GELERNTER ON BELLOW

the weekly Standard

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# It's His Party

## *The Rise of John Kasich*

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

the weekly Standard

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*Cover by Sean Delonas*



## Books & Arts





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# Notorious B.I.G.

With government-sponsored affirmative action in retreat everywhere, you might think federal bureaucrats would hesitate before spending tax dollars to promote racially divisive programs. Wrong. Consider the annual "training and development" conference that will be held in Washington this August by Blacks in Government (BIG), an organization of black public-sector employees. According to BIG's promotional literature, the conference has been "recognized and endorsed" by President Clinton himself, as well as by a number of federal agencies.

What exactly goes on at a BIG conference? Last year's meeting in Atlanta began with a "Freedom Vigil" held for the benefit of "all Americans who fear for the future of our country in the face of the conservative threat to the freedoms for which this country was founded." Oscar Eason, Jr., BIG's president, touted the vigil by denouncing "the efforts of a conservative Congress to turn back the clock on the progress of minorities and women in America."

At one of the group's earlier annual conferences, Louis Farrakhan gave a rousing speech in which he explained how "the white boys"—whom he described as "The Enemy"—had invented AIDS, injected thousands of black people with cancer, created inner-city street gangs, and secretly added chemicals to beef in an effort to control the black birth rate, among innumerable other crimes. Farrakhan ended his address by describing how greedy, clannish Jews "run the world." The crowd erupted in applause.

Who pays for this nonsense? You do. Government employees who want to attend the BIG conference do so on salaried time, under the guise of "training." Federal agencies pick up the registration fee, too, which is more than $300 per person. With more than 3,000 government employees expected to attend this year . . . well, you do the math. It's quite a subsidy.

## The Lawyer He Deserves

Bill Clinton is famously concerned about his place in history. He should rest easy; his place is secure. He has it all to himself: No president has ever before been credibly accused of exposing himself to a strange woman and demanding oral sex. No president has even been incredibly accused of it, for that matter. And we wager no president ever will be again.

When future scholars write the story, they should reserve special scorn for Robert Bennett, Clinton's lawyer in the Paula Jones matter. The man simply cannot stay out of the news. And every time he talks, he embarrasses his client. For months now, Bob Bennett has publicly insisted the president has no memory of meeting Paula Jones—and vividly remembers never touching her. Last week, Bennett's defense team leaked word that it had secured a deposition from one of Jones's former employers, who was prepared to testify that she was a tramp—and that he had slept with her. On NBC's *Meet the Press*, Bennett himself promised "some surprises" in the case, and allowed as how he was prepared—on behalf of the president of the United States—to "put her reputation at issue" if need be.

In rape prosecutions, this is known as the "nuts and sluts" defense. Feminist organizations, after an eternity of hypocritical silence, finally went berserk. Bennett was forced to backtrack. But the p.r. damage was done.

The president's insurance companies no longer permit Bob Bennett to count his media appearances as billable hours, according to *Newsweek*. They're probably annoyed that Clinton hired Bennett in the first place.

## The Appease China Sweepstakes (cont.)

Four months ago, this page awarded top honors in our 1997 Appease China Sweepstakes to Democratic senator Dianne Feinstein of California. She had proposed that China and America appoint a commission on human rights that "would point out the successes and failures" of both sides, "both Tiananmen Square and Kent State."

That's pretty mind-boggling. But this week a competitor in the appeasement/moral equivalence sweepstakes emerged. In an article in the Business section of the *Washington Post* titled "Prison Labor: Can U.S. Point Finger at China?" Paul Blustein quotes James Feinerman, professor of Asian Legal Studies at Georgetown University. Feinerman thinks it is the "height of hypocrisy to get on our high horse about China making its prisoners work due to the fact we do the same thing with our prisoners." Of course, we don't sentence people for speaking up for democracy, attempting to pray as they wish, or offending the political authorities. But Feinerman still asks, in the tradition of moral equivalizers everywhere, "Who are we to argue with their choices?" (The answer, incidentally: We live under a free and just regime; the Chinese don't; and we should do what we can to help them achieve at least minimal levels of civil and political rights.)

# Scrapbook


But that wasn't the end of a week filled with amazing comments about China. Two days later, Robert Novak's syndicated column advised China to cut a deal with the Vatican in order to mute criticism of Chinese religious persecution by the U.S. Catholic Conference. Novak quotes his friend Jude Wanniski (described as "a staunch and vigorous friend of China"—a rare Novakian understatement) as advising the Chinese ambassador to tell his government to "come to terms with Christianity." Novak, joining Wanniski in the role of adviser to Beijing, in turn urged the Chinese government to sign "a concordat such as Mussolini negotiated with the Vatican in 1929."

And speaking of "staunch and vigorous" friends of China, Henry Kissinger also weighed in this week. He testified Thursday before the Senate Commerce Committee in favor of most-favored-nation status for China, arguing that "cooperation with China is an essential element of U.S. foreign policy in Asia." On the same day, in New York, Chinese dissident Harry Wu spoke powerfully against MFN, pointing out that the great bulk of the profit from foreign investment "benefits the Chinese government; very little goes to the people."

We're with Harry, not Henry—or Bob, or Jude—but we're grateful that Novak has introduced the Mussolini analogy, which is all too apt. After all, remember how well constructive engagement worked back then? Which of China's neighbors gets to be Abyssinia?

## Death and the *Times*

It's hard to imagine a high-profile death-penalty case without a *New York Times* editorial denouncing executions. And sure enough, no sooner had the Oklahoma City bombing jury pronounced Timothy McVeigh guilty than the Sages of Times Square weighed in with their ritual denunciation, a lead editorial titled "Death and Timothy McVeigh."

"We see capital punishment . . . as morally wrong and against the Constitution's ban on cruel and unusual punishments," the *Times* declared. Now, the death penalty surely isn't unusual, so the *Times* must think that its exceptional cruelty is what makes execution unconstitutional. But the editorial then proceeds to recommend life without parole, since for a 29-year-old like McVeigh "that would be the most excruciating punishment of all." Huh?

About as excruciating as trying to parse the logic of the *Times* editorial.

## "Book" Notes from All Over

Contributing editor David Gelernter writes to The Scrapbook:

"Those of us who are interested in the Bible and also computers have just had a strange week. (I don't know how many people belong in this dual category, but the number can't be small. Neither topic is what you would call out-of-the-way.) People kept asking us to hold forth on a new book called *The Bible Code*, which purports to reveal vital messages hidden in the Hebrew text and just now decrypted by sophisticated computer analysis, in the nick of time for Simon & Schuster to make a lot of money. One outfit even asked me if I would debate the author on TV. The idea that you would have to be an expert on the Bible or computation or anything else to comment on this book is a victory for the publisher and another defeat for common sense. But as we know, there's a sucker born every minute. I can't wait to find out what vital messages can be extracted under torture from the Passaic phone book or a collected edition of *Hustler*. A famous sentence in the Talmud says that one is not to make of the Torah 'a crown with which to magnify yourself, or a spade with which to dig.' *The Bible Code* is contemptible."

## Don't Be Afraid of Deep Blue

In "Be Afraid" (May 26), Charles Krauthammer has approached a controversial subject and addressed it with original insights and engaging writing. The fearful implications that he draws from Deep Blue's celebrated chess victory over Garry Kasparov, however, are misplaced.

First, there is nothing worrisome about a machine's passing the Turing test for artificial intelligence (which is passed when we cannot tell whether a certain task was performed by a man or a machine). Red lights pass it all the time; a traffic light can stop cars just as easily as a traffic cop can.

Nor, as Kasparov and Krauthammer both claim, should human beings be afraid of things beyond our understanding. Who understands how a phone call is patched through, how a car runs, how a television receives signals, how a fax is transmitted, how the newspaper appears on our doorstep every morning, how an e-mail message is received an instant after it is sent? If we feared everything, or even many things, beyond our understanding, the only people who could cope would be Luddites.

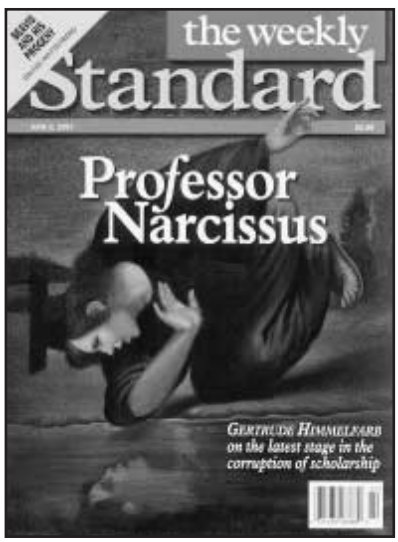
It is hardly terrifying that no man can beat a machine in chess, any more than it is terrifying that no man can alert a community to impending disaster better than a machine. It would be terrifying—or at least very strange—if Kasparov responded to his defeat by leaving his wife and declaring his eternal love for Deep Blue. But he responded in an all too human way: with petulant anger at being denied access to Deep Blue's computer logs during the match.

Mark Gerson
Short Hills, NJ

Charles Krauthammer's otherwise fine article presupposes the belief in an evolutionary system as the means to explain man's present state. He draws an analogy between human evolution—the theory that a single-cell organism clawed its way into a human being over a vast period of time—and the development of the computer. Under this belief system, the advance of computer science is frightening indeed. But if one looks at the rapidly progressing technology of the computer from the creationist point of view, things don't look so bad.

No matter how stunning Kasparov's defeat by Deep Blue may seem, one must remember that Deep Blue is a machine. Not only is it a machine, it is a machine that was programmed by intelligent men and women to play the best game of chess possible. The swift advances in computer science during the past few decades are testaments to the abilities of computer creators, not the machines.

When God created man, He put into play all the good and bad that His creation would ever accomplish. God, however, has the ultimate power to put




an end to His creation at any time. Man, God's greatest creation, only has the power and ability that God has given. Computers, no matter how closely they may come to imitating human thought processes, will always be subservient to man. The old adage that computers are only as good as the people who program them will always hold true. If computers ever get to the point of somehow taking control of their creator, their creator can always pull the plug. The key question is, Will man be wise enough to do that?

Gregory Giordano
New Port Richey, FL

Like Garry Kasparov, Charles Krauthammer has blundered and panicked in the face of Deep Blue. Krauthammer marvels that Deep Blue in Game 2 displayed the "look and feel" of a grandmaster. But what does this mean? Chess is reducible to a game of calculation. Grandmasters calculate, or do rough calculations, far better than lesser players. In short, Krauthammer has it backwards: Rather than say that Deep Blue played with the "nuance and subtlety" of a grandmaster, he ought to recognize that grandmasters sometimes manage to replicate the calculations of computers.

Edward Whelan
Arlington, VA

Having finished the May 26 issue, I am a trifle too amused. Charles Krauthammer previewed the doom we shall encounter at the hands of omnipotent supercomputers descended from Deep Blue, which even now comes perilously close to thwarting the benign intentions of its human masters. Supposedly, the recent 2-1 chess victory points to a future where humans will be at the mercy of cold and calculating silicon masters bent on little other than the destruction of humanity. We should be afraid—and paging Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Directly following this dire warning is an article by James Q. Wilson, which smooths over the perceived evils of human cloning ("The Paradox of Cloning"). There is a chance that Wilson's article may actually provide an opportunity for hope. Perhaps, borrowing his optimistic view that the success of human cloning is imminent, we can plan for overwhelming numerical superiority when Krauthammer's evil silicon rebels rise up to conquer the world.

Nick Ostrowski
Aliso Viejo, CA

## Solipsistic Parenting

While I agree with James Q. Wilson ("The Paradox of Cloning," May 26) that if we are going to permit human cloning, we should insist that clones have parents, it seems that parenting a clone will present a set of difficulties.

Imagine raising a child whose genetic makeup is identical to yours. You, the parent, have spent a lifetime getting to know yourself. One possibility is that you will be a better parent because you

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will understand many of the struggles your child will face. Even so, parenting a cloned child may turn out to be more, not less, difficult.

First, most of us are better appraisers of strengths and weaknesses in others than in ourselves. Having children who are not literal chips off the old block creates a healthy distance between us and our offspring.

Also, raising a clone could heighten the temptation to use our children as a means of self-gratification. If parents are already tempted to see their biologically different children as a second opportunity for success they never achieved, how much greater the temptation when Dad can literally see himself on the baseball diamond one more time.

Professor Wilson is right about one thing. It should take two parents to raise a clone—one to provide the genetic material and the other to protect the child from "himself."

William S. Brewbaker III
Tuscaloosa, AL

## Narcissism: A Personal View

Gertrude Himmelfarb's exposé of the personal and professional lack of integrity in the academy ("Professor Narcissus," June 2) deserves a sequel. My impression, as I began reading, was that someone was finally willing to discuss the ridiculous ascent in modern academic writing of "theory," or the formula-bound methodology that despoils "scholarly" publications. The topic of academic research, be it art, an event, or a person, is set aside and only occasionally mentioned. Favor is given to self-indulgent tirades written according to whatever formula the author depends upon: feminist theory, Marxist-lesbian-feminist deconstruction, etc. Unfortunately, these displays of intellectual self-indulgence are not particularly appealing or substantive exercises for readers. It would take several articles to tackle this aspect of the academy's narcissism. Himmelfarb has made a good start.

Beth E.K. Williams
Westampton, NJ

Why was Professor Himmelfarb assigned to write about a tramp with a high IQ? I have read a number of Professor Himmelfarb's books. She is an outstanding scholar. After reading her recent article, I had a picture in my mind of the public swimming pool when I was a boy: At the shallow end of the pool was the matron with a whistle attempting to make order out of chaos. Please take the whistle and give it to a trainee-writer for articles concerning adolescent behavior and send Professor Himmelfarb back to the deep end of the pool where she belongs.

John Hayek
Carthage, MI

## A Discontented Reader

The review of Norman Mailer's latest whatever-it-is by Paul Mankowski ("Mailer's False Messiah," May 26) was the funniest and most perceptive review yet published by The Weekly Standard.

It did, however, contain one factual error. Mankowski writes of picturing "the puzzled editor at Random House rapping his teeth with a pencil as he read the manuscript."

Today, books are not edited. They are assembled and sold. Every reader knows this. Nothing else would explain so much of what is now in print.

John E. Heaney
Bethesda, MD

## Be Afraid of Smoking

I certainly agree with The Weekly Standard's editorial "A New Direction on Tobacco Road" (May 5) that the motives of the trial lawyers and state attorneys general involved in tobacco litigation have been less than pure, and that the AGs' arguments that smokers are costing society money are specious. Nonetheless, I find it surprising that the conservatives of The Weekly Standard would endorse a big-government solution to the problem of cigarette smoking, and equally surprising that they would trot out the old saw that "everyone knows smoking is bad for you."

In the abstract, that is true, but living in a world in which we are bombarded with health warnings about products that are perfectly innocuous, such generalities as are currently found on cigarette packs are basically meaningless. Do most smokers know, for example, that serious health risks of smoking may begin with the use of as few as four cigarettes a day? Many Americans who declare smoking to be hazardous believe that this refers only to "heavy" smokers, and that surely they do not fall into this category. Do they know that smoking a pack a day for 10 to 14 years appears to double the risk of colon cancer, and that this is irreversible; or that there are a number of dangerous synergistic effects between tobacco and alcohol—for example, that users of both substances risk a spectacular increase in the likelihood of esophageal cancer?

Yes, consumers must take responsibility for risks about which they are well informed. But given the wishy-washy label and the fact that the industry has been stonewalling for decades—as you note—this is hardly the case.

Conservatives may loathe trial lawyers, but we also trust the wisdom of juries. Let Big Tobacco have its day in court, and let average citizens judge the case against the tobacco companies on its merits, rather than have a new layer of bureaucracy impose a solution by legislative decree. Perhaps the average citizen will decide that cigarette companies should be held to the same standard as any other industry—which has not been the case for the last 30 years only because of the raw political power exercised by the industry in gaining the Teflon-like protection of the warning label in 1965—rather than being accorded special treatment that no other enterprise would dream of.

Elizabeth Whelan
New York, NY

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# Casual

## Honeymoon Five-0

It may be the 50th state, but come on! For those of us who grew up on the East Coast and never joined the Navy, Hawaii is more myth than reality. It's smack dab in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, for God's sake. How could Hawaii be a state when you've never seen a license plate with the word "Hawaii" on it? Have you heard of Daniel Akaka, its junior senator?

You can call us Hawaii skeptics the "ice people," in tribute not to Leonard Jeffries but to the frigid temperature of the Atlantic Ocean, in which we have painfully tried to bathe every summer. Hawaii is the place a million miles away where a world war began in earnest half a century ago, the subject of ancient novelty songs about little grass shacks, the home of small-screen characters like Dan-o of "Book 'em, Dan-o" fame, and the temporary setting for sitcoms that were running out of steam and needed a little sun and surf to appeal to audiences quickly growing bored with them. These sitcom episodes had their commonalities: a visit to Waikiki Beach, a shot of the Diamond Head volcano, and an inevitable guest appearance by the Hawaiian entertainer Don Ho. The mere mention of his name inspires knowing and patronizing giggles among those of us at the tail end of the baby boom.

I have spent my adulthood discovering that every single idea held by the majority of people in the northeastern United States is wrong, and now my Hawaii skepticism has been mugged by reality as well. I have just returned from an eight-day honeymoon in Hawaii, and I can safely say that it is the nicest place on earth: Its beauty is welcoming, not forbidding, the people are really wondrously nice, and even the Japanese smile at you in the hotel elevator.

Mostly, though, I was wrong about Don Ho.

We decided to take in Don Ho's nightclub act after seeing his name on a bulletin board in the lobby of our Honolulu hotel above the delightfully named "Pleasant Activity Desk." We thirtysomethings are obsessed with pop-culture kitsch; I remember feeling as though I had found a first edition of Dickens at a yard sale when, on a trip to Las Vegas, I went to see the 1960s comedy act Allen and Rossi, who had apparently been embalmed and were still performing nightly for a $6 cover charge at a hotel called Bob Stupak's Vegas World. (Yes, Marty Allen did say "Hello dere!" About a hundred times.)

Surely Don Ho would surpass even Allen and Rossi for sheer show-biz has-been pathos. And in the 90 minutes before the show, it looked like I was about to get my wish. We sat down at 5:30 p.m., ushered from the bright sun into a dark room off the patio at the Waikiki Beachcomber Hotel that looked like a retooled disco from the early 1970s. Dinner was slapped down on the table in front of us—two slices of prime rib that looked as though the rib dated from Adam's time. I was suddenly very sorry I had come, because the truth is that trolling for kitsch is more entertaining in the contemplation than in the execution.

Well, the joke was on me, because Don Ho and his audience both proved to be very much in on the joke themselves. He came on stage with a five-piece band behind him, sat down, and began to sing his signature song, "Tiny Bubbles." Or rather, he didn't sing it; he simply gestured to the crowd, and the crowd sang with his prompting. After the applause, he looked out at the room and said in a low mumble, "We gonna sing it again at the end of the show. That's the way it's been—twice a night, every night, for 27 years."

And off he went, making jokes in the offhand, throwaway manner of Dean Martin (who was one of the smoothest and funniest live performers America has ever produced). Every now and then he would sing—I was especially happy to hear "Ain't No Big Thing," which he had performed on an episode of *I Dream of Jeannie* I had watched at 1:30 in the morning on Nick at Nite a few weeks earlier during a bout of insomnia. But mostly he made jokes about how old he was (67), about how easy his life was (he golfs mostly). A pretty hula dancer with the astounding name of Haumea Hebenstreit who spoke with an Australian accent did a dance; then a 7-year-old girl hula dancer did her thing; then a Japanese guitarist sang Hank Williams songs; then Don's best friend sang an aria with great relish out of tune. The show lasted almost two hours and was an unalloyed delight from beginning to end.

We had our picture taken with Don Ho in the lobby. He autographed it. I will actually, honestly, and without irony, treasure it.

**John Podhoretz**

the weekly Standard

# Pack of Lies

Most smokers take their first, experimental puff before they reach adulthood—as children. Children enjoy cartoons. The spokesbeast for the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco company's flagship brand, Camel, is a cartoon camel named Joe. He appears on billboards and in newspapers and magazines where unsuspecting minors might see and be influenced by him. Marketing practices that cause or are likely to cause substantial injury to unsuspecting consumers are illegal under federal law. Smoking injures humans. Therefore, Joe Camel is illegal.

That, at least, is the logic adopted late last month by the Federal Trade Commission. That body will now ask a federal judge to exile Joe to the adults-only advertising desert, where said dromedary will never again bare his nicotine-stained teeth at "our youth." The FTC's move is politically sophisticated, bundling a number of sure-fire elements—kids (good), cancer (bad), and a corporate logo as famous as any on earth—into an easily comprehensible two-minute news story.

But the FTC's assault on Joe Camel is a crummy idea, just the same. The factual "findings" that justify the proposed ban proceed from questionable assumptions about the epidemiology of smoking, the operations of the tobacco industry, and the psychology of advertising. The implied regulatory theory under which the FTC claims authority to lasso Joe is alarmingly expansive. Worst of all, corralling the camel is probably useless, even counterproductive, as an anti-smoking initiative. Here, yet again, we have the essence of domestic-policy Clintonism: a gesture that polls well but doesn't actually do anything serious—and, in any case, does what it does badly.

Through the 1950s, Camel was America's favorite smoke. But as filter-tip cigarettes gained popularity in the 1960s, the brand began a long and steep decline. By the late 1980s, Philip Morris's Marlboro label, the industry leader, had more than five times as many customers and thoroughly dominated the crucial market for 18-to-24-year-olds. Desperate for a solution, R.J. Reynolds fixed on Joe Camel, who had first appeared in a French girlie magazine in 1974. Joe was not a ruminative ruminant. He was a party animal—a "smooth character" and "ladies' camel," as Reynolds officials explained—designed to lure "young adult smokers" away from Marlboro. Reynolds went national with Joe in the United States in 1988.

At first, the only public controversy surrounding the new Camel ads involved their looks. As drawn, Joe's snout bore an inescapable resemblance to the male member. It became a big joke, though R.J. Reynolds was not amused. According to Richard Kluger's magisterial history of the tobacco industry, *Ashes to Ashes*, RJR executives initially asked their ad agency's art directors to make Joe "less testicular." But the creative types resisted; today, nine years later, the camel still has a vaguely penile proboscis. And the company shortly made peace with its camel's nose in any case. Because the "smooth character" campaign worked, big time. By 1990, the brand had finally firmed up its customer base and made inroads into the 18-to-24-year-old market.

Joe became a star. And he has been the chief bogey-camel of the anti-smoking movement ever since. In late 1991, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* published studies on tobacco advertising that appeared to contain two sensational pieces of data. More than 90 percent of American 6-year-olds recognized Joe Camel, almost as many as knew Mickey Mouse. And child consciousness of the cartoon smokesperson explained why Camel had recently boosted its share of the underage cigarette market from less than 1 to more than 30 percent.

Both of these statistics, it soon turned out, were entirely bogus. The Mickey Mouse result was derived from interviews with 23 children at a single Atlanta preschool—and couldn't be replicated on a broader scale. *JAMA*'s market-share figures were derived from interviews with "kids" as old as 21, who were shown ads for Camel—but no other cigarette label—and then asked which brand they preferred. Roughly contemporaneous surveys by the federal Centers for Disease Control indicated that Camel's actual share of the 12-to-17-year-old market was probably only about 10 percent.

You can still find the Mickey Mouse thing in major American newspapers, reported as fact. And whatever their specific merits, the *implications* of the *JAMA* articles—that cigarette advertising has a Pavlovian, behavior-altering effect on young people, and that Joe

Camel, by design, has boosted teenage smoking—remain gospel with R.J. Reynolds's critics. Reynolds, of course, says its Joe ain't so: that the Camel ads are not intended to create new smokers, but instead attempt to produce brand-switching exclusively among a small segment of younger adults who already smoke.

What do you *expect* them to say, comes the instinctive rejoinder? But some claims are plausible even though cigarette companies advance them. No study has ever established that brand advertising increases tobacco consumption overall, or that it lures underage nonsmokers in particular. Young people begin to develop a cigarette habit through a complicated process, the most important factors in which appear to be the examples of parents, older siblings, and best friends. Advertising, most researchers agree, has little to do with it. Children who smoke do not purchase specific brands; they borrow randomly from adults instead. And most of them don't begin to smoke on a daily basis until they are 19. After which point, they do become susceptible to brand-based advertising and may switch. But only during a brief window of years. Older smokers are fiercely brand-loyal. Or they smoke generic, cut-rate cigarettes whose manufacturers do not advertise at all.

All of these general postulates can be tested in the case of Joe Camel. That ad campaign's budget rose sharply in its first few years. Government data from the same period indicate that teenage smoking remained level nationwide. After that, Reynolds's spending on Joe Camel fell four of the next five years. Teenage smoking actually increased in three of those years. And Camel now has less than 4 percent of the 12-to-17-year-old cigarette market, a smaller percentage than before Joe Camel existed.

What's with the FTC, then? The commission has repeatedly investigated Camel since 1990. It has been unable to produce convincing evidence that Reynolds has deliberately marketed to teenagers. It has been unable to prove that Joe Camel ever caused a single teenager to begin smoking or continue smoking. Indeed, the FTC now argues that it's not "our burden" to prove any such thing. All that's required for a lawsuit against Reynolds, according to the commission, is that there be evidence that Joe Camel was once "likely to have caused" more underage smoking—even if that smoking never happened. Reynolds should originally have decided that its "smooth character" was risky to the public health. Having decided otherwise, the FTC believes, the company broke the law.

Well. The Joe Camel ban won't take effect anytime soon. It is headed for an inevitable First Amendment challenge that will take years to resolve. If it ever does take effect, it probably won't work. Foreign countries that have banned tobacco ads haven't managed to reduce teen smoking much. Cigarette companies that can't advertise are forced to compete among one another on the basis of price alone, which makes their product cheaper in stores—and therefore more accessible to young people.

In the meantime, ironically, R.J. Reynolds will be forced to *preserve* Joe as its Camel figurehead. The tobacco industry has for months been engaged in high-stakes negotiations with the nation's state attorneys general and plaintiffs attorneys. In return for a global settlement of current and future anti-smoking litigation, the industry—Reynolds included—some time ago apparently offered to accept an even wider ban on Joe-like pictorial advertising. But now, suddenly, RJR cannot pull Joe from the market, which move would automatically be interpreted as a confession to FTC charges. By attacking the dromedary, the government has kept him alive.

A surer way for the government to reduce teen smoking would be to impose higher federal cigarette taxes. But cigarette taxes are now anathema to the Clinton/Gore administration. They're controversial, you see—even if they might, in certain circumstances, be a good idea. So instead we get this shabby, ineffective bit of show-boatery from the Federal Trade Commission.

*This* is liberalism? We liked the old kind better.

*—David Tell, for the Editors*

# Crack-up, Part Deux

**by David Frum**

It's been *another* bad week for conservatives. In France, the second round of legislative elections on June 1 proved every bit as devastating to conservatives as the first round a week before: The socialists won 268 of the 577 seats in the National Assembly, with another 39 going to the Communists. (Communists! In 1997! Who said the French were chic?) The two conservative parties won only 247 of the seats in the Assembly.

The rebuke to President Jacques Chirac was all the more stinging because of the sheer preposterousness of

the campaign promises of socialist leader Lionel Jospin: He promised to hire 350,000 more civil servants and to cut the work week from 39 to 35 hours without reducing anyone's pay. On the very next day, Canadians were taking their own more cautious lurch leftward. The governing Liberals saw their parliamentary majority slashed to a nerve-wracking 155 out of 301 seats. The biggest gainers: the socialist New Democrats and the Progressive Conservatives, who began the campaign to the government's right and ended it far to the government's left with promises to cancel the government's scheduled cuts in social spending.

The humbled governments in both France and Canada were led by men whom reasonable people considered reasonable people. They were cutting social spending, it's true, but hesitantly, carefully, all the while trying to salvage as much of their welfare states as they could. Both governments were consistently praised by self-proclaimed moderates, who hailed their sensible, balanced approach to the fiscal problems of the modern state. And both have just suffered brutal punishment at the hands of their own people. Are there lessons here for other countries?

There's a Monty Python sketch in which John Cleese, playing a wealthy executive, has the concept of charity explained to him for the first time. With ever-rising incredulity, he struggles to understand: "You mean, I give you money and in return I get . . . nothing at all?" Democratic electorates seem to think the way Cleese does. It's one thing to reduce their unemployment benefits and make their pension schemes more lavish. But to tell them that you're doing all this to shore up the finances of the state, while in return they get . . . nothing at all . . . is to beg to be kicked out of office.

In Canada, for example, the average family is now paying more than one-third of its income in taxes. Even in tax-cutting Ontario, individuals hit combined federal-provincial income-tax rates of nearly 50 percent at incomes of $50,000. On top of that, there are federal and provincial sales taxes of up to 15 percent on everything one buys, taxes on gasoline and telephone calls, and payroll taxes for the Canada Pension Plan (which were just increased massively). At the same time, waiting lists are lengthening at the state medical monopoly, educational standards are deteriorating, and city streets are becoming dirtier. No wonder that pollsters are detecting rising levels of alienation: For most people, government is increasingly a rip-off.

Some especially flinty types may think that publics suffering from rising taxes and declining services are getting only what they deserve. After all, they voted themselves lower taxes and rising services in the 1980s. What did they think was going to happen? The public is composed, Michael Kinsley has complained, of "big babies." Why wipe away their tears when they're told that they can't have a new balloon to replace the one they just broke?

The trouble is that it's very hard to govern a democracy over the protests of its own people. As governments fail to come to grips with the crisis of the welfare state in ways satisfactory to their electorates, even their basic political stability comes into question. France's electoral system, which is designed to squeeze out small parties that fail to come to terms with the big ones, held the xenophobic National Front to only one of 577 seats. But the Front still won some 15 percent of the popular vote in the first round of balloting, indicating a truly disturbing degree of alienation from the institutions and moral norms of the Fifth Republic, and indeed the modern world.

Canada's political stability has broken down even more completely. You can't govern a parliamentary democracy when any five backbench members of parliament can put a pistol to the prime minister's head, and you can't offer the voters stark and clear alternatives to government policy in a five-way political debate. Worse still, Monday's result completes the destruction of Canada's system of national parties. The populist Reform party dominates the West; the old Conservative party holds on to ancient loyalties in the east; and the separatist Bloc Québécois is reviled in English Canada. Even the Liberals, the only party with any remaining pan-national appeal, have lost their grip on the West and French-speaking Quebec. The whole country seems to have taken another giant step toward dissolution.

To avoid the turmoil of a France or a Canada, democracies that need to shrink overambitious public sectors must do so in ways that offer voters attractive tradeoffs instead of a dismal sense that everything is getting worse in every way. Conservative parties that offer their people large, offsetting tax cuts—even if that requires larger spending cuts—stand at least a fighting chance of convincing them of the need for spending reductions. People will consider trading public services for lower taxes; but nobody except an editorial writer ever willingly traded public services for a balanced budget or European unity.

That, however, won't stop the Republican party from trying. The Republicans are in the midst of signing off on a budget deal that takes away a great deal from Medicare beneficiaries and other powerful domestic interest groups. That's right and proper: Unless something is done, Medicare will wreck the public finances of the United States. In explaining why Medicare must be fixed, it's important to stress the public-spiritedness of the Republicans' actions,

that Republicans are acting as they are with a view to the good of the whole polity. But it might also be prudent to have in the holster some more material inducements—like substantial and immediate tax cuts.

In his cunning way, the president knows that. That's why he ensured that he got plenty of room for new porkbarrel spending for his constituencies as *his* price for agreeing to Medicare reductions. He hopes to make good his political losses from the slowdown of the growth of one program with political gains from speeding up the growth of others.

The Republicans, unfortunately, will not be able to do the same. The $85 billion in tax cuts over five years that the Republicans got out of this deal will pay for capital-gains and estate-tax relief. But $85 billion over five years won't begin to pay for a middle-class tax cut, especially since the Republicans have conceded a big chunk of that $85 billion to the president for his "targeted" tax cuts to the families of university students. Which means that instead of offering Less Government and Lower Taxes, the Republicans are on the verge of mimicking John Major's Tories, Chirac's Gaullists, and Jean Chrétien's Liberals to offer the voters in 1998 the GOP's own distinctive version of Nothing for Something. You could call it the John Cleese plan. Only it isn't very funny.

***Contributing editor David Frum wrote last week about the worldwide conservative crack-up.***

# Stonewalling Works

## by Fred Barnes

David E. Kendall, the private attorney for President Clinton and Hillary Clinton, got carried away in his June 3 letter attacking independent counsel Kenneth Starr. So helpful have the Clintons been to Starr's investigation, Kendall said, that "their cooperation has been unprecedented." Sure, some delay is "inherent" in a criminal probe, but now it's time for Starr to wind up the investigation. "This means not chasing every rainbow or every partisan rumor," Kendall said. Instead, he told Starr to "abandon your public relations offensive, get on with your investigation in the manner of previous independent counsels, and bring it to a speedy conclusion." In case the message wasn't clear enough, Clinton apologist James Carville declared noisily on CNN, "It's time to end this thing."

Blaming Starr for failing to finish his investigation is like blaming a shooting victim for getting in the bullet's way. Starr hasn't prolonged the probe. Clinton has. He's done it by a ceaseless campaign of stonewalling. This is what's unprecedented. Stonewalling—even of investigations undertaken by Clinton's own Justice Department—is now a defining characteristic of Clinton's presidency. Republican senator Fred Thompson of Tennessee, once the minority Watergate counsel and now chairman of the Senate probe of 1996 political fund-raising abuses, says Clinton and his aides have cited more legal grounds for impeding investigators than President Nixon did in Watergate. "The only contested things I recall in Watergate had to do with the tapes," Thompson says.

How exactly do the Clintonites stonewall? Every way they can think of. They toy with document requests and subpoenas, sometimes deliberately defying them. Last year, four White House aides turned over subpoenaed papers to the Senate Banking Committee just as its Whitewater hearings were ending. Their explanation for complying months late: They hadn't come across the documents until cleaning out their desks. When Thompson's committee sought logs of Clinton pal Charlie Trie's visits to the White House, one page had everything but Trie's name blacked out—no date, no time, no indication of whom Trie had seen. A specialty of Clinton stonewalling is the frivolous claim of executive, attorney-client, or work-product privilege. Though executive privilege normally applies only in national-security cases, Clinton invoked it in Travelgate to thwart the investigation of the firing of seven minor officials.

Not surprisingly, the White House is no help in getting witnesses to testify—quite the opposite. Did the president's men obstruct justice by drumming up lucrative legal work for Webb Hubbell, who is stiffing investigators? Clinton could urge Hubbell to straighten out the matter by talking to Starr or congressional committees. He hasn't. Asked in April whether he would urge former business partner Susan McDougal to appear before a Whitewater grand jury and tell the truth about his role, the president responded: "She has a lawyer. They know what they're doing. . . . It's none of my business." Clinton said McDougal has already stated publicly that the Clintons did nothing illegal. So what's the problem with her repeating this under oath before a grand jury? Clinton didn't say. McDougal remains in jail, convicted of contempt for

refusing to testify.

Meanwhile, the list is growing of Clinton-connected witnesses who won't be testifying at hearings this summer before Thompson's committee and the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee (headed by GOP representative Dan Burton of Indiana). John Huang, a longtime chum of the president, is pleading the Fifth Amendment. So is former White House aide Mark Middleton. (Hubbell is also taking the Fifth.) Were he truly cooperating, Clinton might urge them to testify. He hasn't. Charlie Trie, Clinton's favorite Little Rock restaurateur, and Pauline Kanchanalak, a frequent visitor to the White House, and John H.K. Lee have skipped the country. What is Clinton doing to get them back? Zip, and Congress has no power to extradite them. Johnny Chung, another frequent White House visitor, hasn't responded to a subpoena. But if he testifies, it won't be thanks to Clinton. The Thompson committee has also subpoenaed 23 nuns and monks at the Buddhist temple in California at which Vice President Al Gore pitched for campaign funds in 1996. Most have lawyers and have told the congressional committees they won't talk. Has Gore interceded to make sure they cooperate? Not so you'd notice.

Kenneth Starr

Kent Lemon

To make matters worse, Democrats on the Hill often abet White House stonewalling. During the Senate Banking Committee's hearings on Whitewater in 1995 and 1996, Democrats raised objections so tenuous even the White House wasn't raising them. Now Democrats are making it difficult for Thompson to proceed. It took him 10 days to get a routine subpoena of a client's record at the Bank of China (to find where funds for campaign donations had come from). And Sen. John Glenn of Ohio, the senior committee Democrat, is pressuring Thompson to abandon plans for investigators to travel to Asia. Why? Too expensive and too few interviews have been lined up, said Glenn in a letter. Who has the responsibility for setting up interviews? The Clinton State Department.

Obtaining White House documents is laborious and lengthy. And this is a special problem for Thompson because his investigation expires on December 31. "We never should have agreed to that," Thompson says. His first request, made April 9, involved documents in 28 categories. Two months later, barely half the documents had been turned over. In mid-May, he sent another request. When that produced little, Thompson complained directly to Erskine Bowles, the president's chief of staff. Things got better. Still, the White House has put many papers on a "document privilege log" and not released them. "We've received so few documents, we haven't had a chance to worry about the privilege claims," says committee spokesman Paul Clark. Besides, there probably isn't time for the committee to litigate any privilege issues.

Far-fetched claims of privilege began popping up early in Clinton's first term. In 1993, the White House invoked executive privilege to block the transfer of Travelgate documents to the House oversight committee. To keep an incriminating memo by former Clinton aide David Watkins from becoming public, the White House claimed work-product and attorney-client privileges. The latest claim is that Hillary Clinton's conversations with White House lawyers are privileged. By this reasoning, John Dean could have refused to testify in Watergate about his boss, Richard Nixon, by invoking attorney-client privilege. Indeed, Dean mentions in his book, *Blind Ambition*, that he and Nixon once agreed their conversations were privileged—strange bedfellows for Hillary, who worked at the House Judiciary Committee to impeach Nixon. (Later, Dean testified voluntarily.) Says Joseph diGenova, a former independent counsel and a Republican: "It is amazing the degree to which they've lawyered these [privilege] questions for delay purposes." Hillary, ordered by a U.S. appeals court to yield the lawyers' notes, has appealed to the Supreme Court.

There's a reason the Clinton stonewalling never stops: It works. What matters in congressional investigations is the hearings. They're often nationally televised. But if critical documents are released tardily, it's usually too late for them to be highlighted in hearings, which take weeks of preparation. This hap-

pened in the Senate hearings on Whitewater. One key issue involved Hillary Clinton's contacts after the 1993 death of Vince Foster, the deputy White House counsel. Well after the Foster phase of the hearings was over, Maggie Williams, the first lady's chief of staff, handed over her phone records, which showed extensive contacts with Hillary following Foster's death. The committee couldn't make much of this. And the White House was hardly punished.

Only rarely do the media nick Clinton for stonewalling. Given this, the White House has calculated that Clinton suffers more from promptly releasing damaging information than from coming clean tardily or not coming clean at all. So, in Clinton's Washington, stonewalling is here to stay.

***Executive editor Fred Barnes appears weekly on* Fox on Politics *on the Fox News Channel.***

# Mullah Dearest

## by Peter W. Rodman

During the Iran-contra affair, Art Buchwald defined an Iranian "moderate" as an Iranian who has run out of ammunition. Despite this cynical view, there most likely *are* moderates in Iran—the vast majority in the country who are disgusted with the Islamist theocratic regime, and even some in the leadership who may question whether Iran benefits from its risky and provocative hostility toward the West. The real issue has always been not whether there are such people, but how the United States can strengthen their hand in whatever internal debates may be taking place.

This whole question is reopened by the May 23 presidential election in Iran, in which a supposedly moderate 54-year-old cleric, Mohammed Khatemi, won a stunning upset over the more hidebound Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri, favored by the political and religious establishment. Khatemi won 69 percent of the vote, apparently with enthusiastic support from young people, women, intellectuals, and others who saw him as a force for change. The turnout was an extraordinary 91 percent, nearly double that of the last presidential election.

Whatever Khatemi may mean for Iran, his victory has, at the very least, shifted the ground of the policy debate in the United States. Long before the election, there were voices in America calling for a more flexible U.S. policy—easing economic sanctions, pursuing a dialogue with Tehran, seeking common ground with the Europeans. That this advice was wrongheaded is all the more obvious in retrospect, given that when it was put forward, Iran was still led by its *un*reconstructed leaders (the same gang named by a German court as systematic purveyors of international terrorism, and possibly responsible for 19 American dead in a Saudi barracks bombing) and Nateq-Nouri was universally expected to be the next president. The idea of relaxing pressures on Iran, recommended then on the ground that our policy had failed, will undoubtedly now be put forward again on the ground that our policy has succeeded. But it's still bad advice.

Foreign policy did not figure in the recent Iranian election campaign, and there is no hint from the president-elect that he questions Iran's revolutionary "internationalism." The *possibility* of a change in Iran's course does now exist. But it only brings us back to the question: What is our strategy? How exactly do we expect to influence Iran's conduct or evolution?

The Clinton administration has adopted the concept of containment, borrowed from our long postwar experience with the Soviet Union. It's not a bad model. When George F. Kennan propounded the original containment doctrine in 1947, the theory went as follows: The Soviet system was externally dangerous but deeply flawed internally. We could not affect it directly. But if the West firmly and patiently blocked the Kremlin's external expansion, sooner or later a new group of leaders would come into power who would be forced to turn inward to confront the system's internal contradictions. It was a brilliant forecast of what actually happened.

It was also a long-term strategy. It did not promise instant results, but rather, as noted, made firmness and patience the cardinal requirements.

Perhaps Khatemi will be the Mikhail Gorbachev of the Iranian revolution; perhaps not. Our job is to continue to shape the external conditions in which Iran must operate. Containment of Iran has meant doing the maximum to mobilize international pressures on Iran—keeping it off balance, compounding its economic problems, imposing costs for its obnoxious behavior. If we can maintain such a policy, we increase the probability that new leadership, Gorbachev-like, will undertake a wholesale reassessment of Iran's role in the world as well as of its internal system. If Iran's policies are discredited by failure, a rational leadership will think about changing them.

In the meantime, we have no choice but to enforce our laws and, when the facts warrant, to retaliate strongly for terrorist attacks against Americans. To fail to do either would be inexplicable and would signal a collapse of the U.S. position. The time has come, moreover, to lend some support to democratic opposition groups both inside Iran and outside and to set up a Radio Free Iran.

The present U.S. policy is full of holes, to be sure. Our allies in Europe and Japan are willing to go along with some important restraints (on arms sales, technology transfer, and new credits) but refuse to end normal trade and chafe at U.S. pressures on *them*. Nonetheless, as Churchill said about democracy, it's the worst policy—except for all the alternatives. The alternative of *relieving* Iran of international pressures would be completely incoherent; nor do its advocates put forward any serious explanation of how exactly it would induce Iran to abandon its ideologically driven assault on the West's vital interests. It is the product of impatience, not analysis.

The mullahs' regime is in trouble. It is periodically shaken by riots and other social unrest, and prominent military figures have called on the clerics to leave politics; the election upset was eloquent testimony to the disaffection in the country. If Khatemi is Gorbachev, then the total unraveling that accompanied Gorbachev's reformism is in itself a daunting prospect facing Khatemi. The West's responsibility is to maintain the calculus of costs and benefits as before, so that the regime understands the high price it pays for its present policies—and (it goes without saying) the benefit of a more normal relationship with the West should Iran change its course in a fundamental way. The West should not sell its favors cheaply or, worse, give them away for free.

***Peter W. Rodman is director of national security programs at the Nixon Center for Peace and Freedom and a senior editor of* National Review.**

# Clinton's Race Tricks

## by Roger Clegg

On June 14, President Clinton will deliver the commencement address at the University of California at San Diego. His topic will be race relations and the importance of diversity. The speech is being hyped as one of the president's moves to engage us all in a "national discussion about race," along with his reported plans for town-hall meetings and a new advisory panel on race, his apology to the victims of the infamous Tuskegee experiment, and his literally grandstanding appearance at the Jackie Robinson celebration at Shea Stadium.

Another man who is concerned about the race issue, Ward Connerly, chairman of the American Civil Rights Institute, begins running radio ads this week calling on Clinton to make the administration's policies colorblind. Good luck. Herewith a skeptic's forecast of what the president will say in San Diego.

The choice of a University of California campus was deliberate. It gives the president an opportunity to attack Proposition 209, the referendum passed by California voters last November with Connerly's heroic leadership. The referendum amended the state constitution to bar state government from granting preferences based on race, ethnicity, or sex in contracting, employment, or education. Prop. 209 was struck down as a denial of "equal protection" by a Carter-appointed trial judge but was upheld on appeal, over the objections of the Clinton administration.

Accordingly, Clinton's speech to a group of California graduates will probably address why race and ethnicity should remain factors in deciding who gets into college. All the more so since recent figures released by California's law schools—the first to feel the impact of the university system's new colorblind admissions policy—show a sharp drop in the number of blacks and Hispanics admitted. But look for the president to defend the use of racial and ethnic preferences not by admitting that he favors discrimination, but by using the Four Rhetorical Tricks that apologists for the new discrimination always use.

First, he will declare himself "opposed to the use of quotas." This is a dodge, because liberals define quotas very narrowly. What he will not say is that he opposes discriminating on the basis of race and ethnicity, which is precisely what makes quotas offensive.

Second, he will say that he believes that race or ethnicity should be "only one factor" in deciding who gets admitted. But he will not acknowledge that, to the extent that this factor makes a difference, it is discrimination, causing some applicants to get in, and others to be excluded, on account of the color of their skin.

Nor are such cases rare. A study of undergraduate admissions by the Center for Equal Opportunity, for example, concluded that in 1993-95 "a massive degree of racial preference in admission policy" existed at

Berkeley, another campus of the University of California. A forthcoming study by the center will document the use of preferences at the San Diego campus where Clinton will be speaking.

Third, the president will assert that he "does not favor the admission of unqualified students." This is another slick dodge. The question should be, Does he favor the admission of the *most* qualified students? The answer is no, since that would stand in the way of the "diversity" he wants.

And fourth, he will say that there is nothing wrong with considering an individual's race or ethnicity, since "schools already consider factors" like whether the applicant's father is an alumnus and how well the applicant can play football. But those factors boil down to money—not the noblest of considerations, but not intrinsically offensive in the way that racial discrimination is. The president will not mention this interesting development: Governor George Bush of Texas announced on June 2 that he will sign a bill making it illegal for his state's schools—which have also been forced to adopt nondiscriminatory admissions criteria—to give athletes special treatment in admissions.

Then the president will talk about the importance of "diversity" to our nation and to our colleges. Diversity might be valuable in a student body for two reasons: because it helps students learn that, deep inside, people are not so different, or because the truth is that, deep inside, people are in fact different. Let's consider both.

In the former case, a diversity strategy succeeds in enlightening the potentially bigoted student only if the student is surrounded by others of different race and ethnicity who are as well qualified as he is. If they are less qualified, the strategy can easily backfire.

So the proponents of diversity must believe instead that there are fundamental differences between people depending on our melanin content and the birthplace of our ancestors. This, indeed, is now the party line. But how likely is it that these distinctive characteristics (they used to be called stereotypes) are (a) real, (b) relevant to the study of, say, mathematics, (c) more relevant to achieving an intellectually diverse student body than individuals' actual ideas and specific life histories, and (d) worth the price of discrimination?

The president will mention none of this as he extols the value of diversity. Expect instead a discussion of the national mosaic, and how this mosaic will unravel—there will be plenty of mixed metaphors—under Proposition 209, which threatens to turn back the clock to the day of lily-white universities, if you count Asians as white. Then look for the president to cite the new figures on plummeting minority admissions.

At this point, do not expect the president to draw the obvious conclusion: that black students, in particular, are disproportionately uncompetitive for slots at our nation's top schools because they suffered disproportionately from bad public schools and broken families. Do not expect him to acknowledge that these are failures—of the educational establishment and of Great Society programs—that conservatives have complained of for years. Do not expect him to call for vouchers or any other educational reform that might actually do some good. Instead expect him to advocate the use of lower standards and racial quotas to sweep academic failure under the rug.

The most intriguing thing to look for in the president's speech will be its characterization of his administration's civil-rights record. For a time, President Clinton actually claimed that his appointees and bureaucrats were not unalterably wedded to preferences based on race, ethnicity, and sex. It will be interesting to see whether he has the gall to make this claim again.

This is, after all, the administration that: promised a cabinet that "looks like America" and openly used its EGG criteria (ethnicity, gender, and geography) in making all appointments, no matter how much this slowed down the process; vowed, through the nominations of Zoe Baird and Kimba Wood all the way to Janet Reno, that the next attorney general would be someone "wearing a skirt"; repeatedly nominated figures from the civil-rights establishment, diehard defenders of preferences; included racial and ethnic quotas in its ill-fated health plan; reversed the Bush administration's policy of limiting the use of racially exclusive scholarships; defended the quota policies of the city of Birmingham, Alabama; nominated "quota queen" Lani Guinier to head the Justice Department's civil-rights division; adamantly defended the use of racial gerrymandering, both before and after the Supreme Court struck down the practice; issued a series of internal orders to ensure that career civil-service positions would be quota-correct; used the Justice Department, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and the Department of Labor's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs to pressure employers into meeting numerical goals for women and minorities; switched sides in the Piscataway, New Jersey, litigation in order to defend a race-based layoff; defended the use of the Department of Transportation's preference program for minority subcontractors all the way to the Supreme Court in the *Adarand* case, where it was struck down, then steadfastly resisted changing any other contracting preferences in the face of this Supreme Court ruling; defended the University of Texas Law School's use of racial and ethnic preferences and pressured schools to ignore the court deci-

sion rejecting those preferences (until, under fire, the administration reversed itself); and finally, as noted above, attacked Prop. 209 in federal court.

It might seem improbable that with this record a president would claim to be anything other than a staunch defender of affirmative discrimination. But never underestimate the infinitely flexible Bill Clinton. All in all, expect an entertaining spectacle on June 14.

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# Setting Sun

## by David M. Smick

Imagine you were George Soros's chief currency and bond trader. Throughout the late 1980s, you bet that an almighty Japanese juggernaut—the new capitalist model for the 21st century—was taking over the world, Rockefeller Center and all. Today, had you followed that line, you would not be George Soros's chief trader. Or imagine you were CEO in the late 1980s of an American computer chip manufacturer. At the time, you were convinced Japanese chip makers were so advanced you directed your company into other, less technologically competitive niches. Today, Japanese chip makers have fallen far behind their U.S. competitors. You would no longer be CEO.

The Japanese economic juggernaut that was to have owned us all has entered a period of crisis. Japan now finds itself wound in a series of frustratingly tight policy knots. Most Tokyo policymakers know in their gut they have one, messy solution left: bold liberalization and deregulation of the economic and financial systems. But it won't be easy, given Japan's rigid political environment. The best bet is that Japan is doomed to years of economic drift marked by slow growth and a lackluster stock market.

Not that Japan is a basket case. The country continues to have a high savings rate with some extraordinarily competitive, world-class companies. So Japan can never be entirely counted out. The system confounded conventional wisdom twice during the oil shocks of the 1970s, adjusting to new price levels with amazing speed.

But the situation is different this time. The tried and true policy tools are not working. Monetary stimulus, for instance, has been surprisingly ineffective. The Bank of Japan for years now has left short-term interest rates at the unusually low nominal level of 0.5 percent. Yet both the supply of and demand for credit have continued to decline. Meanwhile, the Japanese government, the last Keynesian stronghold in the world, enacted a multi-year series of massive supplemental budgets to pump up public-works spending. The exercise failed to spark much additional economic activity. Indeed, without the additional spending, real gross domestic product would have slightly declined over the last four years. Japan is now left with a deficit-to-GDP ratio of 7 percent (or perhaps higher, depending on how it's measured). In other words, Japan's deficit ratio is nearly twice that of Italy.

The lingering economic crisis has eroded the confidence of the Japanese people in their national leaders. Five years ago, a president of a large financial institution in private conversation would have been highly respectful of officials in the Ministry of Finance. Today, individuals at this level are sneeringly dismissive of finance bureaucrats. And they've lost faith in Japan's economic potential, too. Since 1994, domestic investors as a whole have been net sellers on the Tokyo stock market, the Nikkei. Only buying by government pension funds (the so-called price keeping operation or PKO) combined with sporadic buying by foreign hedge funds and mutual funds has stabilized the market—at less than half its value at the beginning of the decade. Now on some days, transactions on the stock market are roughly the same as the daily transactions in the United States of one stock, Intel. True, it has been relatively easy to prop up the market artificially, giving the illusion of stability. But it *is* an illusion.

Until several months ago, Japan seemed headed toward the bold deflationary approach, coupled with deregulation of financial and economic systems. It would be messy, but at least it dealt with a fundamental cause of the private sector's dwindling confidence: today's still artificially ballooned asset prices. Under this approach, Japan's horrendous bank balance sheet problem would be tackled quickly through a bank restructuring not unlike the process that saved struggling U.S. banks five years ago. Indeed, many large Japanese banks today look enviously at institutions such as Citibank, which were mired in an ugly restructuring effort as the savings and loan crisis unfolded in the early 1990s. Citibank's stock price dropped to single digits. Yet once the restructuring was over, Citibank stock, propelled by a much healthier balance

sheet, became one of Wall Street's biggest winners. Japanese reformers would like to emulate this success, but it won't happen until the all-important asset price floor is established, giving investors confidence in the system again.

Prime Minister Hashimoto appeared to be on board, as did the Diet. With soaring rhetoric, Hashimoto offered to deliver the so-called big bang financial reforms. The lower house of the Diet approved foreign-exchange liberalization legislation, which would ease cross-border transactions. Beginning April 1, Japanese pension funds were ordered to change their reporting practices to reflect the true market value of holdings. Hashimoto and his coalition, led by his Liberal Democratic party, were responding to, among other things, pressure from the pro-reform opposition.

But suddenly, the reform drive stopped. The big bang reforms look vague and weak as bureaucrats fill in the details. Government strategists insist the reform effort remains alive, but those in the private sector believe the pendulum has swung the other direction toward the old, go-slow, status quo approach. One example: the failure to forge a solution to the troubles of the life-insurance industry. During the financial bubble of the 1980s, investors were guaranteed a 5 percent annual return for 30 years. Now, government bond yields have dropped to a fraction of that rate, which means the "5 percent promise" threatens to bankrupt the entire industry.

But continuing with the old inflationary approach will stretch out rather than solve Japan's acute problems. Going slow was always the approach favored by many in the ruling LDP, whose political and financial base consists largely of Japan's mid-sized and smaller corporations and financial institutions. Under an abrupt liberalization and deregulation, they would be most at risk. The status-quo option means continuing government jawboning to stabilize the yen-dollar rate. And it involves continued buying by government pension funds on the Japanese stock market along with the injection of quick amounts of stop-gap cash from the Bank of Japan in the event of an occasional bank failure. This is pure Keynesianism, and it's a policy that Japan's leaders, despite rhetoric to the contrary, seem unwilling (or unable) to abandon, absent a powerful external shock.

Watching this drama for signs of the future are Japan's largest corporations—the Toyotas and the Sonys. Notice that the top 25 or 30 industrial giants account for roughly 75 percent of Japanese exports. Most are in manufacturing, which represents 25 percent of the economy but 68 percent of the Nikkei 225 (Japan's Dow Jones Industrial Average), a fact that creates considerable confusion for policymakers. These 25-30 large firms are the core of the industrial base. Their position today is similar to that of many large U.S. corporations at the beginning of the 1970s: Having concluded that the U.S. political and economic situation involved too much uncertainty, these companies moved offshore and transformed themselves into broadly diversified global conglomerates. Today, many of Japan's industrialized giants are also moving offshore, regardless of exchange rate considerations and other promised policy changes. It is a process that threatens to hollow out further the beleaguered domestic industrial sector.

Japanese individual investors are thinking along the same lines. The dollar has until recently appreciated against the yen in part because Japanese individual investors are moving offshore in search of greater yield. This will accelerate with the pending regulatory changes forcing the huge pension funds to disclose their poor return on investment. Indeed, the yen today would be far weaker if Japanese tax authorities had not been deliberately vague and slow at communicating to the public the tax advantages of individually owned offshore accounts. Again, the go-slow, holding-pattern approach at work.

Somehow, Japan will likely muddle through and avoid catastrophe. Yet one cannot help but reflect on the old U.S. "revisionist" crowd that throughout the 1980s thought Japan would run the world. American-style capitalism, the revisionists firmly believed, was becoming obsolete. Today, many of these folks are completely befuddled by the U.S. stock market's robust performance. Most failed to predict the massive U.S. corporate restructuring that has taken place since the mid-1980s.

The truth is that developments in the U.S. market, in Japan, and elsewhere are probably more interrelated than we think. The great global financial market is like a beauty pageant, says an official from the New York Federal Reserve. Out on the runway walks Miss Japan. Though she has potential, she hardly looks very beautiful these days. Out walks Miss Germany. Plagued by huge uncertainties over monetary union as well as the public and private sector's reluctance to initiate painful restructuring, Miss Germany looks even worse. The same with Miss France, who now sees currency devaluation—a new, but weak euro—as her only hope.

Suddenly, the beautiful Miss America saunters out, with all her computerized curves and technological prowess. True, she may be overvalued. She may be problem-ridden, too. But she sure ain't Miss Japan.

*David M. Smick is president of Johnson Smick International, Inc. and publisher of the* **International Economy** *magazine.*

# It's His Party

## *The Rise of John Kasich*

**By Andrew Ferguson**

John Kasich, the chairman of the House Budget Committee and the primary architect of this spring's federal budget agreement, wants to talk off the record for a while. We're sitting in the living room of his small clapboard bungalow on a leafy street in Westerville, just outside Columbus, Ohio, and a news story in this morning's *Columbus Dispatch* has him all jazzed up.

Kasich is often all jazzed up—among people who follow politicians he's famous for this already, these rapidly blinking eyes, the shrugging shoulders, the restless hands and drumming fingers. Even sitting here on his couch, theoretically at rest, he is a near-riot of activity. He crosses and uncrosses his legs, props his Adidas up on a coffee table, sweeps the air with his arms and folds them across his chest and plumps the sofa cushion. His synapses seem to fire at twice the rate of any normal human being's.

Anyway, he wants to talk off the record about this news story he's just read; it has something to do with the separation of church and state and it involves a Democratic colleague of his and he'd rather not be quoted saying anything critical, but this is an issue that exercises him greatly, that he's been thinking about for a very long time, really since the beginning of his career, and if we don't come to terms in this country with this imbalance, this absolute craziness that happens when people make paramount this idea of individual rights over the community good, then really we're not going to come to terms in this country with the . . .

"Um," Kasich says, stopping himself and pointing to my tape recorder, "you might want to turn that on now. This is pretty good."

And it is pretty good (you can judge for yourself in a moment). But what makes it interesting and worth repeating is that John Kasich is running for president—not technically, of course, not officially, though he is refreshingly uncoy about his ambition—and no one seems to think his running is a thoroughly ridiculous idea even though he is a relatively obscure congressman from Ohio. And the reason no one thinks it's ridiculous is that John Kasich, more than any other Republican politician, more than Newt Gingrich even, occupies the center of gravity of the Republican party these days. He is 45 years old, he has been in the House of Representatives 14 years, he has been obsessed with budget cutting and budget balancing for his entire career, and the Republican party has come to him at last. The party is now where he is, but he was there first. So when he decides he wants to run for president, as he almost certainly has, the way he runs tells us a lot about the Republican party. Here in 1997, John Kasich is Mr. Republican. For better or worse.

> JOHN KASICH IS REFRESHINGLY UNCOY ABOUT HIS AMBITION TO BE PRESIDENT—AND NO ONE SEEMS TO THINK IT IS ENTIRELY ABSURD.

"I have a message I feel compelled to talk about," he tells reporters when he's asked whether he'll run for president, "not just in terms of what we've been doing to balance the budget, but the larger message of how the Republican party can essentially lead the way in terms of saving our culture."

That's what he's talking about now, here in his living room in Westerville, this larger message beyond balanced budgets. So let's go to the audiotape:

"I think what's happening is, we're on a rampage to secularize American society. I think it's the uniqueness of America, if you look at de Tocqueville or if you look at Lincoln, or whether you look at Martin Luther King, all of their observations are that America can't be separated from its values. And de Tocqueville probably more than anybody.

"I think it's fair to say we're a unique country

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*Andrew Ferguson is a senior editor of* The Weekly Standard.

where the church and state are separated, and should be separate. But what's been happening over the course of the last thirty years—maybe since Madalyn Murray O'Hair—is that we have been attempting to secularize everything. You know, it's called synchronicity. It's to me a great term—the Police sang about it, remember that song? It's about a balance, isn't it, about this unique relationship between certain things. There r
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the unavoidable Tocqueville, through Madalyn Murray O'Hair to the unlikely Sting, lead singer of the Police. As he prepares to run for president, Kasich the budgetmeister, the master of numbers, is becoming increasingly allusive intellectually. On his coffee table is a pile of working papers—a memo from his staff distilling into a few pages the central themes of Orestes Brownson's *The American Republic*, also a letter from an informal adviser containing ready-to-quote passages from Edmund Burke "on the need for values," as Kasich says. They reflect the perfectly admirable crash self-improvement course that politicians often undertake when they are about to go national.

But in fashioning his post-budget-deal message, Kasich may be getting ahead of himself. Though he successfully shepherded the agreement through the Congress, the deal itself remains controversial. Most of the Washington conservative establishment—the Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute, Citizens for a Sound Economy, etc., etc., not to mention THE WEEKLY STANDARD—has come out against it. The week we spoke in Westerville, the *Wall Street Journal* had unloaded a blistering editorial titled "William Jefferson Kasich."

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ned "Pentagon reforms." His interest in environmentalism has led one member of the leadership to call him a "green squish." (His Jeep in the driveway boasts a "Save the Elephants" bumper sticker from the World Wildlife Fund.) Being a deficit-obsessive, he came late to the cause of tax cuts, and in 1994 he was one of a handful of Republicans to vote for Bill Clinton's crime bill. When the bill passed narrowly, over near-unanimous GOP opposition, he gave an impassioned speech in its defense. "This is the way we will govern this House, and govern this country," he said, "by making tough, tough decisions and coming toward the middle to serve our country."

His ideological eclecticism has led to other self-designations; he is not only a populist but also "a cheap hawk" on defense and a "supply-side deficit hawk" on fiscal policy. The oxymorons have served him well. Few politicians have received such consistently glowing press. He is well loved by establish-

ment Big Feet like David Broder and Al Hunt as the kind of Republican you can do business with—which means, in the conservative lexicon, the kind of Republican who gets rolled. Even so he seemed unprepared for the heated criticism unleashed on the right by the budget deal with Bill Clinton.

"HE'S UNBELIEVABLY STUBBORN," SAYS AN AIDE. "BUT IT'S BECAUSE HE ACTUALLY BELIEVES THIS STUFF. THERE'S NO CALCULATION. NONE."

When I asked him about it, Kasich frowned and stood up. "Let's go walk my dog," he said.

The dog's name is Penny, after Tim Penny, the former Democratic congressman from Minnesota with whom Kasich designed a series of austere budgets, much praised for their spending cuts, in the early 1990s. The dog is a recent acquisition, and part of a new domesticity in Kasich's life. He recently married his girlfriend of several years and is building a house on ten acres of countryside outside Westerville. He says he doesn't want to be in Congress much longer—another term, maybe two—and he's twice refused the entreaties of local Republicans to seek higher office in Ohio. But he seems to be getting his domestic life settled in preparation for something big.

Outside it becomes quickly apparent that Kasich doesn't walk Penny. Penny walks Kasich. She pulls and pants and strains at the leash. We proceed at a half-trot down a cobblestone street overarched by towering oaks. I ask again about the conservative criticisms of the budget deal.

"Look, I do not think this budget agreement is an end-all," he says. "I think we still got to kill departments. We need more tax cuts. We've got to deal with the baby boomers' getting older and the strain on entitlements.

"But this budget agreement is so amazing. Just a couple of years ago (*Penny, no!*), Dems were telling us we were cutting taxes for the rich and making people on Medicare pay for it. Now our Medicare savings are more than what we proposed in 1995 and we're going to actually have a capital-gains tax cut. And Democrats are accepting that!

"Part of the frustrations conservatives have is, we won. (*Penny!*) It's kind of hard to figure out who you're going to fight with and what you're going to fight about anymore. I think that's a cause for celebration. But now these people are mad, 'cause who are we going to fight?"

Penny holds up suddenly and squats on the lawn of a handsome Victorian house. "Oh, Penny," Kasich says, his usual slouch slumping deeper. Penny leaves a deposit on the voter's grass. "Oh great," Kasich says. "Oh, man." He gives the dog a yank on its leash and glances around sheepishly. Pooper-scoopers have not yet come to Westerville, apparently. We resume our trot.

"It's not like we're done. We still have entitlements to deal with. But listen: I mean, Bill Clinton is like a Republican. We're going to have discretionary spending grow at one-half of one percent a year, compared to 6 percent it's been growin' for the last ten years. I'm sorry, but there is no way to declare defeat on this. There's only a way to declare victory.

"It's just silly for these conservatives to be griping. They've got to realize, that debate is kind of over. Ronald Reagan won!"

We turn down Westerville's lovely main street, dotted with courtyards and boutiques and a refurbished movie palace selling Amish antiques. Kasich has lived here for twenty years, since he first ran for the state legislature, at the age of 26, in 1978. He comes here most weekends to be with his wife. "I hate to be in Washington," he says. "I just hate that culture. *This* is where I live."

Suddenly, from around a corner, a group of twenty or more schoolchildren comes charging toward an ice-cream parlor. "Ice cream!" one of them shouts, and the rest stream into the shop, two beleaguered teachers bringing up the rear. It's a Norman Rockwell tableau. "Oh, man, look at this," Kasich says. He's beaming. "Is this beautiful? Is this America, or what?"

"The thing you've got to realize," one of Kasich's former staffers told me, "is that when he says, 'We've got to balance the budget for the children, we've got to do this for future generations,' he really means it. There is no cynicism there.

"Understand, I don't like him all that much. He is the most intense human being I've ever met. He doesn't listen. He yells at his staff—a lot. Really, he's terrible to work for. He's unbelievably stubborn. But it's because he actually believes this stuff. There's no calculation. None."

Unlike most fortysomething conservatives, Kasich is not a self-hating baby-boomer. He seems—yikes—almost proud of it. "We were the last generation that thought we could change the world," he says, "and you know what? I still think we can."

He brings to the politician's trade all the baby-

boomer characteristics. He brags of his love for rock 'n' roll. "I've got my Counting Crows tickets already," he says excitedly. "And we're going to see Bush this summer. There's a rumor that the Stones are coming to Columbus. I've got to check that out." You might question our president's sincerity when he speaks of his love for the Mamas and the Papas, but Kasich's paeans to the greatness of, say, Deep Purple seem to reflect a genuine lack of taste. When I saw him in Westerville he'd just bought the new Depeche Mode CD. How'd he like it? "Oh, *man*," he said. Words failed him.

But they don't fail him often. "He is, bar none, the single best communicator the Republican party has—the best since Ronald Reagan," says Frank Luntz, a pollster who advises most of the leading Republicans on "communication techniques." Luntz's specialty is the soundbite—highly stylized chunks of verbiage designed to ring the bells and win the approval of focus groups. When you hear a Republican politician touting "common-sense practical solutions" or referring to the estate tax as the "death tax," you're hearing Luntz. But he freely acknowledges that Kasich does not need his advice.

"What he's got, you can't teach," Luntz says. "The language and the message he uses is better than anything any pollster could come up with. I stopped doing language with him, because everything I told him, he just took and made it better." Luntz has often screened tapes of Kasich's speeches and TV interviews for focus groups. "The man just tests through the roof. Democrats, liberals, everybody. I'll say, 'They want him to run for president.' And they say, 'Yes!' I'll say, 'Isn't he too young?' And they say, 'I don't care. I want him to run.'"

Luntz is right: Kasich tries hard to connect. For a man who has built his career on a mastery of budget arcana, he can be refreshingly colloquial. In a recent speech to Republicans in Iowa, where he met (incidentally) with the party operatives and donors who might form the nucleus of a presidential campaign, he explained the necessity of a capital-gains tax cut like this: "Look, you've got to have rewards for the risk-takers in this country. If you take the reward out of risk-taking, only idiots will take risks."

On welfare reform he is particularly artful. "I once told this roomful of rich people," he told the roomful of rich people in Iowa, "Look, we didn't reform welfare for you." The Republicans looked disappointed, but only momentarily. "We did it for Joe. You know Joe? Maybe you've seen him when you forgot your briefcase one night and went back to your office on the 31st floor and there he was sweeping up and emptying the trash. And we did it for Carol, who's pouring Starbucks coffee at the airport for just above minimum wage, and she's wakin' up at 6 a.m. to take her kids to day care, 'cause her husband left her, and when she goes to work she parks in a parking lot that's closer to *Mars* than it is to the terminal where she works.

"So I tell you, we didn't reform welfare for rich people. We reformed it for Carol and Joe. Because it is immoral—*it is a sin*—to take money from Carol and from Joe and give it to people who don't want to work."

This is a great applause line that never fails to deliver, not only for Republican audiences but every other kind, too. And no wonder. For while it sounds progressive and compassionate—liberal, almost—and therefore flatters its audience, there is lurking beneath it, in that phrase "people who don't want to work," the Cadillac-driving, vodka-chugging welfare queen of blessed memory. Maybe Ronald Reagan really is winning.

"My point of view basically comes from the underdog," he says. "I guess I'm kind of obsessed with fairness." This is another essential characteristic of the baby-boomer politician that Kasich perfectly exemplifies: overweening self-regard. But baby-boomer narcissism is deeper and more layered than the standard-issue narcissism of older politicians. Kasich speaks of his own singularity with an alarming insouciance.

"You know, I've been in politics 20 years," he announced to the gathering in Iowa. "I got into this because I'm a doer. I'm a doer. I go out there and *do*. I'm not one of those guys who wants to talk about all the problems. I want to talk about what we can accomplish. I'm a risk-taker. I swing for the fences."

> "YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE REWARDS FOR THE RISK-TAKERS," KASICH SAYS. "IF YOU TAKE THE REWARD OUT OF RISK-TAKING, ONLY IDIOTS WILL TAKE RISKS."

"I'm just who I am," he likes to say. "This isn't an act. It's not anything I'm trying to do. I'm just a regular guy." But he's not, of course, and he knows he's not. For one thing, regular guys seldom talk about how regular they are. He is extraordinarily expert at selling his ordinariness, even as he refuses—simply refuses—to apologize for his own political courage. "Back in '89," he says now, "there were three budgets. There was a Democratic budget, a Bush budget, and a Kasich budget." In fact there were half a dozen budgets or more;

devising alternative budgets used to be a cottage industry among members of the budget committee. "And I remember a reporter said to me, 'Hey, you seem to be out there all alone on this thing.' And I said, 'I don't care. I don't care because I really believe this is the right thing to do for our country.'"

He is unapologetic too about his passion for bipartisanship. Hill Republicans were scandalized earlier this year when Kasich agreed to appear at a fund-raiser for his friend Gary Condit, a Democratic congressman from California. (Kasich later reversed himself and didn't attend.) "First off, it wasn't supposed to be a fund-raiser," he says now. "It was supposed to be a meeting of his breakfast club. That was a mix-up. But let me tell you something. Gary Condit is a friend of mine. And my friendship with him means more to me than making a bunch of Republicans happy, okay?

"And I'll tell you another thing," he goes on. "Ron Dellums came to my wedding." Dellums, of course, is the left-wing congressman from California, with whom Kasich led the fight to scuttle the B-2 bomber. "Ron Dellums gave me a beautiful wedding present. And Ron Dellums said to me, 'John, I don't know where I'm going to be and I don't know where you're going to be, but I want you to know when you look at that present how much I love you guys.' Now, that is a priceless treasure. Friendships are not to be taken lightly in this world.

"And you know what? There's a lot of Republicans who watch what I do with the people on the other side of the aisle and they're beginning to learn."

They are, they are.

If there is a prototype for the Republican of the Late Clinton era—not to mention the post-Clinton era—it is John Kasich. "He's a hero to the sophomore class of House Republicans," Luntz says, referring to those House members elected in 1994 who are recasting the party's identity. The revolutionaries of '95 are the bipartisans of '97; they value comity above all. And it was Kasich who brought the budget to the center of the Republican political debate, so that all issues were subsumed by it. Even defense, once a "bright line" division between the parties, is seen these days as primarily a matter of budgeting rather than national security—a question of "What can we afford?" rather than "What do we need?" We are all cheap hawks now. So too with tax cuts: The $85 billion in tax relief called for in the budget agreement is the maximum we can expect from the Republican Congress for as far as the eye can see.

But what now? If the budget debate is, as Kasich says, "kind of over," what is the Republican message for elections to come? We're back to the living room in Westerville, where Kasich is working on it.

"With the budget done, we can now move on to these other issues, which frankly trouble Americans more than the government's finances."

And those are?

"Well, look. There's a sense of a loss of personal control, that the culture's collapsing, that their kids aren't safe, that they're not learning, or that the country's dangerous—this rise in gated communities and security systems. These are the things that are really gnawing at people. These things have to be talked about and they all get down to this problem of values and justice."

KASICH'S MESSAGE-IN-PROGRESS CERTAINLY DOES SOUND BIPARTISAN. THERE'S VERY LITTLE IN IT BILL CLINTON COULD DISAGREE WITH.

From the evils of Big Government to the evil of gated communities: Such is the evolution of Republican doctrine in the 1990s. "My message is no longer that government is going to somehow solve these problems. What I'm arguing to people is that the solutions to your schools and the broken homes and the solutions to poverty don't lie in the hands of government.

"My other pitch, beyond this values thing, is that you've got to defang government. I want to defang it at all levels and then set people free, and that, coupled with this set of values about decency and justice and compassion, it's then up to them to begin healing society, right there in their communities."

It might not be quite as precise as talk of budget recisions and readjusting COLA formulas. But Kasich's message-in-progress certainly does sound bipartisan. Clintonian, in fact. Surely there's very little in it that the president could disagree with. Which raises the question—a typically right-wing question, as Kasich says—of how you can engage in political debate when both sides are so busy agreeing with each other.

"Oh, there's plenty of areas to engage," Kasich says. "But frankly I'm a lot more interested in healing this country than in"—his voice suddenly drips with sarcasm—"than in engaging the enemy.

"Look: I'm not in this to be a Republican. I'm in this to fix my country." ♦

# The Cyberspace Liberation Front

**By Neil Munro**

A battle is on over the shape of economic activity in the information age. It pits government—specifically, law enforcement—against a disorienting jumble of right-wing and left-wing legislators, interest groups, and business leaders to be known herein as the Cyberspace Liberation Front.

The front is pushing legislation that would bar the government from regulating the hugely powerful encryption software now under development. Encryption can be thought of as a combination lock that shields computerized data and transactions from hackers and eavesdroppers—but also from legitimate investigators. It is vital for storing money or secrets in cyberspace.

In the establishment corner, hoping to defeat the legislation and regulate encryption software, are the Clinton White House, Louis Freeh's FBI, the Treasury, and the Pentagon. They worry that private parties' use of sophisticated data-scrambling software will weaken regulation of banks, allow terrorists and other criminals to plot undetected, and hamper U.S. surveillance of foreign arms merchants and armies.

In the other corner, free-speech advocates huddle with free-marketeers—the Free Love and No Free Lunch lobbies. The American Civil Liberties Union, Grover Norquist's Americans For Tax Reform, Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum, such Internet-boosters as the Electronic Frontier Foundation, and Steve Forbes, editor of *Forbes* and once-and-future GOP presidential candidate, have joined with two of the largest software companies in the world, Microsoft and Netscape Communications. Their efforts have persuaded much of the House and a good part of the Senate to back bills keeping Washington's hands off encryption technology. Sponsored by two Republicans, Conrad Burns of Montana in the Senate and Bob Goodlatte of Virginia in the House, the bills have the support of Senate majority leader Trent Lott, majority whip Don Nickles, and House majority whip Tom DeLay.

*Neil Munro is a reporter for* Washington Technology*, a business newspaper published by the Washington Post Company.*

The members of the Cyberspace Liberation Front have various motives. Goodlatte's closest Democratic ally in the House is Silicon Valley's Zoe Lofgren, whose goal is to "give women more freedom and choice." Concern for privacy is what unites her liberal friends with what she calls the "Black Helicopter caucus," the militia types who fear a United Nations invasion of the United States. Phyllis Schlafly, meanwhile, says she wants to stop Al Gore, Janet Reno, and Freeh from imposing a police state, while Sen. Burns aims to keep the Internal Revenue Service out of his constituents' computers. Industrialists such as Netscape's James Barksdale say they are only trying to maintain American preeminence in the information age.

They've all got a point. Good encryption is essential to the U.S. software and computer industries and to the development of markets in cyberspace. Armed with cheap encryption software, ordinary users of desktop PCs can scramble electronic documents and e-mail, thus protecting their intellectual property and personal communications from snoopers, cyberthieves, and hackers.

In addition, the technology can be used to sign contracts with unique electronic signatures, mint unforgeable digital cash, armor the nation's power grid and telephone network against destructive attacks by foreign computer hackers in wartime, shield cellular phone conversations, and verify the identity of any user of the Internet worldwide. Together, these functions make possible an electronic marketplace of ideas, products, and reputations worth many, many billions of dollars to U.S. workers and companies.

The trouble is, the reverse is also true. The technology can indeed be used to evade taxes, give criminals sanctuary from police, produce currencies that rival the dollar, anonymously rent Ryder trucks, put perverts in touch with one another worldwide to swap child pornography, link terrorists in hidden communications networks, and generally undermine laws and social conventions.

Here's a simple example. Gambling is illegal or

restricted in most states, to prevent Pop from squandering little Julia's community-college tuition on craps. But Internet gambling will allow Pop to blow all his family's savings in an afternoon in the privacy of his living room—and the cops won't be able to do anything about it because Pop can use encryption to hide his bets at a cyberspace casino based in some semi-criminal overseas state.

For the time being, the use of encryption is still unrestricted inside the United States, and both sides in the controversy acknowledge that little harm is being done. Industry executives claim, however, that foreign companies will use their own growing expertise in encryption to cut into U.S. exports of miscellaneous business and consumer software. And cops say they are beginning to find criminals using encryption to hide their cellphone conversations, financial records, and libraries of child porn.

THE CYBERSPACE LIBERATION FRONT HAS LITTLE HOPE OF OVERRIDING A CLINTON VETO—ESPECIALLY ONE BACKED BY POLICE CHIEFS.

In reality, there isn't much Congress can do to prevent these unfortunate side effects. Encryption technology is advancing rapidly in the United States and overseas. (The industry standard, currently 40-digit lock combinations, will soon be 128-digit combinations that are as good as uncrackable, even by the superfast lock-picking computers built by the nation's eavesdropping outfit, the National Security Agency.) Large corporations are eager to promote Internet commerce. An international policy on encryption is hard to envision, given governments' varying levels of interest in respecting their citizens' privacy. Moreover, U.S. courts may yet declare encryption software protected by the First Amendment.

Amid these pressures, the White House has maintained a reasonably firm policy of simultaneously promoting industry's use of encryption and defending the power of law enforcement. The administration's goal is to protect investigators' interest, in the event of a court-ordered wiretap or search warrant, in gaining access to encrypted material.

To this end, the White House is seeking to encourage the development and use of so-called key-recovery software. Under ordinary encryption, the single combination "key" can be closely held by the owner. Encryption software with the key-recovery feature would automatically create a second key, which might be held in escrow by the maker or by a new "key-management industry," so boosting the FBI's chances of finding a copy of the key once a judge has approved a court order.

The FBI and the Treasury are prodding government agencies and companies to devise a government-backed, privately operated key-management industry that would safely store spare keys for individual and corporate clients. This industry would also develop expertise in tracing encrypted transactions through diverse computer systems. Just as banks have long helped police trace criminals' money trails, the key-management industry could help them uncover criminals' cyberspace dealings with legitimate banks and businesses.

The White House has at hand several means of persuasion. It is using complicated trade rules to hold up exports by uncooperative companies and facilitate exports by cooperative ones. It can also steer government contracts to companies that market government-favored encryption technology. And it will be poised to blame its political opponents for any future terrorist attacks aided by encryption.

The development of key-recovery software and a key-management "infrastructure" is the goal of draft legislation that Democratic senator Bob Kerrey, flanked by minority leader Tom Daschle, announced in May. It will fall to Republican John McCain, chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee and a likely presidential candidate, to midwife a compromise between the Kerrey bill, favored by the administration, and the Burns and Goodlatte bills favored by the Cyberspace Liberation Front. McCain's goal is to keep the government's options open as it oversees the creation of the information-age economy, says an aide, adding, "You have to be prepared to deal with issues you don't know" and can't foresee, such as novel forms of organized crime and the impact of digital money on the banking system and the dollar.

Although the Cyberspace Liberation Front thinks it can win in the House and Senate, McCain's aide sees little chance that Congress could override a promised presidential veto—especially if Clinton vetoes the bill in front of a telegenic assembly of police chiefs.

In any deal, McCain will have to bring along both poles of the Cyberspace Liberation Front—the likes of Lott and Nickles, on the one hand, with their 1996 American Conservative Union ratings of 95 percent and 100 percent respectively, and on the other, of Ron Wyden, Patrick Leahy, and Barbara Boxer, who score 15 percent, 5 percent, and 5 percent respectively on

the ACU scale. In the House, more than 120 members have lined up behind the similar bill sponsored by Goodlatte and Lofgren (ACU ratings 95 percent and 5 percent). Supporters range from Bob Barr to Jerrold Nadler (ACU ratings 100 percent and 0 percent).

What keeps this coalition together is the Internet's power to generate both paranoia and profit and to commingle free-speech and free-market issues. These themes come up again and again in the comments of front backers.

Grover Norquist sees in cyberspace "an area of the economy that the government hasn't screwed up yet." Given the chance, he predicts, government will do its usual mischief. "If the government knows X about you, it will tax X," he says. So don't let it know; protect your privacy. "The Cold War is over," he says. "The Right does not genuflect at the power of the state anymore."

Norquist's director of economic research, James Lucier, puts it this way: "This [issue] is about the government being able to read, monitor, and control everything on the Internet. It is the ultimate Big Brother issue." Phyllis Schlafly chimes in: Encryption is needed to prevent "the nosy government from spying on us. . . . They think they are running a totalitarian state."

Don Haines, the ACLU's legislative counsel for cyberspace and privacy, is equally skeptical of government, arguing that "the FBI itself cannot be trusted." Besides, in his view the FBI does not really need to control encryption, partly because increased use of computers will force criminals to leave electronic tracks whenever they deal with legitimate companies, such as airlines, which are usually willing to cooperate with law enforcement. Rep. Goodlatte makes the same point: "Criminals are not going to participate" in any safeguards mandated by law, any more than they obey the gun laws. Government intervention will cripple the U.S. computer industry without thwarting criminals, he says.

This marriage of industry with left-wing and right-wing libertarians reflects the Internet's impact on business and politics, argues David Johnson, the Washington-based chairman of Counsel Connect, an Internet network for lawyers. Over time, the Internet will realign politics and force the government to cede more regulatory tasks to companies and communities of people linked via the Internet. "Both of the traditional parties are going to have to come to grips with this. . . . People have a lot more power on the Internet than in the real world," says Johnson, because in cyberspace they can directly influence politics and business in choosing how to spend their time and money.

White House cyberspace adviser Ira Magaziner shares this vision. He is completing a high-profile policy paper for Clinton's approval that recommends that government, in the name of economic efficiency, hand over much regulatory power to industry. For example, the information-technology industry should establish rules for the protection of personal privacy in cyberspace, and it should create software allowing parents to screen out distasteful content such as pornography. If government thus divests itself of many regulatory functions, education will be its chief remaining instrument for promoting equality in the new economy, Magaziner says.

But in the short term, the libertarian parties to this union will likely get dumped outside the church door if big business and government can make a deal. Already, the libertarians are aghast at an FBI-backed provision of the Goodlatte bill that would criminalize the use of encryption for criminal purposes.

Microsoft is quite willing to sell key-recovery software, provided users are allowed to switch the key-recovery function on and off, says Ira Rubinstein, a senior counsel for Microsoft. If the government would just agree not to mandate the use of key-recovery technology, industry would see its sales of software rise, and more criminals would actually end up using it, he argues.

Larry Ellison, founder of the world's second largest software developer, Oracle Corp., says his company "is inclined to work closely with the intelligence community and the government to find a sane solution to this problem." Ellison, whose $7 billion software fortune is second only to Bill Gates's, spent the morning of May 21 in Washington, D.C., talking to intelligence and law-enforcement officials about the encryption problem. He seemed confident it could be worked out. "I suppose the princes of commerce, the merchant princes, would like to get rid of the princes of government," he said, "but it is not going to happen. There is a role to be played by both. . . . Let private industry make shoes, and let the government keep the peace." ♦

WHAT HOLDS THIS UNLIKELY ALLIANCE TOGETHER IS THE INTERNET'S POWER TO GENERATE BOTH PARANOIA AND PROFIT.

# Drive, Bellow Said

## *A Nobelist's Novella*

**By David Gelernter**

The star of Saul Bellow's *The Actual* is a stretch limousine. This is unsurprising in a novella that anyone who cares for American fiction will want to read, but not for the reasons that ordinarily send you diving into a novel and stroking through it. The limousine ties the story together and is, in some ways, the best-realized character in the book. When Amy Wustrin joins an elderly billionaire and his wife inside, things start to roll. When she is all alone in a cemetery supervising a reburial operation at the novella's close, the faithful limo comes to get her, bearing her fervent admirer in its back seat so the plot can resolve. When we first meet this automobile, it is "very slowly coming up through the snow, lounging along the curve"—a "great polished concert-piano limousine." Bellow likes this piano image so much he uses it twice, which is understandable; every word he writes about this car is perfect. The passengers ride in "a luxurious little parlor with the TV screens shining cokey gray, iridescent." A great writer is one who can tell you what a TV set looks like when it is turned off.

*Contributing editor David Gelernter, our art critic, wrote last week about Robert Hughes's* American Visions.

The two main human characters are another story. Harry Trellman, the narrator and Amy's fervent admirer, half-works; Amy doesn't work at all. The characters slip in and out of focus. Weird gargoyles overdecorate the story and threaten to stave in the roof. But you read it anyhow and like it, for the incomparable dryness of the tone, and the fact that Bellow is one of five or six living authors who can dominate the English language the way Heifetz dominated the violin, de Kooning dominated oil paint, Roy Rogers dominated his horse. (Assuming he did dominate his horse.) And underneath the gargoyles, the story's structure is simple and majestic.

Kent Lemon

Trellman is a middle-aged cipher who dated Amy long ago and then allowed her to be claimed by a series of other men—two husbands and various lovers. He built over the years a successful import business, bringing battered Oriental antiques to Guatemala City and fixing them up on the cheap. Then he returned to Chicago, where Amy's second husband divorced and humiliated her and then died. The husband was a lawyer and sex-besotted cheat, but she had become an adulteress herself, so he bugged her in the act and played the tape all over Chicago. Trellman watches brisk and lonely Amy, loves her still, thinks about her constantly, and does nothing. His position is plausible and moving; he is the Sphinx in love—unblinking, all-seeing, incapable (to his resigned sadness) of stirring. When Amy needs to oversee the exhumation and reburial of her late louse of a husband, for reasons that are too complex and nonsensical to be worth spelling out, the limo'd billionaire steps in and makes the story finish.

Amy's character never comes clear. The details we get are too sparse and haphazard to allow us to see a whole person. When Trellman dated her in high school, she put on her lipstick imperfectly. "She didn't walk like a student. There was also the faulty management of her pumps." The many years since "have had no power to change her looks, the size of her eyes, or the brevity of her teeth." I can believe that these and other such facts pressed on us by Trellman from his drawerful of assorted mementos might describe an actual woman, but I have no idea what she would look or be like. That Trellman is obsessed and in love with her is merely an assertion, neither plausible nor implausible. "Of course," says Trellman, "she was no longer the beauty she had been." What kind had she been? Her dialogue is unconvincing. "A slug of disgrace is what it took to make a battler out of me." "You did behave like a wild bitch." Who talks like that?

**Saul Bellow**
***The Actual***
Viking, 112 pp., $17.95

Her husband Jay Wustrin is equally out of focus, as fuzzy as his last name—which is exactly the wrong type of name for a novel. Until you settle on a way to read it, the two leading possibilities rattle around like loose bolts in the undercarriage, driving you crazy and ruining the sound of many a fine sentence. No doubt Bellow did this on purpose, one more droll grotesquerie.

A Bellow narrative, this one more than any other I know, is a bed of fallen leaves blasted dry into weird, complex curls and flutings and hollow, weightless shells. The urge to crunch such leaves underfoot is (for many people) irresistible, like eating potato chips, so the story draws you onward. We learn about Trellman first, and then the billionaire, then Amy, and then the limo rolls onto the scene and a day's action unfolds, winding up at the cemetery and the coming-to-terms of Amy and Trellman. The author knows exactly what he is doing and tells us about it like a tour guide along the way. Over on the left is "a freakish mix-up" leading to the reburial. Coming up on the right is a Mrs. Heisinger and her "intricate ideas." Ordinarily you accept the strange details with a shrug, but sometimes they are mere aimless doodles. Amy's first husband rushes briefly onstage and we learn that he "inherited a small raincoat factory." Naturally. Such items are too easily concocted.

So what's good about this novel? The breathtakingly true and beautiful passages you encounter on every other page. Humiliated Amy sees on someone's face an expression with which she had become "all too familiar"—"a sidelong, oblique look of amusement, appearing on the half-averted cheek." Amy's second husband was Trellman's friend and plied him with sex tales: "With Oriental patience," says Trellman, "I held still while he loaded me like a beast of burden with his anecdotes." Trellman listened willingly; he is a masochistic-type Sphinx. "I remembered his anecdotes when he had long forgotten them." This last sentence is a knockout punch, and stands alone as a paragraph in itself. The book has a rhythm that reminds you of Mozart's last piano concerto, which opens with lovely halting dignity—three irregular phrases put

together with two single-bar pauses. ("I myself was both larger and heavier than my parents, though internally more fragile, perhaps.")

The story's structure is simple and spacious. This reviewer's encounter with its key passage surpassed his previous greatest Bellow-reading experience. (When *The Dean's December* was published in 1982, I was a graduate student, ostensibly of computer science but actually studying the technical details of writing and painting at the minutest, picayunist level I could reach. I thought of Bellow as a great stylist and was fascinated by what I took to be his heartlessness. When I reached a point where his characters suddenly turned real—where an abstract, distracted lady astronomer curls up in her narrow childhood bed, her hair spread out on the pillow behind her, and is comforted by her husband—I was astonished. I hadn't grasped that Bellow was capable of that kind of writing.) *The Actual* centers on the old billionaire's telling Trellman, "Our friend Mrs. Wustrin is going to have a bad day of it at the cemetery. No woman should have to do such a chore alone."

This statement sends the plot chugging home. It is powerful in two ways—on the universal scale and in the specific world of the book. First, it has Biblical resonance. On the point of creating Eve, God says, "It is not good for man to be alone." ("No, nor woman neither," Bellow wants to add, with Hamlet.) Second, the statement rings true as a record of one Jew talking to another about a third, in a vanishing world whose sounds we still recognize. The Greek narrative hinges on a moment of catharsis, pity, and terror, the Jewish narrative on *rachmones*, pity and kindness—a homelier, less histrionic emotion that used to exist as a last resort, not always but often, between Jew and Jew; a weary old car that kept running many years after its allotted lifespan, and kept getting you where you needed to go. Bellow is scared to death of kitsch, and he successfully avoids it. The old billionaire's declaration is the emotional hinge of the story.

The ending, on the other hand, doesn't come off. It makes sense, but the dialogue is too lackadaisical to support it. The layout and design of the book are unforgivable. Viking evidently believes that Saul Bellow is such a great author, his novels ought to look like *The Bedtime Book of Precious Little Pronouncements* you can find near the maroon candles at your local gift shop.

Still, *The Actual* is an object worth the indignity of owning. Trellman refers to Jay Wustrin, Amy's dead husband, as "the late Jay"—"Behind this was a freakish mixup, just the sort of joke that appealed to the late Jay." This is worth the price of admission, and in its own small way shows Bellow's greatness. There are many ways the thought could have been put; the most obvious version is plain "Jay" without "the late"—we already know he is dead. But "the late Jay" is a brilliant phrase because it is so short and tight, so wry and dry and funny. Who knows how a great author invents such phrases? It is hard to say even, in the end, why they are so good. E.B. White's advice to young writers was to get lucky, and if that is indeed what it takes, Bellow is one of the luckiest men of our time. ♦

# It Takes a Whatever

## *Elizabeth Drew's Account of 1996*

**By Brit Hume**

*Whatever It Takes* is Elizabeth Drew's third book chronicling the political saga of the Clinton years, and it promises a "rich and dramatic story" of "the real struggle for political power in America" in the 1996 election. The author's publicists say she looked past the uninteresting story of the Clinton-Dole race to provide the "secret history of a titanic battle" for control of Congress. The principal players in this drama are a group of relatively unknown figures on both the left and right who head political pressure groups. Their influence on the 1996 congressional election, the author suggests, was decisive.

**Elizabeth Drew**
***Whatever It Takes:***
***The Real Struggle for Political Power in America***
Viking, 384 pp., $25.95

*Contributing editor Brit Hume is Washington managing editor of the Fox News Channel.*

Drew has brought to this account the same clear-eyed and fair approach found in *On the Edge*, her account of the first two years of the Clinton White House, and *Showdown*, a chronicle of the 1995 war between the Clinton White House and the Gingrich-led Republican Congress. *Whatever It Takes* is much the shortest of the three, and it seems clear why: She tried to find a different way to chronicle an election year and chose an unusual cast of characters through whom to tell the story, and they didn't turn out to be as important as she had imagined they would be.

While we do hear about AFL-CIO political director Steve Rosenthal and other liberals, the main actors in Drew's account are on the right, from Ralph Reed and the National Rifle

Association to the omnipresent conservative activist Grover Norquist. There is more here than you likely have ever before read about the National Federation of Independent Business, certainly more than you ever expected to read about the National Beer Wholesalers Association. Drew does her best to make these people and organizations seem important; she describes Norquist as "one of the most influential figures in Washington and—through the coalition of largely grassroots organizations he had put together—the nation."

The former Washington correspondent of the *New Yorker*, Drew hardly brings a conservative perspective to her reporting. But she reports on these right-wing activists with admirable evenhandedness and almost none of the condescension with which Washington journalists usually write about them.

Occasionally, though, a telltale phrase gives her away. She writes, for example, that Bob Dole's criticism of U.N. secretary general Boutros Boutros Ghali in his San Diego acceptance speech was "code for racism" and that President Clinton's decision to sign the welfare-reform bill was "the largest blot on his presidency thus far."

Such lapses are rare, however. More typical is Drew's description of Second Amendment activist Ray Nemeth, head of a group called the American Freedom Association. Drew writes elsewhere in the book that "federal courts have uniformly held that there is no constitutional right for an individual to own a gun." But she is fair enough to write of Nemeth that he "would probably be considered by the world at large a 'gun nut,' but he is a perfectly normal, pleasant man who feels strongly on this issue, and it all makes sense to him."

As neutral as Drew strives to be, however, her viewpoint still affects her reporting in important ways. She exudes a faith in the efficacy of campaign-spending limits only a true liberal could have. She laments early in the book that campaign-finance-reform laws have become a "sham" and explains painstakingly how "soft money"—special-interest contributions not subject to the law's spending limits—"[grew] into a monster, overwhelming the original reform laws." She has special contempt for Supreme Court rulings that she believes made this development possible, especially for a 1986 ruling that drew a line between "candidate advocacy" spending, which the court said was subject to spending limits, and "issue discussion," which it said was not. That line, she says, "is a nonsense." The court in 1996 further decided that political parties, too, could spend without limit on their candidates as long as they did so independently of the campaigns themselves. Drew calls this "an absurd distinction that added to the ways in which the campaign finance laws were rendered meaningless in 1996."

**Elizabeth Drew**

Chas Fagan

But despite her dismay at what she considers the failure of campaign-finance laws, 1996 proved to be the year when fund-raising excesses carried a heavy price. The scandal over illegal contributions from foreign sources, Drew reports, stalled the Clinton campaign's momentum in its critical final weeks, holding his vote below the 50 percent he craved and preventing the Democrats from regaining control of the House. "It was," Drew writes, "as if the Gods had stepped in to punish Clinton for his arrogance and insouciance when it came to fundraising." Of course, it was not the gods, but the voters, who decided based on press reports that Clinton and his party had gone too far and punished them for it at the polls. The fact that democracy's most basic safeguards appear to have worked here, and more effectively than the Federal Election Commission ever could have, seems lost on Drew.

And here we have the fundamental problem with *Whatever It Takes*. Its premise is that the key players in this election were a small group of men operating largely out of public view in their Beltway offices. She makes a good case that as such people go, they were as influential as any. But she never demonstrates that their machinations were in any way decisive. Indeed, the evidence in the book suggests precisely the opposite.

Consider the case of Rep. Greg Ganske, the Iowa Republican and one of three GOP freshmen whose reelection race she tracked closely. Unlike the other two, Peter Torkildsen of Massachusetts and Randy Tate of Washington, Ganske won reelection. "He had wriggled out sufficiently from the Gingrich problem," she writes, "and he had a weak opponent." In describing Randy Tate's defeat in Washington, Drew quotes a Democratic operative: "You had a fatally injured incumbent and a good candidate on our side. We ran a better campaign and had a better candidate." She does not argue with this assessment, and with good reason. Despite all the excitement in Washington and in the pages of *Whatever It Takes* about the power of political action committees, lobbyists, and campaign donations, the principal forces in American elections remain the candidates, the issues, and, most of all, the voters. ♦

B&A

# STOKI IN STEREO

## *He Was No Mickey Mouse Conductor*

**By Jay Nordlinger**

Leopold Stokowski had been the conductor of the renowned Philadelphia Orchestra for nearly three decades by 1940, but much of the world met him only that year, with the release of the Walt Disney movie *Fantasia*. In the opening frames, the "Fabulous Philadelphians" filed in, took their seats, and warmed up. Then came "Stoki" (as he was universally known), in solemn silhouette. He ascended the podium, raised his arms, and—feet together, nose imperiously high—gave the emphatic downbeat for Bach's *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor*.

This is the image that many people retain of Stokowski, and, indeed, of all conductors. Accompanied by *Fantasia*'s wordless animation, he conducted, among other works, Beethoven's "Pastoral" Symphony, Mussorgsky's *Night on Bald Mountain*, and Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* (in a dazzlingly virtuosic performance). Children were especially enthralled by the antics of Mickey Mouse, who at one point walked up behind Stoki, pulled on his tails, and shook his hand. Stokowski made the cover of *Time* magazine, which read: "Leopold Stokowski: He and Mickey Mouse put on a brand new act."

Stoki's celebrity endured into the mid-1970s, when he was a provocative nonagenarian, maintaining an active concert and recording schedule and teasing interviewers like Dan Rather, as he did during a prime-time CBS special in January 1977, Stoki's ninety-fifth and final year. Someone had fed Rather an inane question, which came out, "I know that you have never taken a composer's work absolutely literally, have you?" Stoki replied, appropriately, "I don't know what you mean by 'literally.'" He then allowed that "emotion" had its place, because, "If your father had no emotion, you wouldn't exist now—because he loved your mother." (Stoki's mind, when not on music, was usually on the sensual, and often it was on both at the same time.)

To this day, Stokowski's musical reputation can be hard to disentangle from feelings about his fame. He is revered by a certain cadre of musicians, which regards him as underrated, penalized by snobs for his collaboration with the likes of Disney. He is reviled by other musicians, who consider him a pompous showman. Many older members of the general public admire him as the man who introduced them to serious music. And there are self-supposing cognoscenti who sneer at him for his very popularity. Rarely, though, is a negative opinion about Stokowski offered on strictly musical grounds. Those who will not forgive him for *Fantasia* might be surprised on re-watching it: It is an excellent two-hour musical education, middlebrow (at best) for its day, but indisputably high culture in ours. Stoki's performances—even if narrow-eyed mushrooms bob to the "Chinese Dance" from Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker*—are original, exact, and vibrant.

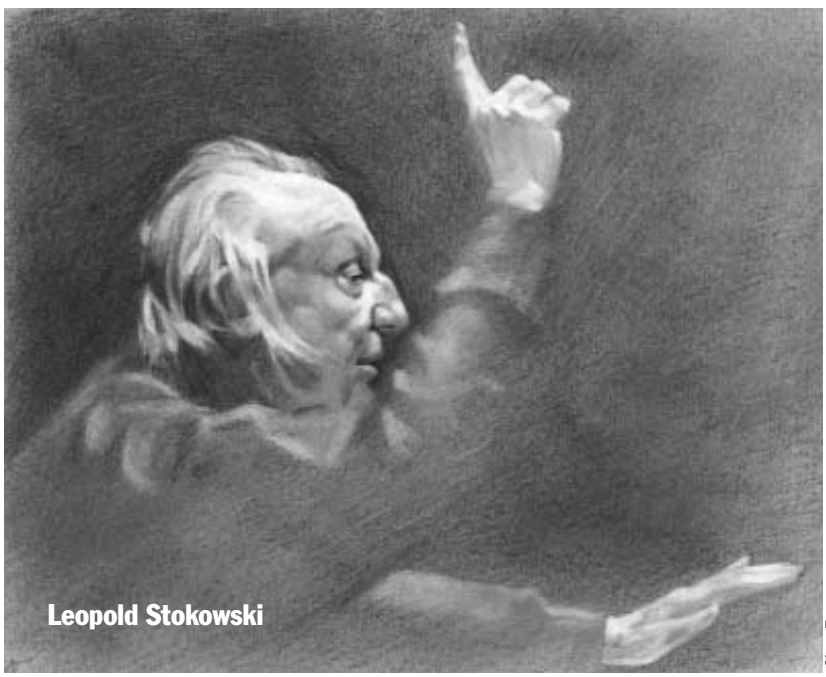
A musician—certainly a dead one—is judged by his recordings, and no one was more fanatical on this front, more posterity-conscious, than Stoki. He cut his first record in 1917; he did not stop until May 1977, four months before his death. These recordings form the Stokowski legacy, and they will be enjoyed and evaluated long after the affair with Garbo, the marriage to Gloria Vanderbilt, the hokey (other) Hollywood movies, the self-parodic airs, and the relentless publicity-hunger are forgotten. A fourteen-disc set, the "Stokowski Stereo Collection," has just come out from BMG (formerly RCA Victor), encompassing all the surviving stereo recordings the conductor made for that label. Most of these were made during his twilight years, when he was a wizened old man with long, wispy hair who often sat to conduct and sometimes seemed barely able to lift his arms.

These recordings had their first releases only a generation ago—Stoki was a modern conductor, not a relic of a bygone age. Yet he was born in 1882. And it is impossible to write about him without having some fun with the numbers, so here goes:

*Associate editor Jay Nordlinger, music critic of* THE WEEKLY STANDARD, *last wrote on Franz Schubert's bicentenary.*

When Stoki was born in London, Dvorak was 40 years old, Tchaikovsky 41, Brahms 48, Mahler but 21. Victoria had almost twenty more years to go in her reign, and President Garfield had just died. Stoki conducted past Jimmy Carter's inauguration.

Stokowski was a tireless advocate of new music—he gave the world or the U.S. premiere of over 400 pieces—yet some of that music now seems as established as Handel's *Messiah*: Mahler's *Song of the Earth*, Falla's *Amor brujo*, and various symphonies of Sibelius, Rachmaninoff, Prokofiev, and Shostakovich (all of whom he knew well). He may sometimes be remembered as a purveyor of light classics, but it was his insistence on championing contemporary composers that landed him in trouble with the Philadelphia's governing board and that probably cost him his job with the NBC Symphony Orchestra, of which he was "co-conductor" with his rival Arturo Toscanini: Half the audience walked out on the Schoenberg piano concerto (which Toscanini had warned him not to try).



Leopold Stokowski

Chas Fagan

Stoki was—and he might even agree with this, after initial apoplexy—a typical American in that he came from across the ocean and utterly reinvented himself. When he left England in the early 1900s to become a church organist in New York, he was a Londoner through and through—the grandson of a Polish immigrant, yes, but also of three native Britons, and a product of the Royal College of Music. He had never traveled beyond British shores. But by the time he assumed the directorship of the Philadelphia in 1912 (after a three-year stint in Cincinnati), he had become a Slav, affecting a thick Polish accent and employing fractured Continental syntax (although these lessened in private speech). He wanted Americans to take him for a complicated European—fleeing from political persecution, and so on—and they did. He was aided in this metamorphosis by his first wife, the pianist and pedagogue Olga Samaroff—née Lucie Hickenlooper in Texas.

Stoki told different stories at different times, heedless of the specifics of his previous lies. He once stormed off a radio set when an interviewer suggested that he had been born in London. In his more outrageous moments, he claimed such things as that he was the illegitimate offspring of the Kaiser's sister, reared by a governess. So dense was the fog that Stoki threw off that it has been difficult to ascertain the facts about him. One biography of him is titled *The Mystery of Leopold Stokowski*; the opening chapter of another is called "Misterioso." The maestro's mischief is even now doing its work: The new *Random House Encyclopedic Dictionary of Music* lists Stoki as having a Polish father and an Irish mother. He always wanted his nationality indistinct, asserting that he belonged to no country, but to music, alone.

Even so, he returned to his native England in 1972, after an almost 70-year career in the United States. The recordings he made for RCA were with the sundry orchestras of London—the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra, the New Philharmonia Orchestra—all of which were (and are) practically interchangeable, sharing much of the same personnel. Other recordings in the new collection are from the 1950s and 1960s, with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the American Symphony Orchestra (one of the two orchestras that Stoki founded, along with the New York City Symphony), and RCA's own orchestra.

No matter what group he was in front of, he demanded, and got, the "Stokowski Sound," also known as the "Philadelphia Sound," which is more readily recognized than described. It comes from the free bowing, rather than the uniform bowing, of the strings and is like liquid silk or the just-exposed pulp of a fresh orange, smooth and glistening and unconfined.

The sound is especially luxuri-

ous—though not to everyone's taste, by a long shot—in Stoki's Bach transcriptions, which he recorded for the last time in 1974. These transcriptions—arrangements of instrumental and vocal pieces for the modern symphony orchestra—are deemed shockingly impure in today's back-to-basics climate. But they are formidable achievements of conception and orchestration. Stokowski emphasizes Bach's melodies, elevating them from the brilliant contrapuntal clutter in which they are occasionally lost. Opponents contend that he adulterated and diminished Bach, but they forget that Bach was seldom heard in the concert hall before Stoki came along and that it was his reverence for Bach that led him to popularize him in the first place.

Stoki's late recording of the Bach D-minor chaconne is technically unimpressive, but carries a spiritual potency that comes from long companionship with a piece and a thorough understanding of it. That same Stokowskiian force lies behind the E-major preludio, the ethereal *Air on the G String*, and the hymn *Ein' feste Burg* (the Gregorian theme used by Martin Luther for *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*, later harmonized by Bach), which Stoki perfectly shapes and imbues with angelic strength. Those who decry these transcriptions on grounds that they are not Bach are not incorrect; but they are Bach-Stokowski, which has its own merits.

Stoki's recordings of Handel's *Water Music* and *Royal Fireworks* music, on the other hand, are less successful—ponderous and undisciplined. They cannot be blamed on his dotage, either, because, first, he had none, and, second, the recordings were made in 1961, when Stoki was a green 79. Listeners thinking to flee to Stokowski because they are weary of authentic-instruments performances should turn instead for these pieces to George Szell's accounts with the London Symphony Orchestra, on London Weekend Classics.

Surprisingly for a man who spent six decades amid what he called "meekrophones," Stokowski recorded Mahler's "Resurrection" Symphony only once, in 1974. It is one thing for a man at that stage of life to conduct a gentle Bach air, but it is another to take on this Mahler, which is a gigantic, sprawling work for full orchestra, a vast chorus, and two vocal soloists. The managerial problems alone are forbidding. But Stoki does not conduct like an old man. (He attended Mahler's own rehearsals for his Eighth Symphony in 1910 and later gave the U.S. premiere of that work in Philadelphia.) One might expect this reading to be on the contemplative side, but instead Stoki wants still to be the dazzler. He traverses the music with tremendous vigor and muscularity.

The choicest bits of the collection? First, there is a 1954 recording (with the NBC Symphony Orchestra) of a suite from Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*, in which Stoki simply puts on a conducting clinic. It is incandescent, demonstrating his extreme sensitivity, acute ear, and awareness of musical architecture. To conduct music that requires continual threads of sound, with no undercurrent of rhythm to rely on, is a special challenge, and Stokowski met it. And like Sir Thomas Beecham, he excelled in lending profundity to music of less than divine inspiration.

Second, there is a Brahms Fourth Symphony, recorded in 1974, that is head-spinning, for it is a young man's performance, robust and ebullient, alert and taut, stormier and more energetic than almost any other. The tempos are joltingly quick, and the ending of the first movement is almost frightening for its ferocity. The conductor is clearly leading his players, stamping himself on every measure. The second movement

sighs and glimmers. The third bursts with confidence. The fourth movement is less fine, but the recording is nonetheless extraordinary.

There are, however, poor performances in the set that do not credit the Stokowski legacy and could have been omitted. His "New World" Symphony of Dvorak is lackluster, and his "Pathétique" Symphony of Tchaikovsky merely pathetic, with Stoki either exhausted or distracted.

In these sessions, Stokowski sometimes had good minutes and bad minutes within the same piece. His *Coriolan Overture* of Beethoven is like that—here perfunctory, there perked up—as is his *Academic Festival Overture* of Brahms, which begins playfully and impishly, falls into indifference (the notes "placed" rather than sung naturally), and then concludes with great cascades of sound, as Stoki rouses himself.

The collection is garnished with a few curiosities, such as a group of religious and semi-religious choral pieces that came out in 1962 on an album called *Inspiration*; Tchaikovsky's rarely heard *Lord's Prayer* is movingly rendered here.

There are also selections from Stoki's rehearsals, both in 1954 and in the London sessions. The later snippets provide a sense of the atmosphere in the studio, with Stoki, in his by-then-tiny, barely audible voice, saying, "Is my beat clear? Anything not clear? Any questions?" In the D-minor toccata and fugue, he says to the brass players, "That *G* was spluttered, it wasn't clean." It was still spluttered the second time. But the third time, it was "splendid! Give it, don't keep it in your pocket." (Stoki was speaking more or less British English in these rehearsals.)

In his nineties, Stokowski did not consistently reach the level of his prime, but he was recognizably himself, and he sorely wanted to record some of his principal repertory in stereo. He loved technology, rejoiced in gadgets, and always wanted to be the first to try the latest thing (he experimented with stereo at Bell Labs in 1932 and made the first long-playing records shortly thereafter). Like other musicians who lived into their nineties—Pablo Casals and Artur Rubinstein, for two—he would hobble or be helped to his post, seeming incapable of functioning, and awaken, transformed, on re-engaging with his craft. The companies obviously wanted the superstar's "last recordings" (they had to keep making them for years), in whatever shape they were, but Stoki did not have to lower his standards dramatically. His final recording, of Bizet's Symphony in C (made in 1977 for CBS), is not his finest, nor the finest of that symphony, but it is reputable and in no way the work of a once-great man being rewarded merely for breathing.

There is undeniably such a thing as performing genius, and Stokowski had it. He was a complete conductor, lacking no trick of the trade, deprived of no significant musical insight. He was a ham, certainly: He had spotlights trained on the podium; he discarded the baton for effect; he kept his feet together because it made him appear all the more elegant. But when it came to the music, his integrity held firm. Every piece of music he made musical, from the frivolous to the heroic.

Stoki's intellectual prowess is occasionally questioned, and his image (self-fashioned) is responsible for that: He gave a good interview, chased glamorous women, titillated the public, and was charming to all. If he had been an irascible s.o.b. and a crazed martinet like Toscanini, he might be given more credit for the strength of his mind. His Beethoven Ninth (no soufflé), recorded in 1967 and available on London/Decca, proves that he understood the permanent things about music as well as anyone. The recordings reveal the truth. The man who shook the hand of the mouse was sublime. ♦

# PARTY ANIMALS

## *Was Studio 54 Really So Innocent?*

**By Molly Magid Hoagland**

*The Last Party* is a group biography of the 1970s New York hot spot called Studio 54 and the innumerable clubs that followed it. Like most biographies nowadays, *The Last Party* exceeds the needs and interest of the general reader. Its author, Anthony Haden-Guest, contends that Studio 54's heyday was a watershed in the history of American celebrity—a time when famous people flocked to the same set of dark, noisy, public rooms to see and be seen in every state of intoxication.

**Anthony Haden-Guest**
***The Last Party***
***Studio 54, Disco, and the Culture of the Night***
William Morrow, 404 pp., $25

He dubs the velvet-rope culture he is describing "Nightworld," a place ruled by "Nightlords" (big *N*) and inhabited by "nightpeople" (small *n*). He offers us a portrait, not merely of a "fabulous" club life, but of a significant phenomenon. "Change is swift in Nightworld, and not always subtle," he writes.

*Molly Magid Hoagland is a writer living in New York.*

Ron Gallela

*Denizens of "Nightworld"; Elton John and Andy Warhol are at left*

"Changes in Nightworld, frivolous in themselves, can indicate changes in the whole culture, as much as the twitches and tweaks of tectonic plates may predict the rise and fall of the landmass."

Haden-Guest recounts Studio 54's rise and fall with the minute detail and suspense usually accorded a world-historical event. But while the silvery bookjacket promises celebs galore ("Diana Ross . . . Mick Jagger . . . Cher"), Haden-Guest in fact tells the story of the clubowners and their hangers-on, whom he calls the "shock troops" of Nightworld.

Alas, the book's central characters—like Studio 54 owners Ian Shrager and the late Steve Rubell—prove a surprisingly dreary bunch, the sort of people who would be turned away from New York hot spots if they didn't run them. The people they let in are not much more interesting. *The Last Party* is peppered with hundreds of names of would-be glitterati whom no one has ever heard of (Joe la Placa, Ulla-Maia Kirimaki, Barbara Allen de Kwiatkowski). Someone named Sally Randall is recalled as "one of the most famous young women in New York." Really? Famous to whom? *The Last Party*, like the very clubs it celebrates, seeks to expand the embrace of celebrity to include every habitué of "the culture of the night."

The photographs accompanying Haden-Guest's text are in some ways the most revealing part of the book; they show the Sodom and Gomorrah-meets-Weimar-meets-Vegas atmosphere of Studio 54 and its descendants better than words can. Bianca Jagger on horseback, led by a naked man in a painted tux. Midgets at table in formal attire. Vladimir Horowitz, who seems to be square dancing. Grace Jones in a body-stocking. Baryshnikov and Mick Jagger lounging bleary-eyed. A jock-strapped man enacting something or other with a chair. Liza Minnelli, Liz Taylor, Halston, Betty Ford, and Martha Graham squished into a banquette.

This amusing gallery hardly illustrates Haden-Guest's dubious central claim that the decadence of Studio 54 was an innocent joy-in-excess somehow different from the decadence of its 1980s successors. "Studio 54 had been . . . the culmination of some very 1960s notions of freedom, openness, giddy display, hope. Sex was good for you and more sex was better, and, as for drugs, well, cocaine . . . was believed to be a non-addictive pick-me-up. . . . [But] the innocence was gone. The new Nightworld was more knowing, and this was one of the legacies of Studio 54."

Haden-Guest argues that Nightworld and by extension the "whole culture" became "more bizarre and more extreme" in the wake of Studio 54. He gives chilling accounts of the drug world within Nightworld—especially cocaine and heroin, but also Ecstasy and Ketamine (a tranquilizer for horses). He describes New York's hardest-core gay sex clubs, circa 1985, in scenes straight from Hieronymus Bosch. After Studio 54, he contends, "Nightworld seemed at once hectic and sullen, Gothic, not rococo, and suffused with a stormlight."

It is difficult to tell how disinterested an observer Haden-Guest really is, as he was something of a "night-person" himself. His reportage is frequently interrupted by reminders that he was always on the guest lists and in the VIP rooms. Despite his sobering observations of the underside of Nightworld, his true lament is for the decline of the club scene. Star-studded no longer, it has been marginalized by the juvenile antics of the super-tawdry "Club Kids."

While we probably *are* more inured to the bizarre today (Dennis Rodman in the NBA), Haden-Guest's distinction between an "innocent," somehow "rococo" Studio 54 and its "Gothic" progeny is bizarre in itself. The hedonistic culture of Nightworld—with its compulsive sex and drugs and its freak-show aesthetic—was Gothic all the while. ♦

LETTERS

# JUST BETWEEN COUSINS, PART II

*In last week's issue of THE NEW YORKER, readers will recall, we published some of the correspondence between Gore Vidal and Louis Auchincloss, novelists and distant cousins whose vital role in the world of post-war American literature is extraordinarily clear to both of them. They like each other, admire each other, respect each other, but they do seem to have some difficulties playing with other children.*

BY GORE VIDAL AND LOUIS AUCHINCLOSS

April 1975

CHER COUSIN LOUIS,

The long-nosed eminences of what passes for Amerikan High Kultur having taken their Sabbath off to bow the head toward Tel Aviv, we can safely open *Caligula*—my screenplay, you know—at porn theaters nationwide before the Sulzberger Stormtroopers come marching in to break the crystal beauty that is my work. Mine and Bob Guccione's.

They know not whom they suppress when they suppress me. Why whine? As the author of *Voyage to a Small Planet*, universally acknowledged as the finest television playlet ever written about a space alien, I will outlast them.

Just read the novel you wrote this month. *Tant mieux* than last month's. There hasn't been a writer like you since Henry James, save, perhaps, Barbara Cartland. She married my mother's step-brother-in-law, as I am sure you recall.

GORE

March 1982

DEAR GORE,

How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable was last night's dinner at Brooke Astor's! I fear for my sanity. There was I, the Saint-Simon of my time, and who was playing the role of the Sun King? Mailer, always Mailer. He bestrides the narrow world like a Colossus. The time is out of joint. Exeunt hurriedly, followed by bear.

LOUIS

January 1991

MON CHER LOU,

The Israelites have had their way. War is afoot in the Middle East. What would Henry Adams say? That is exactly what I asked Johnny Carson last night during an appearance to promote the rerelease of *Myra Breckenridge*, indubitably the greatest novel ever written about a transsexual played on the screen by both Rex Reed and Raquel Welch. It was not well-reviewed in the *Times* on Sunday. The editor of the book review then was named Shapiro. QED.

GORE

March 1997

DEAR GORE,

My wife has taken ill, as has my dog. My sister's condition only gets worse. This has made progress on this month's four novels exceedingly arduous. Fortunately, Brooke Astor continues to feed me, though Mailer is ever there, haunting me. I rented *Bob Roberts*, the movie in which you play a liberal Senator. Too good to be true, of course, that a man such as you could actually serve in the Senate. But what a loss for letters it would be! Who would have written *Myron*? or *Kalki*?

LOUIS