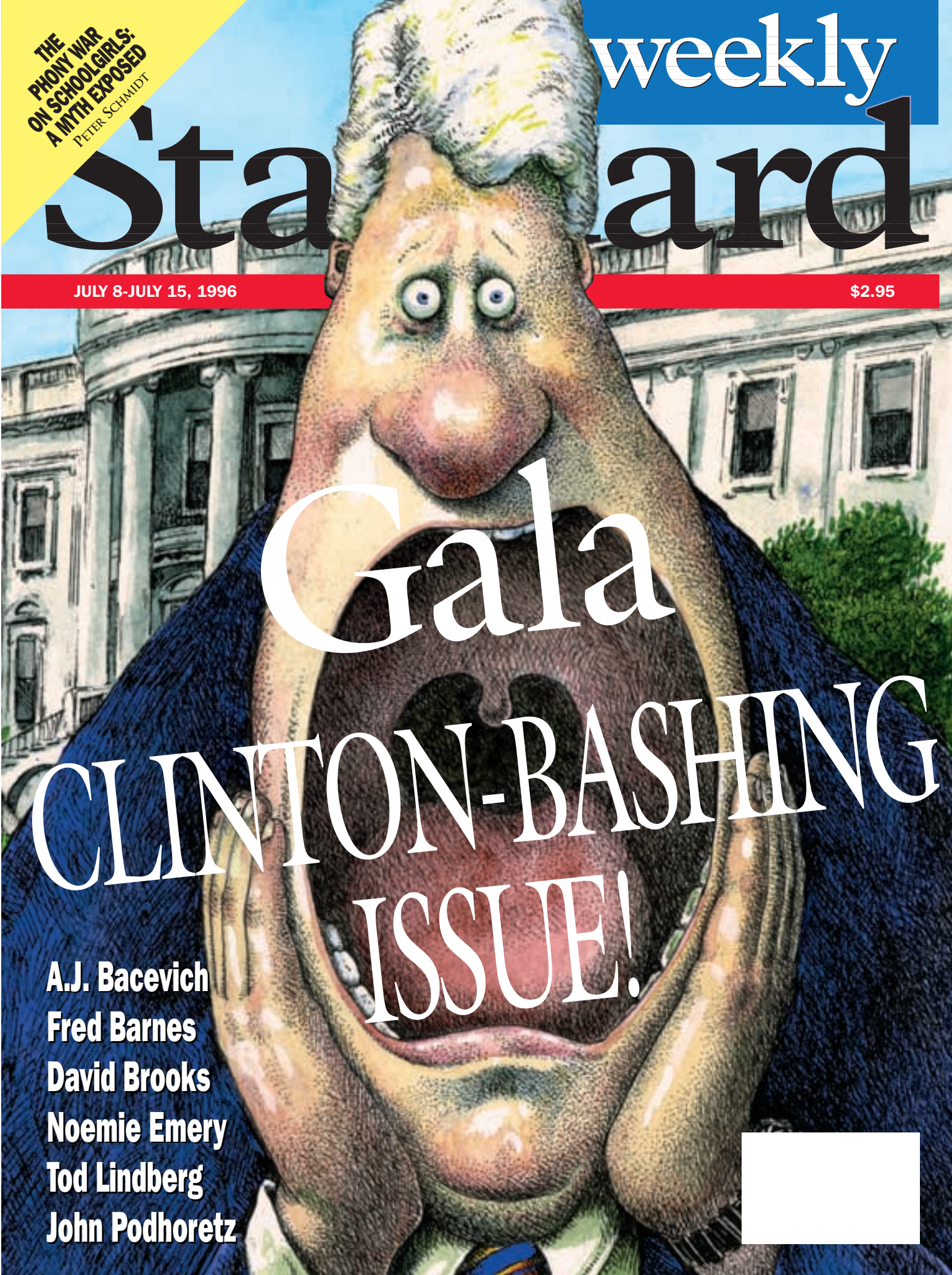
THE PHONY WAR ON SCHOOLGIRLS: A MYTH EXPOSED
PETER SCHMIDT
weekly
Standard
JULY 8-JULY 15, 1996
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Gala
CLINTON-BASHING
ISSUE!
A.J. Bacevich
Fred Barnes
David Brooks
Noemie Emery
Tod Lindberg
John Podhoretz

This is a combined issue. The next* WEEKLY STANDARD *will appear in two weeks.

the weekly **Standard**

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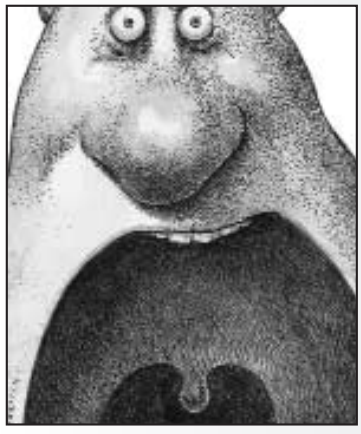

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Worried About Dole? Join the Crowd

At a private Washington reception this past week, one GOP strategist was asked virtually the same question by three prominent Democrats: "When is Dole going to begin doing something?" One of the Democrats, a senior member of the White House staff, expressed amazement at how easy it had been for the president to preempt so many of Dole's issues and initiatives. The second Democrat, a member of the Clinton cabinet, was incredulous when told it appeared that Dole would hold off unveiling his economic plan until the Republican convention in August. The third Democrat, heavily involved in the reelection campaign, couldn't believe that months of Clinton campaign advertising had gone unanswered by the Republican National Committee.

It's true that, in politics, overconfidence often goes before a fall, and there was a fair amount of over-confidence in these comments. But Republicans around the country are asking similar questions. At a lunch in Boston attended by about 400 people, mostly Republicans and conservatives, one prominent businessman stood up, identified himself as a Dole supporter and donor, and asked the speaker (who works for this magazine, but we won't tell you which of us) whether Dole could possibly continue to run as bad a campaign as he has so far. "It's worse than any of us suspected," said the businessman. Heads nodded in agreement.

And so the buzz about Dole goes among both Democrats and Republicans around July 4, 1996—just 20 months after the biggest and most significant Republican victory of our time. Happy Independence Day.

Ralphing Up the Greens

Buckle your chin strap, America: The man they call "consumer-advocate Ralph Nader" is running for president. His party is the Green party, and last week he issued something of a manifesto in the pages of the *Nation*. Titled "A Voice, Not an Echo" (itself an evocation of Barry Goldwater's slogan in 1964), it assailed the Democrats and the Republicans—"the DemReps"—as a "two-party duopoly," "essentially one corporate party with two heads," albeit "wearing different makeup." There is no "counterpull," Nader complained, "to the corporate, right-wing pull." The parties are merely Tweedledum and Tweedledee, just as George Wallace, another crusading anti-establishmentarian, alleged. Bill Clinton, Christopher Dodd? They're just "further corporatizing the Democratic party while signaling to progressives that they have nowhere else to go" (except, now, to Nader).

Striking about the manifesto was its unabashed use of the language of the Left. And the *old* Left, not the updated, politer one. We read of "oligopolists" and "autocrats"; Clinton has paid "obeisance to the nuclear power and timber industries, and to the auto industry on fuel economy"; the "major Clinton nominations" are "all Wall Street-approved."

Also striking about the document was that, for a manifesto, there was really no program in it; only a harsh indictment of the major parties. And for something Green, there was barely a chirp about environmentalism. Nader never indicated what he would run on, apart from a paragraph of generalities about a "modest-sized party" that "focuses on new and stronger tools of democracy," "breaks through the DemRep taboos," and "brings into progressive politics a young generation of Americans."

Nader and his Greens are now on the ballot in seven states, including California, generally agreed to be a must-win for Clinton. It's oddly nice to know that the Left is back; at least you know where they stand.

Unlimited Access, Limited Hygiene

Unlimited Access, a new book by a retired FBI agent once assigned to the Clinton White House, is out this week from Regnery. Gary Aldrich's memoir will get widespread attention for the immediately relevant charges it features—that the White House allowed staffers without proper security clearance access to classified documents, among other illegal things. Yet some of the most revealing passages in *Unlimited Access*

Scrapbook

have nothing to do with breaking the law, but with crimes against civility, good taste, and personal hygiene.

As Aldrich tells it, members of the Clinton administration were sloppy, had bad phone manners, and indulged a seemingly uncontrollable urge to be rude to the help. Aldrich's description of the the White House Mess is by itself worth the price of the book. A member of Mrs. Clinton's Health Care Task Force is seen stealing extra yogurt from the dispenser. Others throw garbage on the floor, toss coffee on the walls, refuse to use the recycling bins, and "double dip" from the drink machines. At one point, Aldrich says, "Craig Livingstone actually had to issue warnings to the Clinton staffers and interns that passing bad checks to the handicapped man who ran the Secret Service gift shop would not be tolerated." Not everyone got the message. According to Aldrich, despite the prohibition against petty thievery, "we had a major problem with interns walking off with laptop computers."

When they weren't making life difficult for the janitorial staff, Aldrich recalls, many staffers were, in violation of the liberal creed, bringing government into the bedroom—or at least the bedroom into government. Two gay men were discovered on a desk by a workman. One amorous lesbian couple monopolized a good part of a communal shower. Another young employee showed up in a short skirt, bending over in sight of Mrs. Clinton. This, apparently, was the limit: The first lady promptly issued an order requiring White House staff to wear undergarments to work.

Cowardly Custard

The June 24 Saudi Arabian bombing led President Clinton to warn that "the cowards who committed this murderous act must not go unpunished." If there is one act more predictable than the Pledge of Allegiance before school, it's the invocation of "cowardice" by U.S. presidents every time a bomb goes off. Just a week earlier, on June 15, speaking of an IRA bomb that was detonated in Manchester, the president condemned "this brutal and cowardly act of terrorism."

The locution was popular in the Reagan administration, and the tradition, in this country at least, dates back to the Carter administration, when two pro-Palestinian mayors on the West Bank were blown up in their booby-trapped cars ("cowardly acts") in 1980. But every country has adopted it. When a bus bomb killed 20 in Israel in March, Spain spoke out against "blind and cowardly terrorism," German foreign minister Klaus Kinkel described the attack as "cowardly and abhorrent," and Boutros Boutros-Ghali called it a "a brutal and cowardly act." The *fons et origo* of this oratorical set piece, as far as we can tell, was the Vatican. On December 15, 1969, Pope Paul VI referred to Maoist bombings in Rome and Milan as "cowardly and wicked terrorist misdeeds."

"Wicked" is more like it. There's something weird about calling terrorists *cowardly*. Sure, they don't engage in open, head-to-head warfare, but as a matter of simple fact, they're rather bold. Let's not forget that the latest attack was in response to Saudi Arabia's recent *beheading* of four other terrorists. The cowardly avoid doing things that might get them beheaded. Enough already. Try "wicked," or, better still, "evil."

Casual

The FedEx-Files

"No, sir, it's *not* lost." "*You can't find it?*" "We don't know *exactly*—"

"*Then it's lost.*"

Although they won't admit it and it may not be *permanently* lost, Federal Express lost my Father's Day gift. They can't tell me where it is—they don't *know* where it is. They *can* tell me where it isn't. But, hell, I can tell *them* that. It isn't at my father's house like it's supposed to be.

I bought the gift two weeks early and sent it Two-Day FedEx just so I'd be sure he'd get it by Father's Day. The first time in my life I've ever planned that far ahead for any gift outside of Christmas, and look what happens. There is a direct relationship between the amount of planning I put into something and the resulting magnitude of disaster. I'd packaged the gift ever-so-carefully, placing the box inside a cardboard container, surrounding it with foam-lined envelopes, taping all the edges, seams, and openings—twice. I *should have* bought it two days before Father's Day and mailed the flimsy gift box through the U.S. Postal Service. Then I wouldn't have expected it to get there on time, or really at all, and I wouldn't be so distraught.

This experience has only somewhat shaken my faith in FedEx, though. The hundreds of times I've used them, they've never let me down once, not even during the Great Blizzard of '96. And my confidence in FedEx can only be rivaled by my distrust for the other carriers, excepting UPS. (I don't use them and I don't know why . . . maybe those ominous brown trucks.) In fact, in the past I've been very tempted by my many bad experiences with Airborne Express to write of my faith in FedEx and my confusion over just how it is that a company which is supposed to be in the shipping business can make a habit of losing packages and pissing off people on the telephone with ludicrous explanations.

I've traded Airborne Express horror stories with any number of people, and I've got some good ones, if I do say so myself. The best? They lost the cover artwork for the *premier issue* of the *Oxford American* magazine, where I was working as art director. First, they had no record of having picked it up. Then, over the course of a day, we were told numerous different stories, most of which conflicted radically with the others. They *eventually* found it, but not before the ordeal shortened my lifespan considerably.

Cheap uniforms, delivery trucks that are, generally, dirty and in poor condition—even their drop-off boxes are inferior (Did these people start ValuJet?) I'd trust FedEx to China and back with my liver before I'd trust Airborne across the street with a roll of toilet paper.

So, then, where's my dad's peanut brittle, gourmet blackberry preserves, pure Virginia maple syrup and Colonial Williamsburg Sweet Potato Muffin Mix? I had to give a description of the package's contents for tracking purposes—in case the shipping label had come off. I somehow feel violated that these gift items that my wife and I carefully picked out one peaceful Saturday afternoon at the Virginia Company in Old Town Alexandria are now listed on some computer bulletin board.

"Let's see . . . a Father's Day card, blackberry pre—"

"Yeah, that's it."

Every time I call to check on the package, someone starts to read the list off to me. In addition to having my personal gift-giving ability critiqued by everyone with access to FedEx's computer, I have to contend with the notion that now that they actually know what is in the package, it's in greater danger than ever. All I can see is some hefty uniformed FedEx employee sitting around his breakfast table enjoying my daddy's maple syrup and blackberry preserves on a big stack of buttermilk pancakes. Hope you choke on it.

Monday. The day after Father's Day. Four-thirty p.m.: "It seems that your package is acting as an invisible item in our tracking network at this moment."

Is it now . . . is it really? That's mighty creative. My daddy's preserves are acting as an invisible item in your tracking network. This brings up all sorts of possibilities. "Yes, I'm sorry. It seems that my MasterCard payment is acting as an invisible item in my checking account right now. If you'll call back in a week, I'll see if it's reappeared."

Truth be told, everyone I've dealt with has been very apologetic and helpful. *Except* at its final holding destination, Tupelo, Miss. "It was like pulling teeth to get anything out of them," a tracking agent in Memphis told me. I started to call and say, "Look, I've lived in Tupelo, grew up not far from there. Birthplace of Elvis Presley . . . Jerry Reed's *Tupelo Mississippi Flash* and all that." And then it occurred to me. One of my packages, out of hundreds, gets lost going through *Tupelo?* Somebody's got it in for me. Some poor kid I beat up in the bathroom in second grade is exacting his revenge. Whatever it is, whoever you are, I apologize. Just give my daddy his preserves.

Kent Bain

Anti-Abortion and Pro-Choice?

Tucker Carlson claims that pro-choice Republicans are in a "philosophical bind" and that, worse, "it shows" ("What Pro-Choice Republicans Believe," June 24). For whatever reason, none of the Republicans he interviewed could explain why they find abortion repugnant and, at the same time, oppose restrictions on it. As a pro-choice Democrat, let me offer a solution.

Pro-choice Republicans could argue that while they don't think a fetus has reached full status as a person, neither do they think it is "merely a piece of tissue." Its potential life places it somewhere between those two points and, consequently, somewhere between a legally recognized being and moral significance.

Thus, the termination of a pregnancy is seen as "an agonizing personal decision" because one would be halting the development of the fetus, a future human being. At the same time, it falls short of murder because the fetus is not yet a person.

Now, perhaps Carlson can explain how anti-choice Republicans talk of abortion as murder but act as though it is not. How can Bob Dole support a plank in the platform showing tolerance to pro-choice Republicans? Would he be as accepting of those who favored legalizing infanticide? Why don't anti-choice Republicans demand the death penalty for abortionists and women who choose abortions? Perhaps it is because they either don't have the courage of their convictions or don't really believe abortion is murder.

Stephen K. Medvic
West Lafayette, IN

While reading Tucker Carlson's excellent piece and speculating about a possible floor fight in San Diego and the likely results of a pro-choice victory in that fight, I was reminded of the old nursery rhyme "Humpty Dumpty."

While a switch to the pro-choice position might seem a wise tactic in a country where (arguably) three out of five voters and four out of five wealthy donors are pro-choice, this move would be like Humpty's great fall and the resulting shell fragments would be all that remained of the bond that once held Pat Robertson and Christie Whitman in the same party. The king's horses and the king's men—represented by Bob Dole, Newt Gingrich, William Weld, and Ralph Reed—are most unlikely to be able to put our beloved Humpty together again. What then, I ask, would stand in the way of American socialism?

Kevin R. O'Keefe
Campbell, CA

Tucker Carlson did my heart good and the GOP proud in his excellent piece on the indefensible positions of pro-choice Republicans. Carlson

rightly exposes their position as intellectually vacant, but is keenly aware that a political candidate often prevails even in the absence of morality or religious principle. To win is not always to do right, as many a current White House staffer can attest.

To win with principle, however, Republicans must resist abortion and its beckoning sirens of self. Self is, after all, to paraphrase a prominent Republican, what it's all about. And selfish support for abortion is nothing but the denial of duties once accepted and understood. If we are to believe pro-choicers, responsible living is an undue burden not to be visited upon womankind. Women are to be worshiped only and not held responsible for activities in which oppressive white guys and religious nuts are no doubt truly to blame.

Republican softening on abortion is, in short, a betrayal of principles of equality. Let us not, as Democrats of yore, begin our own list of whimpering groups to whom standards of equality and responsibility don't apply. Whatever the potential political gains, it's un-Republican.

Andrew Rusk
Galveston, IN

Pipeline to the Almighty

Thank you for publishing Robert H. Nelson's article "Bruce Babbitt, Pipeline to the Almighty" (June 24). As a recent graduate of a mainline Protestant seminary, I know well of the movement of many within my denomination towards such figures as Lester Brown, Lynn White, and Carl Sagan.

The liberal strains of many denominations, joined together in their rejection of a transcendent moral authority, are surprised to find themselves dealing with feelings of irrelevancy. When worldwide change left Marxist-dominated "liberation theology" by the wayside, many in the church were ripe for the olive-branch offered by the environmental community.

One might think that those within mainline Protestant churches would be cautious of their bedfellows, but then again, if one has already walked away from transcendent authority and chosen experience as the final arbiter of moral truth, then the path from the scriptures and traditions of the church "to the 'priests of the snake clan'" is but a short, intimately personal journey.

Eric Spake
Traer, IA

Robert H. Nelson sneers at what he considers the quasi-religious appeals of Bruce Babbitt in defense of sound environmental policy. Babbitt's sense that there is something transcendent in our experience of nature seems altogether wholesome when one considers the tawdry, pandering, accusatory Christianity of Pat Robertson.

Although the pope identifies materialism as the besetting sin and chief corruption of American society, it falls on

Correspondence

deaf ears among conservatives who have an abiding faith in the mystical powers of a marketplace freed from any moral purview or reasonable constraint.

In a culture in which getting and spending represents the highest good, natural resources become yet another commodity to be used and disposed of in an atmosphere of consumptive hedonism.

It's not at all surprising that Nelson and other conservatives today resort to a process of commoditizing nature, insisting for instance that saving endangered species has no intrinsic value because it has no dollar value.

No one was ever debased or diminished by the saving of an old-growth forest, but we are all diminished by a society in which materialistic values become confounded with Christian values. I'll take Babbitt over Robertson and Falwell any day.

Marc D. Smith
Portsmouth, NH

Affirmative Inaction

I am appalled to see Republican leaders failing the first serious gut check on shutting down affirmative discrimination ("Affirmative Action: A New Idea," June 24). Terry Eastland's "new idea" would settle for attempting to end contract set-asides—a "half loaf" for now. Sorry, that won't feed the bulldog.

Eastland is naive to think that a bill ending only contract set-asides would not be filibustered in the Senate just as energetically as a bill to end all preferences. The Democrats don't think set-asides are less "defensible." In this they are right for the wrong reason: No discrimination based on the irrelevant, inborn characteristics of race and sex is morally less, or more, defensible.

I say, go for the whole ball of wax, and let the Democrat filibusterers know that their actions will come back to haunt them the next time they run for office. We must illumine the difference between Republicans and the Party of Preferences on the issue of quotas.

Or maybe there just isn't much difference. Since Richard Nixon's administration, Republicans have been complicit in quotas. Talking the talk may be an improvement over the conspiracy of silence that once cloaked quotas, but congressional Republicans have yet to show that they can walk the walk.

Depend upon it—if they fail, the restive majority will elect a Congress that will make Pat Buchanan's peasants with pitchforks seem as demure as a DAR cotillion. Time and our patience are fast running out. And the bulldog is famished.

Warren Wetmore
Hazel Crest, IL

Save Yale From Within

In throwing light on Yale University's decision to return Lee Bass's $20 million gift last year, Neomi Rao rightly puts the blame where it belongs: on Yale's radical professors and on the administration that capitulated to their demands ("Stonewalling at Yale," June 24).

By calling on Yale to release the Cabranes report, however, Rao may unwittingly help turn a mess into a disaster. Although Yale claims that alumni giving has not suffered from the negative publicity of the Bass fiasco, the reality is likely otherwise. Negative publicity affects not only the large donors of the day, some of whom have already written Yale out of their wills, but also those who plan to give (or not) in future years.

Because the loss of such future donations is hard to measure now, it is unlikely to influence, much less dictate, Yale's direction and decisions. Instead, continued negative publicity will deliver a lasting, if deferred, blow to Yale's reputation and endowment. Might there not be a better way to do battle against the radical fringe at Yale?

Igor Kirman
New York, NY

Wicker's White Hometown

How interesting that Tom Wicker chose to write his *Tragic Failure: Racial Integration in America* in Rochester, Vt., at what David Frum calls his "writer's lodge" ("Wicker's Tragic Failing," June 24). According to the U.S. Commerce Department's *County and City Data Book*, this hamlet is located in Windsor County, where whites compose 99.27 percent of the population.

Apparently, Wicker likes to study his subject from a distance. Perhaps he will soon favor us with a book about rain forests written from a lodge in Arizona.

Joseph Johnson
Gettysburg, PA

Democracy in Nicaragua

Robert Kagan wrote that only Republicans care about the peasants of Nicaragua, and that the Carter Center "spiritedly defends a flawed electoral process that seems consciously designed to disenfranchise many of Nicaragua's poorest citizens" ("Republicans and Campesinos," June 17).

I also just returned from observing the voter-registration process in the Nicaraguan mountains, and I can attest to the fact that there are plenty of people, including many non-Republicans, who do "give a fig" about the campesinos.

Kagan and I clearly have opposing views about the role of international monitors. It is apparent from his article that he, and many of those he cites, supports a particular political party in Nicaragua. At the Carter Center, we believe that international monitors must keep their distance from the parties, while consistently demonstrating their interest in the democratic process.

Was this a flawed election process deliberately designed to disenfranchise Sandinista opponents? Our delegation witnessed a process designed to ease the registration of the poorest and most isolated segments of Nicaraguan society. With an enthusiastic turnout of 98 percent of the total eligible voters estimated by the OAS's verification commission, the registration appears to have been a resounding success.

Jennifer McCoy
The Carter Center
Atlanta, GA

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the weekly Standard

In Praise of Dirty Campaigning

These are heady days for the self-appointed disciplinarians of American politics. There's so much for them to *do*, so many Republican and Democratic fannies to spank. Festering national problems demand commonsense, compromise solutions, you see. But our party politicians never come when they are called to complete that assignment; they're out running wild with their fellow gang members, extorting campaign contributions and getting into knife fights with the rival mob. If only these children could be made to quiet down, clean up their act, and finish their chores.

It's a seductive impulse, this sense that modern politics would be better if less rambunctious and *smaller*, its layers of partisan "dirt" removed. American government is structured to resolve questions of national policy in a battle conducted by major parties with opposed ideas. And often, in a transitional era like this one, and on issues like last year's Republican budget, the fight is an inelegant stalemate. Creation of an effective majority must await further national elections, in which the parties have at it some more—with even greater heat and directly before the voters—until one side outpersuades the other.

> IT'S A SEDUCTIVE IMPULSE, THIS SENSE THAT MODERN POLITICS WOULD BE BETTER IF LESS RAMBUNCTIOUS. BUT THE HONOR OF DEMOCRATIC DISCOURSE SHOULD BE DEFENDED AGAINST IT.

But the panjandrums of Big Media and the alienated swing voters of grassroots populism have lost patience with the never-ending, rigorous debate that democracy requires. The press boys are weary aristocrats of good-government refinement: They have heard all the policy arguments before, and they already know the right answers, having long since worked them out in neat little op-ed pieces and talking-head guest spots on CNN. The populists, for their part, do not pretend such sophistication. They have no answers, and bristle when asked to provide them. But they are just as certain as the pundits that those answers exist, blocked from public view by the self-interested cowardice and dishonesty of our elected officials. In this essential respect, Ross Perot and the *New York Times* editorial page march in lockstep. Cease the squabbling over partisan orthodoxy, they demand of "the system." Find the middle. Get it done.

Do the two parties defend themselves—and the honor of democratic discourse—against this fundamentally anti-political crusade for "reform"? They do not. Quite the contrary: Fearing its power, they rush to embrace its logic.

Democrats have learned an obvious lesson from the mid-term election of 1994. Their party's animating principle, liberalism, is broadly and deeply unpopular. Defending it is dangerous. So they've packed its arguments in dry ice and locked them in storage. As directed by President Clinton's White House, current Democratic advocacy is an elaborate, image-protecting nothingness. The president and his party colleagues are for everything that's nice and uncontroversial, and opposed to everything that isn't.

No such trick is too cheap or shameless to be employed. Last week, they pulled off two of them. First came word that Mr. Clinton had suddenly discovered a gaping hole in the Constitution: It fails to guarantee crime victims the right to speak at the sentencing and parole hearings of their victimizers, an

oversight by the Founders that the president proposes to correct by amendment. Twenty-four hours later was unveiled a nationally distributed television advertisement produced by the Democratic National Committee and organized around footage of a burglar's hands prying open a backyard window—and dark-skinned people leaping over border fences and being arrested by the feds. The president, we are meant to understand, is tough on immigrants.

Abandon liberal orthodoxy. Find the middle. It works; Clinton enjoys a solid and steady 20-point lead in preference polls about the 1996 presidential election. But it won't help America make up its mind about the correct size and reach of the federal government—or about what cultural norms we will strengthen or reject. And Republicans won't be much help in that effort, either, it seems. The GOP's most articulate and interesting ideological spokesman, Newt Gingrich, stung by the low poll standings he earned during the 1995 legislative session, has made himself almost completely invisible. And the party's titular leader, presidential nominee-in-waiting Bob Dole, appears similarly fixated by last year's news. He doubts that vaguely partisan and independent middle America can be persuaded to conservatism. So he mutters about President Clinton's thievery of the oldest and most popular Republican ideas—and neglects to come up with any new ones.

POLITICAL PARTIES ARE DESIGNED TO REFLECT THE DISAGREEMENTS OF THE PEOPLE—AND SETTLE THEM, TEMPORARILY AT LEAST, ON BEHALF OF A PERSUADED MAJORITY SENTIMENT.

How, then, will the national agenda be advanced? What will the two parties *argue* about? They will argue about restricting the scope and form of their own arguments. This year, once again, the Senate was cowed by critics of political "corruption" into taking up a campaign-finance "reform" measure that would have applied strict limits on the amount of money congressional candidates might use to run for office—to proclaim their views and engage their challengers. It was unconstitutional legislation, and it is now, mercifully, dead, narrowly defeated by a filibuster threat. Reaction to the loss was swift and predictable. "Truly awful," harrumphed the *New York Times*. "The system is incapable of change from within," announced Russ Verney, national coordinator of Ross Perot's new spoiler third party.

Both parties are now conditioned to accept such insults without objection. Each, in fact, is almost eager to confess and repent its sins of debating excess. Something called the American Association of Political Consultants, a bipartisan guild of campaign handlers, has now gone on record denouncing the practice of "push polling." Push polls are the crime du jour of dirty campaigning. As described by Larry Sabato and Glenn Simpson in their recent bible of political reform, *Dirty Little Secrets*, the technique involves phoning targeted voters late in a campaign, pretending to be conducting scientific survey research unconnected to the interests of a particular candidate, and quickly revealing misleading and derogatory information about that candidate's opponent.

Take one example that Sabato and Simpson apparently regard as horrifically beyond the pale: In a 1992 Ohio congressional race, the Democratic polling firm of Cooper & Secrest phoned voters in the district to tell them that Republican Martin Hoke "in the past was part of a religious cult where he wore a turban, a beard, and had an assumed name." The real facts of the matter? Sabato and Simpson set the record straight: "Hoke had joined the Sikh religion two decades earlier while a student at Amherst College. But the Sikhs—a respected religious entity—are certainly not a 'cult,' even though male members wear a turban and grow their hair long."

And how to prevent such dastardly misdeeds? According to the reform agenda proposed by Sabato and Simpson, and now adopted by the consultants' association, campaigns may still phone voters with embarrassing information about their opponents. But the callers may not disguise themselves as "reputable" hired-gun pollsters (no smirking, please). They must clearly reveal the partisan motivation for the call. And the information in question may not be "false or misleading." You're still allowed to inform voters that Martin Hoke was a Sikh, in other words. But you may only do so "truthfully."

And therein lies the central and ugliest problem with the entire goo-goo project to shame partisan political debate back into its paddock. What does "truthfully" mean? Like it or not, there really is no objective third-way path to truths and oughts in American politics. People disagree about such things. Political parties are designed to reflect that disagreement—and settle it, temporarily at least, on behalf of a persuaded majority sentiment. If loud, robust, partisan argument—about abortion, or affirmative action, or anything else—is "dirty campaigning," we need more of it, not less.

—David Tell, for the Editors

Ethics and the Clintonites

by John Podhoretz

How could they? How could mid-level Clinton White House officials have decided to search through the confidential FBI files of Republicans? How could senior White House staffers have tried to force a criminal investigation of seven hapless civil servants after their firing from the travel office? How could a senior Treasury Department official have told the White House about a confidential inquiry into the bankrupt savings and loan the Clintons had been involved in? How could the White House counsel have blocked a legitimate police inquest into the contents of the office of a government official who had committed suicide? What explains this behavior during the first year of the Clinton presidency?

I ask these questions not because this behavior seems especially shocking, but because it seems so feckless and stupid. For in the 12 years prior to Bill Clinton's victory, Washington had undergone a transformation forced upon it by a disgruntled Congress and the self-appointed Diogeneses of our public and political morality—columnists, editorial page editors, the public interest groups, and what was left of the old do-gooding American Establishment. Together, they proclaimed a pious goal: to purify the American presidency from ethical taint. But as with many displays of piety, the purification effort was really a form of institutional warfare. Congress, in the hands of the Democratic party, was weakening the power of a Republican-run White House without ever having to admit such a partisan assault was taking place. And it was a form of ideological warfare as well, as liberals and leftists disgusted by conservative policy-making sought not only to discredit the policies but to send the people who made the policies to jail.

All in all, a bloody transformation, one that left careers in ruins, destroyed reputations, and forced people innocent of any but the most technical wrongdoing to plead guilty to crimes simply to spare their families from financial calamity. And those who suffered as a result of it were, almost without exception, officials of the executive branch of the U.S. government. By the time the Bush administration took office in 1989, executive-branch officials had learned that any meeting they attended could, years later, be the subject of a congressional inquiry or testimony before a grand jury. Bush officials stopped taking notes, stopped sending e-mail, and felt no compunction about walking out of a room when something was going on they didn't like the looks of. It was self-preservation, pure and simple; when you have seen what it means to be part of a controversy that might turn into a scandal, you want no part of it.

IN SOME ELEMENTAL SENSE, THE DEMOCRATS AND CLINTONITES AND LIBERALS DID NOT BELIEVE THE RULES APPLIED TO THEM.

So, when the Clintonites took over in 1993, they had every reason to know they were expected to conduct themselves as the modern equivalent of Caesar's wife. After all, they had been materially and substantively involved in the transformation.

Consider. Hillary Rodham Clinton and Bernard Nussbaum met as lawyers on the Democratic side of the congressional committee investigating Watergate. For liberals, that scandal has assumed the sanctity of a political creation myth: Republicans as purveyors of executive-branch evil unparalleled in the annals of American politics. (Untrue, of course—the Nixonites had done nothing its predecessors had not done, but the "it didn't start with Watergate" argument isn't very strong.) Al Gore intoned sanctimoniously on White House misbehavior from the floor of the House and the well of the Senate. George Stephanopoulos was the chief aide to House Majority Leader Gephardt during the passage of draconian legislation that strengthened and extended the ethics stranglehold over White House officials.

And the Clinton White House and executive branch were literally populated by veterans of Washington in the 1980s, by Democrats who rejoiced when special prosecutors indicted executive-branch officials; when hapless bureaucrats like Rita Lavelle went to jail for telling Congress lies in an effort to make her bosses look better; when the new take-no-prisoners tactic of character assassination that came to be known as Borking emerged.

There was a mercilessness to these assaults. It was

as though the Democrats and their friends in the media forgot that their ideological opponents were *people*, like them, with families and children, strengths and failings. And quite a few of these people were publicly disgraced as though they were guilty of bank robbery or murder. This was strange on the face of it: After all, in only one Republican scandal of the 1980s—the HUD scandal—was anyone accused of actually stealing money from government coffers. But the temptation to deny someone with whom you disagree his essential humanity is deep-rooted.

That temptation is nothing new in American politics, as people were always quick to remind Republicans and conservatives who complained of such things in the 1980s. John Adams, our second president, tried to use the Alien and Sedition Acts to silence his opponents. Fully a quarter of presidential appointees in the 19th century were denied confirmation by Congress. In his wonderful *Battle Cry of Freedom*, James McPherson explains how a congressional committee headed by Benjamin Wade to look into procurement violations during the Civil War ran amok, the precursor to Iran-contra special prosecutor Lawrence Walsh.

But that is no way to run a political system, particularly one in which the balance of power shifts back and forth between two huge parties. What the Democrats seemingly failed to realize is that the draconian ethics regime they created to hamstring the executive branch would someday govern them. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" is remarkably sound political advice, as is its negative corollary: "Turnabout is fair play." Did the Clintonites believe that Republicans, who had been subjected to their withering scorn and legislative heavy hand for more than a decade, would simply sit idly by and allow them to act with impunity? Did they think that people who were genuinely horrified by the besmirchment of Robert Bork, who believed that Iran-contra figures had been subjected to vicious political persecution, who saw friends and family (like my own) dragged through personal and financial hell for doing what they believed was right, would somehow vanish when the besmirchers and persecutors took over?

The truth is that they never gave a moment's thought to this possibility, for the very reason they brought the ethics regime into existence in the first place. For in some elemental sense, the Democrats and Clintonites and liberals did not believe these rules applied to them. And so they experienced a failure of vision, a failure of perspective, that led to lapses during the first year of the Clinton White House that were more ethically compromising than nearly all the instances of Republican misbehavior during the Reagan and Bush years.

Democrats and liberals believe in the affirmative use of government. This belief defines them, just as the conviction that government is (as Ronald Reagan put it) "part of the problem, not part of the solution" is the defining conviction of contemporary conservatism. But Democrats and liberals could only wonder: If Republicans and conservatives hate government so much, why were they seeking political power? If Republicans and conservatives don't want to use government to help people, what could possibly be motivating them?

LIBERALS BELIEVE CONSERVATIVES ARE THEIR MORAL INFERIORS, RULED BY CRUDE PASSIONS, AND APPEALING TO THE BASEST INSTINCTS OF VOTERS.

The answer: Only bad things, like personal aggrandizement, self-enrichment, power-hunger. Liberals looked at the Reagan White House staff and saw hundreds of people looking to cash in on what they believed to be a public trust, and they were sickened. And the more perfervid among them imagined even worse motivations: Bloodthirsty warmongering (which explained the increase in the defense budget and support for the contras); the suppression of women and blacks (which is why Ted Kennedy made the grotesque claim that Bork wanted to restore segregation and back-alley abortions); even a military coup (which explains Bill Moyers's vicious conceit that a "secret government" was operating in the basement under Reagan's Oval Office).

Could such people be trusted to do what was right, proper, or just? Or was America endangering itself by allowing Republicans to run free throughout the executive branch? The answer was obvious to Democrats and liberals, who spent the 1980s and early 1990s sharpening the definition of "ethical behavior" to such a fine point that it was no longer enough for someone to be disqualified from public service for engaging in a "conflict of interest." No, merely "the appearance of a conflict of interest" came to be considered acceptable grounds for banish-

ment, even though the very idea is an oxymoron—after all, if there is only the *appearance* of a conflict of interest, then there *is* no conflict of interest. Nor was it enough for someone to commit a crime to be considered a criminal; the mere fact that Clarence Thomas was alleged (probably falsely) to have spoken the words "Who put a pubic hair in my coke?" in a room with a female aide present was enough for an entire political party to revile him as a national disgrace.

This was all politically useful, of course. And, as Noemie Emery often points out in these pages, Democrats and liberals tend to excuse behavior they find repugnant in Republicans when Democratic and liberal politicians indulge in it. But what is going on here is not simply hypocrisy. It is hypocrisy, but it is hypocrisy born of conviction. Liberals believe conservatives are their moral inferiors, ruled by crude passions and only worth taking seriously because conservatives are able sometimes to appeal successfully to the basest instincts in the American electorate. Conservatives don't want to help. They are bad. Liberals want to help. They are good.

And this explains the conduct of the Clintonites in 1993 and after. Their ability to use government as a means of salvation was, they believed, endangered by the powerful conservative appeal to the selfish and small-hearted impulses of ordinary Americans. The liberal desire to help was at risk from an unscrupulous and energetic enemy.

Recall the White House of 1993: Secret Service agents were leaking stories about domestic discord between the president and the first lady. Stories were spreading about how drug use by the incoming White House staff was making security clearances difficult. Hillary Clinton fired a White House usher for having a telephone conversation about computers with Barbara Bush. The gays-in-the-military flap. Zoe Baird and Nannygate. Vincent Foster's suicide. And, always, the possibility that Whitewater might turn into a serious crisis.

The sense of siege must have been strong, as strong as the sense of mission the Clintons and their loyal underlings shared. It was never entirely clear either to them or to us where exactly they wanted to take America in the first two years of the administration, but they did want to take us *somewhere*, and the journey was proving extraordinarily difficult. Hillary, we now know, was not averse to being compared to Joan of Arc; at the announcement of Ruth Bader Ginsburg's nomination to the Supreme Court, Bill expressed deep outrage when ABC's Brit Hume dared ask him about the inconstancy of his opinions.

They were under siege, and they had to protect themselves. Roger Altman, the deputy treasury secretary, *had* to give the White House information on the investigation into Madison Guaranty Savings and Loan because the White House needed to protect itself against vicious partisan assaults so that the Clintonites could do good for people. White House counsel Bernard Nussbaum had to block the U.S. Park Police from examining Vincent Foster's office because who knows what kind of information might leak out damaging to the president and first lady, who needed to protect themselves in order to do good for people. The White House tried to criminalize the travel-office firings precisely to avoid the kind of partisan political trouble they found themselves in later. And what other reason could Craig Livingstone and Anthony Marceca have had to search through Republican FBI files other than to gather some kind of information whose primary use would be to protect the Clintonite ability to do good for people?

Thus, the Clintonites are not merely Arkansas sleazes and political hacks looking to cover up their petty crimes. They are creatures of conviction, a conviction most tellingly summed up in the title of James Carville's bestselling book: *We're Right, They're Wrong*. They are true believers in the tautology that defines what is left of the Left: Liberalism is good because liberals are good, and whatever must be done to defend liberalism and liberals is therefore both justified and good. ♦

Representative of Her Age

by David Brooks

It was a stereotype constructed by friend and foe alike: Hillary Clinton was the smarter of the Clintons. She was the efficient one, he the charmer. She focused while he empathized. The stereotype allowed her admirers to elevate Hillary Clinton to the status of feminist icon, and her enemies could depict her as a ruthless and intelligent ice queen.

It's pretty clear by now that the stereotype is wrong. Hillary Clinton is not smarter than her husband. She can master a brief and organize information, but anybody who falls first for Michael Lerner's "politics of meaning" and then for the New Age spirit-babble of Jean Houston possesses

limited abilities as a critical thinker. And Mrs. Clinton is not ruthlessly efficient. Every task she has undertaken, from organizing the health-care task forces to responding to Whitewater allegations, has been accomplished with maximum *inefficiency*, maximum heaving and bother.

Looking beyond the polarizing hype, Hillary Clinton seems remarkably ordinary by high-level Washington standards. Her reactions to the vicissitudes of life at the top have been utterly banal. She says she was shocked to discover the difficulty of living in a fishbowl. Has there ever been a leading politician who hasn't said that? She feels persecuted, is offended by the way the complexity of her life is reduced to 800-word articles. She leads a fantastically cushy life, but experiences waves of self-pity, believing herself a struggling soul in a hostile town. Like most politicos surrounded by teams of adoring aides, she is self-absorbed. Like Newt Gingrich and so many others, she can be grandiose, imagining herself on the stage with World Historical Figures. And yet she can also be strangely casual, as in her habit of responding to queries with "Okey-dokey, artichokey."

BY WASHINGTON STANDARDS, HILLARY CLINTON SEEMS REMARKABLY ORDINARY. HER REACTIONS TO LIFE AT THE TOP HAVE BEEN BANAL.

And like many people in public and private life who combine mushy spiritualism with personal ambition, she goes in for New Age solipsism. For what is New Age but religion with obligation replaced by flattery, humility by self-esteem? Jean Houston is only a few steps down from the mass gurus who fill time on PBS fund-raising drives: Leo Buscaglia, Joseph Campbell, Deepak Chopra, Yanni at the Acropolis. Up in the White House solarium, eyes closed, communing with Eleanor Roosevelt and Gandhi, Mrs. Clinton was only doing what thousands of corporate executives and troubled private citizens have been doing for years.

Bob Woodward's account of her sessions with Jean Houston led me (as it probably did many others) to the bookshelf to look through the late Christopher Lasch's brilliant book, *The Culture of Narcissism*. Phrases from the book leapt out and illuminated Mrs. Clinton's behavior: "the ideology of intimacy . . . the grandiose self . . . the romantic cult of sincerity and authenticity . . . self-absorption defines the moral climate of contemporary society . . . he praises respect for rules and regulations in the secret belief that they do not apply to himself." Mrs. Clinton's brand of narcissism is so commonplace that a bestselling book written 17 years ago captures it perfectly.

One phrase, a chapter heading, stands out: "The Banality of Pseudo-Self Awareness: The Theatrics of Politics and Everyday Existence." Only a mixture of pseudo-self awareness and a habit of theatrics could allow Mrs. Clinton, brought to the pinnacle by her husband's electoral success, to sit among an audience of aides and listen with a straight face while a court favorite called her the most important woman since Joan of Arc.

In these ways, Mrs. Clinton embodies the zeitgeist of her generation. Her 1969 Wellesley commencement address was a Zelig-like summation of the different threads of that era—the rudeness to elders, the politics of ecstasy, the liberationist demands—and typically it included this grand call: "We're not interested in social reconstruction; it's human reconstruction."

As with most other members of her generation, she has dropped some of the 1960s baggage. What has not been dropped is the ambition to understand all and to reform all—what might be called her set's spiritual greed. "Let us be willing to remold society by redefining what it means to be a human being in the 20th century, moving into a new millennium," the first lady said in a speech 24 years after her Wellesley remarks. Throughout the years, she has preserved as in amber certain notions of her youth: that American society is crippled by "alienation and despair and hopelessness"; that it suffers from "a spiritual vacuum . . . a sleeping sickness of the soul"; and that it is her mission to help produce a transformation. Many conservatives talk this way, too; and those who do usually had their consciousnesses forged by the 1960s.

The traditional religions call on holy men to renounce worldly ambitions and practice humility. But for those up from the 1960s, spiritual life can, does, and should coexist with worldly ambition, religious understanding with high self-esteem. This desire to have it all has taken 1960s types on notoriously restless journeys. The cries for social revolution in the 1960s have been domesticated into the fuzzy New Age spiritualism of the 1990s, made more organic but no less utopian. Jerry Rubin went through guerril-

la politics, gestalt theory, Esalen, Reichian therapy, health foods, networking, yuppieism, and who knows what else in search of total peace and complete understanding before he was hit by a car. We've all known people who go off on crazy kicks in search of higher consciousness, and we have learned to tolerate their phases. If Hillary Clinton were our friend, we'd smile indulgently as she enthused over the gifts of Jean Houston.

And we'd know she'd soon be on to something else. Even Hillary Clinton could not long stomach the lunacy at the center of *A Mythic Life*, the book Jean Houston shared with the first lady. In *A Mythic Life*, Houston says she destroyed an orange-sized tumor in her breast by going into a trance. She claims to have visited "the chamber of the great pattern keepers in the time beyond time" where our destinies are laid down. Mrs. Clinton doesn't go in for that weirdness. The only real overlap between Houston and the first lady is their common spiritual pride, their desire to understand all and change all (Houston claims she has already found the secret key).

"My hypersensitive availability to others' wounding," Houston writes, "makes for a constancy of inner pain that belies the outer merry face that I present to the world. As I travel around the world, for example, especially in countries where people have little hope, I am haunted by the eyes of children." That self-aggrandizing claim to selflessness is another manifestation of the 1960s style that Mrs. Clinton too often embodies.

At Wellesley, Hillary Rodham was a revolutionary. At Yale, she preached what the Yalies preached. In Arkansas, Hillary Clinton did business the Arkansas way. In Washington, Hillary Rodham Clinton strives and suffers the same as everybody else who's at the top of the pecking order. Far from being a world-historical figure, she is a clichéd product of her time, so completely representative it's weird. ♦

You're No Eleanor Roosevelt

by Noemie Emery

Hillary Clinton has been simulating a chat with Eleanor Roosevelt, seeking advice in her trials. Would that she could. Her predecessor might have had something to tell her about how to conduct herself in high office. But this business is not really about Mrs. Roosevelt speaking to Mrs. Clinton. It is about Mrs. Clinton addressing herself. In this "dialogue," Mrs. Clinton controls the whole story: not just what she gets to say to Mrs. Roosevelt, but what "Eleanor" gets to tell *her*. Not surprisingly, what "Eleanor" tells her is what Hillary wants to hear: that she is maligned, and abused without mercy, for nothing besides her good heart.

What Mrs. Roosevelt would actually say to all this can barely be imagined, but Mrs. Roosevelt is not the point. She is used not as a guide but as political cover, part of a longstanding plot to morph the two women together, to declare Mrs. Clinton innocent-by-association. Their roles are similar, so goes the story; their causes are similar, and therefore so are the attacks. The critiques of Mrs. Clinton supposedly equate to the flak taken by Mrs. Roosevelt in the 1930s and 40s for daring to associate with black people. But they do not.

The Eleanor card has long been a staple in the Hillary corner, as her aides use the name of a woman known for compassion and probity to cover the deeds of a woman suspected of being deficient in both. The great revelation of this sad little story is the depth of Mrs. Clinton's need to believe in the myth of her own innocence, the lengths she will go to indulge this delusion, and the credibility she will give anyone—mystics among them—who feeds it. The strange thing is not her belief in spirits, but her own addled view of herself.

Mrs. Roosevelt was a stoic soul who bore her troubles in silence and did not seek public pity. Her concern for the "vulnerable" carried over into her own private circles. She did not terrorize staff, drop old friends (like Lani Guinier) when they became inconvenient, or force loyal aides to face huge legal bills and possibly perjury charges defending her interests. Like Mrs. Clinton, she tried to extend a ceremonial role into policy matters, but she did it in a different way, with a much keener sense of the possibilities and limitations of an undefined, if national, office. In the White House (and the governor's mansion in New York) Mrs. Roosevelt's efforts took three distinct forms:

1. Missions such as fact-finding trips, which she undertook for the president, under his direction, to bring him information on which he then acted;

2. Influence, which she exerted on the president and other members of the administration, by bringing people and ideas to their notice;

3. Influence exerted through books, columns, and speeches, where she took full advantage of the

bully pulpit, but spoke only *in her own voice*.

"Mrs. Roosevelt always knew that *she* had not been elected," said a friend who knew her in the White House years. She did not conflate herself with the president, see herself as his partner, or seek to make use of his powers of office. Mrs. Clinton, on the other hand, seems to see *his* office as *their* common property, which she is permitted to enter at will. It is this unique idea of the public rights of the consort that has caused the convulsions that roiled her tenure. For while the system can expand to absorb the sort of advice and influence offered by an Eleanor Roosevelt, there is no provision in it for a co-presidency, a dual presidency, or for an unelected, unappointed, unaccountable party to exercise the powers of the executive office while subject to none of the restraints. Any sign of such a usurpation would be enough to cause trouble, and thoroughly justified concern and resentment. This is something the historical Eleanor might have been able to tell Mrs. Clinton. But not the one Mrs. Clinton made up.

Sometimes impractical on the policy level, Mrs. Roosevelt nonetheless was a shrewd politician who came to the White House from a ten-year career as an organizer in New York state politics. Mrs. Clinton, while no doubt in fact a "killer lawyer," has, according to Richard Reeves, "the political instincts of a stone." It is these instincts, or the lack of them, that have caused the worst problems of this administration: the tortured hunt for an attorney general, the scandal-ridden "diversity" hires, the mess at the counsel's office, the political errors in the framing and selling of the health-care plan. Mrs. Roosevelt might have told Mrs. Clinton that if she truly wanted to help other people, she should have focused on her areas of proven competence and left the politics to others. But Mrs. Clinton seems unable to admit, or even to see, her own failures. Which cuts to the core of the case.

Months back, President Clinton defended his wife as having been vilified "like Eleanor Roosevelt," for "the same reasons," for the same evil ends. Sure. We all remember Mrs. Roosevelt's cattle deals, her work on behalf of Castle Grande, her close friends in prison, her evasive answers to committees and lawyers, her attempts to turn Hyde Park into the Hyde-Away Vacation Paradise (and make a quick bundle), the disappearing files during World War II. Mrs. Clinton is now in trouble not because she has the social ethics of Eleanor Roosevelt, but because people suspect with some reason that she has the business ethics of Mrs. Roosevelt's sons.

Poor Eleanor Roosevelt. Exploited in life by her flesh-and-blood children, she has no better luck with her current admirers: used by them all as political cover, for everything from shady land deals in the Ozarks to crusades for abortion and lesbian rights. If her shade is around and about, no doubt she is squirming. Would Eleanor really buy into this drivel? Or would she say simply, *Grow up*?

Noemie Emery reviewed a biography of Eleanor Roosevelt in our May 13 issue.

Wrong Time, Wrong Place

by A. J. Bacevich

PICKING THROUGH THE DROPPINGS of the *Washington Post*'s campaign on behalf of Bob Woodward's new book *The Choice*, the strangest tidbit you will find concerns not the first lady's creepy cadre of New Age spiritual advisers but the commander in chief himself. Hillary Clinton may have talked to people from a different age; Bill Clinton discovered that he was meant to live in that age, an age more respectful of the endeavors of Great Leaders and better suited to underwrite heroic political achievement.

Shortly after the debacle of the November 1994 congressional elections, the president (according to Woodward) let it slip to friends that "I'm a person out of my time." Ticked off at the nation's refusal to rally to his banner, Clinton grumpily complained that "I would have much preferred being president during World War II."

Set aside for a moment the incongruity of this supreme exemplar of the coddled Baby Boomer generation waxing nostalgic for an era of epic savagery and untold suffering—when tens of millions were enslaved by or died at the hands of monstrous totalitarian regimes that were overthrown only at the cost of several hundred thousand Americans lives.

Disregard as well the febrile hankering for a "simpler time" implicit in the president's wish. For Mr. Clinton, World War II presumably signifies an era unlike our own in that bold presidential leadership was automatically rewarded with widespread and enthusiastic national support. (Hillary might want to check with Eleanor about the abuse heaped on FDR for supporting Great Britain in its darkest hour.) In contrast to the complexities of the present, World War

II may represent for Clinton a time when the choices facing national leaders were morally unambiguous—such as, for instance, whether to make common cause with Josef Stalin or whether to vaporize Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the hopes of obviating the need for a massive and bloody invasion of the Japanese home islands.

Disregard such considerations and focus instead on what Clinton's remark tells us about his ability—or willingness—to serve the particular nation he was elected to govern—as opposed to some other notional country that exists in his imagination.

In a deeply ironic commentary on our age, Walker Percy once observed that "war is better than Monday morning." Percy understood the allure of the Great Cause for those battered by the disorienting and spiritually enervating circumstances of life in postmodern America. However risky the enterprise, however impermanent the escape, the prospect of slipping loose from the burdens of everyday existence in favor of something more exhilarating exerts a powerful temptation to which few of us are completely immune.

Some give in to that temptation. Others bend themselves to the task of becoming adults. We may now fairly ask into which category the president of the United States falls.

One of the central truths of our age is that the days of the Great Cause are about over. The good guys won big in 1945. They won again even more decisively in 1989, bringing to a successful conclusion an honorable crusade in which a younger Clinton chose not to serve. This triumph does not mean an end to politics any more than it has meant the end of history. But it almost certainly means that the requirements of political leadership and the definition of political vision and courage are in the process of being revised.

WHAT DOES BILL CLINTON'S WORLD WAR II NOSTALGIA TELL US ABOUT HIS ABILITY TO SERVE IN HIS OWN AGE?

As was the case in 1945, the legacy of victory in the Cold War has not been unmixed. In order to prevail, Americans shouldered a heavy burden, military, economic, and political. The pathologies afflicting our culture today provide one measure of the price paid to overcome the adversary. For many conservatives—perhaps for a majority of Americans—addressing those pathologies describes the proper focus of politics after the Cold War. Doing so effectively requires a brand of political leadership less interested in recapturing the spirit of some Great Crusade than in sorting out the mess left in its wake. Like it or not, the world in which we live and that we'll inhabit for the foreseeable future is a world of Monday mornings.

Bill Clinton may well be right. Perhaps he is a person out of his time. But if he finds himself in the wrong time, surely he is in the wrong place as well. He would do well to consider vacating the premises.

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How Serious is Filegate?

by Fred Barnes

PANDEMONIUM BROKE OUT at the White House on June 20 when Attorney General Janet Reno's decision to hand the Filegate investigation over to independent counsel Kenneth Starr was reported on CNN. The news shocked President Clinton and his aides. They hadn't a clue it was coming. Meetings on other topics stopped instantly, and Filegate damage control took over. Reno was bitterly denounced. Clinton aides had thought the attorney general, who earlier insisted the Justice Department would retain jurisdiction over Filegate, was sensitive to White House wishes. Not enough, it turned out, and staffers trashed her as a traitor. One senior official noted the irony of Reno's appointment in the first place: She'd been brought to the attention of the White House by Hillary Rodham Clinton's brother. Now, she was making it easier for Starr, the prosecutor who terrorizes Clinton and his aides, to cause legal trouble for the Clintons, especially Hillary.

The anger and trepidation reflect White House fears that Filegate might prove a catastrophe. This isn't paranoia. More than Whitewater or the Paula Jones case or even Travelgate, Filegate may engage the press and the public and prolong itself indefinitely. It may not be Watergate or Iran-contra, but it's still a major scandal.

Why? First, it's simple to understand: White House flunkies collecting secret FBI files on Republicans. Second, it involves important issues: right to privacy, security lapses, etc. And third, it all happened in Washington, not Arkansas.

Still, Filegate hasn't reached critical mass yet. Far from it, in fact. To become a presidency-shattering scandal, it must advance on five fronts:

The press. Unless reporters develop a lust for pursuing Filegate and initiate a feeding frenzy, it's bound to fade. Only the *Washington Times*, *Wall Street Journal* (editorial and news pages), ABC, and CNN have gotten excited about Filegate so far. The rest of the media have treated Filegate as more serious than Whitewater, but that's not saying much. The coverage of Whitewater has often been downright dismissive: The report of the Senate Whitewater Committee, for example, was played as a purely partisan document, merely the Republican version. In the annals of congressional-investigation coverage, that is unprecedented; when Democrats ran Congress and a Republican was president, the press always treated the majority's view as the "committee" report.

What's kept the media going after Filegate is Capitol Hill hearings and leaks from investigating committees. But those won't last forever. For the story to take off, the press has to begin digging up its own stories. Among the networks, only ABC has been working the story that aggressively. It interviewed Bush White House aide Jim Cicconi, who said personnel files on President Bush's aides were readily available from the Bush library. Thus, FBI files on Bushies did not have to be requisitioned to compile any lists, and, Cicconi said, Clinton aides knew this. ABC also uncovered recommendations to the White House in 1994 by Senate Intelligence Committee chairman Dennis DeConcini of Arizona, who said new personnel security procedures were required. The White House said it would give those procedures serious consideration, but didn't. Neither story was widely picked up.

IN WATERGATE AND IRAN-CONTRA, MAVERICK REPUBLICANS TOOK ON THEIR PARTY'S PRESIDENT. NO DEMOCRAT HAS COME CLOSE TO THIS IN FILEGATE.

The death by a thousand cuts. According to this theory, the folks at the center of a scandal—the Clintons—will appear to be riding it out until one final cut brings them down all at once. Then, polls showing the president routing Bob Dole will flip. What's the final cut in Filegate and when will it come? It may never come, but we know what it will be if it does: if higher-ups at the White House, Hillary perhaps, are implicated, instead of just mid-level security officials Craig Livingstone and Tony Marceca. The first day of hearings in the House didn't produce such a revelation. If the scandal doesn't reach beyond Livingstone and Marceca, it will die—and soon.

Democrats. Many are thinking about distancing themselves from the White House, dubious about the story that Filegate is a bureaucratic bungle. It's vitally important for some Democrats to defect and attack Clinton. That would give the scandal more gravity and lift it above mere partisan politics, which would impress reporters. In Watergate and Iran-contra, maverick Republicans on the congressional investigating committees took on their party's president, gained credibility, and became media favorites. No Democrat has come close to this in Filegate, though Sens. Joe Biden of Delaware and Paul Simon of Illinois (who is retiring) have zinged the White House. Biden even raises the possibility Clinton aides were indeed scouring FBI files for dirt. "It may be there's something nefarious here," he said on *Face the Nation* on June 23. "At a minimum, they violated the rights of 400 people whose files should never have been collected at the White House and at a maximum they had some purpose for it. But there's no evidence to support that." In other words, Biden isn't jumping ship yet. And, in truth, the media praise heaped on Republicans who attacked Reagan and Bush is likely to be far more muted when the target is a Democratic president for whom 89 percent of the Washington press corps cast a vote in 1992.

Internal criticism. Once administration officials start taking potshots at the White House—on deep background, of course—the Clintons will be in terminal trouble. Reporters will be the first to sense this.

For now, officials around Washington are standing by their man Clinton—with two exceptions. Both Reno and FBI director Louis Freeh went out of their way to distance themselves from the White House. In turning Filegate over to Starr, Reno responded more to Republican complaints than Clinton's political needs. Freeh was rougher, publicly accusing the White House of "egregious violations of privacy." Both he and the FBI, Freeh said, "were victimized."

State's evidence. To put Filegate over the top, an insider must become a turncoat, then testify on Capitol Hill and blab to Starr. That's what happened in Watergate when White House counsel John Dean flipped. And Robert McFarlane's decision to testify against other Reagan White House aides deepened the Iran-contra scandal. The only insiders at the Clinton White House to aid investigators are two FBI agents, Dennis Sculimbrene and Gary Aldrich. In his new book, *Unlimited Access*, Aldrich describes Livingstone as "extremely close to the Clintons" and quotes one-time deputy White House counsel William Kennedy's explanation of Livingstone's appointment as chief of security: "Hillary wants him." Sculimbrene said he was told that Craig Livingstone was close to Hillary Clinton. Now, investigators think that Livingstone, who cried when Senate staffers interrogated him privately, might buckle and turn state's evidence.

So Filegate has a ways to go before it's here for good. Perhaps it won't make it. But there's an intriguing parallel with Watergate. When the Watergate burglars were caught in 1972, they were treated as bumblers who left tape on the door they had broken into, alerting a security guard. Bumblers? Isn't that how Livingstone and Marceca have been portrayed? ♦

The Snoopy Conspiracy

by Tod Lindberg

A FLURRY OF PUBLICITY about the supposed revelations in Roger Morris's *Partners in Power: The Clintons and Their America* has obscured what the book really is. To be sure, Morris gives us some anonymous ex-spooks who claim young Bill Clinton was passing information to the CIA during his notorious trip to Moscow, and still more people who anonymously confirm that Hillary Clinton and Vince Foster were long-time lovers, and others who are certain Gov. Clinton was up to his nostrils in cocaine, as well as in the drug-smuggling and gun-running out of Mena airport in rural Arkansas. But *Partners in Power* (Holt, 526 pages, $27.50) is chiefly and simply a viciously doctrinaire attack on Bill and Hillary Clinton—and the American political system Morris portrays them as exemplifying—from the farther-out provinces of the ideological Left.

The book is cast as a dual biography of Bill and Hillary. Five tedious chapters on him and two on her take us to their meeting at Yale Law School. Morris's biographical skills are best captured in his use of a quotation from Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* to illuminate the world of Bill Clinton's father, Bill Blythe. Yes, Blythe was a salesman, but surely the father of a future president of the United States deserves better than to have his brief life refracted through the lens of Miller's generic middlebrow clichés: "He's a man out there in the blue, riding on a smile and a shoeshine. . . . It goes with the territory."

The book picks up a bit when it takes us to the ambitious young Bill's first campaign for office, a failed 1974 bid for a U.S. House seat that nonetheless established him as an up-and-comer in the world of Arkansas Democratic politics. As Hillary Rodham gradually abandoned her own youthful brush with idealism and even her maiden name, Bill frenetically scaled the political heights, first as attorney general and then in 1978 as the second-youngest governor in the state's history. Turned out after a single term, he quickly regrouped, presenting himself as having learned from his past failure to listen to the people—even though neither he nor his wife, in Morris's telling, had much more than contempt for ordinary Arkansans. Through a combination of sheer political skill and the ability to posture as a reformer while quietly accommodating the interests of his powerful allies, he set in motion a remarkable political journey that would take him to the White House ten years later.

And all along the way, both he and she had rich and powerful patrons who would finance his political career and line their pocketbooks—in exchange, perhaps explicitly, perhaps in the manner of a nod and a wink, for an Arkansas state government that would look after their interests. Morris retells the stories of the Whitewater partnership and the other, even more lucrative benefits of association with James and Susan McDougal and their free-wheeling savings and loan. He plows as well through Hillary's special relationship with James Blair, who helped her make $100,000 in commodities trades. And he reviews the myriad other Arkansas interests and financial

institutions that greased the skids of Bill's career.

Most of these tales are well known. Morris also ventures into less well-charted territory, such as the much-mythologized airport at Mena, but with considerably less success. The interviews he himself conducted have yielded mostly speculation and inference—as well as a wealth of anonymous offense-taking at the actions of the Clintons—rather than new information. Even the much-ballyhooed CIA connection ends up rather vaporous, with some of those unnamed covert-ops sources only speaking of the CIA's use of American students abroad in the vaguest terms, not specifically in relation to Clinton. Morris himself doesn't seem fully persuaded.

Still, the real action in *Partners in Power* lies not so much in the biography as in the juxtaposition of the Clintons' lives in Arkansas with the broad changes Morris detects in the political culture of Washington. Oh, what a wretched place this Washington has become, a city in which moneyed interests work the hidden levers of a vast political system to their own financial advantage and to the detriment of the voiceless, the poor and the powerless, whose fundamental decency and dignity are forever being crushed under the boot of their oppressors. The rhetoric here comes straight out of Snoopy's peerlessly awful novel, the one that begins, "It was a dark and stormy night. . . . While millions of people were starving, the king lived in luxury." Or, as Morris actually does say, "There were waiting lists at the most fashionable restaurants and long lines of the hungry at shelters and soup kitchens."

ROGER MORRIS'S BIOGRAPHY OF BILL AND HILLARY CLINTON IS SO LOONY IT ALMOST MAKES ONE FEEL SORRY FOR THEM. ALMOST.

In the world according to Morris (here he parts company with Snoopy), the economy is in decline, the middle class is disintegrating, the ranks of the poor are swelling, and *it is no accident*. It is due to the "growing convergence" of the two political parties, the merger of the increasingly right-wing Democrats with the always "reactionary" Republicans "in the service of privilege," the interests of their rich if little-known masters. Perhaps there was a better, nobler time for the Democrats. But the world of the 1990s is one JFK would never recognize, characterized as it is by the Democratic party's "surrender to the orthodoxy of vested interests."

The point is that Bill and Hillary Clinton and their indifference to the little people—ranging from dirt-poor blacks in Arkansas to the vulnerable objects of Bill's amorous intentions—are of a piece with the corrupt American political system as a whole. There stand we all in dire straits, unless we are somehow able to purify our politics of the corruption of moneyed interests.

Morris, whose biggest claim to fame has been his resignation from the Kissinger-led National Security Council staff in protest over the course of the Vietnam war, remains thoroughly steeped in New Left politics. He even takes occasion to protest the "two great myths" that took hold following the crushing defeat of George McGovern in 1972. The first was the idea that "McGovern's campaign represented an aberrant radicalism in American politics," when in fact his followers were actually rather conservative. The second was that the Nixon victory meant that "voters had turned in some vast, consciously reactionary tide toward historical reversal of the New Deal."

Morris's essential problem is that the people in whose name he purports to speak don't agree with him. Therefore, they must have been oppressed or silenced, and they must be afraid and powerless. After all, that's really the only way a reactionary minority could capture the GOP from its moderate elements and exploit low voter turnout to wrest control of a system that Democrats had cravenly given in to anyway.

This is loony. It almost makes one feel sorry for the Clintons, cast here as the embodiment of a thoroughly corrupt political system. If Roger Morris is attacking you, how bad can you be?

The answer is: pretty bad. And that is precisely what the thesis of this book ultimately obscures. Notwithstanding Roger Morris's rich conspiratorial imagination—he seems pretty sure the CIA set up Gary Hart's exposure as a philanderer in 1987, for example—not all political institutions and not all politicians are equally corrupt. The Clintons *aren't* just the same as everybody else. Even *Partners in Powe*r manages, if inadvertently, to show the ways in which they are worse.

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The Phony War on Schoolgirls: A Myth Exposed

By Peter Schmidt

America's girls are said to face a grave threat: their schools. Word has it that hordes of sexual harassers prey on girls in classrooms and corridors; that teachers routinely ignore or mistreat them; that sexist textbooks degrade them; that gender-biased tests underrate them; and that the entire elementary and secondary education system conspires to break their spirits, cripple their self-esteem, and curtail their careers.

This is the news that certain feminist advocates, with the help of the media, have spread. As a result, "gender bias" has emerged as one of the main concerns of the school-reform movement. School districts have come under pressure to eliminate policies and practices that cannot be deemed "gender neutral." Colleges and universities have been overhauling their education departments to ensure that they are not training tomorrow's teachers in the use of gender-biased instructional methods. States have passed laws designed to promote gender equity and crack down on in-school sexual harassment (even when the alleged perpetrators are children in first or second grade). The previous Congress also joined the crusade, voting to amend its chief school-funding bill with language enlisting various federal programs in the battle for gender equity.

It seems an unquestionably noble cause, the rescue of schoolgirls. But the truth is that girls do not need to be rescued. The much-bemoaned schoolgirls crisis is largely a hoax. By most academic and social measures, the nation's girls are doing fine, and it's the boys we should be worried about.

So where did this widespread misperception come from? It came not from a consensus of education researchers, but a slick public-relations campaign mounted by the leadership of a single advocacy group, the American Association of University Women. The AAUW commissioned, published, and hyped the three reports on schoolgirls that sounded the alarm in the popular media; these reports compose the bible of the ongoing crusade. The AAUW has also taken the lead in lobbying for a policy agenda meant to remedy the problems alleged in its reports.

IT SEEMS AN UNQUESTIONABLY NOBLE CAUSE, THE RESCUE OF SCHOOLGIRLS. BUT THE TRUTH IS THAT GIRLS DO NOT NEED TO BE RESCUED.

While the group's leadership insists it mounted its campaign out of a sincere concern for girls, its own literature betrays ulterior motives: ideology and self-interest. AAUW officials had resolved to instill the belief that schools discriminate systematically against girls long before much of anything besides feminist theory told them this was so. Soon, they came to see a crusade as a way to raise their organization's profile, recruit new members, and solicit new donations.

The AAUW issued the first of its three reports, "Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America," in 1991. The report found that girls' self-esteem plunges during adolescence and that schools bear much of the blame. A 1992 report, "How Schools Shortchange Girls," concluded that girls are the victims of severe educational discrimination that affects their marks, course selections, and career possibilities. A 1993 report, "Hostile Hallways," exposed what the AAUW

Peter Schmidt investigated gender issues as a staff writer for Education Week.

described as "a sexual harassment epidemic" in schools.

The organization touts these reports as authoritative and unbiased, pointing to a dearth of public criticism as evidence of their validity. Ann L. Bryant, the AAUW's executive director, said in 1994 that she could count the reports' critics on two hands, and those tended to be "a few academics and news commentators—mostly men."

But critics there are. One of them is Diane S. Ravitch, head of the Education Department's research branch under George Bush, who accused the AAUW of selective interpretation of data. Another is Chester E. Finn, Jr., who held the same post under Ronald Reagan and called the group's research "a deflection from what is really wrong in education and a focus on a bogus problem." Still another is Joseph Adelson, editor of the widely used *Handbook on Adolescent Psychology*, who described the AAUW effort as "a propaganda machine that does not seem to respond to any contrary evidence."

If other educators and social scientists have accepted the AAUW's reports at face value, it is perhaps because they have been lulled by the group's reputation as venerable, staid, and mainstream. Established in 1881, the AAUW was old-line and hardly in the vanguard of feminism at the time of its centennial. The average age of its members was 55, and many had rebelled against the group's decision to support abortion rights. The AAUW was founded specifically to advocate on behalf of women who were being denied access to higher education. Having all but won that war, it was suffering a rapid decline in membership and was under pressure to prove its relevance.

So the timing seemed right when, in the mid-1980s, the group discovered Harvard psychologist Carol Gilligan and other feminist scholars who had tapped into a hot new field: bias against girls. By June of 1989, AAUW leaders had begun to view the lives of schoolgirls through a feminist lens. In a pamphlet issued that month, they lamented the fact that girls and boys tend to take different courses and get slightly different grades, pointing to gender bias as a prime culprit. Citing the work of Gilligan and others, the pamphlet posited that girls favor cooperation over competition and thus fail to thrive in the competitive, male-centered environment found in most schools. "The structure of lessons and the dynamics of classroom interaction all too often create an environment alien, if not hostile, to girls," it said. The pamphlet urged members to pressure teachers, local school officials, and university education departments to embrace instructional methods certified bias-free.

Fourteen months later, a second pamphlet proclaimed that the schools' white-European-male-dominated curricula must be replaced by books and lessons that "show women and minorities as doers, leaders, and decision-makers." The pamphlet assured AAUW members that their group was "exerting every effort to bring the needs of women and girls to a central position" in the national debate over school reform.

The first big report came in January 1991. Based on a survey of about 3,000 children conducted by the polling firm Greenberg-Lake, it said that girls undergo a dramatic and disproportionate loss of self-esteem during adolescence—due largely to the way they are treated in schools. "Girls aged eight and nine are confident, assertive, and feel authoritative about themselves," the report said. "Yet most emerge from adolescence with a poor self-image, constrained views of their future and their place in society, and much less confidence about themselves and their abilities."

> THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN HAD WON THE WAR IT WAS FOUNDED TO FIGHT AND NEEDED TO PROVE ITS RELEVANCE.

The report linked much of this deterioration to girls' difficulties in math and science. "Of all the study's indicators, girls' perceptions of their ability in math and science had the strongest relationship to their self-esteem; as girls 'learn' they are not good at these subjects, their sense of self-worth and aspirations for themselves deteriorate."

Ordinarily, the results of such studies first appear in social-science journals, where others in the field can examine methodologies and conclusions. The AAUW eschewed this approach and chose instead to distribute a spiffy summary directly to the popular media. From a public-relations perspective, the strategy paid off. The nation's journalists eagerly repeated the report's most alarming conclusions without bothering to check them out. The AAUW's subsequent literature boasted that the survey "shook America's consciousness and has had a far-reaching impact."

One journal that showed some skepticism was *Science News*. In its March 23, 1991, issue, it noted that the AAUW's researchers had depended on students to assess their own thoughts and feelings and thus had based their conclusions on a form of data notoriously unreliable and difficult to interpret. It also faulted

Michael Ramirez

researchers for not bothering to locate and survey high-school dropouts, who are disproportionately male and whose answers would likely have painted a less rosy picture for boys.

In *Science News* and elsewhere, social scientists also questioned the way in which the AAUW solicited and interpreted children's answers. The survey presented children with such statements as "I am happy the way I am" and asked them to choose the best response in a continuum generally ranging from "always false" to "always true." The researchers then threw out those responses in the middle—which they held merely to signal the respondent's uncertainty—and drew conclusions based on the number of children who expressed strong feelings. Such methodology may work well in anticipating election returns, but it can lead to tenuous and subjective findings when used in studies of human behavior.

Moreover, readers of the AAUW report might have gotten the impression that self-esteem has been clearly defined and shown to have an impact on student achievement. In fact, it has not. Experts in the behavioral sciences say self-esteem has no established definition, is almost impossible to measure, and has not been shown to lead to or stem from academic success. If high self-esteem leads to high academic achievement, why is it that black males in the AAUW survey were the most self-assured while, at the same time, the most at-risk academically? If low self-esteem breeds academic failure, why do Asia's relatively humble children routinely clobber our own on international comparisons of academic achievement? And if girls are giving up on themselves academically, why are more women than men enrolling in colleges and graduate schools?

But the AAUW publicized its report as if its starkest conclusions were beyond doubt. That June, it launched its "Initiative for Educational Equity," an elaborate effort to prod federal, state, and local authorities to purge schools of gender bias. The heads of the AAUW's approximately 1,700 local branches received packets from the national office telling them how to mobilize members to demand such change. The packets included a guide for hosting round-table discussions to ensure the AAUW's "visibility as the leader on educational equity issues."

The national leadership's vision of a "gender-fair" education system left little to chance. Under the proposed new order, states would not certify prospective teachers and school administrators unless they had taken courses on gender-related subjects such as new research on women. Teacher-training programs would tell prospective pedagogues that they "must not perpetuate assumptions about the superiority of traits and activities traditionally ascribed to males in our society." School systems would evaluate administrators, teachers, and counselors based on their efforts to promote and encourage gender equity.

And schools would have to submit to annual evaluations conducted with the assistance of the AAUW's new "Gender Equity Assessment Guide," which asks: Are girls equally represented in all classes, sports, and activities? Are "multicultural and gender sensitivities . . . raised in every aspect of the curriculum?" Are procedures in place "to review textbooks, teaching methods, and curricula for gender-role stereotyping?" Do the school's health-care providers offer a "full range of reproductive health services?" Etc. The answer, of course, must be yes, and woe to the school official who might defend the standard curriculum or express fear that offering a "full range of reproductive health services" would spark a parent rebellion.

> THE REPORT GAVE NO CLUE THAT BOYS GENERALLY RECEIVE LOWER GRADES, OR THAT BOYS ARE FAR LIKELIER TO BE SUSPENDED OR HELD BACK A YEAR.

The AAUW's second report, "How Schools Shortchange Girls," attempted to explain exactly what makes the status quo so destructive to the women of tomorrow. Conducted under contract by the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, it concluded, based on a review of 1,331 previous studies, that schoolgirls are the victims of profound gender bias at all grade levels. Teachers lavish substantially more attention on boys, it said. Textbooks erode girls' enthusiasm for learning by downplaying the achievements and experiences of women. Schools avoid discussing health-related topics, such as birth control, that are especially crucial to girls' development. Although girls enter school on the same footing as boys, they fall behind in key subjects because of their second-class treatment, and then on top of it all, they are asked to take standardized college-admissions tests that are biased against them.

Unfortunately, the report shortchanged its readers by presenting only half the picture. It failed to note that much of the extra attention that boys get from teachers comes in the form of scoldings and reprimands. It disregarded Education Department statistics showing that girls have almost caught up to boys in science and mathematics and are doing much better than boys in reading. It glossed over the fact that girls have substantially narrowed the gender gap in college-entrance test scores and are actually more likely than boys to complete high school and obtain college or graduate degrees.

The report gave no clue that boys generally receive lower grades on their report cards, or that boys are far likelier to be suspended or held back a year, or that boys account for two-thirds of children in special-education programs. Attempting to portray boys as youth's favored gender, brimming with confidence and self-esteem, the AAUW also failed to account for the particular self-destructiveness of adolescent males: Not only are boys two to four times likelier to commit suicide, depending on their age, they also stand much greater risks of being murdered, killed in car accidents, or incarcerated later in life, according to data compiled by the National Center for Health Statistics and other federal agencies.

The AAUW and its researchers denied any sort of bias. "Advocating for girls and women's rights is important, but our business is not advocacy, our business is research," asserted Susan McGee Bailey, executive director of the Wellesley center. Journalists once again took the AAUW at its word and gave currency to its claims. Educators scrambled to show worried parents that they were attentive to the problems described in the report, which was accompanied by an "action guide" telling AAUW members how to whip up public support for certain school reforms.

"The early reports are in and it's clear that the 'Initiative for Educational Equity' is the right issue at the right time for the AAUW," boasted a new letter to AAUW branches. Instead of suggesting how to help girls, the accompanying instructional packet described how to capitalize on the popular appeal of the crusade to help the AAUW. Branch leaders were urged to ask themselves: "How will Initiative efforts help our branch achieve membership growth, visibility, and fundraising goals?"

Much of the packet read like a training manual for door-to-door salesmen. It advised branch leaders: View everyone you meet in the course of the gender-equity campaign as a target for membership recruitment. Invite them to branch meetings where you can

get their addresses and phone numbers and fellow members can chat them up. Push them to join and, "if possible, take their checks on the spot." When networking with other educational organizations or women's groups, ask for their membership or donor lists. "The overarching strategy is to turn every activity into a membership recruitment opportunity," it coached.

In June of 1993, the AAUW issued its explosive third report, "Hostile Hallways." Its shocking conclusion: 85 percent of girls have experienced sexual harassment in school. In a survey conducted by Louis Harris & Associates of 1,630 8th- through 11th-graders, 65 percent of girls complained of having been touched, pinched, or grabbed in a sexual way, and a fourth of the girls who reported being sexually harassed identified teachers or other school employees as the perpetrators.

But, perhaps due to the seriousness of its allegations, educators and social scientists seemed less inclined to accept this third report on its face. They argued that the AAUW had defined "sexual harassment" too broadly and thus risked trivializing the problem. In many cases, the alleged transgressions were unwelcome comments, jokes, gestures, or looks.

Skeptics asked, Were girls being subjected to a teenagers' Tailhook or just horseplay, adolescent taunts, and the awkward romantic overtures of unpopular boys? Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, complained that the report blurred the lines "between acts that are criminal and acts that are merely rude" and paved the way for schools to adopt new codes of conduct conveying the message that students "have an absolute right never to be offended." The report appeared to assume that the unsavory behavior it described was the product of a sexist society. Conservative scholars and pundits have posed an alternative explanation: that such behavior is actually the bitter fruit of the sexual revolution that feminists helped bring about.

But the AAUW stuck by its guns and called on schools to crack down on sexism. The crusade rolled onward, drawing new support and gaining ground on several fronts. In some school districts, the AAUW forced more changes in education policy in the space of a few short years than had advocates for black children in forty. Philanthropies and government agencies poured money into new programs for girls. All-girls private schools enjoyed a dramatic upsurge in popularity—as did women's colleges such as Wellesley. A few public schools set up separate classes for girls, even as women's-rights groups elsewhere were trying to block districts from forming experimental academies for black males.

By now, other groups with more overtly feminist agendas were getting into the act. Inspired by the AAUW's research, the Ms. Foundation for Women launched "Take Our Daughters to Work Day." Its curriculum included handouts that lionized Anita Hill and Gloria Steinem and sought to teach children a litany of widely disputed statistics, telling them, for example, that a woman earns 71 cents to a man's dollar and that "10 percent of American women are lesbians." One handout listed a court's ruling that a lesbian couple comprised a "family of affinity" as a key historical event of 1992.

SKEPTICS ASKED, WERE GIRLS BEING SUBJECTED TO A TEENAGERS' TAILHOOK OR JUST HORSEPLAY AND ADOLESCENT TAUNTS?

The effort was soon joined by the National Education Association. Working with the Wellesley College center, it produced *Flirting or Hurting*, a 106-page guide instructing teachers of 6th- through 12th-graders how to fight student-to-student sexual harassment. The authors, both from Wellesley, were Nan Stein, who had recently contributed to the book *Transforming a Rape Culture*, and Lisa Sjostrom, who had written both the Ms. Foundation's curriculum and a primer called *The Mother Daughter Revolution Reader's Companion Guide*. Among *Flirting or Hurting*'s admonishments: "[W]hen a target complains about being sexually harassed, it should not be within the purview of school staff members to decide whether or not the situation being described constitutes sexual harassment."

In April of 1993, the AAUW proudly announced that Congress had been moved to respond to its "irrefutable" evidence of extensive gender bias in schools. Flanked by officials of the AAUW and other women's groups, the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues announced an ambitious package of House bills dubbed the "Gender Equity in Education Act." *Education Week* placed the annual cost of the measures at $360 million—three times what the Education Department was spending on school desegregation and nearly half again its budget for bilingual education and immigrant programs. The proposed legislation created an Office of Gender Equity and funded the recruitment of female math and science teachers.

Later that summer, members of the Senate offered a similar group of bills.

Congressional support was overwhelming. Elsewhere, however, the fanfare, rhetoric, and additional federal spending associated with these measures caused the gender-equity crusade to pop up on conservative radar screens. Barbara J. Ledeen, executive director of the Independent Women's Forum, denounced the legislation as "feminist pork" and asserted that its underlying philosophy demeaned women by viewing them as victims.

But the most visible critic was Christina Hoff Sommers, a Clark University philosophy professor whose new book, *Who Stole Feminism?*, debunked the AAUW reports and an assortment of other statistics popularized by feminists. She blasted the AAUW studies as biased "advocacy research" and alleged that the federal legislation they inspired "will enrich the gender-bias industry and further weaken our schools."

Sommers's book attracted widespread attention and secured her a place on the talk-show circuit. Outraged, the AAUW became part of a coordinated effort to attack her credibility. "We need to respond and respond loudly," the liberal media-watchdog group Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting said in a letter mailed to AAUW officials and other feminist activists. Both FAIR and the AAUW sent formal complaints demanding retractions from Simon & Schuster, Sommers's publisher. When Ann Bryant took to the radio to defend the AAUW studies against Sommers's criticisms, an interoffice memorandum urged her staffers to flood the talk show's switchboard with sympathetic questions and comments. "Men usually dominate as call-ins, so we need all the friendly calls we can get," implored Gabrielle Lange, an AAUW public-relations official.

Eventually, gender-equity legislation was passed into law. Since then, however, the new Republican-led Congress has come under pressure from conservatives to repeal some of its measures. Rather than simply defend the AAUW's reports, gender-equity crusaders have been questioning the motives of the critics by asking, What difference does it make if the AAUW's research was flawed? What is important, they argue, is that the reports succeeded in making the nation aware of the educational needs of girls. Only a sexist reactionary would fret over the veracity of reports that so clearly served the best interests of girls.

Logic of this kind is seductive to those prone to confusion about ends and means. This is because it ignores the harsh truth that our public schools have finite resources with which to address overwhelming demands. Far from fully meeting the needs of all students, most school administrators wrestle with the dilemma of how to apportion neglect. And hard decisions should be based on accurate information, not propaganda.

The AAUW has a point when it says that girls lag behind in science and math and that schools should be doing more about it. But instead of directing its energies toward changing the way these subjects are taught, the AAUW decided that a complete transformation of the school culture was required. The sweeping and diffuse education-policy agenda that it subsequently adopted seems more concerned with having schools produce feminists than with having them produce new generations of female doctors and engineers.

> THE AAUW'S AGENDA SEEMS MORE CONCERNED WITH HAVING SCHOOLS PRODUCE FEMINISTS THAN FEMALE DOCTORS AND ENGINEERS.

And given that our education system seems to be having enough trouble teaching the basics, parents might question whether schools should be in the business of quizzing students on the glories of Anita Hill or disciplining them for sending a valentine to the wrong classmate. The AAUW, aware that many children learn traditional notions of gender from their parents, has been promoting the slogan "Raise boys and girls the same way." The slogan tips the organization's hand and reveals its true agenda: not a laudable quest for basic fairness, but a radical desire to create a society in which the concept of gender no longer applies. Such thinking ignores both the biological basis of gender and the wishes of many parents, who would rather raise boys as boys and girls as girls and feel it is their prerogative to do so. Even those parents who accept the AAUW's philosophy and want to raise boys and girls the same way often find that doing so is impossible, if not downright cruel to the children.

If the gender-equity crusade were truly motivated by an earnest concern for all children, rather than feminist ideology, one might expect its leaders to be concerned with the serious problems that plague boys. For the most part, they aren't. The AAUW has not just diverted attention from the problems of boys, it appears to have opened the door to outright discrimination against them. One AAUW pamphlet asserts that even when all children are treated exactly the

same, "there may be a negative impact on girls because they may experience it differently than boys."

The sorriest truth is that the reforms inspired by the crusade may actually harm the education of both boys and girls. "There is reason to fear [that] such programs and policies will deepen gender stereotypes, 'water' down the curriculum, label girls as having 'special needs,' and ultimately cheat all students," warned Roberta Tovey, a writer and teacher from Boston, in *The Harvard Education Letter* last year. In pushing for the equal representation of girls in all classrooms, the AAUW may, perversely, be putting schools under pressure to assign more girls to low-level compensatory and special-education classes, where they are now outnumbered.

If the AAUW genuinely wants to rescue girls, it can start with this: by sparing those, girl and boy, who risk being trampled by its crusade. ♦

Act-Up Vs. PETA: Clash of the Titans

By Matt Labash

Animal-rights soirees usually go off without a hitch, like the Great American Meatout on Capitol Hill, where vegan activists try to convince congressional staffers that Fib Rib veggie sticks really are delicious. Sometimes Animal Rights people (call them AR for short) are nakedly aggressive, as when PETA's stitchless nymphs crash the catwalks of Karl Lagerfeld and other fur-accented couturiers.

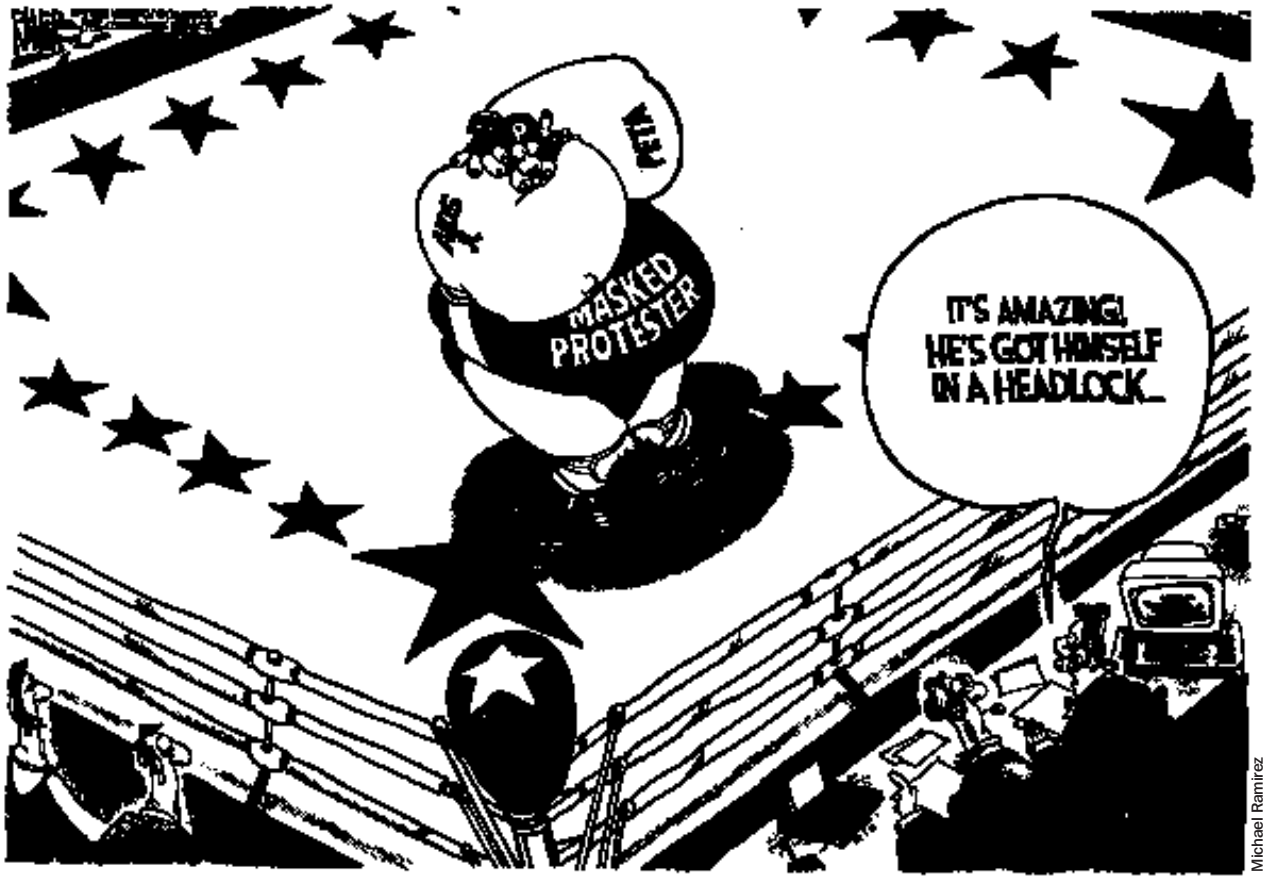
What AR usually doesn't get is a fight. Nobody wants to be seen as an abuser or exploiter of animals, and this reticence often provides the activists with a platform from which they can move beyond the advocacy of animal welfare into a war against scientific animal research—the same research that 97 percent of the medical community (according to an American Medical Association poll) says is essential to human health.

THE ANIMAL RIGHTS MOVEMENT CONTENDS THAT ANIMAL TESTING IN AIDS RESEARCH IS INEFFECTUAL. GAY ACTIVISTS BEG TO DIFFER. THIS PUTS CELEBRITY TYPES IN A REAL BIND.

As usual, the five-day Animal Awareness Week in Washington in June was wall-to-wall denunciations of the "bioresearch/pharmaceutical industrial complex," along with the inevitable comparisons of vivisectionists to Nazis. But this time, the often bullied biomedical research community fired back—specifically, the Foundation for Biomedical Research. Holding press conferences and arming dilettante reporters with acres of peer-reviewed data, the Foundation combated the stock swipes of the AR community: that animal research is painful and unnecessary, and that human testing, computer models, and tissue cultures could achieve the same breakthroughs scientists have achieved by using animals. Nonsense, the Foundation says; nearly every Nobel prize for medicine since the turn of the century required animal testing. It has been instrumental in everything from the polio vaccine to insulin for diabetics to organ-transplant techniques to antibiotics.

Though AR activists try to make us feel sorry for dogs and cats and monkeys, the Foundation explained that mice and rodents make up 85-90 percent of all research animals; only 1 percent are dogs or cats, and 0.3 percent are primates. The Agriculture Department has determined that 54 percent of animals used in medical experiments suffer no pain, 35 percent had pain relieved by anesthesia, and only 11 percent suffered at all—and in their case only because alleviation of that pain would have compromised the data.

Still, the Foundation knows that all the statistics in the world won't stifle some of the most skilled and voguish guerrilla tacticians in the activist business.



Which is why the industry brought along an unlikely ringer in the person of Steve Michael, head of the Washington chapter of ACT-UP. As the AR groups, led by the National Alliance for Animals and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, scurried from press conference to protest to marches to celebrity galas, Michael and his cronies stuck to them like tartar.

ACT-UP, which usually engages in pseudo-terrorist acts against scientists and politicians who do not spend day and night worrying about AIDS, is not commonly aligned with the medical establishment. "I'm not sleeping with the enemy," Michael insisted to me; "it's more like I'm under the sheets with one shoe off." Michael, who has AIDS, is one of the most obnoxious activists in the business—his most famous act was pouring a bottle of Rolling Rock beer over the head of Rep. Steve Gunderson because Gunderson was both a Republican and (at the time) in the closet. Michael remains miffed about the incident: "I'm still waiting for my free case of Rolling Rock. I got those people a lot of press."

The AR movement contends that animal testing in AIDS research is ineffectual, and thus has found itself on Michael's hit list. This conflict puts celebrity types in a real bind. Maybe they would rather go naked than wear fur, but they also like to wear a red ribbon. Maybe nobody wants to be crosswise of the animal-rights movement, but even fewer want to be on the wrong side of AIDS. PETA tried to outflank ACT-UP by staging a press conference at the Mayflower Hotel featuring AIDS activist James Brown and his chocolate lab, Daisy. She looked adoringly at her master as he told a near-empty room, "Gays have always been friendly to animals. They're an incredibly compassionate group of people."

Plenty of mini-skirmishes followed. In the lobby of the National Press Club, a doe-eyed Lisa Lange from PETA yelled at Michael, "You don't represent ACT-UP, you don't represent the AIDS community, and you know that. You're hysterical!" Michael exacted revenge a few nights later at the celebrity gala at the Renaissance Hotel; as attendees skirted around him, averting his withering gaze, he chanted "Your shoes don't match your views."

I spotted a few inconsistencies myself at the animal-rights march down Constitution Avenue a few

days later. Chrissie Hynde, lead singer of the Pretenders, was sporting her snakeskin shoes; they may have been faux, but they nevertheless objectified the snake. And the poor reptile, one conference speaker had already said, suffered from "speciesist" prejudice, with expressions like "snake in the grass." Additionally, I tagged Rue McClanahan, late of *The Golden Girls*, for her Chanel leather purse. "I found it easy to give up meat," McClanahan said. "And I found it easy to give up cheese. Unfortunately, this is the last thing to go."

As in any war, blatant propaganda was passed off as gospel. Example: The National Alliance of Animals claimed that Linda Blair, who played the possessed girl in *The Exorcist*, "remains as popular today as she was twenty years ago when she erupted on to our movie screens." And there was intrigue abounding. AR activists claimed that ACT-UP Golden Gate, a group out of San Francisco that was in alliance with Michael, was in town as the guest of Americans for Medical Progress. That group, they said, is a front for U.S. Surgical Corp., which is accused of selling medical staples to hospitals by demonstrating their effectiveness on live dogs that are later put to sleep. In response, ACT-UP Golden Gate claimed that ACT-UP San Francisco, a PETA ally, wasn't a legitimate ACT-UP chapter.

The big throw-down came at the U.S. Air Arena in Landover, Md., on the first day of what was billed as the "Animal Congress." Both sides showed up in their battle gear. The AR activists looked imposing: gaunt gents with George Clooney-cuts in retro-rayon shirts, escorting indignant lasses in sativa smocks with barrettes and backpacks stuck with pins that read "Eat Beans, Not Beings." Michael led his troops in the traditional West Village Construction Worker Get-Up: Doc Martens and denim cut-offs with handcuff accoutrements and the occasional Andy Gibb silver bicep-choker.

Reporters stood by waiting for bloodshed or witty ripostes. Finally Michael's set sounded the battle cry, recorded on a chant list so no one forgot the rhyme scheme: "People with AIDS, Under Attack, What do We do, ACT-UP, Fight Back!" and "We die, You lie!" The gay animal activists seemed to falter. There were only nine people in Michael's crew, but they swarmed and yelled over each other, making them seem at least three times their number.

This made it impossible to talk issues, though Bill Dollinger of Friends of Animals tried: "What's your stand on fur, hunting, pigeon shoots?" Michael stayed focused on his singular objective: "What about the people with AIDS you've murdered by supporting the Animal Liberation Front, that evil organization that burns down labs and destroys human lives?"

Steve Simmons, a gay PETA activist, tried conciliation: "The common enemy is the AIDS profiteers who profit from our plight in order to carry on needless animal experiments." Michael redrew the divide: "You are Operation Rescue! You're the same people that kill abortion doctors! You're just as vile and evil as everything else on America's extreme!"

Dollinger was ready with a counterstrike: "I've seen you attack a person with AIDS; I've seen you call him a wimpy faggot and hit him!" Michael was unbowed: "You are a wimpy faggot yourself, selling out to a heterosexual organization that marginalizes the lives of people with AIDS!"

ADVICE FOR PROTESTERS: WHEN YOU'RE GETTING ARRESTED, KEEP YOUR HANDS BEHIND YOUR BACK, EVEN IF YOU'RE NOT CUFFED—IT MAKES FOR A BETTER VISUAL.

The animal activists slowly beat a retreat, as Michael's crew prepared for a photo-op arrest. To stay adrenalized, they lashed out at anything that moved, like the Maryland park policewoman who fitted herself with latex gloves to prevent any inadvertent fluid-swapping. Yelled one ACT-UPper: "Your gloves don't match your shoes, you'll see it on the news." As any old hand knows, in a successful protest you don't let up until you're carted away.

I learned many lessons from Michael in street-theater aesthetics and technique. For example, when engaging in civil disobedience, take your Crixivan and replenish those fluids, because, as Michael explained, "We don't want a bunch of AIDS patients dying of sunstroke." Make your placards out of foamcore instead of cardboard because "it's lighter and makes a better sound if you hit it like a drum." When you're getting arrested, keep your hands behind your back, even if you're not cuffed—it's a better visual. Ask the cops, "Is it air conditioned?" before they put you in the paddy wagon, so you can remove unnecessary clothing. Give the TV crews their lapel mikes back so they don't lose your audio.

And most important, don't skimp on plastic combat boots. "They're not as comfortable, they don't breathe, and they're sweaty," he says. "Remember, there's nothing like real leather. It's a great fashion accessory for summer or winter." ♦

Michael Lind: Portrait of the Autist

By David Brooks

What writer, struggling at the keyboard, wouldn't want to be like Michael Lind? He is the Niagara Falls of the profession, a great big unstoppable torrent of words. Faster than most people can think, faster than anybody can research, Michael Lind produces a thundering flow of critique, condemnation, and opinion. Since, at age 33, he published in *The Next American Nation* his Grand Theory of American history, culture, and politics, his output has been unceasing—countless articles and book reviews (on subjects ranging from the flaws in the American jury system to the history of American Indians to the situation in China). He has written a novel called *Powertown* to be published in September; a 10,000-line epic poem to be published next year by Houghton Mifflin; and his new book, *Up From Conservatism*, a history of American conservatism, a history of American liberalism, a statement of the Lindian political creed, a memoir (he is now 34), an exposé of a dirty conspiracy at the heart of American politics, a survey of recent electoral history, a critique of various political philosophies, and a scathing attack on his many political enemies, real and imagined.

That's not prolific, a critic once joked about another author, that's incontinent. But Lind rises above such cheap shots by virtue of his grand and solitary fury. Lind's prose has the two-in-the-morning feel of a solitary figure typing away furiously by the light of a single bulb. The writing has a brittle intensity that can be strangely hypnotic for people in that middle-of-the-night mood. It suggests a person who thinks alone, who comes up with brilliant insights but is unaware that hundreds before have had the same insights; who isn't accustomed to testing his more outlandish concepts in normal conversation; who has constructed an entire world inside his head, with himself as the main player and the rest of his virtual reality peopled by abstract threats like "the national business class" and menaces like "wave after wave of right wing terrorism." But carrying it all along is a fascinating energy, spellbinding hatreds, and the endless flow of words pouring one upon the other.

> THE WRITING SUGGESTS A PERSON WHO THINKS ALONE, WHO COMES UP WITH BRILLIANT INSIGHTS BUT IS UNAWARE THAT HUNDREDS BEFORE HAVE HAD THE SAME INSIGHTS.

The central chapter of *Up From Conservatism* asserts that American conservatism is in fact an immense conspiracy: "What passes for intellectual conservatism is little more than the subsidized propaganda wing of the Republican Party. Public dissent on matters of concern to the U.S. business elite is not tolerated."

The mechanism that makes possible such total control is laid out by Lind: "Republican politicians would adopt a position, in response to pressure from this or that constituency—corporations seeking bigger depreciation allowances, the anti-abortion movement, the NRA—and the intellectuals would undertake to provide scholarly sounding rationalizations for the conservative Republican line." Orders come down from a series of secret summits: "The Party line tended to be adopted at periodic 'conservative summits,' the private meetings once a year or so between conservative editors like [Irving] Kristol, [Norman] Podhoretz and [William F.] Buckley, occasional journalists like Charles Krauthammer, Republican politicians and foundation executives." The most important of these meetings, Lind claims, is the Council on National Policy: "The membership roster of this secretive organization, which does not allow the press to attend its meetings, shows the degree to which mainstream Republicanism blends imperceptibly into far-right extremism."

Other writers of the Left—those who have actually researched their subject, like E.J. Dionne and John Judis—argue that conservatism is actually fractured and that it may well break apart. But Lind sees a vast apparatus that rigidly controls thought and opinion. The opposition to abortion, for example, "was dictated by the religious right to the Republican party, which in turn

dictated it to conservative scholars and journalists, via a few editors and program officers." And no dissent!

This ruthlessly efficient apparatus, Lind claims, is two decades old: "The modern conservative brain trust originated in a scheme hatched in the 1970s by William E. Simon, Irving Kristol and others." One of their goals, he says, was to revive eugenics theory. What we now know as the religious Right, Lind continues, was also created at about the same time: "Today's religious right, far from being a spontaneous rebellion on the part of people of faith, as Christian coalition leaders Pat Robertson and Ralph Reed would have it, was engineered from above by Howard Phillips, a Jew, and Richard Viguerie, a Catholic, and other grass-roots activists in the 1970s." The religious Right was started, Lind asserts, with seed money from the Republican party and is now the dominant part of the conservative movement, which is itself "disproportionately staffed by immigrants and subsidized by foreign interests." The apparatus works in tandem, Lind says, with its "covert, paramilitary terrorist factions," including abortion-clinic bombers, the "sons of Gestapo," and David Koresh.

Conspiracy nuts will be impressed by Lind's account, but he will lose many of those who stop to wonder at his lifelong habit of taking checks from the nefarious network. *Up From Conservatism* is published by the Free Press, the same house that has made its name publishing Irving Kristol, Ralph Reed, and David Brock. Lind is vicious about Rupert Murdoch, the backer of this magazine, but Lind's novel, for which he reportedly received a $100,000 advance, is being published by HarperCollins, Murdoch's publishing house. Those with a Lindian frame of mind will begin to wonder if Lind himself isn't a careful creation of the conservative mafia meant to discredit those who are really out to expose the right-wing beast.

But it's not really fair to scrutinize Lind's assertions, because his writing is not really about argument and evidence; it's all about momentum, a constant and dizzying flow of certitudes. "Today," he opines, "the right is defined by Robertson, Buchanan, and the militia movements." To defend that point in the world the rest of us live in, he would have to explain away the fact that Pat Robertson and Pat Buchanan did not win the Republican nomination, and that William Safire and George Will seem to have greater standing in conservative circles than the members of the Michigan Militia.

> IT'S NEVER NECESSARY TO ADDRESS COUNTER-EVIDENCE IN LIND'S HERMETICALLY SEALED UNIVERSE. WHAT'S IMPORTANT IS VELOCITY.

But in Lind's hermetically sealed universe, it's never necessary to address counter-evidence and complexity. What's important is velocity. *Up From Conservatism* careens from issue to issue. One minute you're reading Lind's analysis of OECD figures on income inequality, the next he's spinning his theory of constitutional jurisprudence. In one chapter entitled "Three Conservative Hoaxes," Lind tackles conservative economics, education reform, and welfare reform, throws in the Strategic Defense Initiative, health-care reform, and FDA reform, and gets in a few words about eugenics (a recurring obsession) besides. Others might have written a long book on, say, the Republican economic platform—going back to Friedman and Stigler, Buchanan, Mundell, and Feldstein—but Lind spits out the whole subject in just three pages! And in that tiny section, relying on such sources as the *New York Times* Week in Review section, he asserts to his satisfaction that Republican economic ideas are not only completely wrong, but willfully wrong, a hoax. (At one point, Lind criticizes Nathan Glazer, Jeane Kirkpatrick, and others for writing on subjects such as administration and foreign policy on which he says they have no expertise.)

To convey some sense of Lind's frantic pace, I include an outline of the topics covered in this book on pages 15 through 26 (in a Michael Lind outline, there are no supporting points):

I. Republican Realignment in 1994 (*p. 15*)

II. Overclass Revolution, Triumph of Wealthy (*p. 16*)

III. Party Switching Since 1994 (*p. 17*)

IV. Analysis of 1992 Election Results (*p. 17*)

V. History of American Electoral Swings 1800-1951 (*pp. 18-19*)

VI. U.S. Not a Two-Party System—Samuel Lubell Thesis (*p. 18*)

VII. Survey of Global Trends in World's Democracies (*pp. 19-20*)

VIII. Postwar Productivity Gains Declined Post-1973, Wage Stagnation (*pp. 20-21*)

IX. Achievements of the New Deal (*pp. 21-22*)

X. Problems with Civil Rights Movement (*p. 22*)

XI. Rise of Southern Republicans (*p. 22*)

XII. Analysis of 1948 Presidential Campaign (*pp. 23-24*)

XIII. Henry Wallace to George

Wallace—History of Democratic Party (*pp. 23-25*)

XIV. End of Ideology Thesis (*p. 25*)

XV. Rise of New Left Activists (*p. 25*)

XVI. Influence of Jews on American Left (*p. 26*)

The most welcome sentence in this book reads: "There are two issues I do not address in this book."

Serenity does not come easily to men who are aware of their own towering genius (look at Ezra Pound), and in the memoir sections of *Up From Conservatism* Lind makes clear that his life has been a painful quest for intellectual honesty. While he formerly worked at conservative institutions and now works at liberal ones, he says, "my political journey has been far less dramatic than a switch from left to right. . . . My political views have scarcely changed since college." His goal, he writes, has been always to support the forces most likely "to return to the tradition of the great age of midcentury liberalism of 1932-68." Lind writes that since childhood he has ranked Lyndon Johnson among the greatest of American presidents and that the "New Deal liberals, between FDR and Johnson, were responsible for most of what is worthwhile about contemporary America."

So where did the young writer, fresh out of college, go in search of the heir to Hubert Humphrey and Lyndon Johnson? To William F. Buckley, Jr., of course. With Buckley's support, Lind was able to edit a conservative magazine called *Scrutiny* while a graduate student at Yale , which may seem an odd way to champion what Lind depicts as his unswerving pursuit of Humphrey/Johnson policies. (Lind modestly omits any mention of *Scrutiny* in his brief recounting of his Yale days.)

Then Lind accepted a job at *National Review*. Now, it so happens that I held a similar slot at *NR* a year or two before. I did not detect a flowering of Great Society liberalism at the magazine. But obviously Lind by his very presence elevated the job status and saw deeper. When I held it, the job was your basic entry-level position for kids just out of school, generously offered and gratefully accepted. But by the time Lind took over, it seems, it had become a major position from which it was possible to view the very inner workings of the conservative elite. In the mid-eighties, Lind asserts, "the Republican Party under Reagan appeared to be mellowing and moving to the center," and so it seemed likely to Lind that conservatism would evolve along Great Society lines. Many of us, lacking Lind's insight, were unaware of this at the time.

Michael Lind

Kent Lemon

Now when I left *NR* at age 23, I felt lucky to get any job. But as he makes clear, Lind was on a mission to expound his New Deal/Great Society principles. He writes in this book that in the mid-eighties he especially admired Gary Hart. So where did he go to work in search of promoting these liberal ideas updated by Hart? He decided to join the staff of the Heritage Foundation as a "fellow" (he says). But his talents were put to poor use there. The most he could do to advance the cause of the New Deal and Great Society in those years was to publish op-eds trashing ideas like the Citizens Corps, a national service plan put forward by Sen. Sam Nunn and Rep. Dave McCurdy. (This body of work too is modestly omitted from *Up From Conservatism*.)

Lind moved on, as his intellectual quest took him to job after job, to the State Department and then to the *National Interest*, the foreign policy magazine published by Irving Kristol. It was there that he watched the 1992 Republican convention, a pivotal moment in intellectual history. As Pat Buchanan spoke to this convention, Lind was shocked to discover that American conservatives were not in fact the heirs to Lyndon Johnson and Gary Hart, but were, astonishingly, conservatives. Many of us saw the Buchanan speech as a slightly more aggressive version of frequently expressed, though not universally accepted, conservative ideas. But remember that Lind operates in his own world, elevated from ours. The speech, he says, "produced an exo-

dus of leading young intellectuals formerly associated with the neoconservative right." That is to say, Michael Lind.

Shortly thereafter, he went to work for *Harper's*. A bit after that, to the *New Republic*. A year after that, he accepted some sort of mysterious role at the *New Yorker.* That is where the scourge of the Overclass, the man who despises Manhattanites with their nannies, now finds himself—working for Tina Brown.

Lind appears to realize in retrospect that two of the loci of evil in America are the two men who gave him his early jobs, William F. Buckley, Jr. and Irving Kristol. Others would see these men as unlikely villains, since they have done so much to advance the thinking and careers of so many, since Buckley is legendary for his friendships, since Kristol is equally legendary for his geniality. But Lind, seeing things others don't, heaps obloquy on the two, especially Kristol. (Though to be fair, his criticism of his former employer is not as great as that directed toward the South, the region where he grew up.)

And so having broken with his past, Lind stands alone, with nothing to protect him from the conservative *über*-plot but his role at the *New Yorker*, his contributions to the *New York Review of Books,* and his various book contracts. What Lind really needs is a magazine all his own. For who else in American life would feel himself qualified to write, on a weekly basis, editorials on political matters, think-pieces on intellectual history, poems for the literary section, short stories, reviews, satires, and, it seems only fitting, letters to the editor appraising his own work? Until *The Lind and I* comes into being, or until he finally accepts his proper role as a late-night talk-show host, we will have to be content with more sporadic signposts of his flowering talent.

It seems worth mentioning, in closing, that Lind's forthcoming *Powertown* represents another burst of personal growth. The first paragraph of that work announces the emergence of high literary style:

"The eagle slants. It hungers through space, its talons unknotting, its wingspan ragged as a saw blade." The plot spans the range of Washington life, from elite society—private parties, inaugural balls—to crack-gang hangouts. The novel is Lind's attempt to achieve a Disraeli-like intimacy with the high and the low. The dialogue demonstrates how Lind has mastered the African-American argot: "'Oh, lawdy,' says Velma. 'Somebody else got shot. Lawd a'mercy.'"

And so *Up From Conservatism* is aptly named, for that is what we can expect from Lind, that he will ever ascend, up, up, up. ♦

Books

School Days, Fool Days

By Richard Starr

There's no denying how pleasurable academic success is—sailing through childhood on the good ship lollipop of easy A's, fawning teachers, and proud parents. So pleasant an experience should be universal, no?

Such would seem to be the guiding philosophy of our schools. And by this measure, though only by this measure, they are among the most effective public institutions. American students lead the world in their high opinion of themselves, an exaggerated estimate of their abilities that is encouraged deliberately from an early age. Laurence Steinberg puts it well in his new book *Beyond the Classroom* when he writes that typical public schools "expect little, penalize virtually nothing, and reward even the barest of achievement."

Beyond the Classroom (Simon & Schuster, 223 pages, $22) is a popularization of a study by Steinberg and two colleagues of more than 20,000 teenagers carried out over the past ten years. This is social science in the grand tradition: Platoons of researchers deployed in nine sites across the country; volumes of data gathered and analyzed from thousands of students, parents, and teachers; the whole enterprise underwritten by handsome grants from the U.S. Department of Education and several eminent foundations.

One cracks such a book with exceedingly low expectations. The very scale of the enterprise suggests it will feature conclusions tepid enough to pass muster in committee and calculated to stroke the grant-givers; its academic credentials seem to promise jargon-clotted prose. The wonder here is not only that Steinberg surpasses these expectations but that he has much to say that is reasonable and interesting. There is a bit of ritualistic puffery in the "why-this-study-is-unique-and-path-clearing" genre (probably a recapitulation of the original grant proposal), but on the whole *Beyond the Classroom* is a blessedly cant-free and at times even wise book.

Steinberg contends that school reform has failed and that what is needed now is *student* reform.

Indeed, he thinks institutional reforms over the past decade and a half may have produced scant results precisely because the students are so obtuse ("disengaged" is his term). He is not making a Pollyannaish argument that the schools are just fine; rather, he argues that the life of students outside the classroom is the telling factor in academic success or failure. Unless students are serious about the business of learning, other reforms are doomed to disappoint: "Most discussions of contemporary education overemphasize the responsibility of school to be engaging and ignore the obligation of the student to be 'engageable.'"

Steinberg is admirably unwilling to let the kids off the hook just because their schools may be less than ideal, or even plain awful. Teenage students are not at the mercy of their environment; indeed, along with their parents and teachers, principals and school boards, they *create* that environment. Some kids, as he points out, excel even in the worst schools, and more could do so if they made the effort. Why so few exert themselves is what he and his colleagues set out to find.

The answer: "Students believe, with some accuracy, that there are no real consequences of doing poorly in school, as long as their performance is not poor enough to threaten graduation." The effect is to turn students into slackers—which is magnified by a fact that will come as no surprise to anyone alert to human nature: "It appears that students are motivated much more to avoid the negative consequences of failure than to reap the positive rewards of success."

How to change this calculus? Steinberg sketches three possible approaches. The first remedy is the well-known favorite of reformers: higher academic standards set by schools. The potential obstacle here is so great Steinberg resorts to euphemism: "If we go the route of raising minimum standards . . . we must be prepared to respond to students who do not meet the standards." Translation: The standards will have no effect unless schools can summon the will to flunk those who don't meet them. Then the schools must be prepared to withstand gale-force protests when it turns out, as it almost inevitably will at first, that minority students are overrepresented among those who flunk.

> STEINBERG IS UNWILLING TO LET THE KIDS OFF THE HOOK JUST BECAUSE THEIR SCHOOLS MAY BE LESS THAN IDEAL, OR EVEN PLAIN AWFUL. TEENAGERS ARE NOT AT THE MERCY OF THEIR ENVIRONMENT.

A second and related approach would be to tighten university admission standards—this would expand the incentive for high achievement that now exists only for the tiny percentage who hope to attend a handful of highly selective universities. Do the obstacles here even need to be spelled out? Here is a partial list of the constituencies that would mount the barricades: every institution of higher learning and its political allies; every high-school student who hopes to attend college and his parents; every legislator who hopes to live out his three score and ten.

The third approach is to redefine the problem. Some students *are* motivated to succeed, not just to skirt failure. What makes them tick? Why do they care to get A's, and not merely to graduate? What can we do to produce more strivers?

Hard-working students tend to share certain traits. They have what Steinberg calls a "healthy attributional style"—they attribute their triumphs to effort and, just as important, blame themselves for their failures. These same students also tend to have "authoritative" parents, firm but not overbearing, who are involved in their schools. Parental interest translates into greater effort by children, though *how* parents involve themselves makes most of the difference. Monitoring homework and cracking the whip don't matter much. But showing up at school matters a great deal. Hard-working, ambitious students also hang out with their own kind: Peers are influential, for good as well as ill. To the extent parents can steer their kids toward groups of diligent students, "peer pressure" will turn out to be a wonderful thing.

Finally, successful students treat school as a full-time occupation. Working part-time jobs is a recipe for doing badly in school. The key is how much time is spent on the job. More than 20 hours a week will almost certainly take a toll on grades and interest—a threshold surpassed by half of all working seniors. (The same is true of overindulgence in sports and extracurricular activities.) Those who think steady employment in high school builds character and teaches diligence will want to ponder this bit of news: "Our longitudinal studies show that working long hours *leads* to increased alcohol and marijuana use. Teenagers with between $200 and $300 of discretionary income per month have a lot more money to spend on drugs and alcohol than their peers, and this is one of the things they spend their earnings on."

Intriguingly, Steinberg and com-

pany found that the ethnic academic pecking order in America—from Asian to white to Latino and black—can be explained by these factors without recourse to the bedeviling bell-curve debate. Asian students seem to hold themselves entirely accountable for success or failure, have a heightened fear of failure, and associate with peers in the same boat. (They might like to hang with the slackers, but the slackers don't necessarily welcome them.) Indeed, their peers are influential enough to compensate for ineffective parents. These qualities tend to fade as Asians acculturate to the American way: "Our findings, as well as those from several other studies, suggest that becoming Americanized is detrimental to youngsters' achievement, and terrible for their overall mental health." At the other end, black and Latino students are more likely to believe that innate ability and luck explain success and failure, are more likely to feel that getting B's and C's is sufficient, are more likely to have friends who subvert parental authority, and, most consequential of all, "don't really believe that doing poorly in school will hurt their chances for future success."

The good news, then, is that parents who bestir themselves can push their children in the right direction. However mortifying it will be to their teenaged brood, parents who march into the principal's office early and often, consult with teachers, and generally make their presence felt at school will probably raise the grades of their offspring. Similarly, close supervision of the social life of teenagers by their parents would seem to be in order—an effort school-choice programs would assist by allowing canny parents to engage in the wholesale rejection of peer groups they disapprove of.

The bad news is that the oak grows right where the acorn falls. For just as too many students today can't be bothered to pay attention to their studies, an alarmingly high number of parents can't be bothered to pay attention to their teenagers. Steinberg calls these the "disengaged parents" and puts their number at 25 percent. What he reports is dispiriting: "We found that about one-fourth of students are allowed to decide what classes to take in school without discussing the decision with their parents, that about 30 percent of parents did not know how their child spends his or her spare time. And parental disengagement is not just limited to their youngsters' school lives: one-fourth of the students we surveyed said their family 'never' did anything together for fun, and only 30 percent said their parents spend some time talking with them each day."

TOO OFTEN, IDEAS FOR SCHOOL REFORM ARE THE PEDAGOGICAL EQUIVALENT OF "LOSE-WEIGHT-BY-EATING-MORE-FAT" DIETS. IS IT NOT SUSPICIOUS WHEN REMEDIES ARE *PLEASANT*?

Steinberg's analysis in *Beyond the Classroom* is altogether believable. Its essential honesty can be discerned in the fact that his prescriptions—greater effort by students, increased oversight from parents, an upward redefinition of expectations from "getting by" to excellence, curtailment of after-school jobs—will be resisted. That education might require drudgery, might ineluctably involve repetition, suffering, and sweating, is too seldom acknowledged (though we don't flinch from this truth when it comes to excellence in, say, athletics or the arts).

Too often, ideas for school reform are the pedagogical equivalent of "lose-weight-by-eating-more-fat" diets. Consider such hardy perennials as smaller class sizes, computers on every desk, and higher pay for teachers. Is it not suspicious that these are all exceedingly *pleasant* remedies?

Beyond Steinberg's prescriptions lies a larger question about public education his book only hints at. It is a commonplace in analyses of public enterprises with disappointing results to blame the "unintended consequences" of past reforms. This turn of phrase suggests there may be a way out, since no one wants the results we see. But what do we do when the consequences we dislike *were* intended?

Many people will say that it is a good and humane thing that children are no longer humiliated in school when they don't perform up to par, that the social costs of failing kids are not worth the academic gains that would result if more kids had to fear flunking out.

Every roadside carnival worth its saltwater taffy has an attraction called the moonwalk that looks like a grounded hot-air balloon with a giant air-mattress inside. Kids take off their shoes and bounce around inside. The cushiony surface is a great equalizer. The klutziest can bounce around next to the most athletic. True, the inflated surface is too soft for handsprings or backflips. It turns every kid into a klutz. But unlike a trampoline, no one gets hurt. Everyone falls down and bounces right back up. No consequences. No tears. Just like the schools.

After the moonwalk, will we be able to stand gravity again? ♦

Books

Roddy Doyle, Bouncer

By J. Bottum

It is not voice that makes Roddy Doyle's novels run, though ever since his first—*The Commitments*, a comic 1987 tale of a gang of poor Dublin kids trying to form an American-style soul band—the Irish novelist has garnered praise for giving realistic modern voice to the poverty-stricken characters of urban Ireland. Neither is it narrative—Doyle's high-speed, almost drunken lurch through storytelling—though his 1993 Booker Prize-winner, *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*, was celebrated for its ten-year-old boy's narration of the break-up of his parents' marriage.

What really makes a Roddy Doyle novel run is *bounce*, the mad joy and insane hope with which his working-class characters face a joyless world their creator has stacked hopelessly against them. And when the bounce runs down—as it has in his new book, *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors* (Viking, 226 pages, $22.95)—what remains is only voice and narrative, which prove ever less compelling as his horrifying account of an abused and alcoholic Irish housewife gradually tires out its readers.

Curiously, however, *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors* is the only Doyle novel in which a character's action leads to any success, the only one that could end with its heroine declaring, "I'd done something good." Born in 1958, Doyle was teaching grammar school after his graduation from University College, Dublin, when he finished *The Commitments*. Unable to interest a publisher, he borrowed 5,000 pounds and published the novel himself under the imprint of "King Farouk" (Dublin rhyming slang for "book"). The novel eventually earned him over 70,000 pounds and laid the foundation of the Rabbitte family in the fictional Dublin ghetto of Barrytown on which he built his next two works: *The Snapper* (1990) and *The Van* (1991).

> THIS IMPOVERISHED URBAN IRELAND IS NOT THE HISTORY-HAUNTED EMERALD ISLE THAT W. B. YEATS, JOHN SYNGE, SEAN O'CASEY, FLANN O'BRIEN, AND EVEN JAMES JOYCE STILL BELIEVED IN.

Nothing much ever comes to good in Barrytown. With the help of a balding, fifty-year-old American trumpeter who once jammed with the soul-crooner Joe Tex, Jimmy Rabbitte manages to persuade his pale friends to form the band they fondly imagine will change themselves and Ireland forever. "Say it once, say it loud," he whoops in an off-key James Brown soul-shout, "I'm black an' I'm proud." But after some small successes, the Commitments collapse in acrimonious wrangling and the novel ends with Jimmy's return to his record collection and his dreams.

In *The Snapper*, Jimmy's twenty-year-old unmarried sister Sharon is pregnant. But rather than admit that the father is a middle-aged neighbor, she vainly tries to convince everyone of her one-night stand with a dreamy Spanish sailor off the docks. In *The Van*, Jimmy's father and his friend Bimbo buy a decrepit food wagon and prowl the streets of Dublin during the 1990 World Cup, poisoning hungry soccer fans with undercooked fish-and-chips and trying to dodge the health inspectors. *The Van* too ends with a return to the way things were and always have been, as the friendship between Jimmy, Sr. and Bimbo breaks under the strain of the long hours working together.

Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha is a darker novel with an even darker ending, in which Doyle gives up straightforward narrative and tries to follow the odd jumps and segues in the thoughts and experiences of a city boy growing up in the 1960s while his family falls apart. But even *Paddy Clarke* derives its success from the energy with which its young narrator moves through his blasted world.

Doyle's impoverished urban Ireland is no longer the history-haunted, mostly rural Emerald Isle that W.B. Yeats, John Synge, Sean O'Casey, Flann O'Brien, and even James Joyce still believed in. And yet, Doyle still retains some old-time Irish in him, for his novels—especially in their early stages, while hope and energy still run high—bounce along on exuberance and expectation. Doyle's angry young men have only to hoist a few down at the pub, and the world again seems amenable to grand and hilarious plans. The drunken narrative matches its characters drink for drink—perpetually balanced between the maudlin and the truculent, that tipsy point where nearly everything seems funny.

It is a rule of fiction, however, that heroes and victims should never tell their own stories if they know themselves to be either heroes or victims. Like all success-

With this issue, Contributing Editor J. Bottum assumes the duties of fiction critic of The Weekly Standard.

ful presentations of a child's world in adult fiction—like Dickens's *David Copperfield*, Hughes's *A High Wind in Jamaica*, even Kosinski's *The Painted Bird*—Doyle's *Paddy Clarke* works because its narrating boy understands neither his own heroism nor the extent to which he is a victim. But Doyle stumbles in *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors*, allowing his victim-heroine Paula Spencer to tell her own story of alcoholism and wife abuse with full self-pitying consciousness.

A pretty working-class girl in a world in which all teenage girls are either "tight" or "sluts," Paula falls for a sexy boy named Charlo the first time she sees him. There are some undeveloped suggestions in the novel that under better social conditions Charlo might have made something of himself, but after a blissful honeymoon, the marriage turns sour. When Paula, queasy with the morning-sickness of her first pregnancy, snaps at her husband, he knocks her to the floor.

The remaining years of her marriage pass in an alcoholic haze, the occasional good times buried in the endless catalogue of abuse: burns and rapes and kicks, beating after beating. But, catching her husband eyeing their eldest daughter one day, Paula at last awakens from her haze and inertia, and smashes Charlo with a frying pan—blow after blow, driving him bloody and dazed from the house. A year later, when Charlo is gunned down by the police in a bungled bank robbery, Paula sits down to sift it all out of her damaged memories.

The Woman Who Walked Into Doors contains some precise observations. The look Paula sees in Charlo's face as he leers at their daughter is not lust, but hatred; her own mother's embarrassment at Paula's early menarche expresses itself as anger; her sober memory of her drunken episodes remains uncertain and drunken.

But the overall effect is far from precise, as Doyle's attempt to pack in every known symptom of a battered wife makes Paula into little more than a generic victim with none of the humor and grit that make his bleak world bearable and believable. And the generic quality of *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors* has the unintended effect of suggesting a generic quality in Doyle's earlier work. By giving an alcoholic, abused woman the same Dublin voice he gave a teenage rock-and-roller, an unwed mother, and an old man in his Barrytown trilogy, and the same pattern of memory he gave a ten-year-old boy in *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*, Doyle demonstrates not a capacious vision but a profound limit to his imagination.

In 1994, the BBC produced Doyle's four-part television play, *The Family*, which is said to have had much the same effect in Ireland that Ingmar Bergman's 1973 television film *Scenes from a Marriage* had in Sweden, and which may have been a decisive factor in the recent Irish vote that legalized divorce. Away from Ireland's envenomed social politics, however, the effort didn't travel well, and *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors* seems to suffer equally from its author's new-found desire to instruct his readers. What's sad is not just that Doyle has begun to use his art as a kind of over-easy social propaganda. (Who, after all, is in *favor* of wife-beating?) What's sad is rather that—in order to forge in the smithy of his bestsellers the uncreated social conscience of his race—Doyle finds it necessary to strip his characters of the bounce that used to make his novels run. ♦

Architecture

Pleasure Dome

By Henry Hope Reed

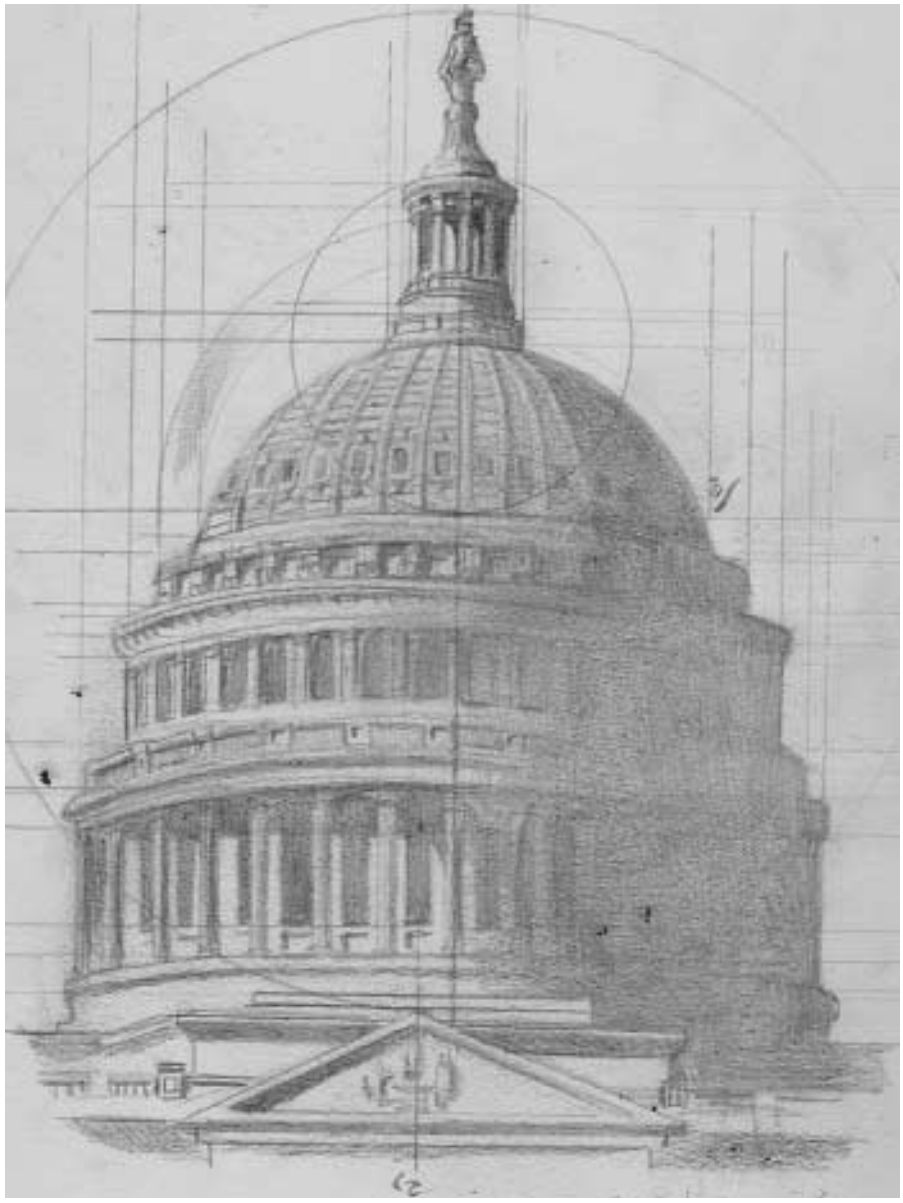
No image is more frequently seen on television than the United States Capitol. Day after day, night after night, it is there—behind a reporter, a politician, an anchorman; in documentaries, sitcoms, and movies. Usually, the view is confined to the Capitol's massive dome. That is the picture that best identifies the nation.

It has left in the dust an equally vivid image: the Statue of Liberty. Seldom is a statue—even a colossus—the symbol of a nation. One thinks of "Mother Russia," outside of Volgograd, but this statue (also a colossus) remains relatively unfamiliar. The Kremlin represents Russia. And in America, the Capitol is number one.

Not often is the seat of a legislature a national symbol. Only one other seems to have as prominent a place: the New Palace of Westminster in London. One glimpse of the famous clocktower, with its bell, Big Ben, and we know that the story pertains to England. Can anyone recognize other legislative buildings? The Reichstag in Berlin, the Palazzo Montecitorio in Rome, the Palais Bourbon in Paris? Paris is represented by the Arc de Triomphe and the Eiffel Tower, Rome by St. Peter's. Berlin? How about the Brandenburger Tor?

Aside from their status as symbols, the Capitol and Westminster

Henry Hope Reed is president of Classical America. His book on the United States Capitol will appear next year.



Sean Delonas

share the distinction of being two of the most lavishly decorated buildings of their kind. It is well worth looking beyond their shells to realize that ornament is everywhere—not just in paintings, but in statues, reliefs, and polychromy, in carved wood and plaster detail. Decoration is found not just on the walls, but on the ceilings and floors. In London, most of this work was executed after the disastrous fire of 1834 (which explains the official name "New Palace of Westminster"). The post-fire reconstruction must have been one of the most important undertakings, not just in architecture, but in all the arts in the England of the last century.

So too with the extension of the Capitol, as far as this country was concerned. The construction here took place in the 1850s, shortly after the completion of most of the work across the sea. But whereas the English palace is wholly Gothic, our Capitol is thoroughly Classical. The ceilings and floors are paved in the same encaustic tile (known as Minton) as at Westminster.

There is also plenty of sculpture, though not as plentiful as in London, and an abundance of frescoes, where the American building has the edge. This last is seen, on a giant scale, in "The Apotheosis of Washington," placed at the center of the great dome. At a distance, few realize that the fresco is over 3,000 square feet. Not to be overlooked either is the Capitol's painted and molded work—the Senate wing boasting more of the painted, the House more of the molded.

Yet a third factor links the Capitol and its British cousin: Neither has been touched by modern art. One finds hardly a trace of it in either place, which is astonishing in a world awash in modernism.

When the East Front of the Capitol was expanded in the early 1960s, a corridor was created on the ground floor for a much-used visitors' space. In their design, the architects made use of massive Doric columns and Doric detail, thus preserving harmony with the older parts of the building—a rare recent example of public architecture executed in the Classical.

The West is lucky to have two key public buildings that have, in every way, repelled fashion and remained loyal to tradition. The U.S. Treasury let us down when, with the new 100-dollar bill, it opted for visual nihilism. Let us hope that it goes no further. And that the Capitol continues to stand gloriously Classical, while Westminster stands gloriously Gothic. ♦

Microsoft scrambled to meet technical problems besetting its new electronic journal, Slate, edited by Michael Kinsley.
— News item, June 26, 1996

Parody