent of the clientele it could if its managers wanted to jam people in like sardines. And, as at LensCrafters, none of the employees is really unskilled. In fact, all of them are trained, from a minimum program of two to three weeks for experienced waiters to a maximum stay of three to four months for incoming general managers.

What drags people in, of course, is the food, which draws from pretty much every genre and socioeconomic stratum of American restaurant cooking. The menu (which, incidentally, has advertising in it) is 18 pages long. Thus, a couple of paradoxes by which American commercialism works in the service of the personal touch. First, it is only the hugeness of the clientele (note the proud impersonality of the word "Factory" in the name) that makes it possible to keep such a large variety of foods fresh. There is nothing you can't get here, and a few rare things (like Tex-Mex egg rolls and Louisiana andouille sausage pasta) you can't get anywhere else. Second, the gargantuan servings make the slightly high prices cheap over the long haul. The appetizers are larger than most restaurants'

meals, and the waitresses happily bag anything you haven't eaten, so if you don't get two meals out of a night out at the Cheesecake Factory, you've ordered foolishly. The place may be a haven of consumption, but not of conspicuous consumption—in fact, quite the opposite.

It's all rather like the afterlife in the 1991 Albert Brooks movie *Defending Your Life*, where a waitress assures Brooks: "Everything we have here is sensational."

The success of the Cheesecake Factory and its ilk has come with a nationwide explosion in food types. Take the tiny niche of the food world occupied by lettuce. In the late 1970s, there was widespread discontent when weather emptied the shelves in northeastern supermarkets of iceberg lettuce—and when the dust settled, Boston lettuce had been added to diners' culinary lexicon. Within five years, Belgian endive was an elite favorite, and by 1988, it was well enough known to the middle class that Dan Quayle could score points berating Michael Dukakis in a national debate for his plans to grow it in Massachusetts. Today, arugula and a half-dozen lettuces not even in the dictionary yet are gracing the salads of the elite, and they are bound to be standard prole fare in this country in a matter of years. Salad makers have begun to veer out of lettuce into such exotica as dikon, chipotle, and jicama.

Peter Steiner

And ice cream? Would you compare the ice cream today to the stuff available in 1981?

Much of the credit for the foodstuff boom comes from a consumer clamor for novelty, according to Mariani, but the greatest of the changes have come in the way food is brought to market. The international staggering of growing seasons, for instance, ensures that virtually all fruits are being grown somewhere in the world at any given time. To take one example, says Mariani, strawberries can be grown in Chile so we can eat them in the fall. "Aquaculture" now accounts for 22 percent of the seafood we consume, so there's far less seasonal fluctuation in the price and availability of fish.

And what is it that has made it possible to serve excellent function food? Twenty years ago, the rubber-chicken circuit earned its name; today, hotels can serve meals for hundreds that the pickiest diner would be happy to eat. Bromley of Four Seasons credits the change to improvements not only in technology but also in organization. "You have to distinguish between big—a couple hundred people—and really big—thousands. At the massive establishments, they've certainly benefited from the technology: convection ovens, 'blast-frozen' food that you can thaw with microwaves, new 'proof boxes' to heat up bakery goods. The high-quality meals you get at the better, smaller establishments are made possible by advances in scheduling and planning. It would have been *theoretically* possible to prepare them 20 years ago."

This is only the merest tip of the iceberg. As I was stapling together some notes for this article, I noticed that Swingline now makes staples in clusters of exactly the length to fit into the barrel of a stapler, neither too short so they jam the head, nor too long so they have to be broken and left to get dusty. Shopping for baby products with my wife, I came across the hollowed-out baby bottles first popularized by the Ansa company in the late 1970s. Thanks to this hollowing, for the first time in the hundreds of years mothers have been using bottles, women have been freed from holding both the bottle and the increasingly heavy baby between the ages of three months and a year; because of the hole in the bottle, the baby can hold it—*and can thus be put down*.

It's hard to keep from being terribly excited about all of this. "You raise standards somewhere, and the bar is raised for everyone," says Wendy Webster of the National Restaurant Association. "This new level of excellence . . . the public has just come to expect it everywhere." Improved products and retail outlets are not just consumer phenomena; they have wider implications for the culture. Among other things, they're an indication that the quality-of-life gap that has endured for centuries between the United States and Europe may at long last be closing. ♦

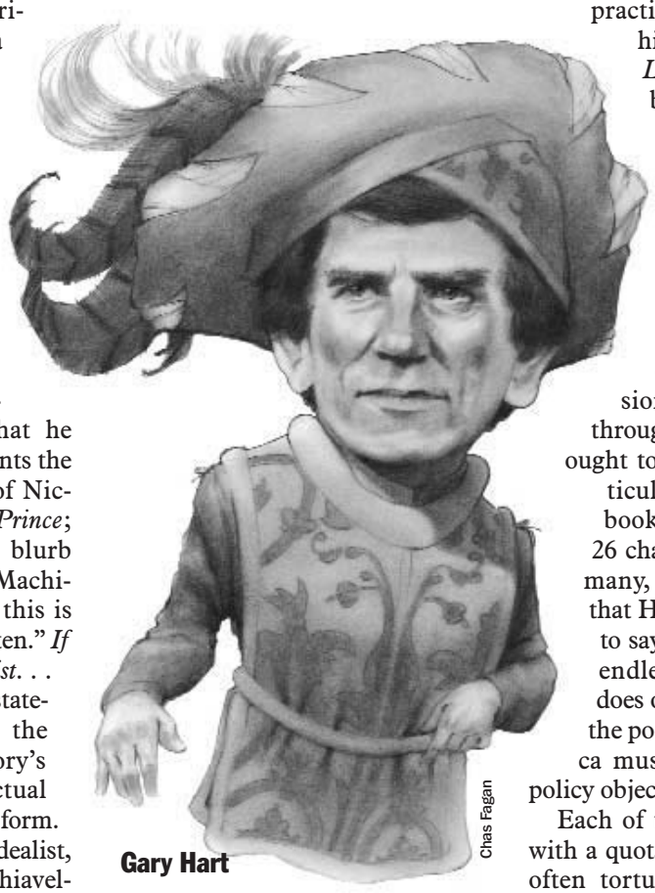
Gary Machiavelli

By Michael Anton

Gary Hart is not a politician; he just played one in the United States Senate. He is, he wants us to know, a patriot—an enlightened leader of his people who loves the common good (or, as he likes to put it, the "national interest") more than his own interest and who wishes, above all, to effect a restoration of America's greatness in the face of a tidal wave of barbarism. His definition of "the patriot" can be gleaned from his new book of the same name, in which he lays out a political philosophy meant to guide a new generation of American "leaders" through a most confusing and unpleasant age.

The Patriot (Free Press, 187 pages, $21.00) is a hilarious piece of work—not that he meant it that way. Hart presents the thing as a modern update of Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince*; indeed, the publisher's blurb announces confidently, "If Machiavelli had been an idealist, this is the book he would have written." *If Machiavelli had been an idealist. . .* . It is difficult to imagine a statement more antithetical to the spirit of Machiavelli, history's most influential intellectual opponent of idealism in any form. If Machiavelli had been an idealist, he would not have been Machiavelli, wallower in harsh realities.

Hart makes an effort to mimic the form, if not the spirit, of the most famous work by his Florentine "mentor." There is the title: In this democratic age, Hart thinks the altruistic patriot should replace the base and self-serving prince. There is also a dedicatory letter, comparable to Machiavelli's astoundingly, cynically obsequious dedication to Lorenzo de' Medici, ruler of Florence. Hart's is a self-serving and long-winded rant in which he exhorts an unnamed (and, one assumes, fictitious) "leader" to take up the banner that Hart himself was forced—by the media, by the cruel realities of politics, and (to some small extent) by his own failings—to abandon. It is telling that, unlike Machiavelli, Hart makes the fictive claim that his tome has been requested of him by the dedicatee; this may help explain the supreme confidence, bordering on arrogance, that pervades *The Patriot*.



Chas Fagan

Gary Hart

But the most important—and obvious—parallel is that *The Patriot* has exactly the same number of chapters—26—as *The Prince*, a common trick, well known to and practiced by Machiavelli himself (his *Discourses on Livy* has the same number of chapters as there are books in Livy's *History of Rome*) and by Machiavelli's own modern interpreter Leo Strauss (Strauss's essay on *The Prince* has 26 paragraphs). But one comes to the conclusion about halfway through *The Patriot* that Hart ought to have resisted this particular emulation. This book simply does not need 26 chapters, or even half that many, for the simple reason that Hart does not have much to say and so repeats himself endlessly. How many times does one need to read that, in the post-Cold-War era, America must redefine her foreign policy objectives?

Each of the 26 chapters begins with a quotation from Machiavelli, often tortured out of context or altered to fit Hart's own purposes. That one of Machiavelli's favorite devices is to deliberately misquote authors or use stories and anecdotes out of context in order to communicate a subtle point best left, as it were, unsaid, has been well established by Strauss and, more recently, by Harvey Mansfield

Michael Anton studies philosophy at the Claremont Graduate School.

(whose new book *Machiavelli's Virtue* ought to be read by anyone interested in understanding the real Machiavelli). Hart too uses this device, but for a different end, namely to make Machiavelli's thought conform, as much as possible, to his own idealism.

This is where a good chunk of the hilarity originates, for Hart recoils in horror from what Machiavelli actually says and takes it upon himself to sanitize Machiavelli in a manner and to an extent that would sober even those who defend Machiavelli against Strauss's charge that he was a teacher of evil. Before a chapter entitled "Concerning the limitations on influencing other states," Hart quotes a Machiavellian metaphor: "It is necessary to be a fox to discover the snares and a lion to frighten the wolves. . . . He who has known best how to employ the fox has succeeded best." Well, those four dots take the place of a goodly chunk of text that Hart would rather not see the light of day, at least not in the pages of his own book. For in the sentences that intercede, Machiavelli points out that cleverness is essentially indistinguishable from dishonesty; that a prudent prince both cannot and should not observe faith when such observance turns against him; that since men are wicked this path is perfectly justified; and that a prince will never have trouble coming up with an excuse to "color" his lack of faith.

Not very idealistic.

In his opening epistle, Hart describes the "national interest"; and like Machiavelli, he defines the term in such a way as to drain it of any meaning. Hart's national interest includes such traditional considerations as keeping borders secure, streets safe from violence, the economy healthy, and citizens well educated. But it also features a "robust and vigorous environment," the "security" of the elderly, care for the poor (defined pretty much as current welfare policy), keeping citizens healthy (Health Security, anyone?) and "productive" (through job training), not to mention "prudent investment in the common good," "wise and just government," and "ethnic and racial tranquillity."

Two fears turn out to dominate Hart's thinking and thus the book: overweening materialism in the hearts of both the populace and its leaders; and American disunity. His case against materialism is not much more than warmed-over Progressive-era populism. He is on firm ground when he inveighs against the fraying of the American cultural fabric—this is the most imminent threat against the country, and Hart urges the new leader to confront it above all else. But as for concrete solutions, he has none; he merely proposes that we again "unite." He does not say around what.

Hart never bothers to articulate exactly what America should be, other than that it should not be what it has degenerated into—a position with which almost everyone, left or right, will no doubt agree wholeheartedly.

Indeed, one gets the impression that, just as Machiavelli's *Prince* was meant to be (and became) the manifesto for the thoroughly modern ruler, so Hart's book is intended to be nothing less than *the* manifesto for that new class of political figure described some months ago in these pages by David Brooks—the Beyondists, those who seek to live outside the narrow partisan boundaries of left and right, but who end up tacking to the left by default.

The temptation when reading *The Patriot* is to excuse its frequent

vapidity on the grounds that Hart means well. But as Hart himself says, "Where the interests of a nation are concerned, intentions are secondary to results." Where the interests of this nation are concerned, *The Patriot* will yield no positive results, but at least (unlike the great and dangerous work it copies in so illiterate a fashion) it won't have any frightening real-world consequences. ♦

Books

Downsizing Hysteria

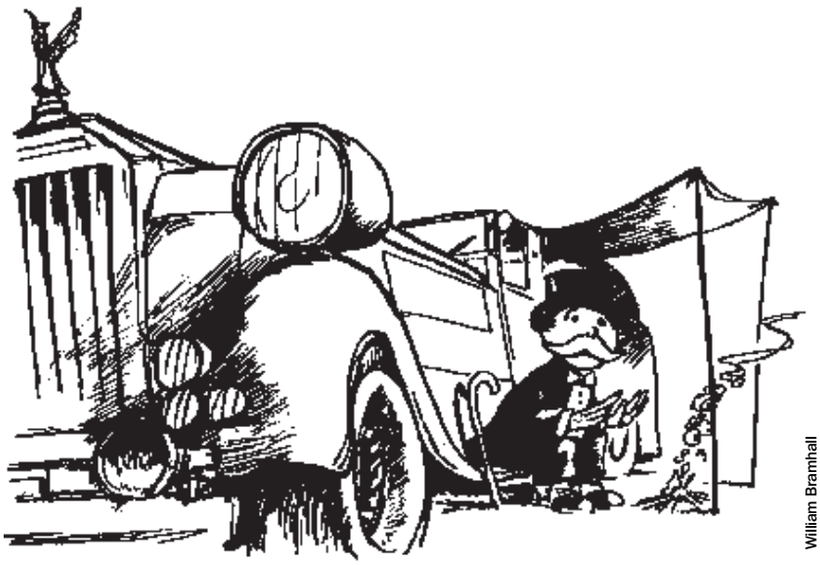
By Christopher Caldwell

I am, I believe, the only American who has actually read through all seven of the articles in the *New York Times* multi-author series on "downsizing" published in March—and I only did it because I got paid to do so by *Forbes MediaCritic*. Now Times Books has brought the series out as a 356-page paperback. The publication is an unfortunate bit of timing, considering the April 23 study issued by the Labor Department and the Council of Economic Advisers. The study reveals a key problem with the series—namely, that the phenomenon it purports to describe doesn't exist. Private sector payrolls grew 8.7 percent between January 1993 and March 1996 (faster employment growth than in any other G-7 country).

Actually, the series itself gives the lie to its own central theory. Even though, according to the *Times*, "there has been a net increase of 27 million jobs in America since 1979, enough to easily absorb all the laid-off workers plus the new people beginning careers, and the national unemployment rate is low," we're still living through "the most acute job insecurity since the Depression. And this in turn has produced an unrelenting angst that is shattering people's notions of work and self and the very promise of tomorrow."

That angst seems particularly acute among the multimillionaires the *Times* interviewed—and it's about time the paper showed some sensitivity to the needs of the multimillionaire community. Take this harrowing story of how the other half lives:

> Robert Miller is yielding only reluctantly to the likelihood that, at 52, he will never again command his past income. He continues to live with his wife and two children in a $700,000, six-bedroom home in a rarified [sic] gated community on Sawgrass Island in Ponte Vedra. . . . Only recently have the Millers even contemplated moving. They have their eye on another gated community, where they might scale back to four bedrooms.



William Bramhall

Tragedy? You bet, and Miller is not alone. When Pulitzer prize-winner Rick Bragg interviews a downsized corporate executive, he shows what it *really* feels like to be down to your last quarter of a million dollars:

> Behind the front, there have been difficult choices. . . . Mr. Sharlow got a year's severance pay when he was laid off, so only in the last two years has he had to peel from their original savings of about $300,000. The withdrawals, countered by profits on his investments, have left him with about $250,000. . . . The bulk of their nest egg is in a 401(k), an ever-changing mix of mutual funds, stocks and bonds. He juggles them now and then, trying to squeeze out every penny.

But mere numbers cannot convey the assaults on their dignity that Mr. Sharlow and his wife have to face: "Now the two ride to work together some days," Bragg tells us. "The transmission in the Mercedes slips so badly that sometimes he has to beg it to roll."

Those who think that two incomes will protect them from the horrors of downsizing should think again:

> Karen Myers is 40 years old, a lawyer and the mother of three. Her

husband, Robert, is a pediatrician. . . . They live in a new neighborhood of custom-built homes in Centerville. . . . "Many of these kids I see are on their fifth or sixth move because the company keeps saying, 'We're not making enough money; we need to downsize more,'" she said recently. . . . Mrs. Myers was talking over coffee and muffins with her neighbor, Mary Ellen Knecht. Mrs. Knecht and her husband, Mark, who quit his job at GIS last fall for more satisfying and lucrative work, have four children.

"We are the new homeless," said Mrs. Knecht.

If so, that's one hell of a homeless shelter Mrs. Knecht is living in there.

Then there are "the new nomad dads," those left to wander the country in their private jets:

Monday mornings, Cinda Woodward rises early, very early, so she can send her husband, Jeff, off at five-thirty on the first leg of his weekly commute—the ninety-minute drive to the Cincinnati airport. By noon, he arrives in Gainesville, Florida, where he goes to work as the chief financial officer for Gold Standard Multimedia, an electronic health-care publishing company. . . . Mr. Woodward—who left his Dayton job at Mead Data Central in May of 1995 after it was acquired by Reed Elsevier PLC, a Dutch-British conglomerate—is one of the new nomad dads. . . .

"I'd rather be the one to be the nomad than drag the whole family around the country," Mr. Woodward said, adding that, at 48, he considers himself fortunate to have the education and the financial flexibility to adapt to the new world. (That financial flexibility made the mechanics of adaptation a good bit easier in the spring, when he began flying his own plane to Gainesville.)

The trauma does not end there. Consider the experience of the undownsized: "Those who have not lost their jobs and their identities, and do not expect to, are also being traumatized. The witnesses, the people who stay employed but sit next to empty desks and wilting ferns, are grappling with the guilt that psychologists label survivor's syndrome."

If comparing not being fired from a high-paying job to surviving Auschwitz doesn't get you, how about the agony the journalists who wrote this misbegotten thing had to go through? A special appendix tells us of their trials. Rick Bragg says, "I have a high threshold for tears. But I saw Mr. Muse and Mr. Sharlow cry in anger and shame and at their own futility, and while some readers blasted the once-so-prosperous Mr. Sharlow for lamenting his new, downsized existence, or scorned Mr. Muse because he wanted to hold on to a shifting way of life, I could not turn away from them once I had come to know them.

"My job was to crawl as deep inside their lives as I could."

Mine, too. I think I'll start by crawling inside Robert Miller's $700,000 house. ♦

Television

Return of the Pseuds

By Andrew Ferguson

Somewhere deep in the bowels of PBS (a horrifying image, I know) there must be a little spool of film marked "All-Purpose Fifties Montage." You've seen it in a dozen public-television documentaries—maybe hundreds, depending on your viewing habits. Johnny Ray or Patti Page drips from the soundtrack as the black-and-white images glide by, a hallucination of clichés meant to convey all that is essential about the decade: Here's clueless Ike on the golf course, hordes of kids in hula hoops, fins on Cadillacs, the fantasy family of *Father Knows Best*. And then the images fade into the crueler, truer reality: a segregated lunch counter, a bomb shelter, police dogs, a close-up of Joe McCarthy that launches you right up into his beard follicles. (Didn't that man ever shave?)

You can enjoy this one-size-fits-all montage again in *Nichols and May: Take Two*, the latest offering in the network's "American Masters" series, airing this week nationwide. There shouldn't be any question that Mike Nichols and Elaine May deserve to be honored as masters: In their four years together, from 1958 to 1962, they were the country's most popular comedy team and created a handful of routines that rank among the funniest stuff ever produced by American humorists. You might question, though, whether their reputation deserves to be revived in the tendentious manner of PBS.

In the documentary's opening minutes, unsuspecting viewers may think they've wandered into a wind tunnel. A team of experts—the film director Arthur Penn, the producer Jack Rollins, the cartoonist Jules Feiffer, and, for some unknowable reason, Tom Brokaw—are brought on to think deeply, without much success.

"It was genuinely the Eisenhower years," says Penn, as the montage slams the message home, "and it was a country reeling under the weight of what had happened in the McCarthy period. [Cut to the Tailgunner's follicles.] I think that we were held in thrall, and that this was the beginning of the bust-out."

The bust-out, of course, was the Arcadia of the 1960s and all its delicious consequences. PBS producers seem incapable of elevating artists of long ago without casting

Kent Lemon

Elaine May and Mike Nichols

them as rebels against their era, beams of light in the miasma of American culture. (This is why the fifties montage is so useful.) With luck, the artists can even be made to seem activists. "Historically, one could take the grand view," continues Penn, "and say that it's from these kind of artists that genuine social change comes."

That certainly is a grand view, but it's also, in the case of Nichols and May, pretty silly. Without knowing it, the show's producers provide lots of evidence contradicting their thesis, in the form of the Nichols and May routines themselves. (If you want your Nichols and May straight up, unfiltered by PBS, Mercury Records has just released a compilation of their best work, *in retrospect*).

Some of the routines are pure comedy, like the famous skit of a phone call between a rocket scientist and his nagging mother. (SON*: Mom, I feel awful about not calling you.* MOTHER: *Honey, if I could believe that I'd be the happiest mother in the whole world.*) Others are character sketches of endearing sweetness—such as the first date of a high-school basketball star and a starry-eyed classmate.

Still others do indeed carry the weight of social satire, and it's as penetrating and pitiless as the best of Mencken or Twain. The splendid irony is that Nichols and May's favorite targets were the tweedy, Stevenson-supporting, Kierkegaard-quoting, Miles-loving pseuds of the era.

A couple listening to classical music:

SHE: *It's beautiful.*

HE: *It has a fantastic, uh, peace.*

SHE: *Yes, yes. It's serene. It has a kind of mathematical certainty that's almost sensual, to me.*

HE: *Yes, it has an order—a finality, finally.*

Another couple at a cocktail party:

HE: *What a shock it was to me when I discovered Nietzsche.*

SHE: *Yes! In many ways, when I read* Thus Spake Zarathustra*, a whole world opened in front of me.*

HE: *Exactly! I know exactly what you mean!*

SHE: *I just never knew such things existed.*

The intellectual pseuds of the 50s have their analogues these days, of course. They produce documentaries for PBS. Nichols and May's routines were conceived 35 years ago, but it's a short distance between their *Zarathustra*-loving cant and the "grand views" of Arthur Penn and Tom Brokaw.

To the producers' credit, they do allow a dissenting voice to penetrate their documentary, that of the comedian Steve Martin. After a particularly ponderous ventilation from Jules Feiffer, Martin gets to say: "Well, I know they were very smart. But they were never smug. I think they were just plain funny."

If you watch this show—and you should—you'll want to reach through the screen and hug him. ♦

DOLE FOR PRESIDENT

NEWS ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MAY 17, 1996

CONTACT: WARFIELD NELSON
202/141-0805

DOLE DOG "LEADER" RESIGNS FROM NAME. WILL NOW BE KNOWN AS "PRESUMPTIVE NOMINEE."

The Bob Dole for President Campaign released the following statement on behalf of the Dole family dog, Leader:

My friends, it's been 12 years since Senator Dole and his wife brought me home from the kennel and named me Leader. For me, that name is more than a label. It's been a mission. It's been a duty to remain loyal but firm, to serve as a model for other dogs, to fulfill the obligations of high office. It hasn't been an easy life; in fact it's been a dog's life. I've come up the hard way. I trust in the hard way. I've been proud to be the one who's there for Sheila when she needs something to kick. If you want a friend in this town, get a rubber bone. Whatever.

Anyway, today I announce that, as of June 6, 1996, I will forgo the privileges that come from the name Leader. I will then stand before you without authority, a Kansan, an American, just a canine. But I will be the same dog I was yesterday, and the day before, and even the first day I began housetraining, straddling that long ago column by Frank Rich. The pundits don't like us Republican dogs. Sure they went gaga over Fala, but they didn't like Checkers, and Liberty never got the credit he deserved. But I do not find that discouraging. For this summer I will be walked across America, from the squirrel-dotted forests of Maine, through the hydrant-studded pavements of Chicago, and I will sniff out the wise counsel of the people in our fair land. I will draw strength from their touch, especially if they rub my belly. And I will seek to be your First Dog with nothing to fall back on but your good judgment and nowhere to go but the White House . . . or the dog house. And together we can end this four-year national nightmare. Kitty litter in the Lincoln Bedroom. Yuck!

WHO: Leader

WHAT: Name Change

WHEN: Immediately

WHERE: America

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Authorized and Paid for by Snoop Doggy Dole, Inc., Robert F. Lightbulb, Treasurer
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