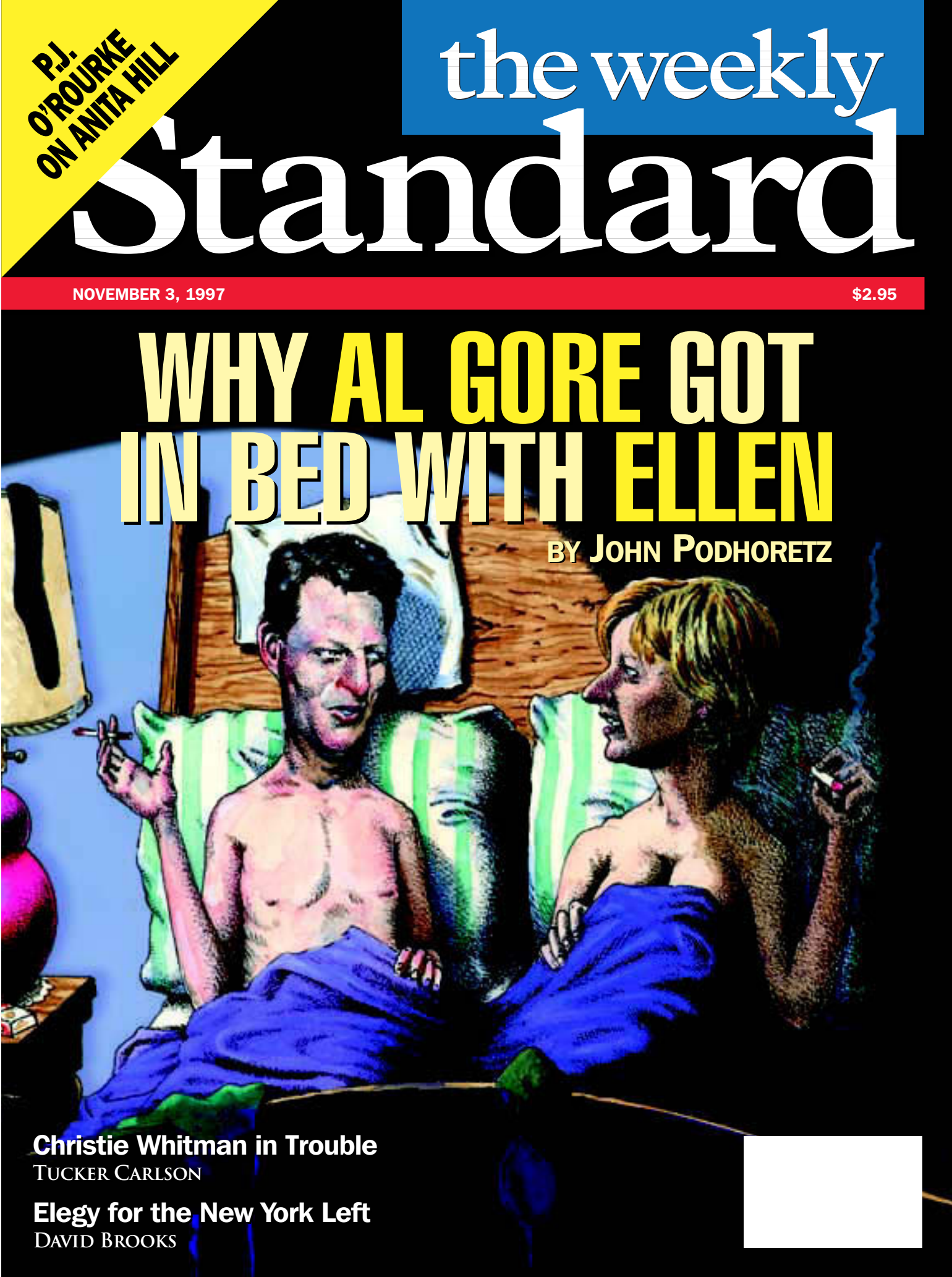
P.J. O'ROURKE ON ANITA HILL

the weekly Standard

NOVEMBER 3, 1997 $2.95

WHY AL GORE GOT IN BED WITH ELLEN

BY JOHN PODHORETZ



Christie Whitman in Trouble
TUCKER CARLSON

Elegy for the New York Left
DAVID BROOKS

the weekly Standard

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 8 • NOVEMBER 3, 1997

Cover by Sean Delonas

Books & Arts

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Someone We're Not Fonda

Just when we are about to forget the horror that is Jane Fonda, something else always comes up. Margaret Carlson of *Time* devoted her column to the queen of workout videos last week, beginning, "Where is Jane Fonda?"

Turns out Jane is off pushing condoms, because, as Carlson writes, an "enemy," the Republican Congress, has "attached strings to $250 million for sex education." To receive federal funds, Carlson notes, "schools must preach 'abstinence only' . . . Say the word condom, and you don't get a cent."

Enter Fonda, who, Carlson assures us, is concerned about the "below-the-waist aspects" of birth control, in the words of the revolutionary-turned-magnate's-wife. "While the rest of us have shed our anti-war activism along with our bell bottoms," writes Carlson, Fonda is still remembered for her "shag cut in Hanoi" and *Barbarella*. And "because we didn't let her grow up, she may have greater appeal to vulnerable teenagers than the icy perfection of a Nancy Reagan urging, 'Just say no!'" Fonda, you see, is "always more interested in making a difference than in making a movie."

And what a difference she made in Vietnam, where, shag cut and all, she commandeered a Communist anti-aircraft gun and, referring to American pilots as she mocked-fired into the air, said, "I wish I had them in my sights now."

In other Fonda news, La Jane appeared in a *New York Times* story about Patagonia, the region in southern Argentina that President Clinton visited recently and where Fonda and Ted Turner have an 11,000-acre pleasure ranch. Says Fonda, "I sometimes dream that there's a revolution in the United States and that we can't return and have to live [in Patagonia] forever."

Funny, Jane, some of us dream the same thing.

Frank Luntz: Going, Going, Gone

The Republican pollster Frank Luntz—the ineffable Frank Luntz, the one, the only, whose Clintonesque advice to Republicans has often been reported in these pages ("Frank Luntz Does It for the Children," Sept. 22, *et seriatim*)—gave an interview to *Capital Style* magazine recently. We highly recommend it to all those Republicans, particularly in Congress, who have lately taken to spouting focus-group-approved Luntzisms as their primary mode of communicating with voters ("It's about the future. It's about the children").

Luntz approaches his work, he told *Capital Style*, "from a Peter Sellers mode. I've actually studied him. I've studied all his characters. By the time he died, he did not exist. He only existed in character. And what scares me a little bit is that I don't exist as much as I did two years ago.

"I am a focus group. I can synthesize for you: After I get out of a focus group, I, Frank Luntz, cease to exist, and I become those 12 people in the focus group.

"Look," Luntz adds, "there is no truth and there is no reality." As a description of politics as practiced by Bill Clinton, this little aphorism can't be topped. But do Republicans really want to make it their motto, too?

The Gingrich Re-armament

The U.S. defense budget has been falling steadily throughout the Clinton administration, and under the terms of this summer's budget deal it's due to keep falling into the next century. In five years we will be spending a smaller share of our national economy on defense than at any time since before Pearl Harbor. Does anybody in a position to make a difference have the guts to put a stop to this irresponsible gutting of the most important military in the world?

Well, finally it looks like the answer is yes. In a bold statement before the House budget committee last week, House speaker Newt Gingrich shocked everyone by calling for a new defense buildup. "We have lived off the Reagan buildup about as long as we can," Gingrich said. "The fact is that our defense structure is getting weaker, our equipment is getting obsolete, our troops are stretched too thin."

Displaying a much better grasp of America's strate-

Scrapbook

gic interests than a whole think-tank-full of defense experts, Gingrich went on to say that he didn't "want us to be strong enough to win narrowly. I want to be so strong that no one can compete with us." Exactly right. The best guarantee of American interests, and world peace, is American military supremacy. Republicans should follow their leader on this one.

School for Scandal

Kaye Christian has given new meaning to the term "judicial activism." Or perhaps we should call it "judicial brain-dead-ism." She is the D.C. superior-court judge who has taken it upon herself to protect the safety of the schoolchildren of the District of Columbia—and protect them she has these past five years to such a degree that they seem rarely to attend school at all. This fall, she has forced the cancellation of the first three weeks of school on the grounds that the school buildings themselves were not up to her safety standards. That was substantively ridiculous, but debatable as a political game of chicken with the school board. Last week, however, Christian journeyed into the twilight zone. Fearful that the little darlings might be cold, she shut down an entire D.C. elementary school because—get this—its boiler needed to be replaced. And she has threatened to shut down another 46 buildings because of boiler problems. That's 46 out of 147 D.C. public schools.

What with D.C. public-school officials and D.C. judges and the D.C. control board, there really can't be school choice soon enough for the children of the nation's capital.

Daschle Our Hopes

It hasn't been a good couple of weeks for Tom Daschle, the Senate's minority leader. On Oct. 10, the *Washington Post* revealed that Daschle had recently taken $5,000 donors for a visit to the face of Mount Rushmore—an area off-limits to the general public but not to South Dakota senators. Then on Oct. 20, he was asked a question about tax cuts at a Capitol Hill session with reporters. "We have the lowest tax rate of any industrialized country in the world," said the earnest Daschle. "Our view is that we've got to make the tax system more fair. *But certainly I don't think that many people are overtaxed.*"

You could hear the Republican fax machines whirring after that one. First out of the gate was Newt Gingrich's press secretary, Christina Martin, who asserted, "When NASA is done exploring Mars, they might want to send a probe to Planet Daschle." Jim Nicholson, chairman of the Republican National Committee, followed with a mischievous letter calling on his Democratic counterpart, Roy Romer, to repudiate Daschle's comments.

By Oct. 22, Daschle claimed Washington's oldest excuse—his comments were taken "out of context"—and then asserted that "Americans are overtaxed" three times during another session with reporters. Kinsley's Law rings true again: It's only a gaffe when a politician says what he really means.

Casual

Overbooked

It's happened again, I won't say against my best efforts, but there it is, or rather there they are, books all over the joint with my bookmarks in them. Do I have more than 20 books going at once? I am a bit nervous about counting them, for they are all-too-vivid a sign of the lack of organization, control, order in my life.

This isn't going to be a very sexy piece, so let's begin in the bedroom. On my night table, I note that I have seven books going. The one I'm reading most intently just now—that is, at the rate of 10 or 12 pages a night—is *His Father's Son: The Life of Randolph Churchill* by Winston S. Churchill, the son of Randolph. I am a sucker for all things Churchillian—I recently bought from a firm in Vermont a blue bow tie with small white polka dots advertised as the Blenheim—and this book doesn't disappoint. When Randolph marries, his father remarks that "all you need to be married is champagne, a double bed and a box of cigars." When the young Randolph loses his third parliamentary election, Noel Coward remarks, "I am so very fond of Randolph; he is so unspoiled by failure." Irresistible.

The Churchill biography is 510 pages but is easily surpassed by Albert Cohen's *Belle du Seigneur*, an English translation (despite its title) of a novel of 974 pages. I seem to have read 354 of them; it's rich stuff, and I hope to get back to it for another hundred or so pages, then perhaps drop it again for another few months. It is brilliant, though in a satirical vein. But brilliance, perhaps, like confession, is best when brief. Mae West was wrong in saying that one can't get too much of a good thing.

Cigarettes Are Sublime by Richard Klein is the other non-fiction on my night table. I had heard good things about it, and, as a serious ex-smoker, I wanted at least to read about smoking since I can no longer do it. But the book is too much summary of what others have written about smoking, and thus left me more let down than the last cigarette of a long night in the bad old days.

As for my other night-table books, I see that I've got to chapter 16 of Nabokov's *Transparent Things*, which is far enough to realize that this book isn't first-class Nabokov, but probably worth finishing anyhow. I note that I've read 366 of 500 pages of *The Portrait of a Lady*. I hadn't read this great novel for more than 20 years, and when the movie version of it came out not long ago, I thought I'd reread the novel instead. It's as great as I remembered, and the only reason I haven't finished it is that I've found myself too tired of late to stay up with James, the reading of whom requires one's greatest alertness. I've made little progress with John O'Hara's *The Big Laugh*, which I bought purely on the basis of a single blurb from Fran Leibowitz: "The greatest Hollywood novel ever written." The O'Hara may be better as a bathroom book, and I may soon transfer it there.

Just now I have two bathroom books going. One is *St. Petersburg* by Solomon Volkov, a cultural history of a great city and another bulky tome (598 pages). The other is *Dinner with Persephone* by Patricia Storace, which is about Miss Storace's year in Athens. Bathroom books should be readable in short takes, and both these books are. I read the better part of Anthony Powell's *A Dance to the Music of Time* in the bathroom. I consider it no insult to an author to read him in the House of Commons, as the Welsh used to call it. An editor once invited me to write for his magazine, saying he couldn't pay me anything, but he wanted me to know that the magazine was intensely read. "They take it to the john," he said.

Other tenth- and quarter- and half-read books are spread throughout my apartment. Allow me a quick inventory: *The End of the Line*, the final memoir of Richard Cobb, the richly idiosyncratic historian of France, a book I ordered from England; a collection of what turn out to be quite brutal stories by Angela Carter; a biography of Walter Winchell by Neal Gabler; the art criticism of Henry McBride; *Six Screenplays* by Robert Riskin; the poems of Wislawa Szymborska; some letters from Janet Flanner, the *New Yorker*'s one-time Paris correspondent; a book on the 1950s by Peter Vansittart; *Light Years*, a novel by James Salter, whose impressionistic writing I find especially readable on sleepless nights; and the most recent collection of essays by Isaiah Berlin.

What's going on here? None of this makes any sense. It causes me to look up, for maybe the eighth time, the word desultory. Its first definition is "marked by lack of definite plan, regularity, or purpose." Its second definition is "not connected with the main subject."

Plan, regularity, purpose? The main subject? I wonder if I could get back to you a little later on all that—once I've had the chance to finish a few of these books.

Joseph Epstein

Snails and Puppy Dog Tales

When one reviews children's literature from another era, one probably shouldn't get sidetracked by the pretensions of late 20th-century liberalism. Unfortunately, David Frum's otherwise insightful piece on 19th-century youth literature ("When Boys Were Boys," Oct. 20) loses much luster due to his condescension toward 19th-century writers.

After all, G.A. Henty was writing adventure books for young boys, not Nobel Prize-quality literature, and, despite the marked simplicity characteristic of children's books, his vast production was exceptional—and quite undeserving of highbrow, politically correct judgments. His books were rooted in surprisingly sound, unrevised history of the old school, and they provided fine lessons in justice, friendship, good and evil, courage, young manhood, duty, loyalty, even young Victorian romance. One either endorses such fine books for boys or one doesn't. Half-hearted adult posturing about them seems hypocritical. Anyone in our day who indicts Henty as "appallingly racist," or his characters as "comical"— even as a dutiful act of neoconservative homage to liberalism—has little grasp of Henty's breadth and understanding. In this dysfunctional day of androgynous boys and girls, one might expect Frum to praise Henty, Cooper, Stratemeyer, and others, not to bury them. Come to think of it, if anyone could be charged with "snobbery," it might be the person who feels it's necessary to write condescendingly about children's literature that dates from the days when boys were boys and girls were girls!

W. Edward Chynoweth
Sanger, CA

While I tend to agree with David Frum's assessment that modern fiction is dominated by female characters presented as heroines, I feel I must point out a few discrepancies.

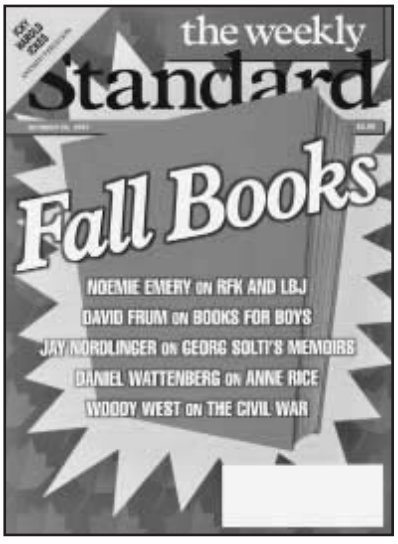
It seems to me that there is a simpler and much less sinister explanation for the huge increase in female main characters today, one that has little to do with young boys' attitudes. The simple fact is that more women than men read fiction. And writers write what sells.

Let me also make note of a type of fiction that has yet to be overrun by the feminist movement: science fiction.

The following books might satisfy a few yearnings: *Ender's Game*, by Orson Scott Card; *The Adventures of the Stainless Steel Rat*, by Harry Harrison; *The Dark Is Rising*, by Susan Cooper; *Watership Down*, by Richard Adams.

Michael P. Page
Yorktown Heights, NY

David Frum has written a hell of a manly and courageous piece about literature for young boys. He is absolutely right: The feminization of America has made it increasingly difficult not only for boys to be boys, but



also for men to be men. Ironically, it is American women who are suffering the most because of it!

Note, for example, that even the Promise Keepers felt compelled to present themselves in feminist terms: They were "compassionate," "nurturing," "sensitive," and "weepy-eyed" servants of the women they loved.

It was enough to make any man—or boy—want to throw his beer bottle—or his Coke can—through the television set!

To be sure, these feminine virtues are fine ones indeed. But they are not what Theodore Roosevelt rightly called the "manly virtues." It is, however, indicative of the feminist conquest of American culture that even the Promise Keepers felt compelled to model themselves after the likes of Alan Alda.

John R. Guardiano
Arlington, VA

Gore's Stale Science

Tucker Carlson's article on the global-climate issue ("Al Gore's Globaloney," Oct. 20) provides a glimmer of sanity in the midst of a troubling debate.

The science of "global warming" is, as Carlson notes, tenuous at best. Notwithstanding the weak scientific data for sweeping collections of job-killing regulations, the upcoming treaty is far from global in its reach.

As Carlson observes, the treaty excludes 134 of 166 nations. Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and a host of developing countries are omitted from the treaty's mandates. Yet these nations will be the bulk polluters of the next century. Within 20 years, the developing countries are projected to pollute more than the developed nations. Over the next 50 years, developing nations are expected to contribute an estimated 76 percent of total greenhouse emissions, and up to 85 percent of the projected worldwide increases in carbon-dioxide emissions.

Though it is unlikely that the Kyoto treaty will pass the Senate, should it do so it would likely *increase* pollution. Energy-intensive American industries, forced to move abroad in the wake of excessive emissions restrictions, would open shop in developing nations, thereby further concentrating the pollution that self-described environmentalists wish to reduce.

The double irony, of course, is that American industry has made great strides in reducing emissions of carbon dioxide and other chemicals, and is producing energy-efficient technologies that will further reduce such emissions.

The National Association of Manufacturers represents more than 14,000 manufacturers of all sizes. We are part of an unusual coalition of small- business and agriculture groups and labor unions that is committed to stopping the treaty.

The stakes are very high—hundreds of thousands of lost jobs, up to a 50 cents-a-gallon energy tax, substantially

Correspondence

lower productivity, and a severe reduction of our gross national product. This is a battle we intend to win.

PAUL R. HUARD
WASHINGTON, DC

CREDIT WHERE NONE'S DUE

In his review of Stephan and Abigail Thernstrom's *America in Black and White* ("Cockeyed Optimists," Oct. 6), Dinesh D'Souza writes incorrectly that I "credit" Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton's book *American Apartheid* with my "newfound support for racial preferences for blacks." I do think very well of the Massey-Denton book, which only confirms the overwhelming visual evidence, available to anyone, of the distinctive and unique degree to which blacks are residentially concentrated. And I have expressed skepticism, once in the *Wall Street Journal*, once in the *New Republic*, about the desirability of fully eliminating affirmative action for African Americans. But the connection between the two positions is in D'Souza's mind, not in anything I have written.

In my comments on affirmative action, I did not refer to the Massey-Denton findings; and where I have discussed Massey-Denton (in *We Are All Multiculturalists Now*), I was not writing about affirmative action. On affirmative action, I think there is a good argument for *voluntary* preferences for blacks, which is what we now see in most selective colleges, universities, and professional schools.

NATHAN GLAZER
CAMBRIDGE, MA

NO TO THE PARASITE CLASS

Your Scrapbook item "Republicans Get Some Very Bad News" (Sept. 22) reported that a poll conducted by the Republican National Committee found that campaign- finance reform had moved "from 2 or 3 percent in previous polls to double digits as the number-one issue of concern."

No RNC poll has come up with anything like that finding. In fact, our most recent poll did not even ask about campaign-finance reform.

We did, however, ask respondents to identify the most important problem facing the United States today. Not one—*not one*—of the 1,000 likely voters surveyed answered campaign finance reform.

It may be interesting to note, however, that 11 percent of respondents did express concern about "the power of special interests in Washington." Ironically, the various campaign-finance "reform" schemes being proposed by Democrats would increase the power of those special interests.

JIM NICHOLSON
CHAIRMAN
REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE
WASHINGTON, DC

ALL IS VANITY

Terry Teachout's article on the death of the common culture ("The Common Culture, R.I.P.," Oct. 13) nibbles at the edges of a topic rarely discussed.

The unstated theme of Teachout's article is the author's obvious anxiety about what might be called the coming decline and fall of boomer supremacy in America. Teachout appears to be one of those fellows who grew up believing that baby boomers were predestined to be the cultural inheritors of the earth, and who has begun to see the early signs of power slipping from his grasp.

The initial figures from the 1990 census indicated that there were a little over 80 million baby boomers left in America. Their numbers now are smaller. From here on out, it will be all downhill for the boomers.

In 1970, boomers made up 40 percent of the population. They are now 29 percent and falling. Their overwhelming cultural influence will disappear soon enough.

As one born in 1952, I can fully identify with Teachout's angst at seeing the demographic tides wash his cultural landmarks out to sea. I too am somewhat mystified by a world in which no one under 30 remembers Ed Sullivan or gives two hoots about the Beatles.

Yet our generation has been the most over-flattered and over-indulged in human history. Is not some sort of comeuppance long overdue? Is there not some sort of justice in seeing those who thought they would rule the world forever come face to face with the knowledge that they too shall pass?

BRUCE MILLARD
JERSEY CITY, NJ

PROMISE KEEPERS COVERAGE

Terry Eastland's "Promise Keepers and the Press" (Oct. 20) confirmed the feeling I had after the rally: The Promise Keepers did indeed hit a home run. The criticism I saw in the mainstream media was so petty that it was entertaining rather than annoying. Since most of the press is hardly sympathetic to the concerns of men like the Promise Keepers, how do you account for the cease-fire? I'm inclined toward this explanation: These men said they were gathering to humble themselves before God and take responsibility for their failures. Apparently they did that, and while God is opposed to the proud, He gives grace to the humble.

DAVID TAYLOR
EASTON, MD

I sincerely hope that Eastland's impression of the media's coverage of the Promise Keepers rally is accurate overall, because it certainly doesn't coincide with what I saw. *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* had a Promise Keepers representative sitting next to two others who used all of their time to criticize the movement. Throughout the day on Saturday, you would have thought that Patricia Ireland was a spokesman for Promise Keepers, so often was she consulted and interviewed about them. What was Eastland watching?

ED BENDER
READING, PA

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the weekly Standard

Jiang Zemin Conquers America

Smooth, Western-style media skills do not come naturally to Chinese Communists. At a press briefing here in Washington last Wednesday, a reporter asked Chinese embassy propagandist Yu Shuning to summarize the intended theme of Jiang Zemin's big U.S. tour. China's maximum leader has an impressive series of photo-ops on his schedule: the U.S.S. *Arizona* Memorial in Honolulu, Colonial Williamsburg, the White House and the Capitol, Independence Hall in Philadelphia, the trading floor of the New York Stock Exchange, and so on. What's it all about, Yu was asked, "What image does President Jiang want to create for himself at sites like Pearl Harbor and the Liberty Bell?"

Yu was flummoxed by the Liberty Bell. Pearl Harbor and *what*, he wondered? Then Yu needed help with the question itself: "What kind of *image*?" Right, the reporter persisted: "What kind of image would he like to create for himself?" Pause. "I have already said," Yu finally responded, "President Jiang will bring images to the United States."

Indeed, he will. There is, for example, the image of Wei Jingsheng in confinement at a Hebei-province concentration camp called the Nanpu New Life Salt Works. Though he was recently passed over for the 1997 Nobel peace prize in favor of some hippie from Vermont, Wei remains the world's leading prisoner of conscience, locked up all but six months of the past 18 years for "illegal" activism in behalf of democracy. Reliable details of his current condition—he is said to be gravely ill—are impossible to obtain. But we may fairly guess at the daily ordeal he and countless thousands like him suffer.

The dissident Liu Qing was subjected to a lengthy prison term in the 1980s for the "crime" of publishing a transcript of Wei Jingsheng's 1979 show trial. At the end of a brief hunger strike, Liu has since written, he was tied to a "special metal chair." Other prisoners "lifted my legs in the air while kneading and pressing down on my stomach." One of them "squeezed my throat tight and pinched my nose shut." A prison official "stuck a metal brace in my mouth, twisting it open so wide that the skin on the corners of my mouth ripped open." The official then "clamped a pair of metal pliers onto my tongue, pulling it way out of my mouth before sliding a length of tubing into my esophagus." Liu next had his stomach pumped full of salt broth, after which "the floor was covered with pools of blood" and "my mouth was a numb and swollen mound of raw flesh."

> CHINA IS A HIDEOUS, AGGRESSIVE, UNAPOLOGETIC DESPOTISM. WE SHOULD NOTICE THESE FACTS AND CONDUCT OUR DIPLOMACY ACCORDINGLY.

There you have it in a nutshell: the central problem confronting Sino-U.S. relations generally and this week's Jiang-Clinton summit in particular. China is a hideous, aggressive, unapologetic despotism, and Jiang Zemin is China's unapologetic despot-in-chief. Shall the United States notice these facts and conduct its China diplomacy accordingly? Or shall the United States largely ignore these facts—since any commensurate response might threaten American corporate profits in the Chinese market—and celebrate Jiang Zemin and his dictatorship as worthy and valued players on the international stage?

Needless to say, we know the answer already—it has been official U.S. policy since 1994. During his pre-summit address last Friday, Bill Clinton touched oh-so-delicately on the essential character of Jiang's regime, explaining it away as the product of China's search for order in a time of profound change. America itself is not "blameless in our social fabric," the president reminded his listeners. And though we may disagree with the Chinese about important matters, he advised, we must nevertheless cooperate with them.

You can't wrest much serious political cooperation from people who "disagree" about something so basic

as freedom, of course, and administration spokesmen have for weeks been careful to minimize practical expectations for the summit. The Chinese may sign a few of those minor agreements they habitually violate as soon as the ink is dry, and that's about it. But in the narcotic inertia of Sino-U.S. "engagement" diplomacy, substance is not really the point. Mere manners are the message. And the message, this week as always, is "nice."

They will be nice to Jiang Zemin at the White House on Wednesday. He will get a 21-gun salute and a state dinner and a concert by the National Symphony Orchestra. He will get all this "first-class" ceremony, explains someone from the National Security Council's Asia office, because he is "the leader of a great nation who deserves to be treated with respect and dignity."

They will be nice to Jiang Zemin at the Capitol on Thursday, where a breakfast banquet will be thrown for him behind the safety of closed doors. No China-related legislation will reach the House or Senate floor this week, the Republican leadership has promised. Candid debate about China policy, Newt Gingrich's press secretary says, might "appear an insult" to their visitor. Can't have that.

The National Park Service and Drexel University will be nice to Jiang in Philadelphia. Former president George Bush and the CEOs of AT&T, Kodak, and IBM will be nice to Jiang in New York. Harvard University will be nice to Jiang in Cambridge; school officials tell the *Los Angeles Times* that the audience for his scheduled speech there "has been carefully 'groomed and sifted' to avoid embarrassing confrontations." The Boeing and Hughes corporations will be nice to Jiang in Long Beach and El Segundo.

This is what the Chinese want, more than anything else. They want to be dealt with politely, as equals, people just like us, people you would be proud to take home to Mother. They are working hard to achieve this goal, in their ham-fisted way. "We try to make some PR job," one Chinese "expert on the United States" tells the *Washington Post*.

And how depressing it is, nauseating even, to see elite America eagerly collaborate in the construction of this spin—which is, at bottom, after all, a lie of gigantic proportions. Jiang Zemin, *Time* magazine tells us, loves Benny Goodman, Mozart, and Elvis, too. He knows the Gettysburg Address by heart. He has "favorite American authors," the *Los Angeles Times* reports: "Mark Twain and"—we're not making this up—"Zbigniew Brzezinski." He's a big, cuddly teddy bear of a man, apparently.

Jiang is also a man, of course, who tells American journalists that "democracy and human rights are relative concepts." And that Wei Jingsheng is a common criminal, not a "so-called" political dissident. And that China's rape of Tibet was in fact a successful effort to rescue that country from slavery, like our own Civil War, and that "the American people should be happy" about it. Jiang issues these spectacular insults, all of them in the last few weeks, but draws no official and direct American rebuke or demurral. Rebuking him wouldn't be nice, you see.

The master of the Nanpu New Life Salt Works has no business invoking Abraham Lincoln, or appearing next to the Liberty Bell, or drinking champagne at the White House. It diminishes American principle that he has been invited to do such things. It diminishes American principle further that he will be applauded for it by our elected leaders, by our college presidents and Kissingers, by our business chieftains, by our "sophisticated" opinion leaders.

The task of rescuing American honor this week will fall to those allegedly unsophisticated protesters who will dog Jiang Zemin wherever he goes, exercising their rights under what Yu Shuning calls "the First Amendment of the Constitution, et cetera." We hope the protests are as large and loud and obnoxious as possible. It won't be "nice." But it will be right.

—David Tell, for the Editors

Choose Your Martyrs Well

by David Frum

Bill Clinton won't be around forever. But the misbegotten arguments that conservatives muster against him may do lasting damage to important principles. It is bad enough that Paula Jones has some conservatives sounding like Catherine MacKinnon on the subject of sexual harassment. Now hatred for Clinton is driving some conservatives to embrace an equally radical theory of libel, in order to defend Internet gadfly Matt Drudge.

Drudge is the editor of an Internet bulletin called the "Drudge Report," a compendium of syndicated columns, newspaper front pages, wire-service news, and Drudge's own reportage that conservatives and media junkies across the country turn to every morn-

ing. Two months ago, Drudge e-mailed a dispatch to his subscribers predicting that the Clinton White House would imminently be rocked by a scandalous "revelation" about White House aide Sidney Blumenthal.

The item must have delighted many readers. Blumenthal, a former journalist, is a particularly unattractive Washington personality. Before joining the White House staff this year, Blumenthal proved himself—first at the *New Republic* and then at the *New Yorker*—to be one of the most ardent, indeed sycophantic, Clinton apologists in the national press. Whatever wrongdoing the Clintons were caught in, from cattle futures to Gennifer Flowers, Blumenthal was ready with an unblushing excuse. Indeed, Blumenthal pioneered a new journalistic role: the reporter as *consigliere*. He didn't just report the first couple's version of reality. He would, as has been widely reported, privately meet with them to help devise it.

Blumenthal was equally unscrupulous in his journalistic handling of the Clintons' opponents, willingly reporting the wildest accusations against anyone who stood in his patrons' way. Aficionados of the Blumenthal *œuvre* will remember the scurrilous piece he wrote during the 1992 campaign charging that George Bush's heroic war record was a sham: that when his aircraft was hit by Japanese fire, young Lt. Bush bailed out with cowardly haste, unnecessarily dooming one of the airmen in his crew.

All in all, a nasty character. But whatever his vices, the one bruited about by Drudge is not among them. And so, Blumenthal is now suing Drudge (and America Online, which carries the Drudge Report) for $30 million. Since Drudge has cheerfully conceded that he did not check the accuracy of the rumors he disseminated in his report, Blumenthal actually stands quite a good chance of meeting the law's exacting standard for the libel of a public figure: "reckless disregard of truth."

To exculpate himself, Drudge now claims to see in the Blumenthal lawsuit a Clinton White House plot to shut down its critics. Some agitated conservatives have adopted his spin. David Horowitz, never one to shrink from the good fight, has led the attempt to drum up a storm of political protest that will pressure the White House to order Blumenthal to drop the suit.

But look: Conservatives have for years argued that the lenient American law of libel gives too much leeway to a lazy and biased press. In the 1964 case of *Sullivan* v. *New York Times*, Justice Brennan laid down rules that make it virtually impossible for a public figure—not just a politician, but even, as Larry Flynt taught us, a prominent preacher like Jerry Falwell—to protect himself from outrageous and untrue remarks. Liberals have tended to equate libel actions by individuals seeking to protect their reputations with government censorship. Conservatives have replied that individuals have just as much right to be compensated if they are injured by a negligent journalist's faulty reporting as they do if they are injured by a negligent journalist's faulty driving.

As Justice Byron White wrote in 1985, "I have become convinced that the Court struck an improvident balance [in *Sullivan*]. In a country like ours, [adequate] information about their government is of transcendent importance [to the people]. That flow of intelligence deserves full First Amendment protection. Criticism and assessment of the performance of public officials and of government in general are not subject to penalties imposed by law. But these First Amendment values are not served at all by circulating false statements of fact about public officials."

> THE AMERICAN PRESS OF THE EARLY 21ST CENTURY IS LIKELY TO BE VASTLY MORE SCURRILOUS AND SLOVENLY THAN THE PRESS OF THE LATE 20TH CENTURY AT ITS WORST.

Drudge's champions are in fact going one step beyond even Justice Brennan. They are implicitly arguing that even when a public figure has a strong claim that he has been libeled in a press account of his private conduct, he should still be constrained from bringing a lawsuit. If this opinion prevailed, public officials would be left entirely without recourse when subjected to the vilest and most unjust forms of abuse.

This is an especially dangerous standard to set in the Internet age. Despite the permission of *Sullivan* to malign anybody it liked, the American press has over the past 30 years been considerably more accurate and responsible than, say, the British press, which enjoys nothing like the same immunity from libel lawsuits. Much of the credit for this must go to a code of conduct—informal but nevertheless real—that inhibits the editors of powerful newspapers and the producers of the network news programs from using their power to the fullest. But in the age of the Internet, everyone is his own publisher, and thanks to cable, almost everyone will soon be his own television producer. The American press of the early 21st century is likely to be vastly more scurrilous and slovenly than the press of the late 20th century at its worst. The law of libel will then be the only check upon it.

One reason that Sidney Blumenthal has been so disliked is that he is seen as a journalist who subordinates principle to the partisan need of the moment. It would be an ironic victory for him if he managed to drag his critics down to his own low standard.

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WHITE HOUSE HOT AIR

by Ronald Bailey

PRESIDENT CLINTON'S PLAN to deal with global warming, unveiled last week, was everything that both friends and adversaries have come to expect from him—ambitious-sounding but indecisive, urgent-sounding but dilatory, bad in its details but presented as the greatest thing since sliced bread. His plan, the president insisted, "will yield not costs, but profits; not burdens, but benefits; not sacrifice, but a higher standard of living." Wonderful.

And if there do turn out to be costs and burdens and a lower standard of living? Well, those will come later. Much later. Conveniently near the end of a second Gore administration, to be exact. "[We] commit to the binding and realistic target of returning to emissions of 1990 levels between 2008 and 2012," promised the president. This will be the U.S. negotiating position at the big U.N. climate-change meeting at Kyoto, Japan, in December.

ENVIRONMENTALISTS ACTUALLY THINK ENERGY COSTS SHOULD BE HIGHER. BUT THE CONSTITUENCY FOR ECONOMIC PAIN IS SMALL.

The target is not realistic, though. It's unlikely the U.S. economy will spontaneously shrink back to 1990 levels. That's where the binding part of the Clinton plan will come into play. A rationing system of emissions caps will be put into place to lower the output of carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas and an unavoidable byproduct of modern industry. But not until 2007. "The Clinton/Gore administration has learned a lot from the budget battle," says Fred Smith, president of the Competitive Enterprise Institute. "Claim the credit now for any supposed benefits, and defer the real pain until you're out of office."

The pain will be quite real. In September, the economic modeling group WEFA concluded that reducing carbon-dioxide emissions to 1990 levels by 2010 would result in a loss to the economy of $227 billion in real dollars that year. This adds up to a cost of $2,061 per household for just one year. Here is where some of that money would be going: By 2010, consumers would be paying 55 percent more for heating oil; 50 percent more for natural gas; 48 percent more for electricity; and 36 percent more for gasoline. This last figure translates to an additional 44 cents per gallon at the pump.

Such numbers are actually music to the ears of environmentalists, because higher costs would drive down consumption, an explicit goal of greenhouse activists. Environmentalist Jessica Mathews, president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, was clear on this point at the White House's conference on climate change in early October, blithely asserting that "energy is just too cheap."

But the constituency for economic pain is small. "I don't think that the typical American would agree that energy is too cheap," says James Dushaw, an official in the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, who also attended the White House conference. And the constituency for pain inflicted selectively on the United States, and not globally, is smaller still. In his speech, the president called on key developing countries to "participate meaningfully in this effort."

Yet under the envisioned U.N. agreement, some 130 developing countries, including China, India, Brazil, Mexico, and Indonesia, are exempt from having to reduce their carbon-dioxide emissions, even though developing countries already account for 40 percent of these emissions worldwide.

In July, the Senate passed a resolution 95 to 0 declaring that it will not ratify any treaty that would put restrictions on U.S. emissions of greenhouse gases while exempting 130 developing countries. "Let me be very blunt: If [the industrialized countries] sign a treaty in Kyoto which exempts the developing world from binding reductions in greenhouse-gas emissions—it will not see the light of day in the United States," said Sen. Chuck Hagel of Nebraska. Big labor is similarly adamant. The unions foresee U.S. factories fleeing to exempted developing countries in search of cheaper fuel. At the White House conference, AFL-

CIO president John Sweeney warned that attempts to cut carbon-dioxide emissions "could have catastrophic economic effects." Captains of industry agree. Says Paul Wilhelm, president of USX: "All it's going to do is transfer huge amounts of the wealth in this country to somewhere else."

Meanwhile, the developing nations have announced that they expect the industrialized countries to go far beyond the president's proposal. They don't just want rich countries to reduce their carbon-dioxide emissions below the 1990 level; in a truly stunning example of chutzpah, they demand to be compensated for any economic losses that occur because much higher energy prices slow down the economies of the rich countries. In other words, if you rich people clobber your economies, you owe us for any negative trade effects we may experience as a result.

With friends like these, the environmentalists would hardly seem to hold a winning hand going to Kyoto. What's more, as the science of climate change has grown more sophisticated in recent years, the case for greenhouse alarmism has been steadily dissipating. "The satellite and balloon data show that catastrophic warming is not now occurring," says Dr. John Christy, a professor in the department of atmospheric science at the University of Alabama. The bottom line, according to NASA climate scientist Roy Spencer, is that the earth may warm up by about a degree and a half Fahrenheit over the next century.

The most significant announcement by Clinton, then, may turn out to be not the hypothetical crackdown on carbon dioxide a decade from now, but the immediate $5 billion in tax cuts and "incentives" he announced to encourage energy efficiency. "A green Synfuels," said one oil executive dismissively, recalling the tens of billion of dollars wasted on Jimmy Carter's infamous Synfuels Corporation boondoggle in the late 1970s. Environmental crises come and go; the pork barrel endures.

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The Quota King

by Roger Clegg

Bill Lann Lee, President Clinton's nominee to head the Justice Department's civil rights division, knew what the issues would be at his confirmation hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee on October 22. The libertarian Institute for Justice had issued a report documenting Lee's consistent support for racial preferences, including his opposition to California's Proposition 209 and his advocacy of forced busing. A number of conservative columnists and lawyers had raised objections to Lee on these grounds as well.

But Lee didn't help himself at the hearings. He admitted—as he had to, given the public record—his belief that Proposition 209 is unconstitutional. He also said that he believes the Supreme Court's decision in *Adarand Constructors, Inc.* v. *Peña* was wrong and that its earlier decision in *Fullilove* v. *Klutznick* was right; the former resulted in a federal race-based contracting preference being declared unconstitutional, while the latter upheld a similar preference. Lee, who is head of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund's Los Angeles office, did not disavow his organization's charge that the California university system's new colorblind admissions policy violates the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Lee said repeatedly that he believes preferences are perfectly fine, so long as they are used in a "limited, measured way." And he indicated that there should be racial preferences as long as there is racism (in other words, forever).

If some of Lee's answers were harmful to his cause, others were evasive—confirming critics' fears that they are being shown only the tip of a dangerous iceberg. With respect to Proposition 209, committee chairman Orrin Hatch pointed out that the court of appeals had upheld the ballot initiative, whereupon Lee quickly volunteered that he would "follow the law." But when Hatch asked Lee whether that meant Lee would support Proposition 209's constitutionality before the Supreme Court, the nominee declined to make any such commitment. And only when pressed by Sen. Jeff Sessions did Lee admit his opposition to *Adarand*.

Lee declined to give any examples of cases he brought on behalf of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund that he would not bring as head of the civil rights division. He would not cite any positions he would take different from those of the last, controversial head of the civil rights division, Deval Patrick. (Sen. Edward Kennedy said Lee might be "even better" than Patrick.) Lee could not point to a single federal race-based program that he thought inconsistent with *Adarand*, though he could not point to any that he thought consistent with *Adarand* either. He could not say whether the well-publicized racial preferences in

the pending transportation-bill reauthorization are unconstitutional, or whether the district court's decision striking down those preferences in the wake of *Adarand* was correct.

He would not explain his statement, "The term 'forced busing' is a misnomer. School districts do not force children to ride a bus, but only to arrive on time at their assigned schools." He said only that he had not intended this "to be a legal pronouncement"—an odd justification, since the sentence appeared in a Supreme Court brief. He would not give a straight answer to Sen. Mike DeWine about whether he shared the concerns of the parents of bused children about long bus rides and the decline of neighborhood schools, or to Sen. Spencer Abraham about judges running prisons. Both senators expressed their frustration.

A big part of the pitch always made by Democrats whenever they want Republicans to vote their way on a civil rights issue is the need for a "bipartisan commitment to civil rights enforcement." This hearing was no exception. But the Democrats don't really believe that there has been a bipartisan commitment lately, at least to civil rights as they define it. The mask slipped at the hearings, when Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein condescendingly explained to Hatch, "Mr. Chairman, you can't expect a Democratic nominee to this position to be anti-civil rights"—the implication being that this *is* what one would expect from a Republican nominee.

Sen. Patrick Leahy, the Vermont Democrat, thanked South Carolina Republican Strom Thurmond for a prenomination letter the latter had inexplicably written praising Lee, hoping that Thurmond would let the remark slide and create an aura of bipartisan support for the nominee. It didn't work. Thurmond asked Leahy to clarify what he was talking about, and then Thurmond told Leahy, "I didn't have all the facts at that time. My mind is open on this nomination." The youthful Leahy, 57, will have to wait a few more years before he can outfox Thurmond, 94.

The other entertaining moment of partisanship came when Democratic Sen. Richard Durbin tried to play the race card, suggesting that perhaps the Republican investigation of campaign financing had focused excessively on Asian Americans, then reminding his colleagues that Lee was "a representative of that group." Seen one Asian American, seen them all.

Friendly senators quoted former opponents who praised Lee's reasonableness, and Lee praised himself in this regard. He is "not a theorist," Lee cheerfully assured the committee. He is a "pragmatist," not "a knee-jerk ideologue," others said. Kennedy. thought it particularly admirable, for some reason, that of the "150 to 200" cases that Lee had filed, only six had gone to trial. Of course, cynics might point to these numbers as evidence of a shakedown approach to litigation.

Nor does every opposing lawyer praise Lee. Patrick J. Manshardt, general counsel of the Individual Rights Foundation in Los Angeles, wrote Hatch a letter detailing an incident in which Lee tried to lock the local police department into using race- and sex-based hiring and promotion goals for the next 18 years by a collusive settlement, approved by a magistrate without the judge's knowledge, on the day of the vote on Proposition 209. "At best," wrote Manshardt, Lee's conduct was "sneaky and underhanded. At worst, unethical."

LEE WAS HAILED AS THE EPITOME OF THE AMERICAN DREAM. APPARENTLY THE DEMOCRATIC VERSION OF THE AMERICAN DREAM IS TO GROW UP AND SUE PEOPLE.

Besides bipartisanship and pragmatism, the main subject Lee's supporters were willing to discuss was the American dream, of which senator after senator declared Lee to be the "epitome." Apparently, the Democratic version of the American dream is to grow up and sue people. Lee's father's version of the American dream—he was a Chinese immigrant who served in World War II, opened a laundry in Harlem, and sent his son to Yale College and Columbia Law School—is now outmoded. Lee himself sues private employers like his father if he thinks their workforces don't have the right racial, ethnic, and gender "balance."

So, try as the administration might, it couldn't keep the focus of the hearings from coming back to preferences. Which is just where it belonged, given Lee's and the Clinton administration's undying support for preferential policies. Hatch told Lee that that the matter of preferences is not an "itty bitty issue." The chairman could not understand why Proposition 209 (which outlaws discrimination) is inconsistent with the Fourteenth Amendment (which outlaws discrimination). "I have real difficulties here."

As well he should. The Constitution gives senators two relevant duties: to vote on presidential nominees and to abide by their oath "to support this Constitution." No senator who believes in a colorblind Constitution can be faithful to his oath and vote to confirm the nomination of Bill Lann Lee.

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ClintonCare II

by Pia Nordlinger

The fix was in at the White House Conference on Child Care. Bill and Hillary Clinton used all the familiar buzzwords—"empowerment," "choice," "national community"—when they kicked off their one-day event on October 23. And while 14 seemingly diverse panelists pretended to be there simply to, as the White House put it, "start a conversation" on the state of child care in America, they had more on their minds. The panelists hailed from various institutions—the church, the military, federal and state government, medicine, big business, labor, nonprofit foundations, and the child-care industry itself—but they were anything but diverse in outlook. All operated on one assumption: When it comes to child care, the marketplace has failed, and the only thing that can save the children of America from disaster is a bigger and more expensive role for government.

> TO HEAR THE SPEAKERS AT THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE TELL IT, ONLY GOVERNMENT WILL BE ABLE TO ENSURE PROPER CHILD CARE.

The theme of market failure surfaced early: President Clinton, who moderated the first panel along with his spouse, asked Treasury secretary Robert Rubin why, in the area of child care, the market is "dysfunctional." Rubin didn't have an explanation, but he didn't dispute the point either. Instead, he touted the "working group" Clinton has designed for business leaders, labor, and community representatives. Rubin will be leading this group with support from AFL-CIO president John Sweeney, another of the panelists.

Sweeney was present to harp on a side-issue: the plight of child-care providers. But he harmonized this nicely with the emphasis on more government. "Most child-care workers," he said, "have no benefits, no pensions. Most don't make enough to keep their own children in child care. On the other hand, we can't expect parents, who are already stretched, to shell out for higher pay and better benefits. That's why we need government and business to play a bigger role and to make a stronger investment in America's working families."

Singing alongside Sweeney in the anti-market chorus was the White House's token businessman, Doug Price, president of FirstBank of Colorado. Price, the last to speak, dropped the crowning "shame-on-the-market" soundbite: "When it comes to child care, Adam Smith's invisible hand is all thumbs." The quip brought hoots of delight and clapping. Indeed, the audience interrupted speakers with thunderous applause throughout the day. The conference had the atmosphere of a campaign rally or a party convention.

Gov. Jim Hunt of North Carolina urged the president to "use that bully pulpit that you use better than anyone who's ever served here." Clinton obliged, boasting of his accomplishments (the Family and Medical Leave Act, the Earned Income Tax Credit, the expansion of HeadStart, the White House Early Childhood and the Brain Conference, the budget deal) and taking the occasion to announce a four-step plan to strengthen the nation's child care.

The plan could have been crafted by Dick Morris, Clinton's one-time political adviser. Morris likes small proposals, or "nuggets," and that's what the president offered. His first step is a scholarship fund for child-care providers designed to help them get training and, when they graduate, "bonuses" from employers. How large are the bonuses? He didn't say. The second is a background-check system to prevent unsavory types from working with children. "I am transmitting to Congress the National Crime Prevention and Privacy Compact," said Clinton, "which will make background checks easier and more effective by eliminating state barriers to sharing criminal histories for this specific purpose."

Third, there is that working group on child care composed of labor and business representatives. And finally, the president encouraged more use of community-service volunteers in after-school programs.

The Clintons and their panelists—most of them, at least—do not expect to establish a federal day-care system any time soon. They do, however, insist on increased federal involvement—regulation, subsidies, and all the rest. And since the conference's planners barred all opposing ideas from their love-in, no one objected all day. Valora Washington, program director for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, seemed to speak for all when she proclaimed, in triumph, "We, as a nation, have decided to support child care with public funds." So it's settled then. But of course, that's what the Clintons thought about national health care in 1994.

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Why Al Gore Got in Bed with Ellen

By John Podhoretz

On October 16, Vice President Al Gore praised the ABC television show *Ellen* in a speech before entertainment-industry executives in Los Angeles for turning its title character into a lesbian at the end of the sitcom's third season. "When the character Ellen came out," Gore said, "millions of Americans were forced to look at sexual orientation in a more open light." The immediate response was predictable. Gay groups hailed the vice president's words; Christian organizations condemned them; and because the vice president was talking about a television show, his words made the front pages and the nightly news.

The surprising response came from the chattering classes, who were largely critical of the vice president. "It was stupid to do this," George Stephanopoulos said. Said Juan Williams,"There are lots of people, not just crazy conservatives, who think that maybe women kissing women on TV isn't the greatest thing." Jonathan Alter wrote harsh words in *Newsweek*; *Time* declared Gore a "loser." The conventional wisdom around Washington was that the vice president was pandering to Hollywood for campaign dollars and that he wanted to challenge the lingering impression that he and his wife Tipper, whose campaign against explicit lyrics in rock songs infuriated the entertainment industry in the 1980s, were Babbitts-with-a-V-chip.

To be sure, the vice president *was* pandering. He was whoring after donations—Hollywood generated an estimated $8 million in soft money for the Democratic party in 1996, while fund-raising ace David Mixner has said that gays gave $3.5 million to the Clinton campaign in 1992. Gore is still the frontrunner for the Democratic nomination, but his poll numbers have tumbled in recent months, and he is bound to face a serious challenge. If he can get Hollywood behind him, and if he can line up gay support as well, his challengers will have a harder time of it.

But Gore's critics, anxious to root out hypocrisy and opportunism wherever they find it, have failed to see the deeper significance of his remarks. The "Ellen speech" was a landmark moment in American political life—the first such moment for which Al Gore is responsible. It was the sort of speech that clarifies the distinctions between the political, ideological, and cultural camps in this country. Gore may not have meant to do it, but by saluting *Ellen* as he did, and with the words he chose, he exposed an important truth about the cultural attitudes of contemporary liberalism and the Left's agenda.

> THE "ELLEN SPEECH" WAS A LANDMARK MOMENT IN AMERICAN POLITICS. WITH THE WORDS HE CHOSE, GORE EXPOSED AN IMPORTANT TRUTH.

Where liberalism is concerned, the opening of American society to homosexuality is *the* defining issue of the day. The other issues dearest to contemporary liberalism—abortion, affirmative action, feminism, environmentalism—are nowhere near as fresh, as biting, as provocative as homosexual rights. Laws supporting liberal views on race, gender, and the environment have been on the books for two decades or more, and the Supreme Court created and has reaffirmed the right to abortion. When it comes to these perennials, liberalism's job is to protect the ground it has already won and make sure the conservative counterattack does not prevail.

Gay rights is a different matter altogether. It is the one issue on which liberals are aggressively, proudly, and triumphantly on the move. It ignites in them the passion essential to any successful ideological undertaking—the sense that they are doing the right thing and that future generations will think of them as admiringly as we think of the abolitionists. And they have no doubt what to call those who disagree with them: bigots. Bigots motivated by irrational fears and angers. Gore's words, Richard Cohen wrote in the *Washington Post*, were "the Kryptonite of bigotry. For

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once you recognize that the object of your loathing is pretty much like you, hate becomes difficult." Cohen is by no means an orthodox liberal, but when it comes to an issue like homosexual rights, it becomes clear on which side of the bright dividing line in American culture he stands. In his view, and the view of millions of others, opposition to homosexual rights is irrational, a form of hatred that should be given no quarter. There is no room for a more complex morality—for the Christian idea that God loves the sinner but hates the sin, or the Old Testament pronouncement that man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. Any mention of such ideas is, for them, sophisticated window-dressing for attitudes they find unenlightened at best and genocidal at worst.

That is why Gore's words—"When the character Ellen came out, millions of Americans were forced to look at sexual orientation in a more open light"—are so telling, and worth examining closely.

When the character Ellen came out. Gore is a very careful man, and nowhere in this praise of *Ellen* does the word "gay," "homosexual," or "lesbian" appear. It would be difficult to take a clip from the speech and make an advertisement attacking it to sway the unenlightened ears of America's homophobic bigots. But the very fact that the vice president could use the phrase "came out" and assume that his listeners would know exactly what he meant is an indication of how the private language of the homosexual subculture has become the common language of the cultural elite.

Millions of Americans were forced to look at sexual orientation in a more open light. Cohen criticizes the vice president for this "inelegant" sentence, but he is wrong to do so. This is precisely the message Gore's audience wanted to hear, and the message he wanted to convey. As today's liberal sees it, the attitudes of those who believe that there is only one natural "sexual orientation" are usually derived from fear. It is very difficult to change people's minds when their motivations are irrational. The only way to change such attitudes is by forcing these unwilling people to "look at" what you want them to look at "in a more open light."

It is especially significant that these words were spoken by a heterosexual. For homosexuals, the liberalization of American attitudes is a matter of the sheerest self-interest. But, to put it bluntly, what's in it for heterosexual supporters of gay rights? For Al Gore, the answer is not simply money and the support of an interest group within the Democratic party. He receives a much more important, if less tangible reward for his words: His gesture makes him feel virtuous, especially by contrast to those who do not share his views. The liberal humanist creed is based on the conviction that people who hold liberal humanist ideas are actually a more advanced breed of human than the knuckle-draggers who do not. People with the right attitudes are more "evolved," they say, than people who hold fast to old and discredited ideas. The unevolved among us are trapped in a closed loop of doctrine and convention. The only way to break the loop is to change the conventions of American society.

The chattering class's disapproval of Gore's remarks about *Ellen* has to do with taste: It seems beneath his high office to single out works of mass culture not because of their quality, but because they try to indoctrinate the American people. (In the same speech, Gore praised the 1960s miscegenation movie *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?* and the 1983 anti-nuke TV film *The Day After*.) Shouldn't presidents and other top officials aim higher than that? They can echo popular culture, borrow from it, and enjoy it, but a major speech by a leading political figure really ought to aim higher than that. That is why it's hard for a politician to go wrong when he criticizes television for corrupting and lowering us; most of us are guilty about the role television plays in our personal and collective lives and think we deserve a little scolding for it every now and then. At least when Dan Quayle talked about *Murphy Brown*, he criticized it. If the vice president is looking for explicitly gay works of art to celebrate, he could talk about W.H. Auden or Oscar Wilde.

IN THE LIBERAL VIEW, OPPOSITION TO GAY RIGHTS IS IRRATIONAL, A FORM OF HATRED. THERE IS NO ROOM FOR A MORE COMPLEX MORALITY.

But for those who believe in *forcing* the American people "to look at sexual orientation in a new light," Ellen DeGeneres is far more effective than Auden or Wilde. She began her career as a standup comic with a particular shtick: Stuttering nervously, stammering humorously, she circled a joke like a dog about to lie down. Her signature line (it became the title of the book she published last year) was, "My point—and I do have one . . ." That line also describes the peculiar journey taken by her television show, which dithered and wandered and rambled for three years until it exploded into the national consciousness just this past April. It wasn't even called *Ellen* to begin with; the

Sean Delonas

show was titled *These Friends of Mine* when it premiered in 1994, and it was a very self-conscious knockoff of *Seinfeld*. Ellen shared an apartment with a male friend, palled around with a couple of girl friends, and dated guys. But there was something unfocused and confused about the show.

It was an open secret in show-business circles that DeGeneres was a lesbian, but she hadn't come out of the closet herself and was, by all accounts, worried that public knowledge of her private sexuality would damage her show and her career. But the truth is that her show was damaged by her lesbianism—it was her limitation as an actress that she simply was not comfortable or believable playing a single, heterosexual woman.

As almost all sitcom plots are about the perils of dating, the problems of marriage, or the trials of parenthood, DeGeneres's show was an especially troubled one. Over the course of its run, it changed its name, focused more intently on its lead character, dropped the male friend, added different friends, gave Ellen a new profession—and still *Ellen* just wouldn't spring to life. Or at least it didn't until the episode in which Ellen Morgan discovered the true nature of her sexuality—and told the woman to whom she was attracted about it by speaking the words "I'm gay" through a loudspeaker at an airport. That highly publicized episode put DeGeneres on the cover of almost every magazine in America, shot *Ellen* to first place in the ratings for the first time, and won her an Emmy.

Gore is right: Millions of Americans *were* forced to look at sexual orientation in a new light. The entire apparatus of the media celebrity culture—magazines, television news programs, book publishing, newspaper articles—worked together to turn a single episode of a little-discussed and not especially popular sitcom into a major national event. (And you would have been hard-pressed to find a single negative word spoken about the idea except by the Christian Coalition and the Family Research Council.) When there is an event on television as highly and as breathlessly publicized as this one (word of Ellen's coming-out surfaced nine months before the episode aired), everybody in America feels almost compelled to tune in and see what is going on.

Now there is a major network television program about a lesbian—about lesbian dating, about lesbian friendships, about how a lesbian behaves around her family. There have been gay characters on television before. Almost every sitcom now seems to have a gay character in a supporting role, and gay characters have been the subject of innumerable television movies since *That Certain Summer* broke the ice in 1972. But never before has the ongoing life of a practicing homosexual been the key issue on a prime-time show watched by 10 million people a week. In his wildest imaginings, Auden could never have had such influence.

So for those who believe, as Gore believes, that America must open itself to homosexuality, the vice president spoke honest, true, and insightful words. They were, as the criticism of them shows, revealing words—words that exposed the snobbery, the self-appointed superiority, and the contempt that today's liberals feel for those traditionalists who do not believe that morals are subject to evolution. ♦

Elegy for the New York Left

By David Brooks

You can pick out the old lefties hanging around Ruth Messinger's campaign events, with their battered shopping bags from the Strand used bookstore, their scruffy vinyl shoes, their ragged gray hair, and, most touching of all, their willing expressions. If only Messinger would give them one good reason she and not Republican Rudolph Giuliani should be mayor of New York City, they'd haul their weary bones out for a last liberal crusade. If only she stirred the old passions—talked about the Triangle Shirt Factory fire, La Guardia, the Scottsboro Boys, any remnant at all of the glorious tradition—they'd carry her on their bent backs and only adore her the more for the hopelessness of her cause.

But she doesn't. "This city can have a new spirit. That's what this election's all about," she declares at her appearances, sounding like any other packaged politician. And in her vapidity can be discerned the last hurrah of a certain sort of liberalism. For nearly two decades, Messinger has been New York's leading progressive, a member of the city council and Manhattan's borough president. Now this smart, veteran pol is fulfilling her lifelong dream of running for mayor. And she is conducting the most lifeless, vacuous Democratic campaign in the city's history, maybe in the history of the world.

It's not only that she is trailing Giuliani by 23 points in the polls. It's not just that she is losing among women, Jews, Hispanics, and registered Democrats, or even that she may be beaten in her own borough and her own neighborhood, the Upper West Side. (Only blacks still say they will vote for Messinger, by 4 to 1.) The trouble is that Messinger has no message. No fire. Her public schedule is sometimes down to two or three events a day. They are tiny and boring, and few TV cameras or reporters follow her. There are no posters around town, no massive rallies, few campaign commercials—this in a city that is 5 to 1 Democratic.

You couldn't have imagined such a pathetic Democratic performance even five years ago. David Dinkins was still in City Hall, Mario Cuomo was still vaguely a presidential possibility, and the city was still a liberal holdout. Even three years back, Manhattanites were horrified by Giuliani's budget cutting, and the local press was overwhelmingly hostile to him. But now Giuliani is cruising, Messinger is alone, and the liberal interest groups that have dominated discussion in this city for so long have fallen into a sulky and confused silence. Combine this change with the reelection of the Republican mayor of Los Angeles, Richard Riordan, the reforming fame of Indianapolis's Republican mayor, Steve Goldsmith, the triumph of conservative Democrats like Philadelphia's Ed Rendell and Chicago's Richie Daley, and you come to a realization: We are witnessing the nadir of urban liberalism. For a century progressives have dominated the cities, but suddenly no more.

> UPPER WEST SIDE LIBERALS WERE PLODDING, EARNEST. THEY SEEMED TO REPRODUCE ASEXUALLY, POSSIBLY BY SIGNING PETITIONS.

Most of Messinger's fellow liberals are trying to avert their eyes. *New York Times* columnist Bob Herbert has written her off. *New York* magazine's columnist Michael Tomasky wonders sadly what happened to her. Just a few of the old warriors are still turning out. They are Upper West Side liberals, like her. The Greenwich Village liberals were always more bohemian, more fun, sexier. Upper West Side liberalism was for plodding, earnest people—social workers, municipal workers, and schoolteachers. People who seemed to reproduce asexually, possibly by signing petitions. Their political culture—now fading like that of some doomed Amazon tribe—was born in the New Deal, in the cluttered old apartment buildings along Broadway, Amsterdam Avenue, and Riverside Drive. These are oddly shaped apartments. To get from the bedroom to

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the bathroom, you always have to go through the kitchen. Moving around in one of these book- and paper-strewn mazes, you realize a core characteristic of the Upper West Side liberal worldview: no aesthetics. These people couldn't care less about beauty and splendor, much less neatness.

The mid-century liberals didn't need aesthetics. They had the future. For them, liberalism wasn't just a political team, it was a secular religion. It came with its own sacred texts (Trotsky, Niebuhr, the old newspaper *PM*), its saints (Norman Thomas, Eleanor Roosevelt), its martyrs (the Rosenbergs, Bobby), its sects (the Amalgamated Textile Workers' Union, the NAACP), its satans (the profit motive, HUAC), its crusades (disarmament, rent control, a shorter work week, rights for prisoners, deinstitutionalization, desegregation, resegregation), and its heaven (the universal brotherhood of man under socialism—oops, liberalism-in-a-hurry).

THEIR GOLDEN DECADE WAS THE 1930'S, NOT THE 1960'S. TO THEIR CREDIT, THEY MADE SACRIFICES, RIDING THE GRAY STEEL DESKS.

You look at one of the old veterans now and you can imagine him early in the morning in his underwear fantasizing about some Clifford Odets moment—a stirring bit of eloquence to galvanize the working classes. In your mind's eye, he's standing by the gas stove pouring a can of tomato soup into a steel saucepan, reliving the glorious day a few decades ago when he gave the keynote speech at the Society of Jewish Atheists convention. He's waving a scarred wooden spoon in the air, now imagining some devastating riposte in front of an angry mob of Nazis or landlords (it doesn't matter which), rewarded with an awestruck embrace from Sadie, the anarcho-syndicalist vegetarian from his freshman philosophy class at City College.

This liberalism is hardly radical chic. The golden decade for the Upper West Side liberals was the 1930s, not the 1960s. These people aren't six-figure foundation-grant junkies. To their credit, they made sacrifices, and they ride gray steel desks as case workers, assistant principals, public defenders, and counselors at the rape crisis center. Over the past quarter-century, their politics has been unglamorous street-level politics. They've fought the small fights, striving to do everything they can, in perversely admirable liberal fashion, to ensure their property values don't improve. They've fought gentrification at every step, fearing that it might hurt the underprivileged, and if you walk around New York with them, they will show you the improvements they opposed, the new buildings, the Barnes and Noble, the Starbucks.

Messinger has always epitomized the type. Her grandfather went to City College, the then-free and fiercely competitive school in upper Manhattan. He became a teacher and a principal. Rising in good immigrant fashion, Messinger's father went to Harvard and became a successful accountant, and her mother was involved in the American Labor party. They were the sort of people who are described in *New York Times* obits as "active in social causes." That is to say, they were pinkos. Ruth was raised singing the left-wing anthems, and she was sent to socially enlightened summer camps. One year she went upstate to do menial chores at a settlement house. Pete Seeger lived nearby and performed for the volunteers.

After her own stint at Radcliffe and marriage to Eli Messinger, a Harvard doctor, Ruth earned a graduate degree in social work and had three children, whom she was soon herding along to nuclear-freeze, civil-rights, and Vietnam-protest rallies. In 1969 the Messingers bought a five-story brownstone at 66 West 87th Street, and it became a gathering place. People moved in and out, crashed for days or months on end, their stays disturbed only by the continual round of peace and justice meetings. One party at the house has become an issue in this campaign: an affair in honor of Dacajeweiah, a felon held in connection with the murder of prison guards during the Attica riots.

Life in the brownstone was governed by collective arrangements, with families sharing kitchen duties and expenses, even clothing. Between 1969 and 1986—that is to say, between the ages of 29 and 46—Messinger slept on a mattress on a bedroom floor, practicing an asceticism common among activists of various stripes.

In 1968, Messinger joined the staff of a progressive community school and through that became involved in Democratic politics. She took her oath of office as a member of the New York City Council in the subway station at 72nd Street and Broadway, to demonstrate her solidarity with the people. She and her husband divorced (he became a lecturer at the New York Marxist School), and in the 1980s she became the liberal foil to centrist Democratic mayor Ed Koch, then in the 1990s to Giuliani.

If Messinger's biography epitomizes the Upper West Side liberal culture, it also exhibits symptoms of that culture's decay. She has remarried and moved from the group home on 87th Street to a chic apartment on Central Park West with views of the park.

The Upper West Side has become an affluent, gentrified, yuppified place. A neighborhood once enthralled by Odets's "Waiting for Lefty" is now waiting for latte at coffee bars where the service is invariably slow. Barney Greengrass the Sturgeon King is still selling his fish over on Amsterdam, but most of the other neighborhood establishments have been turned into expensive brunch places dressed up as country kitchens for well-heeled lawyers longing to simplify their lives. The old West Siders, still on the way up, aspired to complications.

Some writers assume that when a neighborhood gets rich it necessarily gets more conservative. That isn't the whole truth. There are still plenty of lefties on the West Side. In some ways, the people you see browsing at the neighborhood Zabar's and at Labyrinth Books are more liberal than their forebears, including Messinger. It's just that they are cultural liberals, so the books they pick up have titles like *Representations of Transgender Orgasmic Desire in Pre-war Berlin*. Their radicalism is real, it's just aesthetic, sexual, and academic rather than narrowly political. In the '50s, the leftists used to chastise the apolitical Beats for their alienation. The Beats won, and the aesthetic sensibility has overwhelmed the earnest sensibility. Fittingly, Messinger's daughter is a lesbian public-health worker living with a black woman. When she was inseminated, she and her partner were careful to secure sperm from a black man so "their" child, like their relationship, would be biracial. Thus has Ruth Messinger's class leftism given way to today's identity leftism. Radical parents, lesbian children.

One reason the unions can no longer count on squads of Columbia students to help canvassing is that the kids are more interested in subverting gender than in forming worker-student alliances. Artists used to belong to a popular front in the class struggle, but now their interests are more elevated and they are shock troops defending ever more obscure artistic sects. There's one around now called Patheticism.

The ghettoization of the Left inside academe has also changed the way politics is treated. In the first place, *Dissent*, the magazine of the leftie intelligentsia, is now $7.50 an issue. You need a Ford Foundation grant to buy it. Also, today's professors adopt a cool pose. They are always seeing through strategies, deconstructing realities, considering multiple vantage points and multiple meanings. That attitude isn't compatible with the utopian commitment that prevailed among the New York liberals. Fred Siegel's superb new book on urban politics is called *The Future Once Happened Here*, a phrase that captures the old urban liberals' sense of themselves as actors in a world-historical drama. That's why they behaved so pompously, ending friendships over tiny doctrinal disputes, sitting through long, contentious meetings. Even small rifts, it was thought, would have large consequences when the Left took control.

Today, that feeling has evaporated. "We have to show them we haven't become so sophisticated to think that we can't change the world," declared a speaker at a Messinger meeting. But in fact most New Yorkers have acquired just that sort of sophistication, or pseudo-sophistication. Few Manhattanites would admit that the conservatives were right all along about crime, welfare, and the strangling effect of big government. A conservative is still a rarity in Manhattan, especially on the West Side. Instead, the majority has become apolitical. The energy that used to go into political activism now animates upscale preservation groups like Friends of Terra-Cotta and projects like The Central Park Conservancy that upgrade public facilities with private dollars.

The foundering Messinger campaign is a warning to all those writers and strategists plotting a liberal rebirth. A large chunk of the liberal intelligentsia is growing disenchanted with the cultural liberalism prevalent in Manhattan. Many recognize the limits of identity politics. Michael Tomasky of *New York* has written a book called *Left for Dead*, arguing for a return to class liberalism as opposed to identity liberalism. Stanley Greenberg and Theda Skocpol have edited an anthology that also makes the case for the primacy of economics and politics over culture. Even *Mother Jones* magazine has come out against affirmative action and for a liberalism based on class differences. All these thinkers see the widening gap between rich and poor as the central issue for the next decades. And there's some evidence that they can get mileage out of it. According to a recent *Wall Street Journal* poll, Americans with college degrees overwhelmingly approve of the globalization of the economy, while those without overwhelmingly disapprove.

> A LARGE CHUNK OF THE LIBERAL INTELLIGENTSIA IS GROWING DISENCHANTED WITH CULTURAL LIBERALISM AND ITS IDENTITY POLITICS.

The problem is that liberals have no *answer* to the widening inequality of income. If they did, Ruth Messinger would be running a better campaign. She's not so inept that she wouldn't pick up strong arguments if they were lying around. If income inequality

truly had resonance with people, more New Yorkers would be responding to the class-warfare language Messinger does use. Alas, modern liberalism arms her with nothing substantial to say in response to a guy like Rudy Giuliani, who rejects liberal approaches to crime and hacks away at the municipal budget. Under the best of circumstances, it would be tough to beat a successful mayor like Giuliani, but in post-liberal New York, the Democrats can't even put forward a respectable case. ♦

Christie Whitman, Relic of the Eastern GOP

By Tucker Carlson

One Saturday afternoon this fall, New Jersey governor Christine Todd Whitman took the podium in the ballroom of the Cherry Hill Sheraton to deliver a speech to the state chapter of the NAACP. Locked in a dead heat a month before Election Day, with much of the state's black vote still undecided, Whitman was eager to make a good impression. She skipped the opening jokes and got directly to the point. "I've appointed more African-Americans to the bench than any governor before me," Whitman said, launching into a statistical breakdown of her commitment to affirmative action. "Of my 75 judicial appointments to the superior, tax, and supreme-court benches, 15 percent have been minorities," including, she said, "a very special first," a black justice on the state supreme court. Whitman went on to remind the crowd of her "Many Faces, One Family" racial-diversity initiative, her opposition to bills that would outlaw affirmative action, and her efforts to set aside more state contracts for black-owned businesses. Over the course of the last four years, the governor said proudly, "10 percent of all my appointments were African American."

Whitman's speech should have been a big hit at the NAACP luncheon. Yet the audience did not seem particularly interested. An elderly woman seated near the stage played with her soup and fiddled with her nose, while throughout the room knots of people engaged in less-than-hushed conversation. Whitman pressed on bravely. And she seemed to be making some headway, her voice growing impassioned as she explained the need to save inner-city children, when an NAACP official cut her off in mid-thought. "Governor Whitman," barked an impatient voice from offstage, "could you please wrap up your opening statement?" For a moment, Whitman looked confused, then sheepish. "Certainly," she replied, her head down.

Christie Whitman may end up winning the governor's race in November, but she has lost a great deal of her appeal, at least with voters in New Jersey. The woman who just three years ago made *People* magazine's list of the 25 "most intriguing" figures in America is now fighting hard to fend off a challenge from Democrat Jim McGreevey, an until-recently-anonymous state senator no one will ever accuse of being intriguing. Whitman's descent has been steep and quick. Indeed, her struggle to keep her job caught most opinion merchants unprepared. Whitman has become a kind of Republican Daniel Ortega—her fame and popularity outside her constituency have masked the rumblings of dissatisfaction within it. It was only six months ago that Whitman was being hailed as the Future of the Republican Party. Now she may lose over an issue as prosaic and local as car-insurance rates. What happened?

Whitman herself won't speculate on what has gone wrong—her weak poll numbers are meaningless, she claims, since "voters aren't going to give away who they're going to vote for before the election"—but chances are, she doesn't know. Whitman has never been a skilled reader of the voting public. It wasn't until six weeks before the last election, in 1993, that her economic advisers convinced her to announce her now-famous tax-cut proposals. Without those proposals—specifically the promise to reduce taxes by 30 percent—her opponent Jim Florio would still be governor of New Jersey.

Whitman seems particularly naïve about black vot-

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ers. After a speech at the opening of a pharmaceutical plant a couple of weeks ago, a reporter asked Whitman why, despite her enthusiasm for affirmative action, fewer than 10 percent of blacks polled said they planned to vote for her. Four years ago, Whitman won about a quarter of the black vote in New Jersey—50,000 votes in an election that was decided by 26,000—so it wasn't an unimportant question. Whitman dismissed it with a smile. "When I was walking in Newark the other day, a woman came up and gave me a big hug to say 'thank you,'" she replied enthusiastically, as if this explained everything. "We've done some extraordinary things."

Perhaps, but few of them have taken place in New Jersey's largely black cities, which remain among the most depressing urban areas in the country. Instead, Whitman has, with all the moral conviction of a socially conscious Junior Leaguer, spent a lot of her time keeping the state current with every possible trend in the fields of addiction, recovery, and tolerance. A glass case outside Whitman's office in the capitol building in Trenton, for example, is crammed with materials promoting the state's Domestic Violence Workplace Education Day. One pamphlet lists the "male and female responsibilities in a dating relationship." Included on the check list: "I will recognize and accept my own needs and honor them."

Kent Lemon

Christie Whitman

In a state with a long tradition of government nannyism—it is illegal for motorists in New Jersey to pump their own gas—Whitman's kindergarten-teacher approach to politics may win her some support. But only some. Although she is self-assured and verbally quick, Whitman on the stump can still come off as icy. At a recent ceremony at which she received the endorsement of a New Jersey veterans group, Whitman (who arrived 35 minutes late and never apologized) stood with her hands clasped as a former prisoner of war in an American Legion hat read a lengthy introduction. The old man, clearly nervous, stumbled over his words several times. Whitman looked on imperiously, visibly bored and impatient.

Under other circumstances, behavior like this might not matter (candidates less gracious than Christie Whitman have been elected governor of bigger states than New Jersey), but in this race it does, mostly because Whitman doesn't have much to run on. Like all incumbents, she has been forced to argue simultaneously that things on her watch have been great, and that they desperately need to get better. Whitman can point to the dramatic tax cuts she delivered early (ahead of schedule, actually) in her first term. Impressive as those cuts were, however, they're now part of history, not the foundation of a new political program. Whitman can hardly promise to lop another 30 percent off state taxes over the next four years. So she is left with something of a tepid message. "Our progress so far has been good, but I know we can do more," Whitman says, sounding a little like a tired Bob Dole.

The governor's opponent, on the other hand, is neither tired nor unfocused. McGreevey, a 40-year-old state senator who is also mayor of the town of Woodbridge, has not deviated from three simple themes: New Jersey's car-insurance rates are the highest in the nation; so are its property taxes; and both of these sad facts are the fault of Gov. Whitman. There's a good deal of falsehood in the last claim—Whitman cannot directly control insurance rates, and she has almost nothing to do with property taxes, which are collected at the local level—but McGreevey has sold it well nonetheless. Although he has degrees from Columbia, Georgetown, and Harvard, McGreevey does an unusually good imitation of a blue-collar worker. He has a thick regional accent, brags about being "born on the sacred soil of Jersey City," and has the same class-based politics as the labor bosses he often hugs at speaking events. (Not surprisingly, Rep. Dick Gephardt was one of the first nationally known Democrats to stump for him in New Jersey.)

McGreevey is also skilled in retail politics in a way that Whitman could never be. Going door-to-door to introduce himself to voters (many of whom still have never heard of him), McGreevey thinks nothing of throwing his arm around the neck of a homeowner and asking what's for dinner, or checking up on the latest football scores. Corny? Sure. But it works in New Jersey. And it serves to highlight the class differences between him, the son of a union worker, and Whitman, who not long ago reported an investment income of $4 million in one year. The governor, for

her part, has never responded well to attacks on her wealth and background. Under criticism from Florio in 1993, in fact, Whitman broke new ground in victimology by comparing the plight of those born rich to that of oppressed minority groups. "Start condemning people for their money," warned Whitman, "and it's not too far before you allow them to start condemning people for their color and their race."

One issue McGreevey has not been able to use against Whitman is abortion. Whitman has long been strident in her pro-choice views, once telling a reporter that the only Republicans she would refuse to campaign for are those running on anti-abortion platforms. Moreover, unlike pro-choice Republicans such as George Pataki and Steve Forbes, Whitman has gone out of her way to alienate religious conservatives. She recently vetoed a bill in the legislature that would have banned partial-birth abortion in New Jersey. In a state with such a large Catholic population, her veto could have damaged her politically. Fortunately for Whitman, McGreevey voted against the bill, too.

Enter Murray Sabrin, a former real-estate salesman and radio-talk-show host who is running for governor on the Libertarian ticket. Sabrin, who now teaches finance at Ramapo College, is articulate, sane, and very opposed to abortion. At a well-publicized event in October, staged outside an abortion clinic in Englewood, Sabrin was endorsed by the state's largest anti-abortion groups, including New Jersey Right to Life. Sabrin is now polling at almost 10 percent. By almost any calculation, his presence in the race hurts Whitman.

According to his consultant, Rick Shaftan, that's okay by Sabrin. "We don't want Whitman to win," Shaftan says. "The only way to get conservative change is to show that you can't run Republicans like Christie Whitman. If she loses, people will know you have to be conservative to win." Shaftan says that the Sabrin campaign, which has qualified for state matching funds, will soon go up with ads attacking Whitman's stance on abortion. Shaftan gets excited as he visualizes the spot.

"We're going to have footage of this baby sitting in a crib. Then, all of a sudden, it gets vaporized. Just like in partial-birth abortion." The commercial, Shaftan says, will show voters that, in this race, Sabrin is the conservative, Whitman, the liberal. "Murray's like every Republican I know," Shaftan says, "except for Christie Whitman, who's like every Democrat I know."

It's not a bad analysis, but it does make predicting the outcome of the governor's race tricky. Can a Republican who acts like a Democrat beat a Democrat in a state that voted overwhelmingly for a Democratic president who acts like Republican? Who knows what could happen in a political climate like that? Christie Whitman might even be elected again. ♦

The Complaints of Anita Hill

The Memoir of a Self-Appointed Martyr

By P. J. O'Rourke

A certain conservative journalist created a fuss by praising Hillary Clinton. A certain left-wing journalist—looking about him for decent, courageous people to criticize—made a bigger commotion by slagging Mother Teresa. It is impossible to understand journalism without recognizing the fundamental contrarian instincts of the trade. Thus I come to you, male and Republican, with a heartfelt desire to call *Speaking Truth to Power* by Anita Hill an important and illuminating book that will make each of us reconsider our underlying preconceptions about . . .

About buying books or, at least, about reading them. In this case, don't bother. If you are an ardent supporter of Anita Hill, purchase the thing so she can get her royalties, then throw it away and save your eyes and evening. There is nothing in here that Nina Totenberg hasn't told you.

If you are a determined opponent of Anita Hill, leave the volume alone completely. Even supposing she did everything of which you accuse her, she has been vilified *ad libitum* and by experts. *Speaking Truth* contains no self-contradiction or prurience to improve your calumny.

And if you are neutral about Anita Hill, also eschew the tome. You won't emerge from this long, dull read convinced she didn't lie or did. You won't feel compelled to march on legislatures carrying "Men Just Don't Get It" signs. Nor will you be inspired to hang around locker rooms saying, "What's more important, a Supreme Court justice with a potty mouth or the fate of the Constitution?" You will just be bored and puzzled. You'll feel sympathy for Anita Hill, be exasperated by her, and end up in that modern low-salt-in-the-wounds version of the tragic stasis—frozen between pity and annoyance.

Anita Hill
Speaking Truth to Power
Doubleday, 368 pp., $24.95

This is a bad, sad, empty book, made worse by a good story Hill hardly tells. The Hills are a large, hard-working, amiable, and admirable family with impediments. They are poor, black, rural, and Anita is female. Hill goes from a two-room elementary school to Oklahoma State University to Yale to a well-connected D.C. law firm to good jobs at the Department of Education and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and, by the time she is 35, she is a tenured law professor at the University of Oklahoma. Here is the stuff of an affirmative-action *Angela's Ashes*.

But the hardscrabble farm existence, the grueling study, the social agonies, the homesickness—Anita Hill doesn't complain about these. She is too busy complaining about everything else. She complains that men and women are seated separately in her girlhood church, "most likely out of . . . denigration of women's roles." She complains that "prior to the time of OSHA regulations," the work in local food-processing plants was dirty and dangerous. And she complains that the plants have been shut down.

At Yale, "Legal training, with its focus on 'objective analysis,' created a dissonance in me." At her law firm, she was one of only two black women "until late in our first year there." When she goes to work for the government, "the ceiling leaked in the Education office building" and "the ventilation was poor in the EEOC." When she returns to academia, the atrium in the College of Law building "is horribly noisy and energy-inefficient." And home is no relief. "Each day the workers left me a new coat of plaster dust, a final reminder that they had control of my space."

The health-care profession is no better than the construction industry. "Like too many doctor's visits, this one was frustrating and disappointing." She leaves, "praying that I could find a gynecologist who'd be both responsive to my condition and covered by my health plan."

She teaches for a while at Oral Roberts University, "but it became evident that I did not have the support of all of the students. . . . I am certain that, as a black woman, I challenged their notion of authority . . ."

She goes to the University of Oklahoma, but former Democratic

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senator David Boren becomes president there. He had voted to confirm Clarence Thomas. At a university dinner, Boren has the misfortune to say to Prof. Hill, by way of small talk, that he will be "restoring tradition to the law school." And, Lord, how the querulousness flies: "I found the remarks particularly insensitive. Though he probably meant traditions of quality, he simply assumed that I would see tradition in the same way he did, forgetting that when he was a student, there were few women and few students of color, and no black or female faculty."

Once the subject of the Clarence Thomas hearings is taken up (as it is in the first sentence of the first page and never put down), Anita Hill's complaints rise in pitch and goofiness. "I suspected that I would have been treated differently had I had political contacts, money, title, or any other indicia of power." And wouldn't we all. She inveighs against presumption of innocence for Judge Thomas, using the logic that "EEOC guidelines presume nothing of the kind." She derides the media's "brevity of coverage allotted." She harangues the *Washington Post*, of all institutions, for "lack of sensitivity in and ignorance about handling claims of sexual harassment." She is mad at reporters for asking "Do you have a comment?" when Thomas is confirmed. She says, "I was angry and disappointed when Katie Couric of NBC asked me to address David Brock's allegations about me." And she declares, "Some of my classmates have been more than insensitive to my situation; some have been hostile. One in particular, a man with whom I was close in law school and since, has not returned several phone calls."

Hill says the technician who gave her a lie-detector test—taken on her own initiative—had a stern face and tone. "All of which indicated a hostility—at the least a criticism—as though he were on the verge of chastising me. . . . I had come to expect no better." A friend goes to Hill's house and finds a pillow case draped over a lighted bedroom lamp. "I concluded that someone must have broken into the house and attempted to set a fire." Her brother believes he sees "the same Secret Service man throughout the weekend at various spots throughout the city." At the University of Oklahoma, a secretary "discovered two clean-cut middle-aged white men dressed in dark suits and ties rummaging through the recycle bin. . . . They left abruptly as she approached, leaving behind several of the documents they had retrieved. *Each of the documents contained a reference to me or something on which I had worked.*" (Italics added by a secret government agency.) Says Hill, "I would have been afraid to live in the country if George Bush had been re-elected."

SAYS ANITA HILL, "I WOULD HAVE BEEN AFRAID TO LIVE IN THE COUNTRY IF GEORGE BUSH HAD BEEN RE-ELECTED."

Anita Hill is a woman who has had people promise to kill her, who has been menaced with physical assault, and who is to this day excoriated in the vilest language by right-wing nuts and nuts of other flavors. She merely notes this. She would rather concentrate on phantom security agents, *Men in Black* scenarios, and the world's most incompetent arsonist. All the very reasonable paranoia of *Speaking Truth to Power* ends in bathos: "Then someone else sent me fruitcakes as a gift, and despite my apprehension in the face of death threats, I ate some."

Just as Hill prefers abstract, intellectually contrived, and insoluble problems to the concrete hardships she was able to surmount, so she prefers ridiculous fears to real ones. This is the mark of the truly expert complainer. To get full benefit from complaining, the complaint can't be answerable—or there might not be anything to complain about.

What the expert complainer likes best in grievances is how they focus attention on the self. And although Hill continually poor-mouths (or, as we should say of a woman with her career accomplishments, "middle-class-mouths"), she has a marvelously large sense of the me. She insists on calling the confirmation process the "Hill-Thomas hearings." She is miffed that "Thomas' family life and personal background were explored quite positively by the press for weeks. . . . Before the hearing the press gave little attention to my background." When she receives a copy of the special prosecutor's report on the leak of her Senate deposition, she is "stung by the fact that nowhere in the letter was there any acknowledgment of my cooperation in the investigation—there was certainly no 'thank you.'" And an "Open Letter to the 1991 Senate Judiciary Committee" tacked on to the end of the book scolds, "none of you has apologized to my parents."

Ah, we all know the emptiness of apologies. Made or unmade, they leave the emotional grievance wonderfully intact. And, for a grievance to be most effective at focusing attention on the self, it must be of an emotional kind. Nothing is so personal as emotion. And nothing so incurable. Bones may knit, abrasions may heal, but the heart never mends.

Speaking Truth to Power swamps in emotion. Hill imagines public reaction to the Thomas confirmation hearings: "anger, confusion, disappointment, distrust, and more anger reached the boiling point." She watches the 1992 Democratic convention: "Tears rolled down my

Kent Lemon

cheek as I faced the fact again of the involvement of elected officials in what happened to me." She addresses an EMILY's List gathering and "noticed that Senator Mikulski had tears on her cheeks. It was only fair that we trade tears. I assumed that she was crying because I had survived the hearing and in a way prevailed by having a part in the election of women who were being celebrated." She says, "I once engaged in a discussion of gender inequity with some local leadership in an African Canadian community. The discussion was enlightening, lively and compelling but drenched in pain."

Such drenching is the real theme of *Speaking Truth to Power*. And sexual harassment is the ideal acid bath. Anita Hill's friend Judge Susan Hoerchner has said that Hill did not choose the issue of sexual harassment, it chose her. Perhaps. But, whatever the facts of the Clarence Thomas case, Hill has found the perfect grievance. Sex is very personal. Sex is damn emotional. And unwanted male sexual attentions will exist as long as men have things it would be insensitive to mention.

And here at last the male, Republican reviewer is allowed to be contrarian—at least among some of the Republican males he knows. Sexual harassment is immoral and pervasive in the world. In its very mildest form, it is grossly rude. In forms only slightly less mild, it is vicious bullying. Sexual harassment makes all women angry, "good sports" included. When sexual harassment is directed at men, as it is in prisons, it makes them kill.

Speaking Truth to Power is a book purporting to be about sexual harassment. What does Anita Hill propose should be done? Blither. She says twice that since age 6 she has spent all but three years of her life in schools—she resides in a land where words are deeds. She talks about women "finding our voices and breaking the silence forever." Kumbaya? She wants heightened "awareness" of sexual harassment, but the American public could hardly be more aware of it if ABC News caught Bill Clinton chasing Barbara Mikulski around the White House naked.

She calls for unspecified "policy, procedures, and accountability to deal with harassment" as though the issue were some kind of food stamp. Or maybe it's city planning, because she keeps mentioning a "community" of sexually harassed women. (It's "held together by outrage and a deeply felt cause.") She offers few statistics, and they do not make much sense, e.g., "only 3 percent of the harassment claims filed are baseless while 97 percent of the cases go unreported." She says, "Much more needs to be done in politics," but also says, "I dislike and distrust politics," and states, with odd diction but clear insight, "politics controls over any moral or ethical sense of right and wrong."

Contravening sexual harassment rather than complaining about it for 368 pages means doing the kind of thinking unlikely to be fashionable in communities held together by outrage and a deeply felt cause. One must accept the relative powerlessness of the legal system—let alone the political system—in matters of psychological tort. One must admit that gender is not a construct but a biological difference and sometimes an ugly one. One may even need to

go along with poor David Boren's proposal to restore tradition. There's a reason that most societies have different roles for men and women. There's a reason some distance is usually kept between the sexes, especially during their most awful hormonal stages. Men are violent.

But in the majority of post-paleolithic endeavors—and certainly in the endeavor of dating—that violence is inappropriate. Much of civilization is devoted to keeping inappropriate maleness from popping out. Or am I being insensitive again? Anyway, civilization is not created by whining or gab.

Nobody can propose going back to the sexual segregation of a century ago. But, on the other hand, if this meant never having to listen to Anita Hill while the port was being passed, it might be worth considering. ♦

An Odd Brief for the Pope

Jonathan Kwitny's "Man of the Century"

By James Nuechterlein

Of the many possible reasons for writing a biography of Pope John Paul II, that of launching an attack on American foreign policy would not come first—or ever—to most people's minds. But that is precisely what Jonathan Kwitny has done in this most improbable book. He became persuaded, Kwitny tells us in the preface to *Man of the Century*, "that the story of the Cold War is widely misperceived." Washington had nothing to do with the collapse of communism, he repeatedly asserts; indeed, its blundering throughout the Cold War was counterproductive. Instead, communism fell mainly because of a "nonviolent mass movement"—manifested notably in the Solidarity movement in Poland—that was inspired and led by a churchman fundamentally at odds with American foreign policy.

Kwitny never entirely forgets that the pope is a Catholic, but his preoccupation with geopolitical concerns gives his biography a decidedly odd cast. That is the more so because Kwitny's secondary theme is that the pope's social-democratic instincts again placed him entirely at odds with the reactionaries in control of American politics during most of his papacy. This view makes the Vicar of Christ an essentially political actor whose clerical duties are an afterthought to his real work. He is not so much custodian of the sacred mysteries as protagonist of a (non-Communist) social gospel.

Jonathan Kwitny
Man of the Century
The Life and Times of Pope John Paul II
Henry Holt, 744 pp., $30

Man of the Century is not entirely without merit. Kwitny, a longtime investigative reporter for the *Wall Street Journal* and PBS, is an indefatigable researcher, and he has tracked down and interviewed everyone he could from the pope's past, especially from his early years in Poland. Indeed, the sections on Karol Wojtyla's pre-papacy years are easily the book's most informative. They trace Wojtyla's development from an intelligent, vigorous, and romantic youth who contemplated a life in the theater to his rapid rise in the church as parish priest, professor, bishop, archbishop, and cardinal. The closer the book gets to the present, though, the more it is deformed by the author's biases—and, judging by the footnotes, the more potential informants, perhaps warned off by suspicions of those biases, refused requests for interviews.

Kwitny is relentless in elaboration of his thesis. He begins with a cartoonish view of international relations during John Paul II's reign that depicts equally pernicious adversaries—the United States and the Soviet Union—both determined to impose their evil systems on the world: oppressive capitalism versus tyrannical communism. Between these adversaries stands the third force of a Marxist-informed but non-Communist social democracy, represented in Eastern Europe by Solidarity and like-minded movements, and in Latin America by the proponents of "liberation theology."

John Paul II, according to Kwitny, has always been a man of this collectivist, neo-pacifist center. Kwitny prints extracts from an early manuscript of Karol Wojtyla's, *Catholic Social Ethics*, first distributed in 1953 when the future pope was 33. That manuscript, in Kwitny's view, endorses positions similar to those of liberation theologians, positions from which, he doggedly insists, Wojtyla has never departed. (Kwitny's efforts to reconcile that analysis with John Paul's repeated criticisms of liberation theology are exquisitely tortuous.)

Kwitny is a near-obsessive critic of the Reagan and Bush administrations, and he emphasizes throughout *Man of the Century* the pope's own distancing from those presidents' foreign and domestic policies. He attacks with particular vehemence the notion of an anti-Communist "holy alliance" between John Paul II and President Reagan first reported by Carl Bernstein in a *Time* magazine cover story in 1992 and further developed in the book Bernstein wrote with Italian journalist Marco Politi in 1996, *His Holiness: John Paul II and*

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the Hidden History of Our Time.

There was never any such alliance, Kwitny argues. Indeed, the Reagan administration, concerned only with developing massive military superiority over the Soviet Union, evinced no interest in the burgeoning underground people's movement in Eastern Europe. Yet it was that movement—quietly nurtured by Wojtyla both before and after his ascent to the Holy See in 1978—that was undermining communism from within. Thus, according to Kwitny, "Not only did the White House deny aid to a desperate Solidarity" after the imposition of martial law in Poland in December 1981, it even "tried to help John Paul's opponents destroy Solidarity."

Nor was the United States of any help after the implosion of the Communist empire between 1989 and 1991: "Instead of extending unconditional help to the new post-communist Poland, the United States and other Western countries used their leverage to push for—even impose—their own policies." Throughout Eastern Europe, the United States advanced its program of "unfettered capitalism," again in opposition to the pope's own preferred social-democratic policies. And John Paul's hopes for a renewed post-Communist Eastern Europe were further undercut by the reactionary and self-aggrandizing behavior of much of the Catholic hierarchy. Little wonder, Kwitny suggests, that voters in Eastern Europe have in recent years been restoring former Communists to power. However unsavory their pasts, the ex-Communists seem preferable "to law-of-the-jungle capitalists or Catholic theocrats."

What is one to make of all this? Kwitny is hardly the first to dispute the idea of a "holy alliance" between the Vatican and the White House: The critical response to the Bernstein/Politi book made clear that the notion of such an alliance was, at best, wildly overblown. More generally, the pope did frequently distance himself from Reagan/Bush policies in international affairs on neo-pacifist grounds—as in, to cite perhaps the most notable example, the 1991 Gulf War.

But without for a moment denying the pope's wisdom, courage, and influence, it is as foolishly exaggerated to attribute the end of communism entirely to John Paul II as it is to deny Ronald Reagan (or even Mikhail Gorbachev) any hand in it. There is simply too much evidence to the contrary. The rise of Solidarity is a magnificent story, but it is hardly the central element in the collapse of the Soviet empire. And Kwitny's insistence that the Reagan administration was antipathetic to the Solidarity movement is so counterintuitive—how could so fervent an anti-Communist as Ronald Reagan not rejoice in Solidarity's successes?—that it will take far more than Kwitny's partial and ambiguous evidence to establish it. Too many files remain closed to the author, and too many key actors denied him interviews, for the reader to accept his dogmatic conclusions.

Much the same mixed verdict applies to Kwitny's claims of a chasm between the pope and the Reagan and Bush administrations on matters of political economy. John Paul II's early views on these issues reflected the tradition of Catholic social thought dating from Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, a tradition that was both anti-socialist and

strongly opposed to an unregulated and purely individualistic capitalism. Such views undoubtedly placed him at some variance with Republican-party platforms circa 1980-1992.

But Kwitny is simply and demonstrably wrong to insist on a straight line in John Paul's views stretching unbroken from his youthful writings to the pathbreaking *Centesimus Annus* in 1991. The latter document is strikingly different in tone and emphasis from the earlier ones, and if it does not qualify the pope for membership on the editorial board of the *Wall Street Journal*, it even less makes him the implacable enemy of market economics that Kwitny takes him to be.

The fundamental problem with *Man of the Century*—oddly enough, given its title—is that it underestimates its subject. The organization and focus of Kwitny's book suggest that John Paul II is a predominantly political figure. But he is in fact the deeply spiritual shepherd of the Catholic church. In the end, John Paul II did not ascend the throne of Peter in order to end the Cold War, dismantle communism, and establish Catholic social teaching as a third way between capitalism and socialism.

It is probably just as well that Kwitny does not put his primary focus on religious matters, for when he does address theological issues, he is tone-deaf. He has a general sympathy for his subject, but little real understanding. One needn't be a Catholic to write an adequate biography of a pope, but one must at least have a feel for Christian doctrine that Kwitny, on the evidence of this book, does not. In addressing, for example, the pope's eloquent reminder in *Veritatis Splendor* (1993) of the classic Christian teaching that freedom, rightly understood, must always be oriented to truth, he is utterly at a loss. He thrashes about in evident confusion for a few paragraphs and then finally dismisses the teaching—which he seems to think peculiar to John Paul II—as "an oxymoron."

Kwitny appears to sense his limitations here, for his animadversions on moral and theological matters are for the most part far more restrained than his political judgments. In addressing John Paul II's impact on the Roman Catholic church, he attempts to be evenhanded, though he can never entirely hide his sympathy for Catholic progressives and dissenters. If the pope does not come off, in Kwitny's hands, as quite the monster of reaction that Catholic liberals make him out to be, he remains inadequately sympathetic to modern developments in morality and doctrine, a man, in the end, sadly out of step with his times.

The lesson to be learned from this poorly written and haphazardly organized volume is that when you start out with bad reasons for writing a book, you will likely wind up with a product to match. ♦

B&A

Sider's Socio-Christianity

A Challenge from the Religious Left

By John J. Dilulio Jr.

Some months ago, I got into a debate with a friend about the religious Right. My friend, a religious man, accepted the right of religious people to court political influence. His problem, he said, was that many Christian conservatives "talk Jesus but don't walk Jesus" on the poor.

Yes, I agreed, but don't lump pray-for-the-poor conservatives with devil-take-the-hindmost libertarians. For example, the Christian Coalition's Samaritan Project promises to raise $10 million to help 1,000 inner-city churches assist the urban poor. Charles Colson's Prison Fellowship Ministry saves or rehabilitates countless hardcore criminals. And so on.

Besides, I continued, when it comes to helping the poor, mainstream (that is, liberal) white Protestant churches, their black civil-rights-industry counterparts, and a distressing number of Catholic churches and charities are little better than self-serving supplicants for Caesar's coin. A true Christian's war on poverty would do more to imitate the example of Mother Teresa than to increase the budget of Donna Shalala. So, pluck the anti-poverty beam from the eye of the religious Right, but first list leaders of the religious *Left* who have actually "talked and walked Jesus" on the poor. Who?

Ronald J. Sider
Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger
Moving from Affluence to Generosity
Word Books, 300 pp., $15.99

My friend had no answer, but I now do: Ronald J. Sider. Sider, 58, is the author of the religious Left's anti-poverty bible, *Rich Christians In An Age of Hunger*. Over the years, *Rich Christians* has quietly sold more than 350,000 copies. The just-released and much-revised 20th-anniversary edition opens with a chapter on global poverty ("A Billion Hungry Neighbors") and ends with practical suggestions for alleviating poverty at home and abroad ("Watching Over One Another in Love"). All Sider's royalties have gone, and will

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continue to go, to charity.

Running through each chapter is this unabashed message: "God wants every person, or family, to have equality of economic opportunity at least to the point of having access to necessary resources (land, money, education) to be able to earn a decent living and participate as dignified members of their community . . . The Bible clearly and repeatedly teaches that God is at work in history exalting the poor and casting down the rich who got that way by oppressing or neglecting the poor." While living in material poverty is not itself a Biblical ideal, he stresses, giving freely of oneself and sharing one's material resources with the poor is a genuine Christian ideal.

Despite his steadfast refusal to bend the Bible on abortion and homosexuals, Sider has been a revered figure in the world of radical-progressive evangelical politics ever since his book appeared in 1977. He teaches at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania and is the founding president of the Philadelphia-based Evangelicals for Social Action, an organization that works in partnership with other Christian social-service organizations to provide loans and other assistance all over the world.

A Canadian by birth, Sider and his wife, Arbutus, shop at thrift stores and live with their daughter in a tiny row house in a nearly all-black inner-city neighborhood, one of Philadelphia's poorest. After reading the book, I visited the Siders in their home and spoke to many people who know them well. The message of *Rich Christians* has a credible messenger: The Siders practice what the book preaches, including the give-most-income-to-the-poor "graduated tithe" system outlined in Chapter 9 ("Toward a Simpler Lifestyle").

What is most challenging about *Rich Christians* is that the title refers not only to Christian corporate moguls, celebrities with seven-figure salaries, and those with vast inherited wealth. It refers equally to the Siders themselves, and to the two-earner, two-car, $100,000-a-year Christian couple in the suburbs, and to those who have been "brainwashed to believe that bigger houses, more prosperous businesses, and more sophisticated gadgets are the way to joy and fulfillment." In print (but not, I was relieved to discover, in person), Sider is hard on card-carrying Christians who shrug off Biblical teachings about property, possessions, and, as Sider calls it, "economic fellowship." As I read *Rich Christians*, I counted no fewer than 325 distinct references to Scripture (about one per page) in passages such as, "Like the rich Corinthian Christians who feasted without sharing with the hungry members of the church (I Corinthians 11:20-29), we have failed to comprehend the concept that the church worldwide is one body."

Before drafting *Rich Christians* in the mid-1970s, Sider received a Ph.D. from Yale and was trained as a theologian and scholar of religious history. A few pages into the book, however, it is painfully clear that he was not also trained as a social scientist or policy analyst. "I've learned more about economics," he proclaims in his new preface. Maybe so, but the text is punctuated by wide-of-the-mark uses of data on poverty rates and demographic trends, and by adjectives that exaggerate conditions that need no exaggerating (for example, the 1.3 billion people living in poverty worldwide become 1.3 billion people in "absolute" or "desperate" poverty). Likewise, he makes a mantra of certain summary statistics. For instance, over a billion people "live on less than one dollar a day." True, but in many less-developed nations, a buck can buy you plenty of daily bread. And while proclaiming his newfound faith that the spread of market-oriented economies has led to dramatic drops in poverty in Asia and elsewhere, he innocently parrots economically illiterate left-wing lessons about poverty, income inequality, and race in the United States as if they were the gospel truth.

Fortunately, none of Sider's empirical sins of omission saps the strength of his ethical edicts and Biblical interpretations. He warns rich Christians that the Bible condemns not only "individual sinful acts" but participation in "evil social structures" that seduce Christian consumers into guilt-free economic gluttony and Christian producers into denying the sacred humanity of customers (by manipulating them for profits) and workers (by treating them as purely expendable). "The $20 million Michael Jordan reportedly received in 1992 for promoting Nike shoes," he writes, "exceeded the entire annual payroll of the Indonesian factories that made them . . . In response, Nike claims their [Indonesian] workers earn 50 cents an hour (twice the country's minimum wage) as well as free meals and health care."

Not good enough, argues Sider, least of all for self-professed Christians who participate in such blessed-are-my-dividends behavior. Citing both the Old Testament and the New, Sider searingly warns that more and more Christians are acting as if the "size of one's salary (and house)" are "more important than God, neighbor, and the creation. In fact, more and more people value making money more than marriage, parenting, or even honesty." In his book of virtues, such behavior is not merely immoral, it is "abominable to our God": Rich Christians risk Hell.

Sider achieved wider visibility earlier this year when he signed a joint public statement with Chuck Colson and other prominent Christian conservatives calling for greater constitutional acceptance of the legitimacy of active religious belief in public life. This year, he has played a leading role in getting liberal evangelicals mobilized to support school vouchers. And last year, he added his voice to those of his newfound Christian-conservative friends in championing

the charitable-choice provision of the 1996 welfare-reform bill, which enables religious organizations to partner with government in the delivery of social services without having to divest themselves of their religious identities.

In a recent interview published in the "alternative evangelical" magazine *Prism*, Sider explained that he has joined "with friends like these" in order to further "a political realignment where theologically orthodox Christian voices from a wide variety of political and ethnic backgrounds together endorse an agenda that is pro-life and pro-poor, pro-family and pro-racial justice."

Whether any such novel religious "political realignment" will take shape, and on what terms, remains to be seen. Only two things are certain. One is that, if it does take shape, Sider will be an indispensable voice and witness for the religious Left. The other is that, having read *Rich Christians* and gotten to know Sider, I'm having a miserable time acting on my desire to dump my old but reliable compact car for a new, more expensive model. I reassure myself with a passage from Sider's book: "God does not want us to be or feel guilty; He wants us to be forgiven." ♦

The Finzi Moment

A Composer Receives His Due

By Jay Nordlinger

How do we know when a composer's moment has come? The signs are various: His works pop up on concert programs. Recordings are made. Radio stations take notice. Articles are written, later books. Sometimes, a single champion wages an obvious campaign. More often, as is now the case with Gerald Finzi, there is no discernible effort—just something in the air.

Finzi is not exactly barreling toward fame, but neither is he choking in the dustbins. An Englishman who lived from 1901 to 1956, he has always dwelt in the shadows of his celebrated peers, such as Ralph Vaughan Williams, Benjamin Britten, and William Walton. His output was comparatively small, and he devoted himself primarily to religious music for the voice—hardly a sure path to glory. And yet, if we are not in the midst of a Finzi boom, we are experiencing what may be called a Finzi awareness, a recognition that here was a composer of remarkable and lasting gifts.

Finzi was of Italian-Jewish ancestry, but his music? Pure Finsey—nothing could be more English. One of his better-known works is a group of Shakespeare songs, *Let Us Garlands Bring*, dedicated to Vaughan Williams, a friend and mentor, on his 70th birthday. The mezzo-soprano Janet Baker used to favor this cycle, and Bryn Terfel, the young baritone sensation from Wales, has included it in a recent recording. The first song, "Come away, death," is spookily beautiful, vaguely unnerving. "Who is Sylvia?"—which received an immortal setting from Schubert—is light and joyous. The final song, "It was a lover and his lass" (a pet lyric of many a British composer), fairly quivers with delight, playful yet not a plaything. These songs have the virtue of conveying feeling without sticky emotion—a hallmark of practically everything else that Finzi wrote, too.

His clarinet concerto is another of his signature pieces, now a staple of that instrument's repertory. It is nicely balanced and meticulously crafted, affording the clarinet some brilliant moments while eschewing distracting virtuosity. The *Adagio* movement is particularly effective—haunting, elegiac, achingly beautiful. It has that oxymoronic quality, peculiar to British music, that I can only call chipper somberness. Edward Elgar had it, Gustav Holst had it, so did Vaughan Williams—it must be served to British schoolboys in their porridge.

The clarinet concerto easily holds its own with the most distinguished such concertos of the 20th century, not excluding the Copland. Written shortly before Finzi's death, it is the work of an artist on the cusp of a higher phase, one who, given another decade or so, might have ascended to the next rank. It is the sort of piece for which the term "minor masterpiece" was coined—minor only because some other term must be reserved for the "Jupiter" Symphony and the *Missa Solemnis*.

The story of Finzi's life is little known even in musical circles. He was born in Yorkshire to wealthy parents who had scant interest in the arts. He was an awkward, sensitive, introspective child, alarmed by what the world held out. By the time he was 18, with World War I just drawing to a close, his father, his three brothers, and his beloved teacher, the composer Ernest Farrar, were all dead. Finzi sought refuge in literature, about which (unusual for a musician) he was enormously knowledgeable. He was especially attached to the mystical poets of the 17th century—Henry Vaughan, Thomas Traherne, Edward Taylor—and to Wordsworth. Thomas Hardy, he was amazed to discover, saw the world much as he himself did. Finzi would

Jay Nordlinger, associate editor and music critic of The Weekly Standard, *last wrote on the late Georg Solti.*

return to these authors throughout his career.

When he was in his mid-20s—that is, rather late—he went to London to study counterpoint at the Royal College of Music. Before long, he began to instruct at another school, the Royal Academy of Music, and fell in with Howard Ferguson, Edmund Rubbra, and other young composers. Finzi exemplified that artistic cliché, the tortured soul. He seemed incapable of gaining his footing. Work was cruelly painful for him—always a struggle, never a pleasure—and he despaired of fulfilling his considerable potential. As he approached his mid-30s, he was near total collapse.

Relief came, just in time, in the form of a woman—the portraitist Joyce Black (later known as Joy Finzi). They married—with Vaughan Williams as a witness—and moved to the Hampshire countryside, where Finzi built a house with his own hands. There, he found a measure of peace. He collected his books, catalogued early British music, promoted the work of his contemporaries (some of whom he never even met), and tended his apple orchard. In between, he fought with his manuscripts, still working slowly but producing a tidy corpus of pieces that reflects a hard-won store of learning and consecration. A composer, he once said, is like a "coral-reef insect, building his reef out of the transitory world around him and making a solid structure to last long after his own fragile and uncertain life."

Unceasingly, he jousted with God. He was a self-described agnostic, but he would not, or could not, leave religion alone. Seldom did he compose music that lacked an explicit religious purpose, and even when he did, he endowed it with a religious sensibility that seemed inseparable from his nature. Finzi did not write prolifically, but he wrote deeply, leaving an impression that may prove ineffaceable.

Dies Natalis is his major work. He labored at it intermittently from 1926 until 1939, when he at last permitted it to be heard. It is the kind of piece that has long been out of style: a five-movement cantata for high voice (either soprano or tenor) and string orchestra, a paean to the life of God's creating. The words are Traherne's, from poems unearthed only in 1903. The tone is wide-eyed, innocent, ecstatic; then searching, pensive, wise. The piece resembles, if anything, Mahler's *Lied von der Erde* (which uses German translations of mystical Chinese verses). Finzi's concluding "Salutation" is surpassingly reverent, a quietly confident affirmation of the good there is, even in the here and now. *Dies Natalis* is often described as "bathed in light," and so it is—an ethereal composition by a spiritual striver.

Intimations of Immortality, based on Wordsworth's *Recollections of Early Childhood*, is a more ambitious work but less successful. For all its profundity and skill, there is a whiff of intellectualism about it, and intellectualism is fatal to music. To enter the standard repertory, the piece will require forceful, consistent advocacy—and even then, its chances are slim, as sprawling quasi-oratorios for tenor, chorus, and orchestra are not traditionally crowd-pleasers.

Finzi's liturgical music, infrequently heard outside the larger British cathedrals, is steadily finding its way onto disc. "Lo, the full, final Sacrifice" is a daring work, tinged with chromaticism, and "God is gone up" is one of those rounded Anglican shouts for joy. His *Magnificat* is beatific and stirring, at times almost operatic in its expressiveness. The *Three Short Elegies* are sturdy and agreeable, and *Let us now praise famous men* swells with Old Testament virility. The *Seven Partsongs*, to texts of Robert Bridges, are elegant and inspired—the King's Singers turned one of them, "My spirit sang all day," into something close to a hit.

Still, big reputations—at least since the Baroque era—are not made on church music. Britten, too, excelled in it, yet we know him chiefly for his orchestral pieces and his grand operas, *Peter Grimes* and *Billy Budd*. Finzi wrote no symphonies, no operas, precious little piano music.

His *Romance* and *Nocturne* are orchestral miniatures, delicate beauties that meander with polyphonic murmurings and evocative melodies. In 1946, Finzi was commissioned by the BBC to compose incidental music for a broadcast of *Love's Labours Lost*. Such music rarely survives its context, but Finzi's score is graceful and inventive, meriting comparison to Walton's much-admired accompaniment to Laurence Olivier's film version of *Henry V*.

Finzi, then, is established. He will never dislodge Elgar as Britain's musical titan—nor should he—but he has earned his modest tile on the stage. English performers have looked after him, and they will continue to do so: They are ardent musical nationalists, not to say protectionists, and they are unapologetic about pushing their own. (Americans, to a lesser degree, do the same, which is why we have trouble escaping Charles Ives.) Finzi's widow formed the Finzi Trust not long after his death, to act as custodian and evangelist. The Finzi Singers were founded in 1982, performing and recording not only Finzi's music, but that of his fellows. The British record labels, too—EMI, Hyperion, Chandos, Nimbus—evidently consider it their duty to preserve the national musical heritage, and they churn out disc after disc, seemingly heedless of the bottom line.

A professor once told me a useful anecdote: A student has the temerity to ask, "But wasn't Mendelssohn second rate?" The professor, unruffled, thinks for a minute, then says, "Maybe so, but do you understand how good that is?" Second rate is, indeed, a startling achievement, and so are third and fourth. The Finzi hour, richly deserved, is here, not soon to expire. ♦

"No parent should ever have to choose between work and family, between earning a decent wage and caring for a child."

—Bill Clinton, October 23, 1997

Parody

Clinton Unveils Marriage Policy

"False choice" between fidelity, adultery deemed "national disgrace"

PREZ' DIET INITIATIVE

Calls it "unconscionable" to have to choose between eating dessert & staying thin

CLINTON TO PUSH FOR NEW CABINET POST

"Secretary of Home Repair" Would Fill Void

"Americans shouldn't have to choose between fixing up their houses and taking their families to Europe," President says

President Orders Parks Closed Sundays

"Let it be said that my administration was the last in which hard-working Americans had to choose between mass and trout-fishing." — Bill Clinton, Oct. 23, 1997