the weekly Standard

OCTOBER 13, 1997

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THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CRISIS
TUCKER CARLSON

The Forbes Factor

How An Unlikely Presidential Candidate Has Gained Surprising Momentum

by Fred Barnes

Tony Blair's Coronation
IRWIN M. STELZER

Alfred Kazin's America
MALCOLM BRADBURY

the weekly Standard

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Cover by Chas Fagan

Books & Arts

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Appeasement in Our Time

The Scrapbook has been enjoying voluminous nominations for the Dianne Feinstein Appease-China prize. What with the approaching Bill Clinton-Jiang Zemin summit, making goo-goo eyes at China is fast becoming the dominant indoor sport in the nation's capital.

Consider the "very urgent" memo we have obtained, which was sent last week by Robert A. Kapp, president of the United States-China Business Council, to the council's member companies. Kapp was concerned that a "House China Bill Juggernaut" would "prove very inflammatory, embarrassing to the Administration as it prepares to meet Jiang Zemin, and so embarrassing to the Chinese guests that their impact on the summit meeting itself . . . could be disastrous."

Of what, precisely, does this "juggernaut" consist? Five different bills in "mark-up"—parts of which may or may not eventually be passed—that Kapp describes collectively as "inflammatory," "punitive," and "intentionally polluting [of] the prospects for U.S.-China cooperation." This is ludicrous. One bill, finding that Iran has acquired Chinese cruise missiles, directs the White House to enforce a law already on the books—the Iran-Iraq Non-Proliferation Act of 1992. Another would prohibit entry into the United States by Chinese officials who have been responsible for imprisoning, detaining, or otherwise repressing religious people in China. A third would appropriate $2.2 million over two years to monitor political repression in China. Another calls for a study on the feasibility of providing ballistic-missile defenses to Taiwan. And finally, there is a bill that would increase funding for Radio Free Asia and Voice of America broadcasting into China.

This last item's appearance on the Kapp hit list provoked a counter-volley from Alberto J. Mora, a member of the broadcasting board of governors that oversees VOA, Radio Free Asia, and other U.S. government broadcasting.

"There is nothing 'inflammatory' about either Voice of America or Radio Free Asia broadcasts other than the truth, responsibly presented," wrote Mora to Kapp. "Nor is there anything embarrassing to the Administration about these broadcasts, as you mistakenly suggest. . . . How can broadcasts that lead to a better-informed Chinese citizenry and, consequently, increased mutual understanding between the United States and China ever be considered 'punitive?'"

How, indeed? The international-relations theory of the appeasement caucus seems to be Machiavelli-in-reverse: Since the United States is the world's most powerful nation with an economy 30 times the size of China's, and China is a Great Power wannabe desperate to buy our technology, we should therefore strive to give no offense to the sensitive Chinese dictators, whose constitutions are more delicate than a Fabergé egg. The proper posture of a global superpower, the business-at-any-price lobby wants to make clear, is prostrate, with an ingratiating smile across its face. Congratulations, Mr. Kapp. For your deft elucidation of this theory, you are this week's Dianne Feinstein laureate.

Despite A-Bomb, Japan Surrenders

Okay, the headline in the Sept. 28 *New York Times* wasn't *that* outrageous, but it came close: "Crime Keeps on Falling, but Prisons Keep on Filling." Gee, there's a paradox. And lest you think the headline writer, in a stab at euphony, has misrepresented the story, here is the lede on Fox Butterfield's thumbsucker: "It has become a comforting story: for five straight years, crime has been falling, led by a drop in murder. So why is the number of inmates in prisons and jails around the nation still going up?"

Astonishingly, the possibility that longer sentences and less parole might be playing a large part in that falling crime rate merits only one tiny subordinate clause in the article, which argues instead that rising prison populations may soon lead to a crime wave. How's that? Well, locking up more and more felons has diluted the "stigmatizing effect" of imprisonment. Wow. Sociologists say the darndest things, and reporters who spend too many years pondering the "root causes" of crime sometimes parrot them. But whatever happened to the stigmatizing effect of an editor's derisive laugh?

Fake Tocqueville Lives!

The fake Tocquevillism that John J. Pitney Jr. sought to stamp out in these pages two years ago—"America is great because America is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to

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be great"—not only lives on, it metastasizes. Earlier this year, the Christian Defense Fund published *One Nation Under God*—according to the cover, a compilation of "powerful statements by America's Founding Fathers on the crucial role of the Christian faith in building our great nation." The introduction argues that American students are routinely subjected to the mistaken liberal belief that the Constitution and America's founding both call for strict separation of church and state. The book's goal is to set the record straight, and in certain respects it does. But it also adds to the confusion, providing a long version of the infamous fake Tocqueville quote on page 13. "I sought for the key to the greatness and genius of America in her harbors, . . . in her fertile fields and boundless forests; in her rich mines and vast world commerce; in her public school system and institutions of learning. I sought for it in her democratic Congress and in her matchless Constitution. Not until I went to the churches of America and heard her pulpits flame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because America is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great."

For its part, THE SCRAPBOOK fears that an America that persists in putting the words it wants to hear into the mouth of a dead French nobleman will soon cease to be great.

TED CENSOR

Last week, Christopher Caldwell noted in these pages that Ted Turner's billion-dollar U.N. gift wouldn't be a billion dollars, wouldn't go to the U.N., and was perhaps less a gift than a quid pro quo. This week we're led to surmise something else: It won't go into free-speech programs, either.

CNN, in which Turner still owns a share, has just pulled ads that criticize a proposed U.N. treaty on global warming. Does this have anything to do with Turner's environmentalism and his newly forged U.N. ties? Does it have anything to do with currying favor at this week's confab at the White House on global warming? Or is this just the way the new CNN operates? Certainly Rick Kaplan, new president of Turner's CNN, is hardly a champion of untrammeled expression. At his first staff meeting, he ordered employees to stop using the word "scandal" when referring to the Clinton fund-raising . . . scandals.

Turner whined quite a lot about freedom of expression when he was presiding over the Committee to Protect Journalists in 1995. We hope we've heard the last of that tune.

CLINTONISM OF THE WEEK

From an Oct. 1 *New York Times* story on Israel's refusal to extradite Maryland teenager Samuel Sheinbein, who has been charged with the murder of one Alfredo Tello: "Ms. Leitner, Mr. Sheinbein's lawyer, said her client 'doesn't at this time remember being involved in anyone's death.'"

Casual

Watching, Seeing, Reading

If you are, as I am, an inveterate consumer of pop culture, half the time you must wonder why on earth you bother. Most of the movies you see, television shows you watch, books you read, are disappointing. I can remember when that wasn't really the case for me, when even a bad television show held a certain fascination because it might have a moment or a performance or a snippet of dialogue worth remembering. But after three decades, my ability to enjoy those very small pleasures is diminishing. Instead, I find myself testing my powers of endurance. This happened the other week, when I watched the premiere of *Beverly Hills 90210*, the once-hip show about teenagers that has been on so long they are probably worried about their reimbursements under Medicare Part B. I have never—and I mean never—seen anything as awful as this episode. It wasn't awful because it was badly written, though it was, or because it was badly acted, though it was, or because it was pointless and plotless, though it was. After all, as our ironic culture has taught us, really terrible stuff can seem perversely entertaining after a while, if you let it. No, *90210* was awful because it was dead. Lifeless. Its utter lack of energy was stultifying. There was no purpose to its being on the air other than to employ its cast and crew and make a few bucks from Vagisil commercials.

Is this what it means to be a cultural consumer these days—seeing how long one can go before one is literally bored to death? The reason I became so passionate about reading, seeing, and watching in the first place is that they were the ways I learned how to transcend myself. Others find transcendence in physical labor, or in the outdoors, or in a boat, or on a golf course. For me, it comes through narrative, any narrative: a story, a joke, a song. Narrative provides me with an experience that seizes my attention—something that pulls me up out of myself and sends me off somewhere else.

I had such an experience, the first in a long time, just this week in a small Broadway theater where I went to see the much-lauded revival of the 1969 musical called *1776*. This is an unusual show in the annals of modern-day Broadway. Its cast is almost entirely male, but it is not about homosexuals. The love stories it features are entirely incidental, and they are heterosexual. In fact, *1776* is probably the only Broadway musical that attempts to make you laugh, cry, and fall in love with . . . a piece of parchment and a couple of politicians. The piece of parchment is the Declaration of Independence, and the politicians are John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson.

Does this sound horrible? Does it sound as though it is bound to be reductive and embarrassing? It isn't. In fact, *1776* is entirely delightful, and unexpectedly moving because it is utterly besotted with America, but without being corny—a frank and unembarrassed pride in country that would be impossible to duplicate in our multicultural, postmodern atmosphere. Sherman Edwards's score has one catchy and clever song after another (the ensemble, which plays the Continental Congress, complains at the outset of the show on June 4, 1776, that "it's hot as hell/In Philadel/phia," which is a very nice lyric indeed). And, thanks to the remarkable cleverness and literacy of Peter Stone's libretto, *1776* actually manages to convey the seriousness of the debate over the Declaration (and the later Articles of Confederation) within the confines of a Broadway musical. (You can find out yourself by renting the movie version, which may be the most faithful rendition of a Broadway show on film. It's pretty wooden, but it's all there.)

But that is not why, watching *1776*, I found myself transported, so much so that at one small and quiet moment, my eyes filled with tears. In 1969, when I was 8 and growing up in New York City, I was taken to see a matinée of *1776* with a friend. It was the first show I ever saw. Before, I was too restless to be a spectator—unable to remain in my seat at a movie theater, unable to sit still watching television. But when the curtain went up, and after about a minute the assembled actors suddenly burst into song with the phrase "Sit down, John!" something clicked. I sat through the show spellbound, and that evening my mother and I went to the record store to buy the original-cast album, which I listened the grooves off of, as we used to say.

That feeling—the feeling of being taken in hand on a journey that is not your own invention, but has been planned for you by someone else, and to which you cannot help but react—is the basis of all aesthetic experience, whether the art itself is enduring, like a great novel, or appealing but perishable, like *1776*. It was wonderful to have that experience in the raw again, even if what I was experiencing was less a trip to the theater than a visit to my own origins as a pop-culture vulture.

John Podhoretz

Tea and Sex at Yale

As an alumna of Yale, I must disagree with Charles Krauthammer and the Yale Five's characterization of Yale as a campus ridden with sex and party-crazed undergraduates ("God and Sex at Yale," Sept. 29). When it comes to "youthful indiscretions," Yale students are no different from undergraduates across the country. Moreover, such "indiscretions" do not constitute the whole of the Yale experience. In fact, during my four years at Yale, I found the majority of Yalies to be mature, intelligent, and socially conscious young adults whose activities ranged from mentoring New Haven youth to serving on the New Haven Board of Aldermen.

Krauthammer and the Yale Five raise valid concerns, but they underestimate the value of the residential-college experience at Yale. It is the cornerstone of undergraduate life. The 12 residential colleges sponsor lectures by, and teas with, authors, politicians, and other influential figures. They provide fellowships and scholarships to students and hold tree-trimming parties, study breaks, and "Olympic Games." The residential-college system may have some faults, but Yale is attempting to correct them through greater flexibility in meal plans and the renovation of dorms. Furthermore, some colleges accommodate students such as the Yale Five by providing single-sex floors. The college system provides a great lesson in tolerance and allows students to interact with their fellow Yalies daily. Without this constant interaction among students, and without the residential-college system, Yale would be nothing more than a commuter school.

Heather Elayne Davis
New York, NY

Dread on Wheels

Please suggest to Joseph Epstein that the message "LP FAITH" he read on a license plate is more likely to be a reference to Kierkegaard than to long-playing recordings ("Out for a Read," Sept. 29).

It was Kierkegaard, remember, who asserted that a philosophy based solely on logic or rational thought would be insufficient—there would always be a gap in our power of reason that could be bridged only by a "leap of faith."

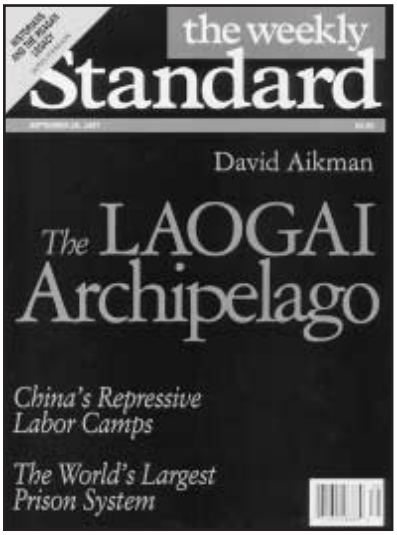
Elizabeth Quaintance
Downers Grove, IL

Epstein's essay on bumper stickers made me recall the wittiest one I ever saw: a blue Plymouth Horizon with a license plate reading BEYOND.

John E. Heaney
Bethesda, MD

United We Care

Seth Gitell's "Your United Way Dollars at Work" (Sept. 22) examined a national and local social resource that,



by its very nature, requires evolution and change. Gitell acknowledges that United Way should listen to the donors who fund the resource, but takes us to task for doing just that. In the process, some facts and realities are overlooked or misunderstood.

The fundamental reason for United Way's existence is as practical and necessary today as it was when its forerunners established a community-wide force for social services in Denver in 1887. It was to increase the organized capacity of people to care for one another.

This is done by an effective and simple system that's been proven over time. Community volunteers from a broad demographic range find out who needs help, and then they raise money from the community to provide that help. This is based on priorities, and priorities do change. Although Gitell seems to lump priorities and diversity together, the fact is that United Way must align its priorities in response to changing times.

Each United Way—which is an independent, autonomous organization, not a United Way of America chapter—responds to changes in diversity and reflects the reality that a third of America's school-age youth are nonwhite. In 15 years or so, a third of the work force will be minorities. Any institution that ignores this reality is not serving its community well or assuring its own relevance.

Project Blueprint and donor choice, both of which actually originated in the 1980s, typify ongoing adaptations that each United Way knows are necessary to meet the changes in its community. Donor choice gives to small but vital charities a voice that might previously have been drowned out by larger, better represented charities. And it fulfills community wishes by allowing financial backers to support the charities of their choice.

Project Blueprint is intended to address the need for greater minority involvement in the form of volunteers and board members for each local United Way. Houston's program dates not from 1995 as your article states, but from a three-year W.K. Kellogg Foundation grant first issued in 1987 to implement pilot programs in 22 cities. I can speak first-hand because I was the president of that United Way at the time. In 1992, the Ford Foundation awarded Project Blueprint another grant to expand to 27 new communities—hardly a "new philosophy," as Gitell has it.

As for religion-affiliated agencies being taken to task by United Way "chapters": It's important to note that United Way has been a non-sectarian organization since its inception. Agencies funded by United Way are expected to serve all people without regard to race, religion, or any other similar factor. Most agencies are funded by several sources, and non-United Way money can be used to serve any purpose—including programs for specific religious groups.

Donors appreciate knowing that the

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money they give stays in their community and that, as local priorities and needs change, their United Way will do its best to match those priorities and meet those needs, just as it has been doing for the past 110 years.

Betty Stanley Beene
President and CEO
United Way of America

A Wet Kiss from the Dems

I read with dismay your article "Has Fred Thompson Blown It?" (Oct. 6), particularly insofar as it attacked Sen. Thompson's chief counsel, Michael Madigan. As chief counsel for the minority, I have dealt with Madigan for the past eight months. I can assure you he is a worthy opponent who has fought hard for the majority throughout.

It is easy to stand on the sidelines and jeer those in the arena. Madigan, at great personal sacrifice, has devoted the past year to public service. The demeaning of his efforts is both unworthy and unwarranted.

Alan I. Baron
Washington, DC

Not All Like Ike

As some silly magazines rank colleges and show-biz executives, so some silly intellectuals rank presidents ("Historians and the Reagan Legacy," Sept. 29). It's a vapid professorial parlor game that says more about the rankers than the ranked.

Conservatives think Eisenhower is "near great"? Please! Don't these august scholars remember the prisoners of war, 900 in number, whom he left in Korea? Or the way he turned his back on Europe? Ike leaped at détente before the Soviets shot down Gary Powers in an act that tarred him as incompetent. A lot of the weeds of the '60s took root under his caretaker presidency, and he took no steps to stop them from eventually strangling America. Indeed, he helped them grow by appointing Chief Justice Earl Warren. At best, Eisenhower should get a low-average rank.

Go back to your faculty cloisters and stay cloistered.

Gene DeSantis
Lancaster, PA

No Friends of Israel

You were too kind to Jim Baker and Zbigniew Brzezinski ("Notorious Z-B-I-G," Scrapbook, Sept. 29). They savage Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israel at every turn, without any attempt at balance. Producing a discussion on Israel with only two enemies of that embattled state as commentators is typical of what passes for fairness on the *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer.* It is all too common these days.

Morton Lurie
Raleigh, NC

It is not surprising that Lehrer maneuvered such a discussion. The show's virulent attacks on Israel and its policies—albeit in polite language—started many years ago.

This bias was best illustrated about a year ago, when Lehrer, in another diatribe against Israel, said that Jerusalem "has been the declared capital of Israel since 1967." Surely he knew that Jerusalem was made Israel's capital when the state was established in 1948. He was clearly trying to give the impression that some change in its status as capital came about as a result of the 1967 war, so as to put Israeli and Palestinian claims on an equal footing.

Sidney Brounstein
Redlands, CA

Press Virtues and Vices

With friends like Stephen Bates, American journalism doesn't need any enemies ("Freedom of Preach," Sept. 29). Of course, he is right in saying that there is a lot in journalism that is not worth admiring; but the virtues of the press should not be dismissed so cavalierly. Despite their knowledge of the human and technical limitations of the press of their day, the Founding Fathers valued the press highly. Without its devotion to the cause of American independence, the public would not have responded to the call to arms.

The debate over the ratification of the Constitution took place in the newspapers as well as in deliberative assemblies—the most famous example of which is *The Federalist*. Thomas Jefferson and James Madison assisted in getting the *National Gazette* into circulation to counteract the Federalist organ encouraged by Hamilton.

It's a mistake to look at run-of-the-mill journalism and miss its greatest moments. It is true that in more recent times journalism has become a tool of ideological liberalism. But there is still plenty of room for the statesmanship (or at least the patriotism) that the nation saw the press exhibit in World War II.

The trouble with the Commission on Freedom of the Press is not that it demanded *too much* from the press but that it demanded *too little*. The press does not need "high-mindedness"—another name for the pseudo-cosmopolitanism of today's leading journalists—for that empty notion provides no defense against whatever debaucheries the press descends to.

What the press needs is more people like Henry J. Raymond, founder of the *New York Times.* He demolished Horace Greeley's arguments for common ownership and supported Abraham Lincoln's conciliatory policies toward the defeated South. Like the Founders, Raymond saw no inconsistency in dedication to factual accuracy and devotion to the highest principles of republican statesmanship.

Finally, serving the so-called cause of republican government *is* to serve truth, for that cause is based on the "self-evident" truth that all men are created equal in their rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Before we write off the press as hopelessly cranky or sensational, let's lift our sights higher!

Richard H. Reeb Jr.
Barstow, CA

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In Praise of Show Trials

We have been waiting more than a year, since the enactment of welfare reform in August 1996, to congratulate the Republican Congress on a meaningful and clear-cut political victory. Those congratulations are now in order. The three-day Senate Finance Committee hearings on the Internal Revenue Service were a small but unmitigated triumph of congressional authority, conservative agenda-setting, and also—pardon the expression—partisanship. If the GOP interprets this success correctly, the IRS hearings may herald a much-needed revival of party confidence and purpose leading up to next November's mid-term election.

The first thing to note about these hearings is how little was expected to result from them. Sen. Fred Thompson's campaign-finance investigation had just about killed off hope that congressional Republicans were capable of using their oversight function coherently to criticize any facet of the public sector. The White House knew this full well, and so it spent an industrious few days before the IRS hearings pre-spinning them as a thuggish "trash" job on the tax agency: a melodrama of anecdotal hysteria designed with GOP fund-raising in mind. In their opening statements on September 23, a number of Democrats on the Finance Committee echoed this theme. And the president of the National Treasury Employees Union, which represents IRS agents, was warning reporters outside the hearing room that Republicans were granting lunatics implicit "permission" to commit acts of violence against his membership.

Inside, something very different was happening. Committee chairman Bill Roth of Delaware and his Republican colleagues offered consistently elaborate praise for "most" IRS employees. They heard from a Government Accounting Office expert who testified that the IRS maintains few reliable data on its practices, and cloaks even those in secrecy. So the subsequent evidence *did* turn out to be largely anecdotal. But these were not your ordinary anecdotes.

On September 24, a retired Roman Catholic priest told how he had been jerked around by the IRS for eight months over an $18,000 tax bill he had never actually owed. A construction contractor named Tom Savage told how, over three and a half years, the agency concocted a fictitious partnership between his company and an unrelated, tax-delinquent business and billed him for $167,000. A woman named Nancy Jacobs described a 17-year-long ordeal during which the IRS mixed up taxpayer identification numbers and then hit her up for failure to pay *someone else's* tax debt.

And then there was Katherine Hicks. You could hear a pin drop in the Senate's Dirksen office building as she testified. Ms. Hicks struggled with the agency for 13 years, as computer glitches and errant mail notices led to proliferating penalties for a 1983 tax bill sent without her knowledge to a former husband. In February of this year, faced with threatened seizure of her home, and to protect her second husband from financial ruin, she filed for bankruptcy—and divorce.

That did it. Democrats on the panel announced themselves appalled. Peter Jennings called the second-day proceedings "stunning." Tom Brokaw called them "scary." A Gallup poll conducted immediately after the hearings reported that a three-to-one majority of Americans had decided the IRS enjoys excessive power—and that 69 percent of respondents believe the agency exercises that power abusively. The Finance Committee was deluged with phone calls, faxes, and letters from ordinary citizens incensed that the federal government could act this way in their name. A follow-up news story in the *Washington Post* concluded that the hearings' portrait of "egregious" IRS brutality was so convincing as to have rendered questions of GOP partisanship "irrelevant."

Pretty neat. And it became neater still when the Clinton administration, more surprised than anyone that the Republican party had managed to draw political blood, failed to respond with its customary super-professional eelishness. It actually defended its tax collectors against proposed management reform. "I believe the IRS is functioning better today than it was five years ago," a huffy President Clinton insisted.

What a gift! The GOP has an actual *issue*.

For nearly three years, Republicans in Washington have struggled vainly to comprehend their true stand-

ing in the American political cosmos. In phase one, made heady with ambition by the electoral success of 1994, they were foolishly convinced that conquest was already complete, that they had only to sack the capital and make off with its legislative treasures. But that pillage was stiffly resisted, and King William eventually smote the invaders with his veto sword, to applause from the peasantry. So in phase two, our Republican heroes wore sackcloth and hid behind a fortress of do-nothing bipartisanship.

The news has been so bad for so long that the GOP is practically desperate for any sign that a third phase might finally be underway. Perhaps, they're thinking, their IRS show trial is a happy omen. They are right—so long as they see the event for what it was, and embrace the political mission it clearly implies.

Already there are Hill Republicans gone giddy over these particular hearings and intent on using them to advance more sweeping tax reform. Fine, we say. Advance at will. But lest they float all the way back into the phase-one ether, Republicans should remember something basic and inescapable. They are an opposition party. They will remain an opposition party until they retake the White House. And one thing an opposition party must do is *oppose*. It must manage the system of checks and balances as aggressively as possible. It must support and enforce public scrutiny of executive-branch behavior. It must cry foul whenever fouls are committed.

Heaven knows, in the Clinton administration, there are endless policy and procedural fouls to choose from. Heaven knows, too, it is sorely tempting for the GOP not to make very much of them. That kind of partisan work is so . . . you know, "negative." But the public must be persuaded about what's wrong before it will trust the GOP prescription for making it right. And doing that takes meticulous, even repetitive argument. Without it, the more "positive" achievement everyone wishes for will be endlessly delayed.

So, if we are to replace the IRS with a flat tax or a sales tax, there must first be *another* round of hearings—or two or three or ten. If we are to have a congressional vote next year on ending racial preferences by the federal government, as Newt Gingrich has announced, we must first have a long series of congressional hearings on how those preferences are administered and why they are so malign. There have been such hearings before. There will have to be more.

The list of issues ripe for similar treatment is very long. Is it an irony that the biggest Republican victory in 1997 should have come in the form of an administrative oversight hearing? No. Oversight is important. A conservative Republican future depends on it.

—David Tell, for the Editors

Gore, the Phone, and the Law

by David A. Price

SUDDENLY, EVERYONE'S AN EXPERT on the Pendleton Act, the 1883 ban on political fund-raising in federal offices. Every few days or weeks, another writer weighs in on the history of the law—and why it exonerates Vice President Al Gore.

"The Pendleton Act probably doesn't apply to the vice president," pronounces former White House senior adviser turned pundit George Stephanopoulos on ABC's *This Week* in mid-September. "It probably only applies if the solicitation was on federal property to a federal employee. And most important, no one's ever been prosecuted under the Pendleton Act."

"You don't want to get involved in prosecuting laws that have never been prosecuted," chimes in *Newsweek*'s Eleanor Clift on the "Diane Rehm Show" on September 26. The Pendleton Act "was meant not to prohibit federal officials from asking private citizens for financial support but to prohibit strong-arming federally employed underlings into forking over money to the governing party," explains Martin Peretz in the March 31 issue of the *New Republic*. "And nobody has ever accused Gore (or, for that matter, Bill Clinton) of doing that."

In news stories and commentaries, the same factoids crop up again and again: that Congress didn't mean for the law to cover solicitations of private citizens who aren't on government property, and that no one has ever been prosecuted for such solicitation.

It turns out that these confident assertions have a common source: an influential research memo issued by the Congressional Research Service on March 7, shortly after the vice president's fund-raising calls came to light. Written by CRS attorney Jack Maskell, the memo attempts to analyze, among other things, the law's intent and its enforcement record. Although written for all of Congress, it has been widely circulated by Democrats.

Most leave-Gore-alone articles cite the CRS memo, and its fingerprints are fairly obvious on the rest. But

Michael Ramirez

the memo is like Robert Reich's memoirs: You rely on it at your peril. It has snookered a lot of writers, including me.

On the first point, even Gore's defenders generally concede that the language of the law is broad enough to cover his fund-raising calls: It says no one can "solicit or receive any contribution" in a government office. What they argue, rather, is that Congress had an unstated intention to cover only solicitation of federal employees—because, the argument runs, the ban was part of an 1883 civil-service law enacted to protect those employees.

The Maskell memo backs this theory of the law's intent, and its review of the legislative history makes it look incontrovertible. Of course, assessing congressional intent is always hazardous—who can say just what hundreds of members of Congress were thinking? That's why courts are reluctant to rely on legislative history to override legislative language that is reasonably clear.

But if you're going to reach back to the 1880s, at least do it right. Maskell misses what is surely the key passage. When the solicitation ban was introduced in the Senate as part of an amendment to the Pendleton Act on December 27, 1882, the amendment's sponsor—Joseph R. Hawley of Connecticut—explicitly pointed out that the ban went beyond fund-raising from employees:

> Our object was to prevent any and every man who got any money from the United States for his work collecting or assessing anything of any value from any other man in the United States who got a cent from the United States for his work. That of itself will remove a great deal of the evil. But we went further and said that no human being could, inside of Uncle Sam's buildings or grounds, solicit in any way anybody for a single cent.

No one questioned Hawley's assertion on this point. While the ban is indeed mainly concerned with shakedowns of civil servants, Hawley said perfectly clearly that it doesn't stop there.

The notion that Congress was somehow at odds with the plain meaning of the solicitation ban never made much sense anyway. The law spells out that its other restrictions apply only to fund-raising from federal officers and employees. If Congress had wanted the ban on soliciting in government offices to be similarly limited, it would have said so.

The second claim is that a prosecution for telephone calls to private citizens would be unprecedented. The fact is, though, that nobody knows whether the government has prosecuted anyone in the last 114 years for fund-raising calls.

In theory, one might be able to find the truth of the matter by going through files at the Justice Depart-

ment and the U.S. attorneys' offices across the country. The CRS memo that pundits rely on for this historical point, however, was not based on any such research. Maskell looked at the same material available to anyone else: a public Justice Department manual and reported court cases. He concluded that there were "apparently" no prosecutions.

But it's a big, big "apparently." The manual, *Federal Prosecution of Election Offenses*, simply gives guidance to Justice Department lawyers; it doesn't pretend to catalogue past prosecutions—nor does it assert that there have been no prosecutions for fund-raising calls. And only a tiny fraction of criminal prosecutions are immortalized as reported cases. In other words, Maskell had almost nothing to work with—and should have said so.

That's not all. Maskell alleges that the independent-counsel law contains an exception under which, even if Gore did commit a crime, the attorney general doesn't have to seek an independent counsel. He says this exception applies if Justice has a policy of not prosecuting the type of offense in question. Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.) and a number of writers have picked up on this and argued that the supposed lack of enforcement shows Justice has such a policy covering Gore's phone calls. What Maskell doesn't mention is that Congress apparently threw this exception out 10 years ago. Until 1987, the law required the attorney general to follow established Justice policies on "the enforcement of criminal laws" in deciding whether to request an independent counsel—including policies on whether to prosecute. But Congress changed the law to require only that the attorney general follow policies on "the conduct of criminal investigations." A Senate report at the time explained that the change was the result of disgruntlement over instances where then-attorney general Edwin Meese had relied on the exception not to move for an independent counsel.

As a matter of legal craftsmanship, the CRS memo, with all these holes and more, is amateurish at best. But, hey, it's just government work.

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Congress and the IRS

by Matthew Rees

It wasn't just the press that sensed dynamite ahead in the recent Senate hearings on the Internal Revenue Service. The Clinton administration was alarmed at the prospect of testimony from IRS agents indignant over abuses of power by their own agency. A senior Treasury official even pressured an aide to Finance Committee chairman William Roth to reveal the agents' identities, arguing their testimony could provoke anti-government terrorism.

Roth's aide refused to be bullied, and the hearings did indeed embarrass the administration: Seven IRS agents testified, six anonymously, and they painted a bleak portrait of the agency. They described a vindictive, heartless place whose managers encourage the reckless mistreatment of taxpayers. CNN, C-SPAN, MSNBC, and the Fox News Channel carried portions of the hearings live. The networks, newspapers across the country, and Sunday talk shows like *This Week* and *Face the Nation* prominently featured the IRS abuses. The public flooded the Finance Committee with phone calls, faxes, e-mails, and letters—more than 2,500 so far.

The three days of hearings were a windfall for the GOP. They elevated the party's issue—taxes—to the top of the national agenda, and when the spotlight is on taxes, Republicans gain. Not only that, but last week the president and Treasury secretary Robert Rubin were in the uncomfortable position of speaking out against proposals to reform the IRS.

The success of Roth's IRS hearings stands in stark contrast to the dubious results of Fred Thompson's hearings on fund-raising misdeeds. The Thompson hearings have been plagued by uncooperative witnesses, GOP turf wars, Democratic stonewalling, a complicated story line, a bloated staff, and an incompetent investigation—while Roth's boasted humble citizens mistreated by government, near-total cooperation between the committee's Democrats and Republicans, and a simple story to tell. In fairness to Thompson, IRS misdeeds have broader shock value than fund-raising high jinks. Yet Thompson's staffers could learn from those who did the preparatory work for Roth—notably chief investigator Eric Thorson.

Roth launched his inquiry in late January after hearing complaints from his Delaware constituents of reckless IRS investigations. Shortly thereafter, the front-page "Tax Report" column of the *Wall Street Journal* mentioned the investigation, and soon the Finance Committee was being contacted by people with stories of IRS abuse. Each of the reports—and eventually there were over 1,000—was methodically

scrutinized by Thorson and his three-person staff, who finally settled on the four individuals with the most compelling and credible stories to tell about the hardships they had suffered at the hands of the IRS.

Compelling they were. There were tales of harassment, fabricated evidence, perjury, retaliation, and cover-ups. Female witnesses cried and men described physical suffering. The hearings were capped by testimony from the acting IRS commissioner, Michael Dolan, who gave a half-baked defense of the agency, but conceded it had handled these particular cases "very badly," for which he was "extraordinarily sorry."

Dolan portrayed the IRS as a friendly, service-oriented place where employees are encouraged to come forward if they see any wrongdoing around them. Yet without even looking, Roth's investigators found an agency where many employees said they lived in fear of management: Every aggrieved agent who spoke with Thorson came forward unsolicited. The agents called or wrote with stories of IRS malfeasance and usually gave their home telephone numbers, as they feared talking to Senate investigators from their workplace. When a story sounded particularly persuasive, investigators asked whether the agent would be willing to testify. Of those who said they were, only one was willing to reveal her identity publicly. Six others delivered their testimony from behind a screen and had their voices altered. Nearly all of the spadework was conducted over the phone; each of the IRS agents who testified gave at least 15 pre-hearing phone interviews to Thorson and his team.

Sean Delonas

William Roth

This diligence was demanded by Chairman Roth, who may seem an unlikely figure to lead a high-octane investigation and to chair three days of boffo hearings. Roth is a genial 76-year-old with a passion for tax reform; he was the Senate sponsor of Jack Kemp's tax cut enacted in 1981. Otherwise he leaves few footprints on Capitol Hill. After nearly 27 years in the Senate, however, he knows how to run a hearing. And after two years chairing an investigations subcommittee, he knew he could trust Thorson.

One of the most important reasons for Roth's success is the cooperation he received from Senate Democrats. From the beginning, the chairman conveyed that this was not a partisan undertaking; it helped that Thorson had spent five years working for the House Government Operations Committee when the Democrats controlled it. Finance Committee Democrats supported Roth's effort from the outset, and at the hearings, not even liberals like Sen. Carol Moseley-Braun were sympathetic to the IRS.

The question now is whether congressional Republicans can replicate the success of Roth's hearings in other areas. Oversight can be a remarkably effective way to bolster public support for one's agenda—remember when Rep. Henry Waxman had tobacco executives testify about the link between smoking and lung cancer?—but Republicans have neglected it (with the notable exceptions of Reps. David McIntosh and Charles Canady). Indeed, these were the first oversight hearings *ever held* by the Senate Finance Committee.

House majority leader Dick Armey, for example, could be spending his spare time highlighting the destructive hand of government. Instead, he's traveling the country with one of his Republican colleagues, Rep. Billy Tauzin, debating the relative merits of a flat tax and a national sales tax. Armey, Tauzin, and the other Republican tax-reformers have missed something: Americans may think their taxes are too high, and they may think tax collectors are imperious, but polls show they are not prepared to scrap the tax code or abolish the IRS.

Roth's hearings may have begun to change that, and he's planning to keep up the drumbeat. He told me he won't be satisfied "until all law-abiding citizens feel they can go to the IRS and get a fair hearing." It's a tall order, but, as the recent hearings demonstrated, one that's worth pursuing.

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The Forbes Factor

By Fred Barnes

This is Steve Forbes's moment: He's propelled himself into the top tier of potential Republican presidential candidates in 2000. "No doubt about it," says GOP representative Bill Paxon of New York, a fresh Forbes admirer. Not only that, Forbes has adroitly embraced a new role as reliable party activist and fund-raiser even as he retains his reputation as political outsider. Also, he has installed himself as an influential Republican agenda-setter, dispatching his ideas and proposals and statements and rapid responses by fax to nearly 10,000 GOP leaders, conservatives, and policy entrepreneurs. "I get so many faxes from him, I can't read them all," grumbles Alec Poitevint, the Republican National Committee's treasurer.

He is connecting with audiences as well. He gave the most effective speech this year by any Republican when he addressed the Christian Coalition in Atlanta on September 13. And three weeks earlier, when presidential hopefuls spoke before a GOP gathering in Indianapolis, Forbes was a star.

Forbes is not the frontrunner for 2000. He may not even have a good shot at the nomination. But he does have a real chance, and that wasn't true before his surge over the past six months. He's managed this much by defying the old rule that 90 percent of politics is first impressions (a rule Dan Quayle, for one, has yet to overcome). Forbes made a bad impression with his one-issue, slash-and-burn presidential candidacy in the 1996 Republican primaries. He was, as Ron Brownstein of the *Los Angeles Times* put it recently, "the man with the goofy grin and the serious bank account." Since he talked obsessively about a 17 percent flat tax, he appealed chiefly to a narrow sliver of voters, mostly supply-siders and libertarians.

Now he has changed his image and broadened his base, in part by taking up the themes of social and religious conservatives, who constitute roughly a third of the GOP electorate. They have responded warmly. And his denunciations of the budget deal ("an abomination," "a monstrosity") have touched a chord with the multitude of GOP conservatives disenchanted with Republican leaders in Congress. Today, Forbes has by far the strongest conservative message of any leading Republican. When both he and Senate majority leader Trent Lott addressed a California gathering of big donors in August, Lott got polite applause, Forbes a standing ovation. The fact that Lott spoke by phone and Forbes was there in person had something to do with this, but it was clear whose ideology the crowd preferred.

Forbes has given Christian conservatives two things they crave: time and respect. He's spoken so often at Jerry Falwell's Liberty University in 1997 that he is practically a faculty member. He had lunch with Ralph Reed, who was favorably impressed, and with James Dobson of Focus on the Family, who wasn't. Forbes met with Life Forum, a group of anti-abortion leaders, for two private grillings last April. When he spelled out his opposition to abortion, "they ate it up," says Paul Weyrich of the Free Congress Foundation. (Weyrich is committed to Sen. John Ashcroft of Missouri in 2000.) As for Republican regulars, they like Forbes's availability. "He's willing to go to small markets and spend time," says Rusty Paul, the party's state chairman in Georgia. Any presidential candidate will come to Atlanta, Paul says, but Forbes agreed to speak in Albany, Brunswick, and Sea Island.

No Republican is quicker off the mark these days than Forbes. In September, Bill Paxon introduced a bill to jettison the IRS and tax code on December 31, 2000. Paxon called a half-dozen Republican presidential types for their help in pushing it. All agreed it was a good idea and asked for more information—except Forbes. "Within 24 hours, he had a game plan to help me promote it," says Paxon. "He sees an opportunity, seizes it, and moves quickly." A few days later, Forbes joined Paxon at a press conference on Capitol Hill. On September 26, within hours after Rusty Paul learned Georgia senator Paul Coverdell would have a well-financed Democratic opponent in 1998, Forbes was on the phone to offer help.

For the time being, Forbes, 50, is holding on to his day job as editor-in-chief of the biweekly business

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magazine that bears his name. Writing his "Fact and Comment" column hasn't put a crimp in his travel. On September 25, he spent the day in New Hampshire, where Patrick Buchanan won the primary in 1996. At every event—a lunch, a forum, a speech, a reception—Buchananites were invited by the state chapter of Forbes's national political organization, Americans for Hope, Growth, and Opportunity (AHGO). Dozens showed up, and Forbes courted them gracefully. "I liked what I heard," Pat Krueger, a state representative and a leader of the Buchanan forces, told Forbes. "I look forward to what your experience will be in New Hampshire."

Forbes is devoting even more time to Iowa, the state with the first major presidential voting event in 2000. He's scheduled three trips there this fall. Says state Republican chairman Steve Grubbs: "Of all last time's presidential candidates, Steve Forbes has come the furthest in establishing credibility. But in some ways he had the furthest to go."

One thing Forbes says he learned from running in 1996 is "you're not always in control of events." This year, events have played into his hands. First, Republican leaders in Congress, traumatized by their fight with President Clinton over the government shutdown, lost their nerve and created a leadership vacuum. Forbes, whose only official GOP title is finance chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, has tried to fill it as best an unelected outsider can. Then, Republican chairman Haley Barbour stepped down, leaving Republicans without the ability to respond rapidly to Clinton and the Democrats. Now, Forbes responds by fax, for example zinging Clinton on October 1 for defending the IRS. And he benefited from Texas governor George W. Bush's poor performance at the cattle show in Indianapolis. Had Bush given a spellbinding speech, the presidential buzz would all be about Bush, his poll numbers, his broad appeal, the inevitability of his being nominated. Instead, the buzz (if not the polls) is mostly about Forbes, and Bush has decided to stay out of national politics for at least a year.


Chas Fagan

Forbes wants to run in the manner of Ronald Reagan, govern in the style of Teddy Roosevelt. That is the broad scheme at least. On the ground, the idea is to recreate the Reagan coalition, in which conservative activists, not elected officials, constituted the base. Forbes aims to have developed a direct-mail file of 400,000 by late 1999 (AHGO has 60,000 members so far). He plans to run everywhere, including the early presidential skirmishes in Alaska and Louisiana. His goal is to amass $35 million before the primaries, proving he can raise money from other people as well as spend his own. If more funds are required, he will venture into his own pocket. Forbes will not accept matching funds and thus won't be subject to spending limits.

It's the Reagan of 1976, even more than of 1980, whom Forbes wants to emulate, Reagan the anti-establishment insurgent challenging and savagely criticizing the Washington wing of the party led by President Gerald Ford. Reagan lost the nomination in 1976, but just barely; if he had been running against anyone but an incumbent president, he would have won. Forbes won't face a Republican president, so in that sense his task is easier. His Washington targets are Newt Gingrich and Lott, though he doesn't attack them by name. In every speech, often while feigning sorrow, Forbes lambastes them for "caving" to Clinton on the budget deal and offering "pathetic" leadership. "I have to be blunt," Forbes told a luncheon audience in Durham, N.H. "Unfortunately, for Republican leaders in Washington, it's business as usual."

The Forbes parallels with Reagan are numerous. Reagan was confrontational toward Washington, and

so is Forbes. Reagan recruited GOP rebels in Congress like then-first-term senator Jesse Helms, while Forbes is building ties to young Republican dissidents in the House like Paxon, Joe Scarborough, and Steve Largent. Forbes, says Scarborough, "has the best program, the best speech, the best vision." Forbes has embraced post-1976 Reagan tactics, too. Reagan communicated to the country by newspaper column and radio commentary. Forbes has faxes, radio ads, and his magazine. Reagan set up a national organization, Citizens for the Republic, as his perch. Forbes has AHGO. (His aides pleaded with Forbes for months to choose another name, fearing people would refer to it as A-HOG.) Reagan traveled incessantly, speaking at conservative gatherings and on behalf of candidates. Likewise, Forbes.

HE MAY NOT GET THE SUPPORT OF THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT. BUT NEITHER WILL FORBES BE VETOED BY RELIGIOUS CONSERVATIVES.

The most important parallel, however, is thematic. Reagan married economic and social issues in his basic message, appealing to the burgeoning New Right as well as to conventional conservatives. That was not Forbes's tack in 1996. Instead, he carelessly alienated social conservatives by overemphasizing economic issues and complaining about the Christian Coalition. He's learned his lesson. Now, his stump speech concentrates as much on the need for "moral rejuvenation" in America as on taxes. "The signs are there" for a moral revival, he told a conservative crowd in Manchester, N.H. "People want to put things right again."

Forbes has made an enormous effort to fashion a compelling moral stand. He was going to skip the Republican confab in Indianapolis to stay on a family vacation in Maine but changed his mind when his wife and daughters urged him to go. His speech was patched together at the last minute. But for his address to the Christian Coalition, Forbes hired a talented speechwriter, Mike Gerson, who has written often on moral and spiritual matters. Forbes, Gerson, Forbes's chief aide Bill Dal Col, and others spent weeks on the speech, and it showed. Forbes was able to move seamlessly between economic and moral issues and to refer to "God and His purposes" without sounding self-consciously religious. What is important in a leader, he said, are "unseen things," such as "a conscious attempt to conform our plans to God's justice."

Christian conservatives have become sophisticated detectors of cant. They spot it instantly in politicians who talk to them solely about their issues (abortion, assisted suicide, school prayer, personal morality) and talk about other issues everywhere else. Forbes didn't do this. He spent a quarter of the speech on taxes and another chunk on the failures of national leadership. Americans want "the challenge of great, virtuous goals," he said, "what Teddy Roosevelt called the 'pursuit of mighty things.' The type of moral leadership that won world wars and cold wars. . . . This is the tradition of Ronald Reagan, who not only fought the waves but changed the tide. That is the tradition of Teddy Roosevelt."

He may not get the support of the Christian Right, and even if he does, that won't guarantee the nomination. But religious conservatives do have veto power, and now Forbes won't be vetoed, if only because of his new stress on curbing abortion. "Remember, life begins at conception and ends at natural death," he said before the Christian Coalition, repeating a line he first used in a radio interview with New York talk-show host Bob Grant. "Beyond vague commitments, we need specific actions," Forbes went on. "And we should start by banning partial-birth abortions. . . . I believe it could be the first step in the process of persuasion and legal change that culminates in a society where every child, from the moment of conception, is protected by law and love." As he left the podium, Forbes was asked by Joseph D'Agostino of *Human Events* if he would back a constitutional amendment banning abortion except to save the life of the mother. If that reached his desk, Forbes said, he would sign it. (He has his Constitution wrong. When amendments pass Congress, they go to the states, not the president.)

Forbes is still at cross-purposes with the anti-abortion movement, however. In a manifesto to be published in *Policy Review* entitled "The Moral Basis of a Free Society," he outlines an incremental approach to halting abortions. Small steps should be taken, like stopping fetal-tissue research and requiring parental consent in the case of minors, until "an overwhelming" national consensus is developed against abortion. "We must recover such a consensus, but we cannot do so simply with the stroke of a legislative pen or a Supreme Court vote," he writes. "In democracy, we cannot impose; we must persuade." Forbes and his aides spent months drafting the paper and tinkering with the language.

By minimizing, for now, the importance of legal and legislative efforts to eliminate abortions outright, Forbes takes issue with exactly what pro-lifers have been working on for years. They *want* legislatures and

courts to intervene boldly. When I read the passage about persuading, not imposing, to Gary Bauer of the Family Research Council, he declared: "That's ludicrous." Others have complained about Forbes's insistence on an exception for rape and incest. Colleen Parro, the director of the Republican National Coalition for Life, sniped at this at the Life Forum (where Forbes was otherwise well-received). His face got red, and he responded haltingly that he knew someone who'd been raped, according to Parro. She has concluded from the encounter that Forbes supports regulating abortions, not outlawing them. Afterwards, she wrote Forbes: "If you are at all open to reconsideration of your position, I would be happy to discuss the matter further with you." Forbes did not respond.

It's clear Forbes feels awkward discussing abortion. But the reason isn't that he's really pro-choice and just faking a pro-life position. The opposite is true: Forbes is more pro-life than he lets on. Ken Tomlinson, the former editor-in-chief of *Reader's Digest* and a close friend of Forbes, says: "In casual conversations over the years, I saw him take the pro-life position consistently. That was just his position, pro-life and anti-abortion."

My guess is Forbes figures a full-blown pro-life stand is bad politics, especially among the rich Republicans he socializes with. He never calls himself "pro-life." And when I interviewed him, he wouldn't say he favors overturning *Roe* v. *Wade*. But wouldn't it be a good thing if *Roe* fell? He said nothing, but nodded yes. Of course, in a speech last year, he endorsed what reversing *Roe* v. *Wade* would produce: each state's right to decide on the legality of abortion.

What about Teddy Roosevelt? Forbes mentions him in every speech. But it's TR's style, not always his substance, that Forbes relishes—the moral fervor, the reformist zeal, the insistence on accomplishing big things. Roosevelt's era "speaks to us today," he writes in his manifesto on morality. Like the 1990s, the 1890s were a "troubled time." Industrial monopolies grew, corrupt big-city political machines flourished, people feared massive immigration. The churches responded and so did TR, says Forbes. "Roosevelt reinforced his battle for political and economic reform by publicly, vigorously, and consistently reasserting the notion that there must be a moral foundation for society [and] that the role of religious faith in society must be affirmed, not undermined."

Forbes believes some of TR's policies were wrong, particularly the graduated income tax. Roosevelt's trust-busting zeal shouldn't be aimed at corporations now but at "breaking up the government education and entitlement monopolies in favor of individual and parental choice and control." And "just as Teddy Roosevelt started the new century by attacking government corruption at its source and busting anti-competitive monopolies, it is time to start the next century by shrinking Big Government." That's what he would do as president, Forbes says—"junk" the tax code and replace it with "a simple, honest, and fair flat tax." He would turn Social Security into a mandatory IRA. He would approve school vouchers. He would bar racial quotas and set-asides. He would halt doctor-assisted suicide. He'd step up the fight against illegal drugs.

Is America ready for all this? Forbes argues "three great events" have laid the groundwork for sweeping political, economic, and moral reform: "the end of the Cold War, the dawn of the Information Age, and encouraging signs of another moral and spiritual awakening." Never in human history has a nation been as powerful and secure as the United States, he says. And the world is watching to see if all goes well here. "We have something that is unique in history," Forbes said in Manchester. "If America gets it right, the rest of the world will be inspired to get it right."

More immediately, the question is whether Republicans are ready for Forbes. The comparison with Reagan shouldn't be overstated. Forbes is not Reagan reincarnate, or even close to it. As a speaker, he has improved, but he lacks Reagan's easy rapport with a crowd. Still, Forbes is quick on his feet. After a recent Forbes speech, a woman told him he shouldn't have praised Franklin Roosevelt's leadership, as FDR was a Democrat. "At least he wouldn't have signed the Smoot-Hawley tariff," Forbes shot back. In Durham, N.H., he dazzled an audience by explaining, in answer to a question, how the deficit could rise only $70 billion while the national debt soared by twice that. The answer is that borrowing from the Social Security trust fund shrinks the deficit but adds to the debt. Still, he doesn't have Reagan's knack for gentle but devastating ripostes. Then again, no other politician does either.

IT'S CLEAR THAT FORBES FEELS AWKWARD DISCUSSING ABORTION. BUT THE REASON ISN'T THAT HE'S FAKING A PRO-LIFE POSITION.

GOP consultant Jeffrey Bell notes Forbes has balked at adopting "a traditional, Reaganite national-security foreign policy on China." Forbes has criticized China, but he backed continued MFN trade status. Nor does Forbes have a large, devoted following,

as Reagan did. Reagan, after all, spent eight years as governor of California and six more running for president. Forbes wasn't a major player in the GOP until the fall of 1995, when he reluctantly announced for president, and then only because Jack Kemp wouldn't. This time, he's not waiting for Kemp to decide. Having run once helps. "In the Republican party, that's the same as having dated," says Ralph Reed, the former director of the Christian Coalition. But marriage is a long way off.

The trouble with being the Republican of the moment is the moment often fades. The history of GOP presidential candidates who soared early is not encouraging. Nelson Rockefeller in 1964, George Romney in 1968, George Bush in 1980, Pat Robertson in 1988—they all looked stronger than they turned out to be. Forbes's wealth is bound to help, though money didn't save Rocky. Forbes is already hiring what amounts to a campaign staff, including two conservative publicists, Craig Shirley and Greg Mueller, who worked for Bob Dole and Buchanan, respectively, in 1996. Within weeks, he'll name a chief fund-raiser. Forbes is all the more noticeable now because, as Bell says, "he's the only potential candidate who's implementing a strategy. No one else has developed a message, a pitch." It's a very good one, and in October 1997, that's enough to entitle a candidate to be taken seriously. ♦

The Episcopal Church in Crisis

By Tucker Carlson

At the bottom of a stairwell at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass., a large oil painting leans against what appears to be a broken shopping cart. The portrait is filthy and badly scratched, its gilt frame smashed at the edges. Wipe the dust away and it is still possible to read the name inscribed on the brass plaque beneath: Robert Treat Paine, President of the Board, 1898-1910. Paine's portrait sits next to that of his contemporary, George Zabriskie Gray, who was dean of the seminary until he died in 1889. Both men were once well known and highly regarded in the Episcopal Church as scholars, theologians, and preachers. It has been a long time since the portrait of either one graced the walls of the Episcopal Divinity School.

It's probably just as well: One suspects that neither man would know what to make of the school these days. How would Robert Paine, famous during his lifetime for such works as "How to Repress Pauperism and Street Begging" and "The Importance of Stopping Outdoor Relief to Chronic or Hereditary Beggars," have responded to the new EDS curriculum, with courses like "Critical Issues in Feminist Liberation Theology" and its subsection, "Readings in Queer Theology"? What would George Gray, who regularly railed against "departure from the Church's teaching, or any other perversion," have thought of the school's latest internal phone directory, which proudly contains the photographs of the gay partners of faculty and students along with their addresses in campus housing?

You don't have to be a 19th-century theologian to notice that a lot has changed at EDS, and in the Episcopal Church generally. For 300 years, the Episcopal Church in America was known primarily by the prominence of its members. A quarter of U.S. presidents, half of the chief justices of the Supreme Court, the Vanderbilts, the Mellons, the Astors, Jefferson Davis, Fiorello La Guardia, Nat King Cole—all were Episcopalians. Though it has always been one of the smallest Protestant denominations, the Episcopal Church was long one of the richest and most industrious, building the country's most attractive churches and finest secondary-school system, all the while sending missionaries to virtually every country on earth.

The Episcopal Church used to be impressive. It isn't any more. Membership has dropped steeply, from a historic high of almost 3.5 million in 1966 to fewer than 2.4 million today, and falling. (There are by contrast 15 million Southern Baptists and close to 9 mil-

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lion Methodists.) Worse, America's most famous Episcopalians are no longer J. P. Morgan and James Fenimore Cooper, but people like David Johnson, who was bishop of Massachusetts when he killed himself two years ago after it was revealed that he had been having affairs with a number of his employees. Or like William Lloyd Andries, a middle-aged priest from New York who was pictured in photographs that ran in *Penthouse* last year having sex with his 25-year-old Brazilian "husband" while wearing clerical garb. According to witnesses, Andries, sometimes dressed as Marilyn Monroe, regularly hosted orgies on the altar of his church in Brooklyn.

What has happened to the Episcopal Church? FitzSimons Allison, the retired bishop of South Carolina, has a plausible theory. Episcopalianism is as close to a national religion as anything America has ever had, Allison argues. No other denomination, Allison says, "could quite be the unofficial church for the culture. As the rest of America has become post-Christian, it has been very difficult for the Episcopal Church to disentangle itself from the culture."

That culture—or at least the culture of the upper-middle-class eastern WASPs who have run the Episcopal Church—has for decades tended toward a brand of fuzzy, guilt-inspired leftism. In the 1930s, the *Witness*, the flagship journal of progressive Episcopalianism, threw its support behind the Soviet purge trials. In the 1960s, the national church gave millions to a series of racial identity groups, some of them violent. In the 1990s, Edmund Browning, then the head of the denomination, publicly congratulated President Clinton for his support of partial-birth abortion.

The latest, perhaps most insidious, enthusiasm to overtake the church has been something called "pastoral theology." Developed in the 1940s, pastoral theology encourages priests to act as counselors to their parishioners. In theory, it is not an unreasonable idea. Priests, after all, spend a lot of their time in the company of the sick, the bereaved, and the confused, and there is nothing wrong with teaching them how to better comfort and communicate with, for instance, AIDS patients or alcoholics. But there are important distinctions between being a Christian cleric and being a social worker, and pastoral education has all but erased them. Successful priests, explains the EDS catalog in its section on "pastoral studies," must possess a "self-knowledge and knowledge of, and sensitivity to, the dynamics of human behavior, as well as knowledge of, and sensitivity to, the needs and problems of the world and the institutions within which ministry takes place." It's hard to know exactly what any of this means, since, unlike Biblical theology, the "institutions within which ministry takes place" change from day to day. What is certain is that EDS, like many other seminaries, now offers considerably more courses in pastoral theology than in the New Testament. The result has been that, in many parts of the church, Christianity has ceased being a means to transcend the temporal world and become instead a method used to counsel people in distress, a vehicle for personal growth: Christianity as therapy session.

Consider the career of Isabel Carter Heyward, a self-described socialist, feminist, lesbian, "womanist" theologian, whose life and work mirror recent trends in the Episcopal Church. A former debutante from North Carolina who was one of the first female Episcopal priests, Heyward is now a professor of theology at the Episcopal Divinity School and perhaps the best-known member of the church's growing feminist-liberation-theology movement. Heyward is noted for her outbursts of melodramatic indignation, which are usually aimed at the church. Several years ago, for instance, she declared she would no longer capitalize the name of her own religion. "Using the lowercase 'c' with reference to 'christian,'" Heyward writes in an entirely representative passage from her latest book, "is a spiritual, intellectual, and political discipline for me as a member of a religious tradition so arrogant and abusive historically in relation to women, children, and nonruling class men; lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered/sexual nonconformists; Jews, Muslims, wicca, and practitioners of other religious traditions; persons whose cultural/racial/ethnic origins are other than European; and all other-than-human members of creation."

Heyward's theology, when it extends beyond slogans, can hardly be characterized as Christian. The Trinity, which is the central article of the faith in which she was ordained a priest, is dismissed in one of her books as "a homophilial/homoerotic image of relations between males (father/son)." Heyward rejects the divinity of Christ out of hand. Instead, she says, "I have been led to Sophia/wisdom, to Christa/community, to Hagar the slave woman, to Jephthah's daughter," all post-Christian goddesses now popular among certain feminist theologians.

Talk like this infuriates orthodox Episcopalians. "It's not only heresy, it's apostasy, and dishonest apostasy," says FitzSimons Allison. "If somebody doesn't believe in God, and leaves the Episcopal Church, then they're an honest person. But if you stay, it's like being in the Rotary Club and not believing in service. It's simply dishonorable."

It's also silly on its face (*Hagar the slave woman?*), which makes Heyward's attempts at straightforward

theology less threatening than they might be if she were able to think coherently. But Heyward is more than just a lousy theologian. She's also a "survivor," "someone in recovery," a woman embarked on "psychospiritual passages" out of anorexia, bulimia, alcoholism, masochistic fantasies, cigarette smoking, and childhood sexual abuse. This last trauma came to light when Heyward experienced in a dream a "recovered memory" of having been "orally sodomized by Jeff, the yardman" 40 years before. In the mid-1980s, Heyward took her many troubles to a psychiatrist, a fellow lesbian, with whom she promptly fell in love. Rebuffed, Heyward stalked the poor woman for months, writing her reams of creepy poetry ("How can I speak to you of love/my therapist") and demanding a meeting.

IF IT SOUNDS LIKE THE CHURCH IS IN A MID-LIFE CRISIS, IT SHOULDN'T BE SURPRISING. THE AVERAGE SEMINARIAN IS PAST THE AGE OF 35.

Pretty embarrassing stuff. Or at least it would be for an ordinary person. As an Episcopal priest in recovery, Heyward felt empowered to write a book about the experience. (In Heyward's version, the stalked shrink took all the blame.) The most amazing part of all, however, was that a lot of people read it. The book was published by HarperCollins and went into paperback.

The moral, of course, is that there is a huge market among Episcopalians for trendy psychobabble packaged as religion. In the mailroom at the Episcopal Divinity School, the most liberal of the church's 11 seminaries, the "Support Groups/Counseling" bulletin board is crammed with notices advertising every conceivable variety of navel-gazing: a weekend retreat for lesbian couples, tarot-card instruction, yoga classes, a ceremony led by a local "artist, mask maker, ritualist and performer" intended to celebrate "rhythms in nature," as well as the by-now familiar classes in "stress management and wellness." An ad for one workshop, placed next to a "Planned Parenthood Needs Volunteers" flyer, offers advice for "coping, managing and thriving when a spouse has Adult Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Adult Attention Deficiency Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)." For those who pay attention too carefully, there are also "Anger Management Groups" designed to help participants "get a handle on temper and other feelings."

If all this sounds like the product of a collective mid-life crisis, it shouldn't be surprising. The average Episcopal seminarian these days is close to mid-life, with the majority entering divinity school past the age of 35. For many, going to seminary is merely another form of self-discovery, often undertaken after a divorce. "I'm looking at the Hebrew Bible in terms of self-esteem," says one middle-aged student at the Episcopal Divinity School, by way of explaining what she has been doing for the past two years.

Whenever two or more Episcopalians gather, there's apt to be talk like this (keep in mind that it was an Episcopalian, John Bradshaw, who came up with the concept of an "inner child"), and not all of it is harmlessly pathetic. In 1995, Ellen Cooke, the denomination's chief treasurer, was indicted after it was discovered that she had stolen $2.2 million from the national church, using most of the money to buy jewelry and a new summer house. Before her trial, Cooke consulted a female priest for counseling. The priest, Cooke explained in a statement, "has helped me acknowledge the pain, abuse, and powerlessness I have felt during the years I worked as a lay woman on a senior level in the Church headquarters." In other words, sexism made her do it.

Even a jury could see through an excuse like that, and Cooke is now doing five years in a federal prison in West Virginia. Episcopalians, on the other hand, remain easy marks for the abuse excuse. Earlier this year, the Rev. Chester LaRue, rector of St. John's in Brooklyn, was arrested and charged with selling cocaine out of his church. When police arrived at St. John's, LaRue was seated at his desk, writing a sermon and smoking crack. LaRue was at least the second rector of St. John's to have met an unseemly end, having replaced the former rector, George Hoeh, who was murdered by his gay lover in Atlantic City in the 1980s. At about the same time LaRue was arrested, two other Episcopal priests in Brooklyn were also brought up on charges, one for tax fraud, the other, by the church, for sexual misconduct. Coming as they did on the heals of Marilyn Monroe impersonator William Lloyd Andries, these scandals raised questions about the church's oversight of its priests in Brooklyn. Before long, the man in charge of overseeing those priests, Bishop Orris G. Walker Jr., came forward to explain that, contrary to appearances, he had not been negligent in his duties. Just the opposite, in fact. "One of my sins is I'm a workaholic," Walker said. "I need to take some time for me." Fellow priests were impressed. "It's the most courageous thing he could have done," the Rev. Sara Louise Krantz told *Newsday*.

The main idea behind pastoral theology is that priests should help their parishioners feel good about

themselves. This is fine, except that much of the Bible, Old and New Testaments, is specifically designed to make people feel *bad* about themselves—to wake them from their self-satisfied languor and stir them into behaving differently, better. God is quoted at length in the Bible making difficult, even frightening, demands. Supporters of pastoral theology have a strategy for maintaining wellness in the face of these less-than-affirming passages: Just ignore them.

This spring, a newsletter produced by the National Episcopal AIDS Coalition, a group funded by the church, described a troubling incident that took place in the Episcopal Diocese of California. According to the newsletter, brochures distributed by the Marin AIDS Interfaith Network had been defaced, made "corrupt," by a mysterious group of "hate-mongers." What had the hate-mongers done to the brochures? Nothing less than altered them "to include Old Testament Scripture condemning the gay and lesbian community." Imagine that, huffed the Episcopalians: quoting the Bible. Talk about hateful.

The long-standing debate over homosexuals in the church has unfolded along similar lines, a theological dispute that, in the pro-gay camp at least, has contained few references to actual theology. For the last 20 years, gay Episcopalians have argued, often eloquently, for the right to be ordained as priests and to have their unions blessed as marriages by the church. For gays, the first battle has been all but won. Although the issue has not yet officially been resolved by the church's governing body, virtually every Episcopal diocese in the country has openly non-celibate homosexuals serving as priests. It is the second question—gay marriage—that now bitterly divides the church.

People have been arguing about gay marriage for a long time in the Episcopal Church, but that doesn't mean its supporters have reached a consensus on what exactly gay marriage is. Even the basic questions remain unanswered, beginning with the most obvious one: Should gay marriage be a lifelong, monogamous union between two people? Otis Charles, the former Episcopal bishop of Utah and one of the most visible and politically active gays in the church, can speak forever about homosexuality as a civil-rights issue. Ask him if gay marriages should be monogamous and he stumbles. "We need to develop an ethical sensibility that comes out of the gay sensibility," he says. In other words: probably not monogamous, no.

After a while it's hard not to conclude that the push for gay marriage in the Episcopal Church is more a political quest than a religious one. Louie Crew, founder of the Episcopal gay group Integrity, doesn't disagree. Getting the church to recognize homosexual marriages, he says, is just the first step on the long road to sexual emancipation. The next civil right to be established in the Episcopal Church, he predicts, will be the right to be married to more than one person simultaneously. "Threesomes and foursomes will have to push for their own agenda," Crew says, sounding tired. "That's not my battle. You can't do all of it at once."

How much farther can the Episcopal Church go before the whole enterprise comes tumbling down, tasteful stone churches and all? Probably not much. At least six groups of former Episcopalians have already split to form their own, more traditional denominations. Countless other church members have fled to Catholicism or to the Eastern Orthodox Church. There is growing evidence that for those who have stayed, encounter-group theology simply isn't as compelling as the kind that used to mention God. According to a study by journalist Robert England, the Diocese of Newark, N.J., has seen its churches empty since the arrival of celebrated Episcopal heretic Bishop Shelby Spong almost 20 years ago. (Spong has argued that St. Paul, author of unequivocally anti-homosexuality statements in the New Testament, was himself secretly gay.) Under Spong's leadership, the diocese has lost close to 40 percent of its membership, twice the attrition rate of the church nationally, and has been forced to close 17 churches.

Nothing of the kind is happening in Africa and Asia, where the Anglican Church (of which the Episcopal Church is part) has never been stronger. Anglican leaders in the Third World tend to be conservative; some have already threatened to break ties with the Episcopal Church unless the Episcopalians start acting like Christians. At some point, the Episcopalians may have to start paying attention, for they are vastly outnumbered. As Roger Boltz, administrative director of the American Anglican Council, a theologically orthodox group working to reform the Episcopal Church, points out, "There are more Anglicans in church on Sunday in Nigeria than there are in the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand and England combined." In the end, multiculturalism may be the salvation of the religion that the world still, and falsely, equates with white America. ♦

HOW MUCH FARTHER CAN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH GO BEFORE THE ENTERPRISE COMES TUMBLING DOWN, TASTEFUL STONE CHURCHES AND ALL?

Tony Blair's Coronation

By Irwin M. Stelzer

Brighton , England

On September 25, America's conservatives gathered in the capital of the world's only superpower to contemplate their navels in the hope of discovering why they have recently been denied power in Washington, London, and Paris. Almost simultaneously, the British Labour party gathered in this Channel-side town for its first party conference (convention, to Americans) since taking the reins of government in the name of "radical centrism."

To travel from Washington to Brighton at twice the speed of sound is disorienting in ordinary times; if you move from the depths of conservative despair to the heights of left-of-center triumphalism in a day's time, as I did, you might go mad. The conservatives in Britain and America have won almost every ideological battle worth fighting. In America, they have sold the idea that government budgets should be balanced; in Britain, they have forced Labour to accept the spending limits of the now-departed Tory government and to recognize, as Prime Minister Tony Blair did in his speech to his party, that "this country, any country, will not just carry on paying out more in taxes and getting less. . . . Hold debt down. . . . Earn before you spend." Margaret Thatcher couldn't have said it any better.

In America, conservatives have forced a reluctant president to end "welfare as we know it"; in Britain, the prime minister told his party last week that he planned a "fundamental reform of our welfare state. . . . The new welfare state must encourage work, not dependency. . . . A decent society is not based on rights. It is based on duty." Youngsters must get jobs (subsidized by the state to the tune of about $100 a week), go back to school, sign up for job training, start a business, or get off the welfare rolls. And single mothers with school-age children must "at least visit a job center, not just stay at home waiting for the check every week."

In America, no one any longer thinks the government can do things better than the private sector, forcing a Democratic president to read an obituary for big government; in Great Britain, the Labour party, once pledged to socialize all the means of production and distribution and to take over the commanding heights of industry, is now committed by its leader to at least partial privatization of the country's pension system, as part of its search for new functions to privatize.

Finally, conservatives have persuaded voters that crime, whatever its causes, is simply intolerable, forcing a Democratic president to promise to put 100,000 new police officers on the streets, and a Labour prime minister to declare, "I back zero tolerance for crime." Indeed, one of the best applause lines of Blair's speech here—other than the promise to do away with the voting rights of hereditary peers in the House of Lords—was one that would warm the heart of Rudy Giuliani and startle the ACLU: "To those who say it's all a threat to our civil liberties, I say the threat to civil liberties is of women afraid to go out at night, and pensioners afraid to stay at home. . . ."

So Bill Clinton and Tony Blair, a New Democrat president and a New Labour prime minister, pledged to push forward the programs of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. Yet conservatives convene in Washington to weep, while 3,000 delegates to a convention of a left-of-center party convene in Brighton to rejoice—proving, I suppose, that winning the electoral battle trumps winning the ideological battle every time.

Certainly, the hard political fact that Labour met as a government-in-power rather than as an opposition-in-waiting for the first time since 1979 tended to keep battles over ideas and policies to a minimum. Brighton was a place for celebration—what one delegate called a "coronation conference." Still, what little ideological warfare did break out proved that old Labour is not prepared to swap its beer and ale for the champagne and chardonnay preferred by Blair's New Labour just yet.

In a key battle for a seat on the National Executive Committee, a diminished but consequential Labour-party policy organ, unreconstructed leftist Ken Livingstone (known as "Red Ken") defeated Peter Mandelson, the Blair intimate credited with fashioning the policies and electoral techniques that propelled Labour to its overwhelming majority in Parliament earlier this year. "It's a weird party that defeats the man who got it elected and elects the man who favors

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policies that kept it in opposition for two decades," one observer told me.

Blair's people tried to explain the defeat as a personal repudiation of Mandelson, who is widely seen as arrogant, rather than as a rejection of Labour's rightward slide. Mandelson, who remains Blair's most influential adviser, dutifully played along with the notion that his defeat was a personal rejection rather than a repudiation of his boss's policies by professing to have learned some much-needed humility.

But in private even the staunchest Blair supporters conceded that Livingstone's victory proves that the old Left is not prepared to go quietly into the night. In addition to defeating Mandelson, old Labour had the votes to return two of the Left's leftest stalwarts, Dennis Skinner and Diane Abbott, to the same council. And the Labour-party conference hall is still a congenial place for Britain's "loony Left" to set out their stalls. The Committee for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) sponsors a meeting aimed at diverting spending from defense—at a bit more than 2 percent of GDP, it is already at its lowest level since the 1930s—to education and health care and calls for "Protecting the Earth from NATO." EMILY's List (there is a British branch) combines with other women's organizations to celebrate the election of 101 Labour women to Parliament, to applaud the appointment of a "minister for women," and to promote a "Girl's Bill of Rights" to improve prospects for the "girl child."

Chas Fagan

The ubiquity of left-wing advocacy groups aside, this convention was a Blair triumph. When Labour last convened as a governing party, then-prime minister James Callaghan pleaded with the unions for wage restraint; they turned him down and launched a series of strikes that saw garbage pile up in the streets of London, unburied bodies pile up all around the country, power cuts that reduced factories to three-day work weeks—all part of a "winter of discontent" that eventually brought Margaret Thatcher to power.

Now the unions are tamed. Their voting power in the Labour party, already sharply reduced, was curtailed still further at last week's conference. Blair has told them that he will guarantee them the right to call representation elections if more than half the workers want them, but will not repeal Thatcher's restrictions on picketing and boycotts or the law requiring a membership vote before a union can call a strike. And he has spent more time with Britain's industrial barons than with its union barons, in an attempt to make his party business-friendly.

This wooing of business is part of a broader effort to position Labour as the party of all the people, one that unites the nation after years of Thatcherite divisiveness. After reaping the benefits of privatization, the reining-in of union power, and the market-opening reforms of Thatcher's Tories, Britain's voters decided they wanted something less harsh than the free-market capitalism that Thatcher espoused and that brought them the prosperity (almost full employment, low inflation) that they now enjoy—in contrast to their European counterparts.

Enter Blair and his Thatcherism-with-a-human-face, a sort of vague communitarianism-cum-egalitarianism mixed with religiosity, an understanding of the limits of what government can accomplish, and a conviction that society's obligation to help the truly needy is matched by the obligation of all others to find work. The appeal of this brew is demonstrated by the fact that tens of thousands of young, middle-class Britons have joined Blair's Labour party, something they would not even contemplate in the lefter days of his predecessors.

The presence of this new governing class in Brighton is a visible sign of just how new New Labour is—more slim young apparatchiks than beer-bellied union bosses, more media manipulators than commit-

ted ideologues, more cell-phone addicts than pamphleteers. The one link between these otherwise disparate groups seems to be tobacco. New Labour's official policy is Hillary-esque in its purity: Stamp out demon tobacco, which Blair told the delegates creates "avoidable illnesses" costing the National Health Service millions every year. But policy is not practice. Nothing could clear the smoke from the spacious but ill-ventilated lobbies and meeting rooms of the grand Victorian hotels that housed this conclave. Indeed, ample supplies of cigarettes were on offer at many of the private receptions held throughout the week.

Nor could anything clear the mist that shrouds the social attitudes of New Labour. Blair, whose stated goal is reelection five years hence, is acutely aware of the bad stumble Bill Clinton took when he chose the issue of gays in the military as one of his first causes. He knows, too, that his wife Cherie's affinity for such causes has his enemies poised to strike should it seem that she has persuaded him to adopt what some call "advanced attitudes" on social issues. This awareness must have been heightened by the fact that on the very day on which the prime minister addressed the conference, Cherie, a lawyer, learned that she had won a precedent-setting suit in the European Court of Justice, which ruled that lesbian partners are entitled to the same travel perks given to heterosexual partners.

His wife's positions notwithstanding, Blair considers himself not only a solid family man and deeply religious, but a modernizer. Hence his dilemma, revealed in his speech. "We cannot say we want a strong and secure society when we ignore its very foundation: family life," he told the delegates, assuring them that "every area of this government's policy will be scrutinized to see how it affects family life." There is to be a ministerial group to "drive . . . through" policies to strengthen Britain's families.

And yet, and yet. Although bemoaning the "huge social problem" created by Britain's 100,000 teenage pregnancies every year, Blair reassured the less hidebound in his party, "This is not about preaching to individuals about their private lives. . . . I am a modern man leading a modern country."

Confused? So is the British press. The *Daily Mail*, one of the tabloid newspapers that traditionally support the Tories, ran a page-one story under the headline "Blair's crusade to save the family." A few days earlier, the *Sun*, a leading Thatcherite tabloid that threw its substantial clout to Labour in the last election, ran a column under a headline that asked the question, "Are Blair and Hague Conspiring to Destroy the Family?"

It seems that William Hague, the new Tory leader, has outraged Lady Thatcher and Conservative-party traditionalists by deciding to share a room with his fiancée at this week's Tory-party conference in Blackpool. *Sun* commentator William Oddie notes that Hague has already voted to reduce the homosexual age of consent to 16 and participated (with Blair) in a gay-pride march in London. "The message is that if the Tory party expects William Hague to lead them back to traditional family values," Oddie writes, "they had better think again."

There is, of course, no conspiracy. But that the prime minister is torn on the question of just how to define the family there can be little doubt. One of his leading advisers has long lived in unwedded bliss with the mother of his two children; he sees no reason why the prime minister should condemn such arrangements. The gays in his entourage argue that enduring homosexual and lesbian relationships impose no costs on society and therefore are a private matter, of no concern to elected officials. The real problem, say these advisers, is the large number of never-wed mothers whose offspring constitute so large a portion of the lawless and jobless.

But Blair's entourage also includes traditionalists. They have no per se objection to gay or enduring alliances between unmarried couples, but are arguing to the prime minister that if he sanctions anything but the married-couple-plus-children arrangements that have always constituted "the family," he will be accepting the notion that living arrangements are mere lifestyle choices of no concern to government. That would make it difficult to mount a credible crusade against the scourge of teenage pregnancy and the social problems it creates.

In the end, Blair seems to have come down on the side of those who would have him show tolerance for all structures save single motherhood. Knowledgeable sources advise me that Mandelson, whose obsessive desire to control every aspect of the prime minister's public image is legend among British journalists, was consulted before Dorian Jabri, the Iraqi lover of Chris Smith, the first openly homosexual cabinet member, gave a lengthy interview to the *Times* of London. Jabri used the interview, which was accompanied by photos of the happy couple posing in their homey study amid a formidable collection of books, to depict the relationship as durable and satisfying.

But the battle for Blair's heart and head is not over. Traditionalists remain encouraged by the fact that Blair has seen and railed against the devastating consequences of teenage pregnancy. Indeed, in his speech he termed those pregnancies part of a national "crisis."

Blair has said he wants to make Britain into "the

best place to bring up children, the best place to lead a fulfilled life, the best place to grow old." He has to decide whether to convert his own tolerance into policies that elevate so-called alternative lifestyles to a coequal status with the traditional family. No easy decision for a modern man who also happens to be a deeply religious, traditional, happily married father of two. ♦

Unequal Justice

By Byron York

Perhaps Janet Reno hoped to buy herself a little breathing room by approving a 60-day preliminary investigation that could lead to an independent-counsel probe of Vice President Al Gore's campaign phone calls. Her decision last week seemed designed—at least in part—to satisfy Republican critics who have accused her of dragging her feet, bungling, and even obstructing the ongoing campaign-finance probe.

In beginning a Gore investigation, though, the attorney general also rejected—again—the demands of House Judiciary Committee chairman Henry Hyde and others in Congress that she consider an independent counsel for a wide range of White House campaign abuses. Reno's decision on Gore is not likely to satisfy them.

But in all the controversy over an independent counsel, one should remember that campaign finance is just one of the reasons Republicans are losing faith in the Justice Department. Republican suspicions have been growing for more than three years now—the result of several cases in which the Justice Department's actions, whether by intent or not, have had the effect of punishing opponents of the Clinton White House and preventing punishment of its friends.

The Party Chairmen: Consider the different treatment of former RNC chairman Haley Barbour and former Democratic party co-chairman Don Fowler. Barbour testified before Sen. Fred Thompson's campaign-finance panel on July 24. He was questioned extensively about an arrangement in which a Hong Kong businessman guaranteed a $2.1 million loan to the GOP's National Policy Forum. A large part of the loan was never paid back, and Democrats—along with some Republicans—suspected that the transaction amounted to an infusion of foreign cash into the Republican campaign.

Barbour dazzled the committee, denying any wrongdoing and standing up to every criticism. But his testimony was called into question when later witnesses—one of them a former RNC chief—contradicted Barbour's account of the loan deal. Barbour, the witnesses said, knew where the money came from and wanted it anyway to help Republicans win control of Congress in 1994.

The conflicting stories caught the attention of the Justice Department's campaign-finance task force, which began to pursue the case with extraordinary speed. "They called within a week or so of Barbour's appearance, asking for the stuff we had used," says Jim Jordan, a spokesman for Democrats on the Senate committee. "They were looking for conflicts in testimony."

They apparently found what they wanted; in late September, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that prosecutors had presented evidence about Barbour to a grand jury. The Justice Department is apparently trying to prove the transaction was an illegal foreign contribution, and that Barbour lied about it during his testimony. It appears that the Barbour matter is the first case brought before a grand jury as a result of the Thompson hearings.

And Fowler? He testified before the Thompson committee on September 9. Fowler repeatedly insisted that he had "racked my brain" but could not remember calling the CIA on behalf of shady oilman Roger Tamraz. Fowler's forgetfulness became difficult to believe when Republicans held up handfuls of memos

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from the CIA and the DNC showing that he had indeed interceded for Tamraz. And the week after Fowler testified, the documentary evidence was supported even further by the apparently unimpeachable testimony of former national-security aide Sheila Heslin.

Unlike doubts about Barbour's testimony, it appears the conflicts involving Fowler's sworn statements did *not* attract the attention of the Justice Department. At the very least, the department is not interested in any evidence gathered by Thompson's staff. "They have sought nothing from us," says a Republican committee lawyer who asked that his name not be used.

The same appears to be true in the case of Richard Sullivan, the former DNC finance director who testified before the committee on July 9. In a sworn deposition, Sullivan told Thompson's staff that as a general rule he did not take many notes and didn't keep many files. For its part, the DNC told the committee that an extensive search had been done for Sullivan's documents, and that all had been handed over.

Imagine the surprise of Republicans when, after Sullivan's deposition and public testimony, the DNC told the committee it had discovered 4,000 additional pages of Sullivan documents—1,500 of them handwritten notes concerning sensitive matters, including the Tamraz affair. Current DNC chairman Roy Romer apologized to Thompson and later told the *Washington Post* that the late discovery of the documents was a "pure, innocent oversight."

Romer lost some credibility when the *Post* reported how the papers had been found. It turns out the documents were not buried beneath reams of paper in some out-of-the-way warehouse; they had been in Sullivan's old office all along. Not only that, they were in a file cabinet—which just happened to be the only file cabinet in the office. Apparently the DNC had not thought to look there.

Republicans were appalled. But the *Post* report—published on August 8—did not move the Justice Department to inquire about the truthfulness of Sullivan's testimony; the Thompson committee lawyer says there has been no inquiry concerning Sullivan.

When asked about the Barbour, Fowler, and Sullivan cases, the lawyer says the Justice Department's behavior has been disappointing at best. "I was surprised and a little dismayed," he says, to learn that Justice had been dealing with committee Democrats while showing no interest in evidence gathered by Republicans. "Typically, when someone wants something from the committee, one would assume that one would go to the chairman of the committee." But at least as far as the Thompson committee is concerned, that's not happening. For now, all the Republicans can do is prepare to refer their evidence to Justice—and hope the department sees fit to use it.

Michael Brown and Nolanda Hill: Then there is the matter of two intimates of Ron Brown, the late commerce secretary—his son Michael and Nolanda Hill, his business partner and close friend. On August 28, Michael Brown pleaded guilty to one misdemeanor charge of arranging for $4,000 to be illegally contributed to Ted Kennedy's 1994 campaign. The plea was an embarrassment for Brown, but what was much more important—and largely unreported in the press—was that in return for Brown's plea to a minor offense, the government agreed to close the book on an investigation into alleged corruption involving Brown and his father.

In 1994, Michael Brown was hired by Eugene and Nora Lum, two Democratic activists and fund-raisers who had bought a small oil and gas company in Oklahoma. Even though Brown had no experience in the business, the Lums paid Brown at least $150,000 in "consulting fees," gave him a 5 percent interest in the company (valued at $500,000), and showered him with other benefits, including a $60,000 membership at the exclusive Robert Trent Jones golf club outside Washington.

Former employees of the company say Brown did not perform any work in return for his lavish compensation. One former top official later testified that the Lums hired Michael Brown "to gain influence with the Department of Commerce, and that's it." Some investigators believe that the Lums actually gave the money to Michael Brown so that he would pass it on to his father. Brown's lawyer, William Taylor III, concedes that "Michael paid some money to his father at a point in time" after the younger Brown began receiving money from the Lums. But Taylor denies that the younger Brown was a conduit for money given to him by the Lums for the purpose of winning favor with the secretary of commerce. If he did, that might well have made Michael Brown part of a scheme to pass illegal gratuities to his father.

None of that matters anymore. When Brown pleaded guilty to the campaign-finance misdemeanor, the Justice Department agreed that it "will not prosecute the defendant for any other conduct by the defendant of which the Public Integrity Section . . . [is] presently aware." (By the way, the prosecutor who gave such generous terms to Brown is the same man who zealously prosecuted fired White House travel-office director Billy Dale.) The Brown case is now closed.

Nolanda Hill is the Texas businesswoman who became Ron Brown's close friend. She formed a company called First International and gave Ron Brown a half-interest. Brown performed no work for the company. When he became commerce secretary and had to give up his lucrative position at the law firm of Patton, Boggs & Blow, First International began to give him so-called partnership distributions. Brown received three checks of $45,000 each in the spring, summer, and fall of 1993—and accepted a total of more than $400,000 from Hill between April 1993 and August 1994.

It was Hill's dealings with Brown that prompted Janet Reno to call for the appointment of an independent counsel in May 1995. When Brown died, the independent counsel transferred the evidence he had gathered to the Justice Department. Eighteen months after Brown's death, a lawyer for Hill says that he has at times gotten the impression that the Justice Department is "stirring around." But so far, nothing has happened.

A Tale of Two Congressmen: And how has the Justice Department treated allegations against two congressmen, one a Democrat, one a Republican? First, the Republican. On March 19, the *Washington Post* ran a front-page story in which Mark Siegel, a Democratic lobbyist, accused House Government Reform and Oversight Committee chairman Dan Burton of shaking him down for campaign contributions. The accusations were particularly damaging because at the time Burton was gearing up for hearings investigating Democratic campaign-finance abuses (after many delays, those hearings are set to begin this week).

The Justice Department moved quickly against Burton. Just eight days after the *Post* article appeared, Siegel was subpoenaed to appear before a grand jury investigating the matter. He testified April 2. Since then, the investigation has continued, carried on by a small team of FBI agents. In June, Republicans Henry Hyde and Bob Livingston wrote Reno to question her decision to send FBI agents to Pakistan as part of the Burton investigation while at the same time failing to find campaign-finance figures who had fled to China. Mark Corallo, a spokesman for Livingston, says Reno did not respond. In August, the two congressmen sent another letter, asking why she had failed to respond to the first; Corallo says Reno has not answered that one, either.

Now to the Democratic congressman: Jim McDermott. It has been nearly 10 months since a Florida couple illegally recorded a telephone call between Newt Gingrich and several members of the House leadership. The couple, John and Alice Martin, first gave the tape to Florida Democrat Karen Thurman. They later passed it on to Washington Democrat Jim McDermott, at that time the ranking minority member of the House committee that was investigating ethics charges against Gingrich. From there, the tape made its way to the *New York Times*, which published a front-page story suggesting the recording showed Gingrich violating an agreement he had made not to defend himself on the ethics charges.

The Justice Department quickly began an investigation into McDermott's distribution of the tape, but the probe seems to have made little progress. In April, the Martins pleaded guilty to illegally intercepting and recording a phone conversation. Beyond that, no charges have been made. "This has been frustrating to us," says Terry Holt, a spokesman for Ohio Republican John Boehner, who was among those illegally recorded by the Martins. "Boehner said this case was so simple that even Barney Fife could solve it." Holt adds that Boehner has written several letters to Janet Reno, asking for an update on the case. He says Reno has failed to answer "almost all" of Boehner's requests.

Of course, listing Republican complaints does not prove that Haley Barbour, Dan Burton, and some others do not deserve to be investigated. But it does suggest that the Justice Department is aggressively pursuing some cases while sluggishly investigating others.

Justice Department spokesman Bert Brandenburg dismisses the criticism as selective memory. "You can ask Dan Rostenkowski," he says. "You can ask Mel Reynolds. And Walter Fauntroy. And Mary Rose Oakar. And the Agriculture Department employees who were raising money for Clinton/Gore '92." Brandenburg says the Justice Department has a responsibility to investigate all the facts of each case, and that can take time. "A good prosecutor does not run an investigation based on the latest that's in the newspaper," he says. "They have a higher standard to meet."

Such a defense is not likely to allay Republican suspicions. Why would the Justice Department apparently bond with minority Democrats on the Thompson committee while ignoring the majority Republicans? Why can the department move with such speed in some cases and with such hesitation in others? Some exasperated Republicans have suggested those concerns are grounds for impeaching Reno—but they might learn more if they instead decided to investigate the investigators. ♦

The Scribes of New Jerusalem

Alfred Kazin Ponders Religion in American Literature

By Malcolm Bradbury

Alfred Kazin is the present dean of American criticism—a figure from a more open generation of literary commentary, a noted scholar who can hook the general reader. His fruitful life has been devoted largely to the study, the interpretation, the celebration of American literature. That does not mean the constant splurge of imaginative writing from all comers and of all qualities that emits from the nation's presses. It means the great and classic literature: the world-class authors who have penetrated the American consciousness and come to stand, around the world, as the great examples of the American artistic imagination.

Kazin's first book, *On Native Grounds*, appeared in 1942, the title declaring his lifetime interest. The nation was now at war; Thirties critics and commentators were warming to the nation's role as preserver of democracy; affirmations of national cultural identity were needed. The book appeared one year after F.O. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance*, and it had a similar impact. Matthiessen had re-envisioned for his generation a key period in the American imagination: the great cultural transformation of New England from 1837 to the Civil War. He explored the work and distinctive culture of Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, and Whitman, proclaiming their fundamental originality. The view was revisionist. Until recently, the great 19th-century tradition had been the Genteel Tradition of Whittier, Longfellow, and Lowell, now nearly forgotten.

Kazin's book took a similar story, but set 50 years on. Looking at the rising tide of Realist and Naturalist novelists at the close of the 19th century, he argued that they were no less exploratory and original. Writing not out of theory or foreign influence, but from the economic crises and the moral, political, and religious despairs of this era of technologization, urbanization, robber barons, Social Darwinism, and muckraking, they constructed a critical and very contemporary vision of America at the time it became modern. Indeed modern (and Modernist) American prose literature grew, Kazin argued, "out of the critical years of the late nineteenth century which saw the emergence of modern America, and was molded in its struggles."

Alfred Kazin
God and the American Writer
Alfred A. Knopf, 259 pp., $25

Kazin's argument was culturally rooted, learned, critical of technological America. It also expressed the voice of liberal Forties intellectuals who were beginning to feel a greater love for their country. The argument—that America's modern literature was made on native grounds—was a tale of the writer's need to take imaginative possession of his own soil, then of the ironies of that possession. It was also, for many of us, to a degree excessive, as it went along with the revised patriotisms of wartime, those renewed arguments about the singularity of American national character. It was meant to compensate for those who saw the spirit of modernity and Modernism in American writing as part of a larger international revolution, or a drama of the Twenties conducted by expatriates in Parisian cafés. The truth surely is that the best modern American writing has really been an amalgam of two forces: an American cultural and social tradition, revived in the 1940s, and the Modernist experimental arts and influences of Europe.

In a number of other fine studies—the lively international essays of his collection *Contemporaries*, the autobiographical explorations of *A Walker in the City*—Kazin widened his map. He took on board the dramas and anxieties of European Romanticism and Modernism, the world-awareness of the Jewish inheritance, the international urgencies of modern, then postmodern change. Still, the American tradition stayed at the center. In probably his best book, *An American Procession* (1984), Kazin attempted to settle the matter, going back to the American Renaissance Matthiessen had brought into play. He takes us canonically through the great procession, starting with the Transcendentalist Emerson, with his distinctive, romantic, American sense of self and nature, then through the ironizing powers of modernity (best exemplified by Henry Adams), to the general climate of a 20th-century literature

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where all the great writers sensed something irretrievably wrong.

God and the American Writer is Kazin's latter-day revisiting of the classical heritage of American literature. Here are the writers he knows intimately, has written on often. But the theme is new, perhaps (for Kazin) even surprising. It is the omnipresence of God in the core writers—again the line runs from Hawthorne, Emerson, and Melville, via Dickinson, William James, and Twain, to Eliot, Frost, and Faulkner—and the strange fist they have made of believing in, disbelieving in, arguing with Him. The aim is another reading of American culture. Now it is essentially a religious culture, born in the predestined certainties of Calvinism. It develops through the wild arguers, the mutant writers of the 19th century who were—to quote Melville on Hawthorne—"God's spies." It comes into the 20th century, the age of materialism and secularism, when, even so, the passion and struggle did not die. Hart Crane still looked to the curve of Brooklyn Bridge to "lend a myth to God." Wallace Stevens saw poetry, not religion, as the supreme fiction, yet still read some neo-divine linkage in the "ambiguous undulations" of pigeons in the evening sky. Only in recent writing does Kazin see the essence departing, as a materialist psychological imagination replaces the religious one.

Kazin finds an excellent epigraph in Emily Dickinson's "We thank thee, Father, for these strange minds that enamor us against thee." His interest is, he explains, not in the artist's professions of belief, but "in the imagination he brings to his tale of religion in human affairs." The hook can usefully be read as a sequence of interlinked but free-standing essays on Great Writers: learned, original, and sometimes—like the essay on T.S. Eliot, who departs the native grounds and his St. Louis background for Britain and Anglo-Catholicism—open to detailed dispute. But throughout, there is a running argument about the importance of "the tale of religion" in American culture.

It begins with that American Renaissance—with the ambiguities, the rival optimisms and pessimisms, of Emerson and Thoreau, the self-makers and yea-sayers, on the one side, and Hawthorne and Melville, the ironists, the nay-sayers, on the other. Being distinctly Emersonian himself, Kazin is particularly good on the great self-seeker. He notes that what was new about him was not his moral sentiment, but his euphoric exaltation of it—here was a man whose egotism was as fervid as Scripture.

A second key argument is the distinctive impact on the American imagination of slavery and the Civil War. He gives a strong reading of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—which was, he rightly says, not only an abolitionist tract, but a typical mid-19th-century work in which a writer of religious devotion (compare George Eliot, Tolstoy) compassionately considers the moral problem of "life among the lowly." But what makes the great difference is the Civil War itself. Until this time, many writers, including Transcendentalists, harbored ambiguous attitudes about slavery and the question of secession. Kazin makes his point by devoting a central chapter to Abraham Lincoln, emphasizing the importance of the Second Inaugural Address. Now God and country became one. This, as Lincoln himself said, was true for both sides, each claiming a Biblical justification. But after Lincoln, Kazin says, religion and the religion of America became synonymous for many Americans, changing the nature of the moral struggle for writers.

The war finally silenced many writers, and changed the sensibilities of most who lived through it—like Herman Melville, left, as his friend Hawthorne said, "not able to believe or disbelieve," struggling with doubt and blank negation on an agonized tour of the Holy Land. It also completely changed and redirected American literature. Kazin gives the subject a new importance, seeing in the war a fundamental influence he feels was overlooked by Edmund Wilson—whose *Patriotic Gore* is a brilliant study of the war's political and rhetorical discourse, but implies that the conflict had little impact on serious American literature.

There are marvelous chapters on individuals here, especially that on William James, a powerful evocation of a major figure. All are deeply explored and show an engaged critical imagination trying to follow the sinuous movement of thought and sensibility as expressed in poetry, prose, and letters. At times, however, Kazin's concern with the American procession becomes a narrowness. The chapter on T.S. Eliot, for example, has nothing to say on the vastness of Eliot's endeavor, as writer and philosopher, to comprehend the "mind of Europe" and its crisis. Kazin has no great interest in the history of symbolism, the larger struggles of modern philosophy, the experimental revolution of modern forms (*vers libre*, stream of consciousness). This is a more personal book than many previous; his own engagement in the theme is clear. Often, it is anecdotal—there are wonderful, insightful reminiscences of Robert Frost, whom Kazin knew well at Amherst ("The world was Robert Frost, and he could never shut up about anything in it").

Perhaps it is not quite Kazin's best book. Sometimes there's an air of ground too often revisited, instances too often quoted. But it has an invaluable energy of belief, even when addressing the literature of unbelief. What it speaks for is interesting and important: the "orphic" independence of religious awareness, the hunger for insight into otherness, conveyed by the visionary pas-

sions of the imagination. American writers made a church of themselves, became apostles without having to believe in anything except unlimited freedom. Kazin is concerned with the contrast between such religious and metaphysical energies and American "official piety," the result of the way religion and the religion of America became one. America may have been founded as a Calvinist pilgrimage, a great, convenanted reliving of the journey of the chosen into the Promised Land. But it became a land of schisms, Great Awakenings, multiple utopias; many of the utopias grew narrow, divisive, fundamentalist. Meantime, official piety became, he says, "publicly vehement, politicized, and censorious." Deism, the religion of reason and enlightenment, was written by Jefferson into the Declaration of Independence; it did not, Kazin notes, become the American inheritance. Unlike the impact a common religious heritage had on European societies and thinkers, America and its official faith sent writers into individual quests for their own personal church, their own encounter with the varieties of religious experience.

Filled with a lifetime of literary experience, loaded with its own quirks and passions, this is a fine book. Kazin stands above and apart from most of the current wars of the decanonizing postmodern academy. For him, there is an American canon, an American imagination, a distinct if now dissolving American literary culture, a writer's struggle with divinity and history framed on native grounds. He also has a way of writing about and interpreting that writing and its writers that is governed by intimate understanding, intense scholarly curiosity, cultural love. It sees writing as invested with spirit, imagination, struggling intelligence, individual vanities and crises, and as a critical struggle with the certainties, rather than a way of possessing or asserting them. That is what makes Kazin "Emersonian." Again he has found a refreshing, illuminating way of telling the great tale of the major canonical writing now being displaced in modern multicultural theory, but that was achieved on native grounds—and other soils too. ♦

The Common Culture, R.I.P.

Goodnight to David and Much More

By Terry Teachout

I don't watch much TV news anymore, but when I heard David Brinkley was retiring, I made a point of tuning in to ABC's *This Week* to see him say goodbye. It was business as usual for the first 45 minutes or so: One of Marv Albert's lawyers did a star turn, and Roy Romer played his why-we-need-campaign-finance-reform soundbite two or three times—I lost count—before Sam Donaldson finally gave him the hook. Then there was a reel of goodnight-Chet-goodnight-David clips, after which Brinkley, looking all of his 77 years but sounding far younger, took his last, elegant bow. Then it was all over, and I felt empty and disoriented, the way most baby-

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boomers feel when another relic of their lost youth passes from the scene. Red Skelton had died the previous week, and Charles Kuralt went on the road for good a couple of months before that; Skelton got a half-page obit in the *New York Times*, not bad for a comedian whose name is completely unknown to anyone under the age of, oh, 35. I wonder how many people read it.

I know a half-dozen Gen-Xers better than casually, and when I'm with them, I do most of the listening, pretending to keep up with what postmodernism has wrought. But I know I'm just going through the motions. Besides, you can't keep up with the culture by talking to a half-dozen Gen-Xers. They can't even keep up with it, because it doesn't exist anymore, not the way it did when I was a boy. Back then, my family watched *The CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite*, and so did every other family I knew, except for the ones that preferred NBC's *Huntley-Brinkley Report*. Not that it mattered much, since there were only three TV networks to choose from, movie theaters showed only one film at a time, and *Billboard* had only one chart that mattered, the Hot 100, at the top of which you could find both the Beatles and, occasionally, Dave Brubeck, the same way you could see them both on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. If you want to know what America was like in 1962, there's your answer: It was a place where everybody watched Ed Sullivan and knew who David Brinkley was.

Conservative intellectuals who decry the death of the common culture in America usually have in mind the King James Bible, Shakespeare, and the Gettysburg Address, but more than that has died in the quarter-century since I graduated from high school: We have also lost the shared reference points of our popular culture. *Billboard* now publishes a dozen different charts, including Top Singles, Top Albums, Country, Adult Contemporary, R&B, Modern Rock, Latin, Hot Dance Music/Maxi-Singles, Jazz, and Classical. I get 76 channels on my cable TV, including three different all-news networks; more often than not, the six-screen theater on the corner of my Upper West Side block is showing at least four movies whose names I don't know, most of them intended for a niche market which in the polite parlance of the day could be described as Male Adolescents of Color. If I want to see a movie better suited to the interests of a Colorless, Middle-aged Male, I have to go somewhere else.

Needless to say, it's decidedly unfashionable to complain about this state of affairs. Not only is diversity the cultural trump card of the '90s, but a surprising number of conservatives seem perfectly happy to be living in a land of niche markets. For them, diversity equals individualism, and the Internet is the ultimate symbol of individualism, a place where all can have their simultaneous say, be they lacto-vegetarians or neo-Nazis. As a result, I find it virtually impossible to convey to my younger friends any sense of what it was like when everybody watched the same TV shows and read the same magazines. They can't make the imaginative leap, and most don't particularly want to.

MORE THAN THE KING JAMES BIBLE, SHAKESPEARE, AND THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS HAS DIED IN THE LAST 25 YEARS.

America was a different country then, and never more so than when you went someplace else. When Norman Podhoretz went to Cambridge in the early '50s, he found that the young Americans he met there had more in common than "good teeth and smooth complexions."

> In those days before pop became fashionable we shared in a thousand guilty secret loves: the Shadow and the Green Hornet, Batman and Superman, James Cagney and Pat O'Brien, Harry James and Glenn Miller, "Did You Ever See a Dream Walking?" and "I Left My Heart at the Stage Door Canteen." *You too?* we would say delightedly to one another, after listening to initially sheepish confessions about the incorrigibility of our low American tastes, *you too?* And then, purifying ourselves in orgies of authenticity after days, weeks, months of genuflection in cathedrals and galleries and museums and chateaux, we would vie with one another in expertise in the culture that was really in our bones, dredging up the lyrics of long-forgotten popular songs, advertising slogans, and movie plots . . . *Isn't it funny?* we would say to one another on a chance encounter in Paris or Athens or Rome, *isn't it funny? I never thought of myself as an American before.*

To be sure, pop culture didn't start with Harry James and *The Green Hornet*: It dates back to the invention in the mid-19th century of the modern printing presses that first made possible the production of cheap, large-circulation daily newspapers aimed not at the well-to-do but the newly literate working classes. But it was the movies, the phonograph, and radio that created a full-scale opening for mass-produced middlebrow "art" intended for an audience whose members were literate to widely varying degrees, and these media soon became, for better or worse, the most powerful integrating forces in American life since the rise of the common school. Woody Allen's *Radio Days*, which shows how network radio helped weave second-generation immigrant families of the '40s into the fabric of middle-class America, reminds us that TV served

only to accelerate a process that was already moving at a brisk clip by the time Norman Podhoretz went off to Cambridge to study with F.R. Leavis.

It's foolish to romanticize middlebrow culture, but no less foolish to claim it was nothing more than an opiate of the masses. *Time* published Whittaker Chambers on Reinhold Niebuhr and Rebecca West; the Book-of-the-Month Club chose *The Last Puritan* and *Nineteen Eighty-four* as Main Selections; Arturo Toscanini conducted on NBC for 17 years. Even Clement Greenberg, that unrivaled scourge of middlebrowism, wrote about abstract art for the *Saturday Evening Post*'s "Adventures of the Mind" series. (I don't know what the cover of that issue was, but I like to think Norman Rockwell painted it.) Sir John Reith, the first director-general of the BBC, once said his policy was to give the public "something rather better than it thinks it wants"; similarly, the gatekeepers of middlebrow culture in America felt a genuine responsibility occasionally to give the public something rather better than *Gilligan's Island*. For all our latter-day worship of "inclusiveness," I'm struck by just how inclusive middlebrow culture really was, as well as how much it demanded of its consumers. God knows TV news in the '50s and '60s had its problems, but at least it tried to be serious, so much so that stylish, thoughtful writers like David Brinkley and Charles Kuralt could actually become on-camera stars.

Still, I know better than to pretend that once upon a time, TV was nothing but *Peter Pan*, *Playhouse 90*, and *The Bell Telephone Hour*. The point of network television in its heyday wasn't that it served up masterpieces around the clock; rather, it was that anybody could partake at will of the wide-ranging fare it *did* serve up. It was because CBS broadcast both *Gilligan's Island* and Leonard Bernstein's Young People's Concerts that some people discovered the latter, and profited thereby. Watching Ed Sullivan on Sunday nights, you saw a little bit of everything—Ella Fitzgerald, Jackie Mason, Edward Villella—and so did your neighbors. Such shows were an important part of the cultural glue that helped hold this country together.

IT'S FOOLISH TO ROMANTICIZE THE COMMON CULTURE, BUT IT WAS MORE THAN AN OPIATE OF THE MASSES.

Now they are gone, and I miss them, the same way I miss the slow-moving America of my small-town youth, back when the word "everybody" was more than an abstraction. Red Skelton and Carol Burnett, Jack Paar and Johnny Carson, *What's My Line*? and *I've Got a Secret*: All are gone and few remembered, and none has been replaced. TV has become yet another instrument of social fragmentation, an anteroom to the World Wide Web in which we sit in separate cubicles, sovereign monads reigning over gated communities of the mind.

Intelligent people who call themselves conservatives tell me this is progress, and I might believe them if I believed in progress. Instead, I surf the Web in search of tiny firms that sell flickering kinescopes of old game shows, and note with sadness the passing of the long-forgotten giants of the small screen. I wonder, too, what future encounters with their multicultural pasts will cause my brightly ironic Gen-X friends to suddenly start thinking of themselves as Americans. Will they remember *Seinfeld* the way I remember David Brinkley? Somehow I doubt it. ♦

BCA

MAKES *ME* WANNA HOLLER

The Odious Career of Nathan McCall

By Jeff Jacoby

When last we heard from Nathan McCall, he was joyfully beating an innocent white kid to a pulp.

"We all took off after him," he wrote on the first page of his 1994 memoir *Makes Me Wanna Holler: A Young Black Man in America*.

> Stomped him and kicked him . . . kicked him in the head and face and watched the blood gush from his mouth . . . kicked him in the stomach and nuts, where I knew it would hurt. . . . Every time I drove my foot into his balls, I felt better. . . . We bloodied him so badly. . . . We walked away, laughing, boasting. . . . Fucking up white boys like that made us feel *good* inside.

From that chest-thumping start, McCall went on to describe a youth brimming with violent crime. By his own (mostly unrepentant) reckoning, he is guilty of repeated acts of assault and battery, breaking and entering, assault with a deadly weapon, armed robbery, and attempted murder.

And rape—lots of rapes. Especially gang rapes. Especially of very young girls. In fearsome detail, McCall recounted the first "train" he took part in—a mass-raping of a frightened 13-year-old virgin named Vanessa. "After that first train," he bragged, "we perfected the art of luring babes into those kinds of traps. We ran a train at my house when my parents were away. We ran many at Bimbo's crib because both his parents worked. And we set one up at Lep's place and even let his little brother get in on it. He couldn't have been more than eight or nine."

Nathan McCall
What's Going On
Random House, 288 pp., $21

McCall's elaborate criminal history notwithstanding, he spent very little time behind bars: He did a total of eight days for shooting a man in the chest at point-blank range and served less than three years of a 12-year sentence for holding up a McDonald's. There was no punishment for all the homes he broke into, for all the victims he mugged, for all the people he shot, for all the girls he raped. Instead, McCall went from prison to a state university, and from there to a career in journalism that eventually landed him on the Metro desk of the *Washington Post*.

And on the bestseller list: *Makes Me Wanna Holler* drew rave reviews and sold a lot of copies. McCall is an unfiltered racist, he is given to self-pity, and he ought to be serving a life term in prison—but he knows how to tell a story. *Holler* was a gripping and fiery read.

Now McCall is back with *What's Going On*, a slim volume of personal essays—"my little truths," he calls them—about "some of the issues that divide people and keep us racially polarized."

McCall's truths are little indeed, and most of them, come to think of it, aren't true. If they were written with the verve and drive of his first book, they might be worth reading nevertheless. But *What's Going On* is verveless and driveless. Worse, it's boring. It is page after page of banal commentary and tiresome, trite conclusions.

Here is McCall on encountering a playful white toddler (and his anxious mother) in a fast-food restaurant:

> I have a theory about this sort of thing. I suspect that babies secretly plot to make fun of grown-ups when we behave in childish ways. I think babies deliberately draw black adults and white adults into awkward racial predicaments. Then, they sit back and watch us squirm—maybe that's why babies smile so much.

And here he is on the gentrification of Old Town in Alexandria, Virginia:

> Old Towns symbolize the American way: America *takes* what it wants. Of course, that's not in keeping with the myth of this country, but it certainly reflects its practice—here and throughout the world. When white folks "discovered" America, it already belonged to somebody else. Whites decided they wanted it, so they took it. Now they feel perfectly justified in treating everyone else like intruders. *America*, they shout pompously, *love it, or leave it.*

And on death:

> The death of family members of

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> friends is always a bummer. It's so depressing you sometimes forget that death may have meaning and purpose.

McCall's lame essays offer no reasoned argument, no shrewd insight, no compelling new theory. And no moving prose: There is scarcely an affecting paragraph in the book. He serves up an insipid blend of Rainbow Coalition and Nation of Islam, but without Jesse's pumping oratory or Farrakhan's (deranged) flair.

Hoping, perhaps, to capture some of the immediacy that helped make his first book so compelling, McCall sprinkles this one with raw details and street argot. But language that adds vividness to a memoir can be clangingly awkward in an essay. What McCall ends up with is not immediacy, but mere schoolboy crudeness:

> He was pitch-black, had big, bulging eyes, a little pea-size head, and hair that looked like mice titties.

> The bottom line [of John Wayne-style movies] was obvious. It was about pussy. The conqueror got the pretty girl.

> [W]e called him Itchy Booty because somebody once caught him scratching the crack of his behind, scratching hard and deep.

The one constant in McCall's writing is his pervasive anti-white racism. *What's Going On* is suffused with it. In McCall's blinkered view, politicians don't simply pander to voters—they seek "to appease a childishly selfish white America." Muhammad Ali didn't just resist the draft in 1967—he "bucked white folks and refused to go to war." That wasn't yuppification going on in Alexandria, it was "the white takeover of black Old Town."

Nor can McCall criticize self-destructive behavior by blacks without adding a racist jab. "Some gangsta rappers," he writes, "are . . . no better than the drug dealer, the pimp—or the wicked white man who earns his riches exploiting blacks." And while *he* can denounce the ugly messages violent rappers pump out, whites can't. "That's why Bill Bennett looks and sounds so out of place," McCall writes dismissively, "when he jumps into press conferences with C. DeLores Tucker."

Finally there is McCall's hypocrisy.

Repeatedly, he vilifies "paranoid" whites who fear young black males. He is "disgusted" by them—"pissed off" by their suspicions that "we might . . . break into their houses and rip off their TVs." He moved from a mostly white Virginia suburb to the mostly black Maryland enclave of Prince George's County, he says, so he would be able to "step outdoors without worrying about being insulted by some arrogant white dude who thinks I'm after his wallet" or see "some old, blue-haired white lady clutching her bags when she sees me."

Needless to say, the fear some whites feel when they encounter unfamiliar black males is not wholly irrational. (Roughly 50 percent of the violent crime in America is committed by young black males, who make up perhaps 3 percent of the population.) And needless to say, it isn't only whites who experience that fear. (Jesse Jackson confessed in 1993 that it pains him to have to walk down a dark street, hear footsteps, worry about being mugged—"then look around and see someone white and feel relieved.")

But it is staggering that McCall, of all people, has the nerve to condemn such people. He is contemptuous of *them*? They make *him* bitter? This veteran gang-rapist and armed robber, this recovering hoodlum who beat, shot, mugged, terrorized, stole from, or forced himself on who-knows-how-many victims—*he* has the effrontery to get angry when others grow nervous in the presence of black men they don't know? It is

because of felons like him that such nervousness exists. He and his ilk are the reason that law-abiding black men so often encounter this humiliating distrust.

In a short essay titled "The Elevator Ride," McCall—writing in the second person, presumably of himself—scornfully describes a white woman who (he imagines) is filled with fear and "racial suspicion" as she descends with him in an elevator. "She suspects what you want," he seethes.

> She seems filled with the wildly absurd terror that, in the brief ride between the 12th and 1st floors, this *black* man may rape her, rob her, and leave her for dead. . . . *Can't she tell from your bearing that you're no rapist or thief?*

Those italics, astonishingly, are the author's. "*Can't she tell from your bearing that you're no rapist or thief?*" Of course she can't tell that. How could she? She's in the elevator with Nathan McCall, writer, reporter, rapist, thief. ♦

SINS OF OUR FATHERS—AGAIN

Professor Smith's Hall of American Shame

By Andrew Peyton Thomas

For a taste of the grim orthodoxy that blights America's universities, one could do worse than to open a new book by Rogers M. Smith, a professor of political science at Yale. His thesis in *Civic Ideals*, a history of citizenship, is that "through most of U.S. history, lawmakers pervasively and unapologetically structured U.S. citizenship in terms of illiberal and undemocratic racial, ethnic, and gender hierarchies, for reasons rooted in basic, enduring imperatives of political life." He terms this a "multiple traditions thesis," one that "holds that American political actors have always promoted civic ideologies that blend liberal, democratic, republican, and inegalitarian ascriptive elements in various combinations designed to be political popular."

Rogers M. Smith
Civic Ideals
Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History
Yale, 719 pp., $35

Smith has created a tome—over 700 pages—from a truism: Like every other nation, the United States has found ways to discriminate against the outsider. If Smith had stuck to compiling a mere chronicle of the gloomier episodes in American history, he might have taught us a bit. But he endeavors to embellish his truism with outlandish assertions and silly asides in the apparent hope that the book will seem fresh and provocative.

The reader can gain a good sense of the work by consulting its first footnote. It features a disclaimer about the use of the word "American." Smith notes the "controversy"—at Yale, perhaps—over "whether it is imperialistic to refer to United States nationals as 'Americans,'" instead of reserving that word for all the inhabitants of the Americas. Smith grumbles that, for various practical reasons, he has "reluctantly elected to follow conventional usages."

Smith starts out with a brief review of the work of other "liberals like myself" who have upbraided America for its endemic "white supremacy and patriarchy." Leading off his list is Derrick Bell, who splashily left the Harvard Law School faculty because the school refused to buckle to his demands for yet more affirmative action. Smith takes honorable exception to Bell's severely Marxist critique of the American founding, but he is nevertheless sympathetic to it, for it has revealed the "civic myths" upon which America was established, myths that "seem to many to be clear falsehoods." A prime such myth? The "unproved but sanctifying claim that men have individual rights 'endowed by their Creator.'"

Smith proceeds with a predictable recital of the historical injustices perpetrated by the dominant Anglo-Saxon male majority. In this, he is extremely comprehensive. He notes, for example, that he and his platoon of researchers surveyed more than 2,500 law cases "in relatively systematic fashion." And the sweep of his analysis is indeed impressive, as it goes back to the 17th century under Sir Edward Coke and forward to the Progressive Era, ending in 1912.

Still, for a history of American bigotry, this is merely half a loaf. Smith offers no good explanation for his decision to stop at the election of Woodrow Wilson. He may have lacked the stamina to produce a second large volume, which is just as well, considering the niggling revisionism heaped on, for example, Tom Paine. After inspecting *Common Sense* for incorrect language, Smith scolds Paine for "repeatedly refer[ring] only to 'men' as exercisers of political rights." Paine also employed such shocking words as "brotherhood" and "unmanly"—and even "mention[ed] in passing that

Andrew Peyton Thomas, an attorney living in Phoenix, last wrote for THE WEEKLY STANDARD *about the debate over corporal punishment.*

gender distinctions were rooted in 'nature.'"

The nation's charter, it turns out, is similarly unenlightened. The framers of the Constitution "said nothing directly" about women, Smith writes, but did "use masculine pronouns thirty times." Later historical figures are likewise frisked for bigotry—Lincoln is scored for his proposal to colonize freed slaves in Central America and Haiti. Even such personages as Harriet Beecher Stowe and W.E.B. Du Bois do not escape Smith's harsh justice. Stowe, he records, regarded African-Americans as the moral superiors of white Americans, yes, but not as their intellectual superiors. Du Bois's offense? He was prone to such words as . . . "manhood."

Smith pays particular attention to the judiciary, what with those 2,500 cases, because, as he explains, "they present official, systematic efforts to connect citizenship policies with the regime's basic principles" (note "regime"). Such a statement would be equally true of the decrees of Hammurabi or Charlemagne. But if, as Smith contends, his aim is to determine which bigoted policies were "politically popular," the last place he should search in the American system of government is the judiciary, the least democratic branch. Decisions such as *Dred Scott* and *Roe* do not necessarily speak for the beliefs and values of the people.

Finally, Smith offers a new and creative concept of citizenship. Saying that most nation-states "contain significant numbers of people who rightly feel more abused than advantaged," he argues for viewing "political communities as, from a moral point of view, most akin to political parties, though far more valuable and dangerous." Americans should regard themselves as members of the "Party of America," thus "avoiding the dangers of ascriptive nationalism."

Racism and bigotry, of course, are banes of all societies, rooted as they are in pride and other deadly sins. Smith's inventory of bigotries—impressive in scope—is, nonetheless, undertaken in a misbegotten cause. The injustices he documents so painstakingly are not simply a reflection of Anglo-Saxon culture, or even of anything inherently "American" (in whatever sense the word is used). Consider the curious fact that many American Indians sided with the South during the Civil War, and that the Cherokee warrior Stand Watie was the last Confederate commander to surrender to the Union. Smith acknowledges why this should be: Many Indians owned slaves.

NOT EVEN W.E.B. DUBOIS CAN ESCAPE SMITH'S LASH. HIS OFFENSE? HE USED SUCH WORDS AS "MANHOOD."

The United States has done more than perhaps any other nation to search its soul and redeem its misdeeds—even to the point of extreme measures like racial quotas and curricular tribalization in the universities where Professor Smith and his colleagues perform their acts. Any society enlightened and tolerant enough to overcorrect for its abuses ought to pat itself on the back—and consign Smith's huge but small-minded book to beautiful, well-endowed libraries, like the one at Yale. ♦

A civic organization in Hot Springs will turn Bill Clinton's old high school into a facility called the William Jefferson Clinton Cultural Campus. *—News item*

Welcome

to the. . .

WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON CULTURAL CAMPUS

Today's Program

•First Floor•

In the Pauline Kanchanalak Gallery

The Paintings of Craig Livingstone

"In a stunning multimedia tour de force, the artist makes uncommon use of crayon, greasy McDonald's wrappers, and shredded paper to convey a sense of dread."—Arthur Danto, *The Nation*

In the Tyson Chicken Lecture Hall

Today's Lecture: "Artists of the Renaissance Weekend"

by Webster Hubbell

Suggested Admission: $425,000

•Second Floor•

In the Harry Thomason Theater

"The War Room," starring James Carville at 8 pm

Mr. Carville will deliver a rant after the film.

In the Roger Tamraz PerformSpace

I Love My Job: Performance Art by Mike McCurry

In the Lippo Sculpture Garden

Hillary's Head, by Botello

The monumentalist sculptor finds his greatest subject.

Through October 30

•West Wing•

In the Virginia Kelley Memorial Casino and SportsBook

Today's Line: Broncos +3 vs. Jets

Gore vs. Special Prosecutor: pick 'em

Thank you for your support. Y'all come back now, y'hear?