the weekly
Standard
OCTOBER 25, 1999
$3.95

OUR HYSTERICAL PRESIDENT
FRED BARNES

The Editors
on the Senate Republicans' finest hour

KABOOM!

Matthew Rees
on the leadership of Senator Jon Kyl

CLINTON'S TEST-BAN TREATY GOES UP IN SMOKE

Contents

October 25, 1999 • Volume 5, Number 6

Articles

Features

Books & Arts

the weekly Standard

THE WEEKLY STANDARD (ISSN 1083-3013) is published weekly (except the second week in April, the second week in July, the last week in August, and the first week in January) by News America Incorporated, 1211 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96127, Washington, DC 20077-7767. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96153, Washington, DC 20090-6153; changes of address to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96127, Washington, DC 20077-7767. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Yearly subscriptions, $78.00. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-303-776-3605 for subscription inquiries. Visa/MasterCard payment accepted. Cover price, $3.95 Back issues, $3.95 (includes postage and handling). Send manuscripts and letters to the editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. THE WEEKLY STANDARD Advertising Sales Office in Washington, DC, is 1-202-293-4900. Advertising Production: Call Ian Slatter 1-202-496-3354.

BPA INTERNATIONAL

www.weeklystandard.com

Bill Moyers's Filthy Lucre

"Journalism ethics" is to many people a mysterious intellectual discipline, riddled with speciousness and ad hoc-ery, but every once in a while a transgression comes along that is so breathtaking in its obviousness that even journalists themselves can understand it. And when it entangles a moral paragon like Bill Moyers, it is all the more delicious.

Moyers, in addition to his many other priestly duties, is one of the nation's foremost documentarians on the issue of campaign finance reform, having climbed his pulpit at PBS more than once to "expose" the corrupting influence of filthy lucre in the nation's politics. This arrangement bemused Frank Greve, a reporter for Knight Ridder newspapers, and last week he did a little exposing of his own.

Greve discovered that when it comes to campaign finance reform, Moyers has a "triple role": journalist, advocate, and financier. For example, Moyers's last show on the subject, "Free Speech for Sale," which aired on PBS in June, opened with Moyers interviewing three campaign finance "experts." All three, it turns out, represent organizations that have received a total of $2.6 million from the Florence & John Schumann Foundation. And the president of the Schumann foundation is, but of course, Bill Moyers (at a salary of $200,000, by the way). Then there was "Washington's Other Scandal," a *Frontline* special in which Moyers announced that "the arms race in campaign money is undermining the very soul of our democracy." The show closed by referring viewers to the Web sites of the "best" reform groups—most of them bankrolled by Moyers.

Needless to say, Moyers never discloses to his viewers that his "sources" are in effect on his payroll. But it's a nice scam St. Bill has worked for himself on the government's television network: Pay people to be advocates for your point of view, then give them airtime in your job as a "journalist." Maybe Moyers is right. Maybe money really is corrupting. ♦

On the Dole

The Scrapbook hears that alarm bells were ringing in Austin two weeks ago when the Associated Press reported "close associates" of Elizabeth Dole were urging her to leave the race for the Republican presidential nomination. Advisers to George W. Bush apparently worry that a Dole exit would leave the Texas governor in a one-on-one matchup with John McCain, analogous to Al Gore's struggle with Bill Bradley. Austin's calculation: Better for the front-runner to have a commanding lead over a passel of minor candidates than see the primary field winnowed down to only one credible challenger.

So with a wink and a nod, Dole has reportedly received assurances from Austin that she will enjoy a very soft landing—i.e., help retiring her campaign debt—if she wants to stay in the race until after the New Hampshire primary. Interestingly, Dole operatives have also recently stepped up criticism of McCain; On Oct. 7, Dole aide Tony Fabrizio said of McCain, "Someone suggested that to know John is to dislike John." Other sources have Mrs. Dole making one last push for the next few weeks, then pulling out before the formal announcement of her candidacy, scheduled for Nov. 7. ♦

Beijing's Best Friends on the Hill

Talk about government sponsorship of offensive art. It turns out that a special photo exhibit honoring the fiftieth anniversary of Communist dictatorship in China (death toll, conservatively estimated: tens of millions) went up last week in the U.S. House of Representatives' Cannon Office Building. It also turns out that the ceremonial unveiling of these Deng-spattered pictures was presided over on Oct. 12 by nine members of China's kangaroo National People's Congress, who were in Washington last week—the first such delegation of Chinese "legislators" since the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre—at the invitation of the House leadership.

And how did The Scrapbook learn about this visit? Not from any formal announcement by the House, which at least had the residual good sense to be squeamish about gladhanding such a group. It seems that the delegation's unofficial hosts—a group of Beijing apologists in Congress led by Republican representative Donald Manzullo, who fashion themselves the "U.S.-China Inter-Parliamentary Exchange Group"—

originally intended to keep the whole thing totally quiet. Manzullo and Co. understandably wanted zero media coverage of their involvement with such unsavory characters, and made that desire known to the Chinese embassy in Washington.

But a spokesman at that embassy, perhaps well practiced at shipping American secrets overseas, promptly leaked word of the whole affair—including the press-embargo request—to the *Hong Kong Standard*, which in its Oct. 14 edition published an account of the National People's Congress members' ongoing meetings with their American opposite numbers.

The cat thus out of the bag, the head of the Chinese NPC delegation then felt free to tell the AP why he was really in the nation's capital: not for some dopey photo exhibit, but to urge defeat of the Taiwan Security Enhancement Act now pending in Congress.

A week before all this happened, Hong Kong's Beijing-installed puppet leader Tung Chee-hwa had endorsed the travel ban China imposes on that territory's pro-democracy legislators—on grounds that they do not "perform well in various aspects" and are consequently "not well accepted by the mainland."

Tung no doubt prefers the behavior of the U.S. House of Representatives, which is apparently prepared to welcome in its halls anti-democratic lobbying by officials of the world's largest and most powerful tyranny. ♦

Fake Tocqueville, the Sequel

This is getting pathological. He did it again! In fact, he did it again even before last week's SCRAPBOOK—which recorded what was *then* the latest example—had hit the newsstands.

In the course of a typically nauseating speech to gay rights activists in Manhattan on Oct. 7 ("You made me a better president; you made me a better person"), Bill Clinton once more made use of "fake Tocqueville," the misattributed quotation this page has been unsuccessfully attempting to expose and kill for nearly four years.

"You've got to believe in this great country," the president urged his audience. "That this is fundamentally a good country, that Alexis de Tocqueville was right when he said America is great because America is good."

Of course, Clinton immediately then acknowledged, "we've done a lot of things that were pretty lousy, starting with slavery, as Thomas Jefferson said."

You guessed it, SCRAPBOOK fans: The president's "pretty lousy" Jefferson quote is no more authentic than his now compulsive Tocqueville reference. ♦

Casual

Deal Me Out

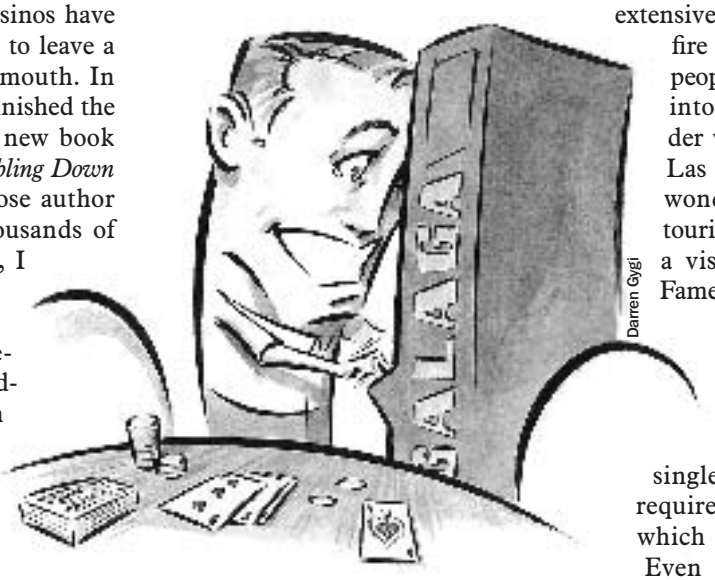
I probably shouldn't admit that while in Las Vegas recently for a friend's thirtieth birthday party I spent more time playing "for amusement only" video games than trying my hand at the likes of blackjack or craps. Even more embarrassing, I'd do it again.

My reason for investing hours in old-school video classics like Asteroids and Galaga alongside kids born since Reagan left office was simple: Past visits to Las Vegas casinos have been just eventful enough to leave a slightly sour taste in my mouth. In addition, having recently finished the wonderfully entertaining new book *24/7: Living it Up and Doubling Down in the New Las Vegas*, whose author recounts losing many thousands of dollars at a single sitting, I was determined not to gamble—er, game—until the very end of my three-day visit. That meant finding other diversions, which I figured couldn't be too hard in a city where you can body surf in an artificial wave pool, bungee jump, look at van Goghs, and visit a whole museum devoted to Liberace in a single afternoon.

My first stop was a slots "tournament" at the Las Vegas Hilton. Watching people play slot machines is about as exciting as reading Nietzsche, but I was curious about this ultimate Vegas con, especially when I learned there was an entry fee of $600. Would casinos, many of which hold these tournaments monthly, really try to market slot success as based on anything other than pure luck?

No, as it turned out. The Hilton's ebullient tournament director happily told me there was no pretense whatever of anyone's winnings being tied to "skill." What's more, the $600 fee included three nights in the hotel, a "prize" of at least $100 (and as much as $25,000 for the first-place winner), and an apparently endless succession of free buffets. This, I concluded, was probably one of Vegas's better deals, right up there with the $4.95 prime rib at the San Remo.

My next stop was the Gambler's Book Shop, a small store a few miles off the Strip that claims to have "the largest selection of gambling books, videotapes and software in the world." I had no basis for comparison, but before long, I'd counted over 50 titles just on blackjack. Separate sections covered how to win at video poker, roulette, sports, and just about every other game you can bet on. I even found a book on the best ways to throw dice.


Darren Gygi

As I pawed through titles like *Blackjack for Blood* and *Guerrilla Gambling*, the place started to pall. When I caught myself reading a treatise on cheating at blackjack, I knew it was time to leave.

Strolling through the larger-than-life hotels proved more uplifting. At New York-New York, my friends and I rode the roller coaster, which has so many loops, corkscrews, and jarring turns it's a wonder the trial bar hasn't filed a class-action suit on behalf of riders.

And it was hard not to be amused by Paris Las Vegas, where the employees don't *parler français* but do wear berets, kepis, and fitted blue suits. There are signs pointing toward *Les Toilettes* and *Le Théâtre des Arts* alongside a sign for that famous French institution, the Sports Book. The hotel restaurant? Napoleon's, of course.

At the Tropicana, the Casino Hall of Fame was genuinely entertaining, a well-maintained museum devoted to Las Vegas legends. Amidst tributes to Elvis, the Rat Pack, and various gangsters was an exhibit entitled "Fires and Explosions," which included extensive video footage of the 1980 fire at the MGM that killed 87 people. The episode, a narrator intoned, "made visitors wonder whether they were safe in Las Vegas"—which made me wonder whether the local tourism authority had ever paid a visit to the Casino Hall of Fame.

When on my last night I gave in to the gambling demons, I at least managed to find a casino—the fabled Binion's—offering single-deck blackjack. This required traveling "downtown," which is definitely downmarket. Even so, just as on the Strip, when you withdraw money from an ATM in hundred dollar increments you're given not twenties but $100 bills.

Not that I had any complaints about Binion's. Even a relative novice can more or less count cards, playing with a single deck. And besides, I was dealt a blackjack on my opening hand by a dealer who broke the monotony by telling one crude joke after another. An hour later, up a whopping $25, I bailed out. "True luck," I've read, "consists not in holding the best of the cards at the table; luckiest he who knows just when to rise and go home."

Matthew Rees

Correspondence

Junk All Spending Limits

I have a few questions for Bobby R. Burchfield ("Enemies of the First Amendment," Oct. 11). Why doesn't *any* regulation of campaign finance offend the First Amendment? Burchfield accepts the alleged wisdom of the Supreme Court in *Buckley* v. *Valeo* and related cases, but the very specifics of the rules laid down by the Court to govern campaign finance tell us that what we have to swallow is judicial fiat, not constitutional mandate.

Would Burchfield seriously have us believe that one rule, such as the "express-advocacy standard," which the learned justices like, and not another one, which they don't, is embedded in the Constitution? Burchfield tells us that Shays-Meehan and McCain-Feingold are all the more objectionable because they run roughshod over state regulation of state and local campaigns. But why is state regulation less offensive to the First Amendment than federal regulation? Doesn't the First Amendment bind the states through the Fourteenth?

The Supreme Court has no more right to forbid legislatures from controlling campaign finance than it has to forbid them to control abortion. Burchfield endorses the same powers of judicial legislation, accountable to no one, that have befouled so much of this century's jurisprudence.

The Constitution is not a writ for appellate judges to nullify at will the purposes of the people as expressed by their duly elected representatives. If Congress and state legislatures could be persuaded to forbid media outlets from charging candidates for air time, we would enjoy a great deal more of that freedom of political speech which Burchfield agrees is the "oxygen of democracy."

Hal Riedl
Baltimore, MD

Bobby R. Burchfield responds: In the 23 years since the Supreme Court decided *Buckley* v. *Valeo*, many have criticized the Court's effort to distinguish between limits on political expenditures, which it considered offensive to the First Amendment, and limits on political contributions, which it sustained.

The Court was clearly correct regarding expenditure limits, and may yet reverse itself with regard to contribution limits. Although I would fully support such a reversal, my article commented on the law as it currently exists.

The Court Is Doomed

Andrew Peyton Thomas has joined the pack baying for conservatives to vote Republican next year on the grounds that "the liberal bloc . . . is one vote away from a liberal activist majority" ("Team Clinton on the Supreme Court," Oct. 11). Yet he fails to note that two of the four consistent liberals in the

Supreme Court were placed there by Republican presidents.

Eisenhower had his Brennan, Nixon had his Powell, Ford had his Stevens, George I had his Souter, and George II may profit from their example. But I doubt if he will. There is no reason to think that the second Bush will deviate from the standard Republican practice of appointing two liberals for each conservative. When a Republican president chooses a liberal, he says later that "mistakes were made." But no Democratic president ever appoints a conservative by accident. So we are left to wonder if Republican presidents are invariably dumber than Democrats, or if perhaps they know a "liberal activist" when they appoint one.

You read it here first: Whether the next president is George W. Bush or a Democrat, the Supreme Court will turn to the left as soon as some of the current justices retire.

Richard Brashares
Glenside, PA

Quayle's Ironic Fate

Along with everyone else who served with him in the Bush administration, I am an admirer of Dan Quayle and have always lamented the lift and crash of his public career in 1988 (Christopher Caldwell, "The Thinking Man's Candidate," Oct. 11). It was Quayle's ironic fate to have been running mate with the wrong Bush. Had he stayed in the Senate, he would today be the highly respected, third-ranking member of the Armed Services Committee, able to bring an insider's knowledge of the way Washington works, his incisive political analysis, and his strong appeal to social conservatives to a ticket headed by the governor of Texas.

Chase Untermeyer
Houston, TX

Vindicating Buchanan

To portray Pat Buchanan as a modern Republican version of the New Left, Blame America First crowd of 30 years ago, as William Kristol does, is wildly inaccurate and essentially identical to what those same New Leftists have been doing to conservatives since that era ("A Party of Appeasement?" Oct. 11). It is fear-mongering at its worst.

If Buchanan's point is that this century has witnessed a progressive takeover of the nation's institutions by the Left—including government, the courts, academia, the church, and popular culture—well, this is irrefutable. If this understanding leads to a basic distrust of the actions of government, that is only prudent.

In all of the salivating furor to denounce Buchanan, his contentions are being proven: that the Republican establishment, and apparently even some who call themselves conservatives, will do anything to win the next election, includ-

ing nominate someone with whom the Republican base strongly disagrees; that the party is elitist; and that they are willing to kowtow to the Left to the extent that they use the Left's tactics to destroy one of their own.

To connect Buchanan's name with the Left is subtly to accuse him of their condescending disdain for the institutions of America (including the American Constitution), and their fundamental dishonesty. These certainly do not apply to Buchanan. More accurately, he seems to prefer to return to a conservative understanding of those institutions that has surely been wrested from us over the course of this century.

PETER HELSETH
Minneapolis, MN

TIMOR TROUBLE

TOM DONNELLY BELITTLES as isolationists those who do not agree with him that East Timor requires a big dose of that indispensable American leadership, the kind that is bringing democracy and peace to the Balkans, Haiti, etc. ("Why East Timor Matters," Sept. 27). The fact that the Australians stepped forward to run the East Timor peacekeeping effort is shameful in Donnelly's view because the Australians do not have much military capacity. Apparently, managing crises around the world is an exclusively American responsibility that cannot be shared no matter how much of a burden it places on U.S. forces. If running the world requires more troops, then Donnelly thinks we should build a bigger military.

This is a foreign policy that desperately needs to be tested with the American people. It is a view of America's role in the world that is certain to exhaust the supply of willing young Americans, the wisdom of our leaders, and the tolerance of all those we will end up governing. It does not follow from World War II and the Cold War that every problem in the world has to be ours to solve. The America that lies behind Donnelly's vision is precisely the kind of country that America fought and defeated in both those wars and should be mobilizing now to oppose.

HARVEY M. SAPOLSKY
Cambridge, MA

WHITE'S SIMPLE GENIUS

ANDREW FERGUSON'S PIECE on Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style* was heartwarming, great stuff ("Unmanning Strunk and White," Oct. 4). But why say, as Ferguson does, that the "little book" is flying under false colors because it doesn't include a labyrinthian examination of grammar and rhetoric? That is one of its charms! What's more, no one would read it and get its real message, if it were as long as all that.

Ferguson also insists that White be labeled "just a journalist," by implication not profound enough to be mentioned as an essayist alongside the heavy hitters he names—G.K. Chesterton, George Orwell, Rebecca West, Edmund Wilson.

I assert that E.B. White was easily as smart as Chesterton, et al., and that his choice to keep his writing lighthearted and endearing doesn't detract, it just proves how smart he was. It's evident he was also principled and brave. Yes, his ways were simple, but I'm not sure he wasn't truly sophisticated as well. Give the man full credit. The "little book," after all, warns us not to confuse glitter and complexity with being profound.

C.A. HEFFERNON
Pardeeville, WI

• • •

THE WEEKLY STANDARD
welcomes letters to the editor.
Letters will be edited for length and clarity and must include the writer's name, address, and phone number.
All letters should be addressed:
Correspondence Editor
THE WEEKLY STANDARD
1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505
Washington, DC 20036.
You may also fax letters: (202) 293-4901
or e-mail: Editor@Weeklystandard.com

the weekly Standard

The Senate Republicans' Finest Hour

Last week's rejection by the Senate of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was the most responsible and courageous action by that body since the 1991 vote authorizing the Gulf War. In the face of a hostile media, a well-organized and well-funded international "arms control" industry, polls showing majority support for the treaty, and explicit threats by Democrats and the White House to use the vote against Republicans in the 2000 elections, Republican senators cast a decisive vote in favor of serious American global leadership. With this one vote, Republicans proved that they are the only party that can be trusted with the stewardship of the nation's security.

The fact that they are being pilloried by the elite media should not give Republicans a moment's pause about whether they did the right thing. On the contrary: They should be proud. The Test Ban Treaty is to the late 1990s what the "nuclear freeze" movement was to the early 1980s and the SALT II agreement was to the late 1970s. All were bad and dangerous proposals that appealed both to the utopian fantasists of the arms control theocracy and to those who have always believed that the most dangerous nuclear weapons in the world are the ones in America's arsenal. Forget all the pious declarations by advocates that the treaty would somehow have magically restrained the likes of North Korea, China, and Pakistan from building up their own nuclear capabilities, or prevented Iraq and Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. That claim, which was manifestly absurd, was only cover for what really animated the push for the treaty. As Thomas Graham, president of the Lawyers Alliance for World Security, told the *Washington Post*, the Test Ban Treaty was part of a larger project: for the United States "to pursue disarmament negotiations aimed at the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons."

That was the real game here. The same people who two decades ago wanted to disarm the United States in our confrontation with the Soviet Union today want the United States to disarm in our confrontation with the disparate forces of evil in the post-Cold War world. Republicans were right to reject such misguided and dangerous fantasizing then. They are right to reject it now.

The accounts of last week's vote in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* were comical. According to the journalists who "covered" the story, Republican "hard-liners" killed the most important treaty of the twentieth century in pursuit of narrow, partisan advantage. The *Times* in its hyperventilating front-page headline actually claimed that the defeat of the Test Ban Treaty "Evokes Versailles Pact Defeat." That paper's R.W. Apple, in what surely must rank as the most embarrassing "news analysis" of the past decade, pulled out all the stops: The Senate's rejection of the treaty "further weakened the already shaky standing of the United States as a global moral leader." Indeed, the rejection "went to the very heart of the efforts by the victorious allies to build a safer world in the wake of World War II." Why, Apple informs us breathlessly, "on Tuesday of this week, a spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry urged American ratification, arguing that it would 'serve as an example and promote the ratification of the treaty by other countries.'" Talk about self-parodic.

What accounts for such hysteria? One might compare the left's faith in arms control to old-fashioned religious fervor, except that to do so is unfair to much religious belief, which at least tries to account for inconvenient evidence and arguments. The fact is, even supporters, like the *Washington Post*, admitted that the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was flawed, that its monitoring and verification mechanisms were suspect, and that U.S. ratification would in no way have guaranteed that other nuclear and would-be nuclear powers would have ratified it, much less that they would have abided by it. The fact is, no international agreement can possibly be relied upon, by itself, to limit the spread of nuclear weapons. And the fact is, U.S. ratification would most likely have ended up placing dangerous restrictions on the reliability of the American nuclear arsenal without similarly restricting the capabilities of other nuclear powers, present and future.

This is to say nothing of the core objection to the treaty, brilliantly summarized by Richard Perle:

> In domestic affairs, no one would seriously propose that the police and criminals come together and sign agreements according to which they accept the same set of constraints on their freedom of action. Yet that is the underlying logic of the CTBT: a compact among nation states, some of which are current or likely criminals, others—the majority—respectful of international law and their treaty obligations.

Because there can be no realistic hope of verifying compliance with the CTBT, this fundamental flaw, which is characteristic of global agreements, is greatly magnified. The net result of ratification of the CTBT would be a) American compliance, which could leave the U.S. uncertain about the safety and reliability of its nuclear deterrent; and b) almost certain cheating by one or more rogue states determined to acquire nuclear weapons.

But leave all this aside: If ratification of this treaty was of such transcendent interest to the United States and the world—if it was, as the *Times* insists, the most important treaty of the twentieth century—how is it that President Clinton barely lifted a finger to press for its passage? How is it that Clinton did not expend a micron of his political capital, did not risk a single digit in his approval rating, to try to push this treaty through the Senate? After all, the president signed the Test Ban Treaty over three years ago, in September 1996. We don't recall his making it a major campaign issue that year. Nor did he make ratification of the treaty an issue in the 1998 congressional elections.

In the 1980s, Ronald Reagan gave speech after televised speech on foreign policy issues of importance. Clinton, by contrast, has never once appeared before the American people to try to explain or sell what we're now being told is the cornerstone of peace and the international order. And as long as we're making comparisons to 1919, how about this: Although in desperately poor health, Woodrow Wilson toured the nation stumping for his treaty, and the exertion killed him. Clinton last week met with a few senators and made a few phone calls. According to the *Times*, the administration's approach to the treaty was one of "benign neglect."

In short, the treaty was so vitally important that the president could hardly bring himself to talk about it. The strongest statement Clinton made in its defense came a day after its rejection, in which he preposterously accused the Republican opponents of the treaty—who include the likes of Richard Lugar and John McCain, Henry Kissinger and Jeane Kirkpatrick—of "a new isolationism."

Which leads us to the question of partisanship. Who was really playing politics with the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty? Not the Republicans. Anyone who thinks Republicans were playing to their constituents on this vote is living on another planet. The polls were against them last week and probably will still be against them come next November. Instead, it's the Democrats who all along were sharpening their knives for the coming election season. The day after the vote, Al Gore already had his ads ready to go. The Democrats can't wait to blame the Republicans the next time India or Pakistan or some other nation carries out a nuclear test.

The bad faith of the Clinton administration and Senate Democrats in the ratification debate was breathtaking. The Republicans did not go looking for this fight. It was Senate Democrats who taunted Senate majority leader Trent Lott and threatened to bring Senate business to a halt unless they got a vote on the treaty. The Democrats did this knowing that they didn't have the votes to ratify. They wanted the Republicans either to refuse to let the treaty come up for a vote or to vote the treaty down. Either way, the Democrats figured, they would have the issue for the next elections. This may well have been smart politics. But let's not pretend it was about anything other than politics. Neither the Senate Democrats nor the White House were thinking seriously about the treaty. They were not thinking about the damage that might allegedly be done to U.S. credibility were the treaty to fail in the Senate. If they had been thinking seriously about these matters, they wouldn't have tried this gambit.

Republicans called the Democrats' bluff, and in doing so, went to the trouble of taking the treaty seriously. Led by senator Jon Kyl, they brought experts and prominent former officials like James Schlesinger and Brent Scowcroft to the Hill to discuss the merits of the treaty. Convinced that the treaty was deeply harmful to U.S. interests, Kyl organized briefings for senators and methodically set about the business of collecting votes against it. One of the *New York Times*'s reporters last week characterized Kyl's efforts as "political intrigue"—as if a senator's reviewing a treaty's merits and marshalling opposition to it were somehow shady and illegitimate activities. Kyl's efforts apparently took the Democrats and the White House by surprise. Why? Because, unlike Kyl, they couldn't be bothered to build their case.

Fortunately, at the end of the day, seriousness prevailed. Republicans have struck a blow at arms control fantasies, thereby showing an admirable willingness—unlike their critics across the aisle, at the White House, and in the newsrooms—to confront the real world, with all its multiplying dangers, without illusion. The Clinton administration would have us believe that the problems of nuclear proliferation can be addressed by gaining ever more signatories to an ever growing plethora of weak international conventions. This while the administration manifestly fails to do anything about the proliferation of weapons in Iraq and Iran, tries to bribe North Korea into halting its programs, and consistently coddles the ever-proliferating Chinese. And this while the administration drags its heels on building a missile defense system that can protect the United States and its allies from real threats today and in coming years.

Senate Republicans have blown the whistle on this charade, and they are to be congratulated and encouraged. This year it's the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Maybe next year they can press the administration to submit its amended ABM Treaty to the Senate, so they can vote that down too. After that, a Republican president can take over, rebuild our defenses, make the case to the American people for serious global leadership, and work realistically for a more secure world.

—William Kristol and Robert Kagan, for the Editors

Our Hysterical President

For sheer bad faith, Bill Clinton's press conference may have been the worst ever. **BY FRED BARNES**

RICHARD NIXON used a presidential press conference—several of them, in fact—to lie about Watergate. Jimmy Carter wildly exaggerated the energy crisis. And Ronald Reagan, while arguing for aid to the Nicaraguan contras, described the threat to Harlingen, Texas, from south of the border as greater than it probably was. But in my 26 years of covering the White House, I've never seen a president as hysterical, cheaply partisan, and dishonest as Bill Clinton was at his October 14 press conference. Attacking Senate Republicans for killing the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, Clinton concocted a fantasy world about the impact of the treaty's defeat. He was also deceitful, illogical, and, worst of all from his own perspective, politically shortsighted. On arms control and national security, Clinton tossed aside all pretense that he's a New Democrat, a triangulator, or pursuer of a Third Way.

Clinton is normally quite clever in tilting one way or the other on an issue, never going too far and usually giving himself plenty of political wiggle room. Not this time. He all but wrote Republicans out of the human race. Calling them reckless and partisan was the least of it. There was the claim, for instance, that out of "personal pique" Republicans would "put our children in peril and the leadership of America for a safer world in peril." And Clinton insisted that Republicans voted against a treaty they knew little about. Actually, GOP senators had been studying it for months. It was Democrats who'd paid little or no attention to it.

The biggest whopper came when the president described what he thinks is the practical impact of the treaty's defeat. "What happens overseas?" he asked himself, and then answered. "Countries that could be putting money into the education and health care and development of their children . . . will be sitting there saying, 'Well, you know, we'd like to lower the infant mortality rate, we'd like to lower the hunger rate, we'd like to lower the poverty rate, we'd like to raise the literacy rate, but look at what the Americans are doing, look at what our neighbors are doing, let's spend half our money on the military." Does Clinton really believe folks around the globe are making this calculation? If he does, he's totally caught up in the arms control cult.

I suspect Clinton has fallen into the same arms control trap that so many Democrats have plunged into over the years. They become convinced arms control, instead of American military strength and a credible nuclear deterrent, is the path to peace. Checking polls, they think the American people believe the same. But it never works out that way. In 1980, President Carter and his aides thought Ronald Reagan's opposition to SALT II would fatally doom his presidential chances. In 1984, Democrats thought the nuclear freeze, which Reagan opposed, would help them regain the White House. Now, it's the Test Ban Treaty. What always happens, of course, when Democrats go on an arms control bender is that a serious national debate on national security ensues, which Democrats lose.

Clinton's argument against the Senate vote was nonsensical. He said the world was going to be a very different and much worse place, and not only for kids. He suggested Japan's overdue economic recovery would be snuffed out by the treaty's defeat. How? By causing the Japanese, who have not had a standing army since World War II, to "divert 4 or 5 or 6 percent of their gross national product" to defense. Really, he said that—and more. He declared that trade with Latin America would decline. And he contended that countries now working out trade pacts with the United States might skip out. "What would happen," Clinton babbled, "if they all of a sudden got antsy and decided, well, you know, we have no national status?" Huh?

The world could have been spared all this horror, of course, if Clinton had merely agreed not to bring the treaty up during the final 15 months of his presidency. But Clinton insisted he had been unable to make this simple promise to Republican senators. He explained at the press conference that he couldn't make that commitment because he might need to press for a vote again next year if "three or four or five countries are going to bail out of the nonproliferation treaty." Of course, such a scenario would have given Clinton grounds for breaking his promise, and no doubt Republicans would have been forced to go along. So here's the illogic: on the one hand, a world disaster; on the other, a promise that wouldn't even have been binding if unforeseen events occurred. Clinton chose the disaster.

And talk about pique. Clinton jeopardized everything with his tirade. By losing his cool at a press conference, he gave up any realistic chance of a meaningful legacy, which requires compromise with Republicans. It was a high price to pay for an hour of high dudgeon. ♦

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

The Clintonized Democrats

No amount of GOP wishing will bring back the Carter-Mondale-Dukakis era. **BY DAVID BROOKS**

CONSERVATIVES will always have a soft spot for the eighties. They'll always have a nostalgic longing for the glory days of Reykjavík and Berlin, for the era of yellow ties, Drexel Burnham, Duran Duran, and Madonna-wannabes wearing their underwear on the outside of their clothes. And the best part of the eighties was having opponents like Jimmy Carter, Walter Mondale, and, a little later, Michael Dukakis.

For some conservatives, those days were so wonderful they will never be allowed to end. For some, every Democrat is Walter Mondale, if not on the surface then at least deep down. Clintonism never really happened. Tony Blair never really happened. The Third Way is just old fashioned liberalism in disguise. On October 13, for example, Steve Forbes delivered a talk in London in which he attacked "Third Way socialism and statism," as if it were all just one big clump out of Clement Attlee's brain.

On the same day, at the Heritage Foundation, House Majority Leader Dick Armey gave a speech called "The Future of Conservatism," in which he talked mostly about the glories of Ronald Reagan. The subtext of Armey's remarks was that politics today is waged on the same continuum as it was during the Reagan era—between the believers in freedom and the believers in statism—and that the main thing Republicans need to do is recapture Reagan's way of delivering their message with a smile. "It is largely a matter as simple as demeanor. We need to practice that, to be optimistic," Armey declared. "We need to learn some skills, to be good natured and entertaining. . . . Let us put on a happy face."

Well, it would be nice if it were just a matter of demeanor. It would be nice for Republicans if Democrats had learned nothing from the failures of Mondale and Dukakis. Just as it would be nice for Democrats if people like George W. Bush had learned nothing from the failures of Newt Gingrich. But wishing doesn't make it so. Clintonism has transformed the Democratic party, making it less vulnerable (and also less honorable). And voters, if not many Republicans, know this. That's why those ads from consultant Arthur Finkelstein—the ones that try to tar Democrats as "liberal, dangerously liberal, embarrassingly liberal"—have been such miserable failures over the past two elections.

Today's Democratic party is much more difficult to pin down. For example, over the past two weeks Al Gore and Bill Bradley have been jockeying to win the endorsement of the AFL-CIO (which went for Gore the same day Forbes delivered his speech in London). Kissing up to big labor, the two Democratic presidential candidates have been at their most liberal. Gore put on events in Des Moines and Los Angeles that had him hugging every blue-collar cliché. "I am pro-labor, pro-union, pro-collective bargaining. I am pro-working family and I always will be," he shouted in

David Brooks is a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

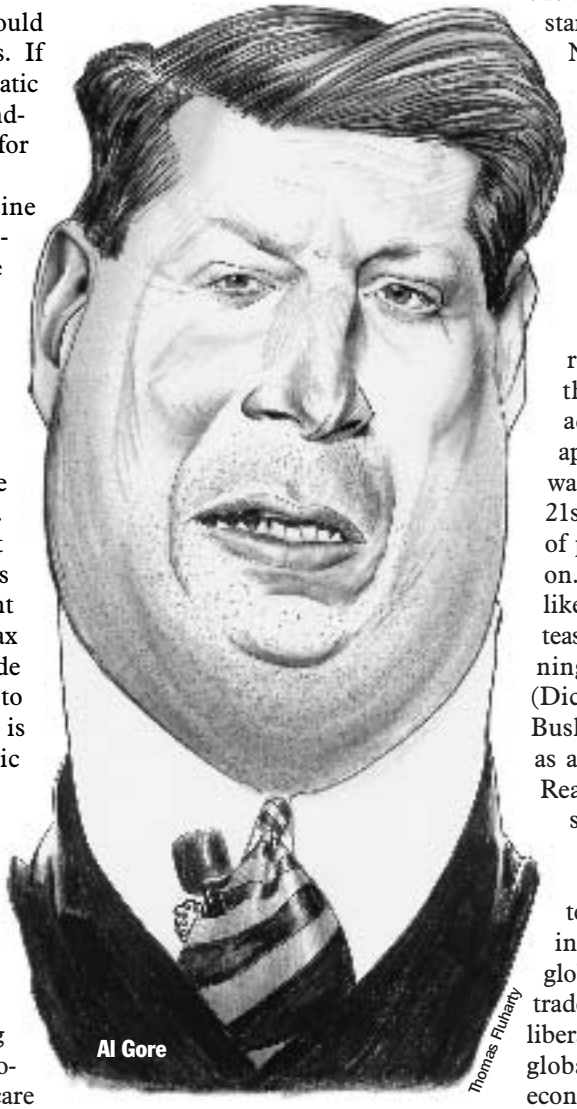
that megaphone manner of his. "If you elect me president, I will veto any anti-union bill that comes across my desk."

Bill Bradley, meanwhile, outflanked Gore to the left by proposing a massive health care reform plan that Kenneth Thorpe, the man who estimated health plan costs for the Clinton administration, estimated would cost $1.1 trillion over 10 years. If there were ever signs of a Democratic reversion to Mondale style tax-and-spendism, this was the week for them.

Bill Bradley has some genuine left-wing elements to his campaign. But, if you look beyond the week's pro-union rhetoric, what exactly did the unions get out of their endorsement of the vice president? Gore remains adamantly pro-trade. The vast majority of his policy proposals come out of the playbook of the Democratic Leadership Council. He never saw a problem he didn't want to throw a tax credit at. It's tax credits for urban empowerment zones, tax credits for day care, tax credits for companies that provide worker training, and tax credits to pay for college education. This is not the old-fashioned Democratic create-an-agency, create-a-program approach.

When a *Washington Post* analysis suggested that Gore's health proposal would threaten to unbalance the budget, the Gore campaign scaled back their plan, so scared are they of being tainted with the deficit-spending charge. Meanwhile, the Gore people attacked the Bradley health care plan, which is a fraction of HillaryCare, as a grotesque government power grab. A Democratic establishment that believes in tax credits and balanced budgets is not a paleoliberal establishment. Clinton is going, but the party will remain Clintonian in policy terms.

And more important, Gore has been Clintonized stylistically. Even at the DLC's conference last year, Gore gave an old-fashioned political speech. He talked about his philosophy of government (he chose the unfortunate phrase "practical idealism"), and he outlined the policies he supported. But in the past weeks, Gore has transformed his stump speech. Now it is a collection of Oprah-ready stories about his growth as a person: his period of disillusionment after his father lost a Senate race, the joys of being a grandfather, his hike up Mount Rainier with his son. There's almost no substance to his speech, but it works. Gore can be insufferable when he is hectoring about some earnest policy idea. But this autobiographical montage is reassuring patter.


Al Gore
Thomas Fluharty

So there is little sign the 2000 election will feature any deliciously Reaganite age of clear left-right ideological divides. No wonder the Democratic Leadership Council's president, Al From, was so triumphalist at the annual DLC meeting in Washington on October 14. From has a storyline for the past nine years, which he laid out at the conference: At the dreary start of this decade, there were "no New Democrats, no New Democratic movement, no New Labor in Britain . . . no Third Way movement sweeping the globe." But now, the Third Way is everywhere on the march. It's the biggest political story of the decade. (He's right about that.)

"As we meet here, we're on a roll . . . the federal government is the smallest since the Kennedy administration!" That was an applause line at the DLC. "If you want to be a successful party in the 21st century, you have to be a party of private sector growth," he went on. Even George W. Bush sounds like a New Democrat, From gloated, teasing that he sounds like he is running for Bill Clinton's third term. (Dick Armey portrayed George W. Bush's compassionate conservatism as an effort to put a happy face on Reaganite conservative policies, a sign that Armey, like From, really doesn't understand George W.)

The one issue that causes stuttering and uncomfortable silences in Democratic ranks is trade and globalization. While endorsing free trade, Bill Bradley has adopted some liberal rhetoric about that demon, the global economy. "The new global economy doesn't care about the 6:30 dinner. It doesn't care that you don't know how to use a computer. The global economy isn't worrying about you at all." The global economy doesn't feel your pain, thus violating the first rule of Clintonism.

If there is a subject on which the post-Clintonian Democrats might be inclined to revert to paleoliberalism, it is economic globalization. On this subject, they show all the signs of liberal guilt. In their heart of hearts, the

New Democrats know that theirs is a movement made up largely of lawyers, wonks, and graduate-degreed information-age workers. They know the global economy isn't so great for those who lack their credentials. There is an undertone of apology when they talk about globalization. They never use the phrase "free trade" for example, which sounds like free markets. DLC types talk instead about "open trade," which sounds like open admissions.

And yet, the New Democrats are not really pulling back from their free trade values. Gore may not talk much about his finest hour, his debate with Ross Perot on NAFTA, but there's no sign he has stepped away from it. This year the DLC deserves credit for stepping up to the plate and addressing the socially awkward subject of globalization head on. The organization even invited an AFL-CIO apparatchik to address the conference. And for the time being there were even signs of a rapprochement with the paleoliberals.

Both sides speak vaguely about the need to come up with some sort of rules to regulate the global economy. The AFL-CIO supports strict rules on things like how banks can lend their money. The DLC presumably would oppose such intrusive regulations. But they aren't talking specifics right now. They are enjoying the happy harmony of fuzziness. In his speech closing out the conference, Al Gore called for a working group to come up with a solution.

With stands like that, Gore is never going to win a chapter in some future edition of *Profiles in Courage*. But then that too is a sign of the Clintonized Democratic party. It never presents a clean target for the Left or the Right. As Stuart Butler of the Heritage Foundation sagely observed last week, Clintonized politicians never tell you where they would ultimately like to take the country. Maybe they don't know themselves. The eighties, alas, are over. Reagan can serve as an inspiration and a policy exemplar, but his political tactics may be of limited use in the age of fuzziness and mush. ♦

The Problem with Wind Power

Hint: It has two wings, feathers, and goes splat when it hits the turbine. BY JONATHAN H. ADLER

ENERGY GIANT ENRON is considering the construction of a new wind power facility in southern California. A *Fortune* 500 company, Enron has invested heavily in wind and other "alternative" sources of energy that do not emit carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. Its proposal to erect wind-powered turbines in the Tehachapi Mountains, north of Los Angeles, is the sort of project green activists usually claim is necessary to prevent ecological Armageddon.

Enron's investment in wind power has environmentalists overjoyed, right? Wrong.

Last month, the National Audubon Society launched a campaign to stop the proposed wind farm. Audubon and other environmental groups are upset because the site is only a few miles from one of the last nesting pairs of California condors. Audubon claims the construction of turbines in "condor pass" could decimate the condor population, much as other wind farms have slaughtered golden eagles, American kestrels, red-tailed hawks, and other birds. According to Audubon, "more eagles are killed by wind turbines than were lost in the disastrous Exxon *Valdez* oil spill."

"It is hard to imagine a worse idea than putting a condor Cuisinart next door to critical condor habitat," Audubon's David Beard told the press on September 13. An Audubon Web site created for the campaign warns of plans by "Enron, the global energy corporation," to build "a complex web of giant wind turbines" in the heart of condor habitat. "If Enron gets its way," the Web site warns, "California condors could be sentenced to death." Despite Enron's efforts to cultivate an eco-friendly image, the company is now in the environmentalists' crosshairs for pursuing alternative energy sources. Billboards in Houston (Enron's headquarters) and Los Angeles repeat Audubon's anti-wind message.

Enron says it has no immediate plans to erect the wind turbines in Gorman Pass, though it did file the project with the state. Nonetheless, Audubon is making the defense of "condor pass" one of its primary campaigns this fall. One of the organization's goals is to cut off federal tax subsidies for wind projects in ecologically sensitive areas. The federal government spends over $1 million per year on condor conservation, while state and federal tax incentives subsidize projects that could put condors at greater risk. The federal wind energy tax credit, which environmentalists supported for years, expired earlier this year. Several members of Congress have sought to renew it as part of a tax-cut package in the current Congress.

Evidence of bird kills at wind farms isn't new. In 1994, *Wind Power Monthly* published a grisly photo of a bird shredded at a wind farm in Tarifa, Spain. The problem for wind power is that the same currents that power wind turbines help keep condors, eagles, and other soaring species aloft. Thus the best sites for wind power generation are also the most likely to present bird prob-

Jonathan H. Adler is a senior fellow at the Competitive Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C., and the author of Environmentalism at the Crossroads.

AP/Wide World Photos

Power-generating windmills near Palm Springs, California

lems. Experts have sought to develop bird-friendly wind turbines for years, with little success. Bird mortality at wind power sites, such as Altamont Pass in northern California, remains substantial. At the same time, wind power's cost is above that of fossil fuels for most applications.

Not all environmentalists, however, view the bird problem as a dealbreaker in the effort to promote alternative energy resources. The Sierra Club calls for turning much of the midwest into the "Saudi Arabia of wind power." The Union of Concerned Scientists Web site contains an extensive discussion of wind power and other renewable energy sources, and yet there is no discussion of the bird kill problem. Likewise at the National Environment Trust's new "hot earth" Web site, which promotes wind as a "solution" to global warming.

Wind energy is now inching toward economic viability—production costs have dropped approximately 70 percent since the early 1980s. Political support is also reaching a tipping point: Most electricity reform proposals circulating in Congress require utilities to generate a minimum percentage of power from "green" sources, including wind. With these breakthroughs in sight, green complaints start to rise.

This is a recurring pattern in the environmental establishment's approach to energy. In the 1970s, hydropower was hailed as a clean, renewable source of power. Although environmental groups opposed many large dam projects, hydropower was praised as the wave of the future. No longer. Today hydropower is conspicuously absent from most lists of "green" power. The "hot earth" site makes no mention of hydro in its discussion of renewable energy sources. At the same time that the Sierra Club and other groups claim America needs to develop alternatives to fossil fuels, they are calling for the removal of dams from coast to coast. Talk of new hydro projects, whether here or abroad, is *verboten* in environmental circles.

Take the example of China. The Asian giant has tremendous coal reserves, which it is likely to burn as it seeks entrance to the club of developed nations. Coal is the most carbon-intensive fuel around, and China already emits several times as much carbon dioxide per unit of economic output as the United States. One would think environmentalists might prefer some alternative. Yet green groups have been steadfast in their opposition to China's Three Gorges Dam, the largest hydropower project ever proposed. Burning coal is bad in their eyes, but not bad enough to justify building a giant dam.

Environmental activists claim the reduction of industrial emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases must be the nation's foremost environmental priority. What, then, explains environmentalist opposition to efforts to develop sources of energy that don't emit greenhouse gases? In their more frank moments, it seems to be an opposition to energy use in general. As then senator Tim Wirth, who later oversaw international environmental policy for the Clinton administration, told the *National Journal* in 1988, "We've got to . . . try to ride the global warming issue. Even if the theory of global warming is wrong, to have approached global warming as if it is real means energy conservation, so we will be doing the right thing anyway."

Fears of global warming may be sufficient to limit continued use of fossil fuels, if the Kyoto Protocol is adopted, but they cannot justify limits on wind, nuclear, hydro, or—next up on the block—solar energy sources. Hence new environmental concerns are hyped to keep additional energy supplies out of reach.

Allowing humanity a cheap, inexhaustible source of energy, in the words of Paul Ehrlich, is "like giving a machine gun to an idiot child." "It's the worst thing that could happen to our planet," Luddite activist Jeremy Rifkin told the *Los Angeles Times*. It appears that the only "alternative" energy sources the environmental establishment will support are those alternatives we haven't got. ♦

So You Want to Cover the Campaign?

An employment test for aspiring political journalists. BY FRANKLIN L. LAVIN

As the political season heats up, there is a need for journalists who can master the complexities of a political campaign. This simple quiz will help you determine whether you have the skills necessary for this critical profession.

1. *Statistics*. The fact that more money will be spent on campaigns this election cycle than ever before means . . .

a. very little since inflation and population growth explain most if not all of the increase.

b. very little since the United States is a large and wealthy nation whose population spends more on pizzas and toothpaste than it does on politics.

c. the very nature of our democracy is imperiled, with special interests dominating and distorting the process to such an extent that the average person does not have a chance anymore.

2. *Analysis*. The upcoming primaries are likely to be among the most hard-fought and divisive ever because . . .

a. it gives journalists a feeling of self-worth to ascribe importance to the events you cover.

b. this thesis is impossible to disprove. Besides, all the other reporters, analysts, and even the candidates and their organizations wholeheartedly agree.

c. it puts into perspective political contests previously thought to have been hard-fought and divisive, such as those that dealt with slavery, war, Prohibition, and civil rights.

3. *Interpretation*. Which sentence does not fit?

a. Although anti-poverty programs often fail to lift people out of poverty and potentially promote harmful behavior, a candidate who wants to trim these programs is heartless and greedy.

b. Although the best funded school districts frequently produce the worst results, a candidate who wants to look at alternatives to public school monopolies is heartless and greedy.

c. Although agricultural subsidies overwhelmingly go to large agribusinesses, a candidate who wants to reduce these programs hates family farmers.

d. One test of leadership is the ability to withstand pressure from groups that seek more from the government.

4. *Advanced Statistics*. If a candidate performs worse among women voters than among men it means . . .

a. different demographic groups have different preferences for everything from movies to cars, so it is predictable that they should have different preferences for presidential candidates, too.

b. candidates' appeal always varies by gender, race, religion, ethnicity, income, and age. This is neither surprising, nor necessarily significant.

c. a candidate's lag among women voters may mean that his opponent is lagging among men voters. This is equally newsworthy and deserving of discussion.

d. the candidate is hostile to women, and unless he starts to pay more attention to "women's issues," he could lose the election.

5. *Advanced Analysis*. An underdog takes a seemingly bold stand on an issue. You should . . .

a. ignore the competitive dynamic between front-runners and laggards causing front-runners to protect their lead and be cautious, while the underdog tries unconventional approaches to make news.

b. ignore the fact that the "underdog" is as much an establishment fixture as the front-runner and has never vigorously pursued the issue he now pretends to care about so passionately.

c. criticize the front-runner for taking a cautious approach to an issue. Praise a dark horse for offering novel policy initiatives.

6. *Bonus Question*. It is 30 minutes before your deadline. The candidate you are covering just outlined a detailed trade policy initiative in a major speech. You should . . .

a. mock the candidate's inability to pronounce the name of the secretary general of the World Trade Organization.

b. ignore the speech and file a humorous item on how his campaign ineptly sent a direct mail fund-raising solicitation to his opponent—since the "Ted Kennedy-mistakenly-got-hit-up-for-a-donation-by-the-Republicans" story is always good for a cheap laugh.

c. discuss the substance of his remarks. Familiarize yourself with offer curves, demand elasticities, import and export figures, and provisions of major trade bills to complete your article.

ANSWERS: All are correct! You will make an excellent political journalist. Anything you write is plausible: Hey, it "might" happen. And in any event, the campaign, your colleagues, your readers, and your editors will have moved on to another issue by the end of the day. ♦

Franklin L. Lavin is a banker in Singapore. He served as White House political director under Ronald Reagan.

Putting Sexual Liberation First

To Clinton's defenders, something more important than the rule of law was at stake. BY DAVID FRUM

IF *An Affair of State*, Judge Richard Posner's new book about the impeachment of Bill Clinton, is indeed as definitive as its admirers insist, my place in history is secure: While the book's index offers only three references to Trent Lott and four to Henry Hyde, it has six to me! (True, Hillary Clinton edges me out with eight, but, I feel compelled to note, four of hers are footnotes.) And all of this thanks to a single sentence published in this magazine in February 1998. Here it is, as edited by Posner. "For David Frum, moralistic conservative, 'what's at stake in the Lewinsky scandal . . . [is] the central dogma of the baby boomers: the belief that sex, so long as it's consensual, ought never to be subject to moral scrutiny at all.'"

According to Posner, the thinking exemplified by my sentence explains how Bill Clinton managed to survive the scandal, and even why he might fairly be thought to have deserved to survive: "[I]f the core of the opposition to Clinton is not that he is a liar or even a criminal (for the Right displayed little indignation over the crimes committed by the participants in the Iran-Contra affair), but that his personal conduct and attitudes are revolting, then the claim of his defenders to be warding off a puritan assault on sexual liberty cannot be dismissed as sheer demagoguery."

The judge wants it to be understood that he himself should not be counted among Clinton's defenders. The bulk of his book is devoted to exposing and scourging the deceitfulness of the case for the president in each and every particular, from its bogus claims of executive privilege at the beginning of the scandal to the two-faced arguments in the Senate trial at its end (see David Tell's review in the September 20 WEEKLY STANDARD). Posner concludes that the president obstructed justice and reckons that a private citizen guilty of offenses comparable to Clinton's would face a prison sentence of between 30 and 37 months.

He goes further still. Posner agrees with the House impeachment managers that Clinton's lying subverted the rule of law. "[T]he president's illegalities constituted a kind of guerrilla warfare against the third branch of the federal government, the federal court system, which had rejected his argument that he should be entitled to immunity from civil suits until the end of his term."

He agrees with William Bennett (whom he criticizes at some length) that Clinton's actions disgraced the American system of government. "Presidents have been called 'the high priests of the American civil religion.' President Clinton may be said without hyperbole to have defiled the Oval Office by his antics. Clinton's disrespect for the decorum of the Presidency, especially when combined with the disrespect for law that he showed in repeatedly flouting it and with his barefaced public lies, constitutes a powerful affront to fundamental and deeply cherished symbols and usages of American government, an affront perhaps unprecedented in the history of the Presidency. Imagine a President who urinated on the front porch of the White House or burned the American flag; these acts could be thought metaphors for what Clinton did."

Posner even follows Robert Bork in regarding Clinton's lies as an assault on the fundamental principles of constitutional self-government. By persisting in his lies even after they had been exploded, and by mobilizing his supporters to express their faith in those lies, Clinton "reminded one of how tyrants exhibit their power by forcing their subjects to express agreement with lies that no one believes, such as that the tyrant is benign and the nation a democracy."

Nevertheless, and despite all that, Posner isn't really sorry that Clinton beat the rap. For as important as constitutional self-government may be, it turns out to be not quite as important as beating back the ever-present threat of sexual puritanism.

Richard Posner is of course far from the first commenter on the Lewinsky scandal to frame the argument in these terms. Shortly before the 1998 congressional elections, Andrew Sullivan published a much-quoted article in the *New York Times Magazine* that asserted the same point even more emphatically. Sullivan discerned in the anti-Clinton camp a new and ominous form of conservatism, one "only nominally skeptical of government power. It is inherently pessimistic—a return to older conservative themes of cultural decline, moralism and the need for greater social control. . . . A mixture of big-government conservatism and old-fashioned puritanism, this new orthodoxy was waiting to explode on the political scene when Monica Lewinsky lighted the fuse." And as Exhibit A for the existence of this new conservatism, Sullivan cited . . . my sentence!

"It would be hard to put better," wrote Sullivan in quoting me, "what was so surprising, and so dismaying, about the Starr Report and the Republican Congress's subsequent behavior. The report was driven, as the Republican leadership seems to be, not merely to prove perjury but to expose immorality. In this universe, privacy is immaterial, hence the gra-

David Frum is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

tuitous release of private telephone conversations, private correspondence and even details of the most private of human feelings."

Sullivan's article is cited approvingly by Posner. Sullivan, in turn, reviewed Posner's book glowingly for the *New York Times Book Review*. It is not fanciful to see in their writings the beginnings of an establishment consensus on the events of 1998; one that parcels out, in apparently even-handed measure, equal blame to Clinton himself and to those affronted by his wrongdoing. It's very bad, this view holds, that the president should conspire to defy the law for his personal advantage. But, as Sullivan observed in his *New York Times* article, "the emergence of religious dogmatists on the far right" had to be considered at least an equivalent "threat to constitutional order and political civility."

Before the new consensus hardens, it might be a good idea to read a little on either side of the offending words of mine that provoked all this viewing-with-alarm. For they mean the opposite of what Posner and Sullivan would have them mean.

The article from which my sentence was snipped was entitled "A Generation on Trial." When it was written, the Lewinsky scandal was barely a month old. In those early days, just about everybody agreed that if President Clinton were proved to have perjured himself and obtained the perjury of others, he would probably have to leave office. Shell-shocked supporters of the president dared argue only that the allegations of obstruction of justice remained unproven, but this play-dumb defense almost immediately wore thin. My article predicted that as it became increasingly impossible to pretend that the president was innocent, his defenders would be forced to say what they really thought: that lying under oath, intolerable under virtually any other circumstance, was permissible if necessary to protect one's sexual freedom—because in their eyes, sexual freedom was the supreme value, the one individual right that outweighed all other moral and political obligations.

Roberto Parada

Here, in its entirety, is the original argument: "Just as the ACLU sees a Frosty the Snowman in front of City Hall on December 24 as the first step toward theocracy, so the president's defenders fear that condemning the Lewinsky affair will ineluctably lead straight back to Puritan New England. Make no mistake: The defense of Clinton's right to lie about his affair with Lewinsky is not, as some of his defenders optimistically suggest, a defense of 'privacy.' If it turned out that Clinton were in the habit of making racist jokes in the company of two or three old friends, the privacy defense would not avail him. If he had lied under oath to cover up an improper deduction on his theoretically private tax return, [his supporters] would lift not a finger for him. The right to privacy? This is a White House in which you're not allowed to smoke. No, what's at stake in the Lewinsky scandal is not the right to privacy, but the central dogma of the baby boomers: the belief that sex, so long as it's consensual, ought never to be subject to moral scrutiny at all."

Posner and Sullivan cite that last sentence to show that sex was the central issue of the case for conservatives; in fact, the sentence warned that sex would become the central issue of the case for liberals. My words were not an unguarded remark that spilled the secret of the vast right-wing conspiracy: They were an accurate prediction (almost my only accurate prediction all year) of how people like Posner and Sullivan would ultimately react. If Clinton had ordered up a campaign of obstruction of justice to avoid paying his income tax, I very much doubt that Sullivan would have rallied to his defense (as, after some hesitation, he ultimately did) or that Posner would find himself unable to answer the question he poses in one of his own chapter headings: Should President Clinton have been impeached? "About all that can be said," Posner perorates, "is that a moral rigorist would be inclined to think that the President committed impeachable offenses, while a pragmatist would lean, though perhaps only slightly, the other way."

In short, rather than say or do anything that might tend to suggest that what Clinton did with Monica Lewinsky was wrong, Posner and Sullivan, however unhappily, ended by excusing the damage Clinton did to the structure of American law and society. Indeed, after a few lines of worry, Posner explicitly shrugs this damage off: "A clearly guilty O.J. Simpson was acquitted of murder in 1995, yet this seems not to have interrupted the steady decline in the nation's murder rate."

All of which raises a very interesting problem. Posner and Sullivan both make the familiar polemical point that conservative moral values tend to conflict with the conservative political ideal of limited government. So eager are moral conservatives to scold and reprove that they have succumbed to the temptation to use the state to foist their repressive creed on everybody else.

There is of course some truth to this charge: Witness the war on drugs. But isn't the real lesson of the Lewinsky imbroglio how sharply *liberal* moral values and *liberal* political ideals now conflict?

As conservatives are reminded any time they criticize a left-tilting decision from the Supreme Court, liberals put great stock in legality. And as conservatives are reminded every time they complain about the ACLU, liberals even put great stock in legalism. And yet, when the test came, a very great many American liberals decided that the president's right to pursue sexual pleasure without interference mattered more to them than his obligation to uphold the rule of law. In other words: When legality clashed with sexuality, sexuality prevailed.

Since it got going in the middle 1960s, the sexual revolution has been hailed by its advocates as the logical culmination of the American experiment in freedom. In practice, however, the sexual revolution has exposed itself as a surprisingly illiberal force in American life. To it we owe the post-1965 disintegration of the family, the institution that best insures individuals against dependence on the state, and the arguments found in Posner's book suggest that the illiberality of the sexual revolution may run even deeper still.

It may be that a self-centered outlook, impatience with rules and restraint, and a disgust with moral judgment is not the stuff of good citizenship. My sentence expressed at the outset of the Lewinsky scandal a fear that people for whom any hint of moral judgment is anathema will lack the strength and courage to defend republican institutions in a time of trouble. Now the news looks even more troubling: People who disdain moral judgment seem to find it difficult to muster much strength or courage even after the moment of trouble has safely passed. ♦

THE FRONT-RUNNER

"The Right Thing for Our Country"

How Jon Kyl and a handful of his Republican colleagues in the Senate engineered the defeat of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

By Matthew Rees

After all the fireworks, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty took a drubbing. Fifty-one senators voted against it, 17 more than were needed to block ratification. Yet up until the very eve of the vote, a high-stakes struggle for the heart of Trent Lott was going on behind the scenes. The majority leader had to choose between holding a vote on ratification and delaying it. His intentions were unclear as late as Wednesday afternoon, when the president called to plead for postponement. That Lott told the president, in so many words, to buzz off was due primarily to the persistence of a small band of conservative Republicans, but also to the arrogance of Senate Democrats and the Clinton administration and the last-minute legal advice of a Washington lawyer.

The backdrop to last week's drama is as follows: President Clinton signed the CTBT, which obliges signatories to permanently forsake all nuclear testing, in September 1996 and submitted the treaty to the Senate a year later. It was immediately referred to the Foreign Relations Committee, where it languished with no hope of going anywhere. Committee chairman Jesse Helms promised not to move on it until the president also submitted the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the Kyoto environmental protocol for ratification—something Clinton showed no intention of doing.

A prolonged stalemate ensued, but it drew little notice outside foreign-policy circles. Indeed, the stalemate might persist to this day but for the spadework of a few Republican senators—Jon Kyl in particular—who were committed either to ensuring the treaty remained bottled up in committee or to killing it outright.

The impetus for action came in April, when Kyl learned the Clinton administration had arranged for an international conference on the future of the treaty, scheduled for September, to be held in New York. This suggested to Kyl the administration would use the conference to mount a massive campaign in favor of ratifying the CTBT. More important, it suggested that for such a campaign to be defeated, he needed to start organizing senators who might oppose the treaty.

Soon thereafter, Kyl drafted Paul Coverdell, an energetic Republican senator and a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, to join his crusade. Their first meeting, in May, was with Lott and Helms, both of whom indicated their support for finding a way to kill the treaty or keep it buried in committee. Kyl and Coverdell promptly began meeting with other Republican senators to gauge their opinions on the treaty; a month later they were pleasantly surprised to discover as many as 30 were already opposed. Equally important, all but one of the 17 GOP senators up for reelection next year indicated they'd be happy to see the treaty defeated in 1999 (Jim Jeffords, a Vermont liberal, was the lone holdout), in hopes of preventing it from becoming a political hot potato during their campaigns. When Kyl and Coverdell shared their intelligence with Lott, he indicated for the first time that he might be willing to bring the treaty up for a vote later in the year.

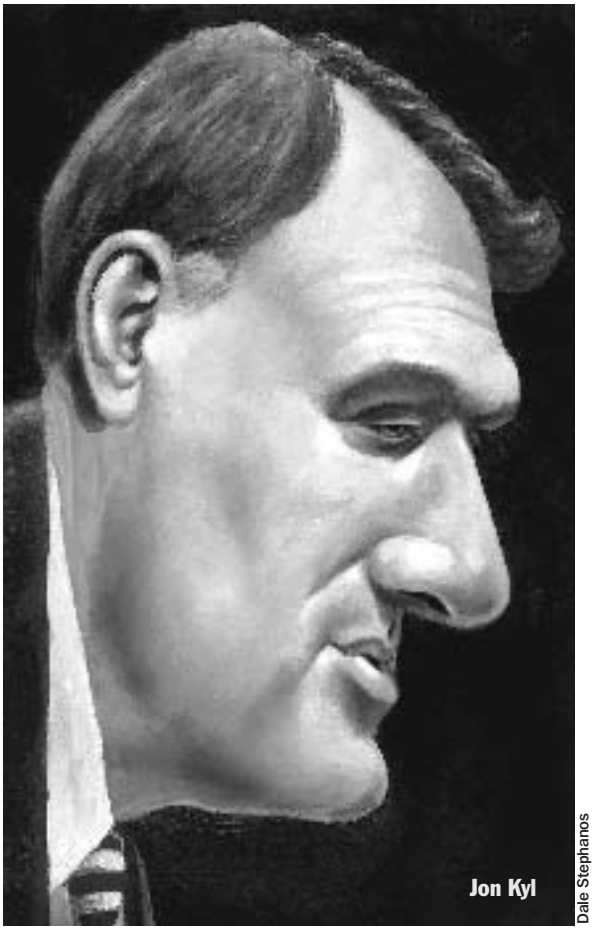
This encouraged the dynamic duo to intensify their efforts during the August recess. They compiled briefing books for Republican senators containing countless articles and memos making the case against the treaty and began recruiting former government officials who could speak to the treaty's many shortcomings. They also brought in two of their conservative colleagues—senators Tim Hutchinson and Jeff Sessions—to expand their advocacy efforts.

Shortly after the senators returned to Washington in September, Kyl, Coverdell, Lott, and Helms met to plot

Matthew Rees is a staff writer at The Weekly Standard.

strategy. Lott had just been informed there were now 34 "no" votes, enough to block ratification of the CTBT. But he and Helms opposed bringing the treaty up for debate until there were 40 hard votes against it. Helms in particular pointed out that some opponents were sure to weaken under pressure from the White House, just as they did during the 1997 debate over a chemical-weapons treaty.

Two developments around this time proved crucial in the effort to defeat the treaty. First, Senate Democrats escalated their criticism of Republicans for refusing to release the CTBT for a vote. On July 20 every Democratic senator had signed a letter urging a vote by September. Then on September 8, in a now infamous statement, Byron Dorgan vowed "to plant myself on the floor like a potted plant" and disrupt Senate business if the Republicans refused to schedule debate and a vote on the treaty. Republicans could barely contain their glee over attacks like these, as they suggested Democrats still hadn't realized the extent of the GOP's mobilization against the treaty.



Jon Kyl

Dale Stephanos

The second development was the success of the Kyl/Coverdell education campaign. Throughout September the two complemented their own canvassing of Senate Republicans with a series of briefings by outside experts. Two former senior officials of the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, now retired, flew in from Hawaii, for example, to speak with senators about the treaty and answer their questions.

Even more valuable was James Schlesinger, whose previous posts include director of the CIA, secretary of defense, secretary of energy, and chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission. In a low-key presentation at a September 21 lunch for Republican senators, Schlesinger spelled out the flaws in the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Some cite this as the turning point in bringing wavering Republicans around to opposing the treaty.

Schlesinger later conducted briefings for small groups of senators, and when Susan Collins, a Maine moderate, wavered, he initiated a private meeting with her. Their 30-minute session helped cement her opposition. Even Lott later acknowledged, "James Schlesinger was the one that had the greatest impact on me."

It's no coincidence that by the end of September, when Kyl, Coverdell, Helms, and Lott met again to evaluate their strategy, 44 Senate Republicans had made solid commitments to vote against the treaty. This prompted Helms to say he would let the treaty out of the Foreign Relations Committee, confident it could be defeated in the full Senate. The lingering question was whether Democrats remained sufficiently clueless about the GOP strategy to keep agitating for a vote.

The answer came quickly. On September 29, senator Joseph Biden told Helms of his plan to offer an amendment to the Labor-HHS appropriations bill with a resolution pledging the Foreign Relations Committee to hearings on the treaty, and pledging the majority leader to schedule debate and a vote on the Senate floor. Lott mischievously called Biden's bluff, saying there was no need for an amendment; he'd be happy to schedule 10 hours of debate on the treaty, then a vote. Kyl and other Republicans thought Democrats would get suspicious at this point, but the only substantive change requested by minority leader Tom Daschle was more time for consideration of the treaty. Lott promptly offered 22 hours, and by October 1 a unanimous consent agreement had passed the Senate, committing the treaty to a vote once the 22 hours had elapsed.

Just why the Democrats fell into the GOP trap of agreeing to a vote is debated in Republican circles. Some believe it was because Daschle, Biden, and the administration still didn't know Republicans had ginned up enough opposition to the treaty to kill it. (If true, this would rank as one of the more extraordinary boners in recent Senate history.) Another theory, advanced by GOP senator Slade Gorton, is that Democrats had concluded they could persuade enough Republicans to vote for the treaty or force a

delay if it were headed for defeat. Daschle confirmed that this was part of the Democratic strategy: "We made the assessment . . . that there would be open-minded Republicans willing to work with us to come up with the necessary revisions." Given the flexibility of Lott and others during debate on the chemical-weapons treaty, this was not an unreasonable expectation, though Daschle also conceded that "there are a lot of people who hold responsibility [for the defeat] and I take my share."

Yet it quickly became obvious the Democrats had been outmaneuvered. The administration initially tried schmoozing a few undecided Republican senators by inviting them to dinner with Clinton at the White House, but the president was brooding, and the evening was a disaster (Clinton slammed the table at one point, complaining, "Trent Lott has me by the short hairs"). Next was a brief war-room offensive, but Republicans were ready with responses. The White House, for example, began trumpeting that 32 Nobel laureates had endorsed ratifying the treaty. Kyl responded with a letter signed by six former defense secretaries opposing ratification. When William Cohen, secretary of defense, held a press conference on the importance of supporting the treaty, Helms went to the Senate floor and quoted from Cohen's statements as a senator opposing a ban on nuclear testing. The ultimate blow came on October 7, when Richard Lugar, the administration's most consistent Republican ally on foreign policy, announced his opposition to the treaty. This, according to Gorton, was "fatal."

Lugar's announcement convinced the administration and Senate Democrats there was no hope of securing enough votes to ratify the treaty, at which point they wisely modified their message. From that point forward, they stressed the danger to the "international community" in rejecting the treaty and the need to postpone the vote. Before long, 62 senators, many of them Republican opponents of the treaty, had signed a letter endorsing this general idea. Lott was clearly intrigued, and did nothing to discourage Republicans like John Warner from calling for delay.

So what prevented Lott from making a last-minute deal? Democrats objected to the central GOP demand in exchange for postponing the vote, i.e. that the Senate not reconsider the treaty before 2001 (Republicans fear Democrats will push for a vote on the eve of next year's elections). Daschle made a last-ditch effort on October 12, writing to Lott that there would be no attempt to schedule a vote this year or next "absent unforeseen changes in the international situation." But even moderate Republican senators ridiculed this exception—"absurd," Gorton told me—and it went nowhere.

Another obstacle to agreement also emerged on October 12, when Kyl began circulating information he'd been given by Doug Feith, a Washington lawyer and senior Reagan Pentagon official. The gist of the matter was that signatories of the CTBT are obligated not to conduct nuclear tests undercutting the object of the treaty even if they have not ratified it (Article 18 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties). This suggested that postponing the vote was a backdoor way of implementing the treaty. Kyl also circulated a brief written in 1996 by John Holum, a senior arms-control official in the Clinton administration, affirming the point.

The final obstacle to a deal was the conservatives' resolve. They'd signaled to Lott their opposition to postponing the vote, but the key episode came late on the evening of October 12. Lott met with Kyl, Coverdell, and Helms to discuss some conversations he'd been having with Daschle, but the senators made it clear they wouldn't support a deal along the lines Daschle was proposing. Later, Jim Inhofe, a Republican critic of the treaty, arrived at the meeting and upped the ante, telling Lott he would use his power to block any effort to postpone the vote. Lott came away from the meeting resigned to holding a vote. It didn't hurt that Dick Cheney, secretary of defense in the Bush administration, called Lott the next day from Canada and urged him to kill the treaty.

Yet even after the vote, Republican senators and their staffs emphasized to me how amazed they were at the ham-handedness of Clinton officials through the entire process. Coverdell, among others, noted that had the president called Lott a week before the vote, instead of two hours before, it might have been possible to cut a deal. Yet rather than extend an olive branch, Clinton devoted much of his October 8 press conference in Ottawa to repeatedly charging the Republicans with politicizing the treaty vote (moments after Clinton made these comments, they were distributed to Lott and other wavering Republicans). Symbolic of the administration's poor handling of its lobbying effort was that on October 13, the day of the Senate vote, Cohen and secretary of state Madeleine Albright were not even in Washington, choosing instead to make a joint appearance at the University of Maine.

These mistakes notwithstanding, Kyl, Coverdell, Helms, and Lott achieved something no one would have predicted a few months ago. It's all the more remarkable in that Republicans have had few such triumphs since winning their congressional majorities in 1994. Defeating the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty may, of course, prove to be an isolated victory. A day after the vote there were already signs of GOP queasiness. Still, a beaming Lott seemed to speak for many of his fellow Republicans when he said, "We did the right thing for our country, and I'm very proud of it." ♦

Feminism on Ice

With Hillary Clinton, in Reykjavík, at the Conference on Women and Democracy at the Dawn of the New Millennium

By Jonathan V. Last

Reykjavík, Iceland

Friday, October 8, 12:20 p.m.—Outside the City Theater, a woman of a certain age is struggling with a heavy torch. Her long black overcoat flutters in the wind, and she smiles wanly into a lone television camera as she tries to lift the thing to shoulder height and light a mini-Olympic flame to kick off the Conference on Women and Democracy at the Dawn of the New Millennium. It takes a while, but the cameraman is patient, and eventually she gets the flame lit before quickly handing the torch over to a male police officer.

The Conference on Women and Democracy at the Dawn of the New Millennium—no abbreviations here—has drawn 300 intelligent, creative, and disgruntled women from the United States, Russia, the Baltic states, and the Nordic countries to the northernmost tip of civilization. The goal of the "delegates" is "effecting positive change," and the highlight of their conference is supposed to be a keynote speech by Hillary Clinton, by acclamation the greatest crusader for women's rights since Eleanor Roosevelt. But Hillary isn't the only bigwig. At the baggage carousel this morning I was standing next to former Texas governor Ann Richards. I smiled and said hello. She ignored me, but my suitcase came out first.

1:00 p.m. The 300 delegates and a few sundry members of the press have taken their seats in the modest main auditorium of the City Theater, a nondescript contemporary building next to a mall. The real meat and potatoes of the conference is supposed to be a set of workshops tomorrow where the delegates will get together to strategize about such issues as gender equity in the media and the relative merits of "voluntary and enforced" change in gender roles. Today they have to listen to speeches.

One of the first speakers is the president of Latvia, Vaira Vike-Freiberga, who cheerfully welcomes her "sisters in the sisterhood of women." Things seem to be going swimmingly in Latvia with the exception of a gigantic porn industry. Young women are sucked into pornography, used, and eventually spit out, hollow husks of their former selves. The culprit here, the president explains, is Western men and their insatiable appetite for porn. But all isn't doom and gloom on the Latvian scene. Last year, the president announces, her country saw more abortions than live births.

Most of the other speakers are comparatively tame. The deputy prime minister of the Russian Federation says that issue No. 1 in Russia these days is to "integrate the gender perspective into legislation and unleash the creativity of women." Iceland's minister for Nordic cooperation laments that "democracy is run by man's priorities."

Strobe Talbott, the token man, representing the U.S. Department of State, rises to defend his brothers but thinks better of it. Freedom is all well and good, he says, but it comes at a price: "With the spread of democracy in what used to be Communist countries, there's been a 10-18 percent drop in the number of women elected to the national legislatures of the region over the past 10 years." "Therefore," continues Deputy Secretary Talbott, "I'm pleased to announce today that the United States will donate"—he takes a Dr. Evil pause—"one million dollars to establish a new program to provide credits to small businesses in Russia." Hey, big spender.

The next speaker is from the Council of Europe. She drones on for so long that Strobe and the Nordic minister begin smiling at one another and passing notes back and forth.

4:00 p.m. A break provides a moment for the delegates to get acquainted. They bustle about hugging and taking pictures as if it were the last day of summer camp. A husky Russian woman in a gold-sequined jacket is wandering through the crowd with an oversized Sony VHS camera from the late '80s taping the spectacle.

After a few minutes the group is herded back into the auditorium, where the chairwomen from the workshops make long speeches about things like "Learning Skills for the 21st Century" and "Making the Most of Networking and Mentoring" and "Promoting Equality Through Legislation and Practice." The first woman launches into a brief for the teaching of "herstory." A speaker from Swe-

Jonathan V. Last is a reporter for The Weekly Standard.

den beams that in her country, 11 of the 20 government ministers are women. "Of course, I'm very proud of that," she says, "but it does not mean that we've reached equality." The workshops all tackle different aspects of male oppression, but there's consensus among the chairs on one point—men need to do more around the house.

Leafing through the program to avoid falling asleep I notice that the delegates' bios all seem similar. There's a director of the International Institute for Women's Networking, a board member of the Swedish Women's European Network, a member of the Council of Women World Leaders, a minister of gender equality, and a minister for gender equality affairs. In an impressive attempt to break down language barriers, a side bar runs throughout the program defining gender jargon in ten languages. My personal favorites are: "Gender contract: A set of implicit and explicit rules governing gender relations which allocate different work and value, responsibilities and obligations to men, women and maintained on three levels: cultural superstructure—the norms and values of society; institutions—family welfare, education and employment systems, etc.; and socialization processes—notably in the family" and "Horizontal segregation: The concentration of women and men into particular sectors and occupations."

Saturday, October 9, 10:00 a.m.—The women are ready to effect positive change, but they won't let me watch. As I file into the building a pretty girl with short blonde hair—definitely not a conference delegate—stops me. "You can't go in there," she says. "The working groups are for working, and the women can't work with men around."

It's raining, and by the time I dash over to the press center next door I'm soaked. I feel better, though, when I find out that even the female journalists were turned away. In fact, the female press are making a real stink about missing the working groups. Someone passes out raincoats, courtesy of Iceland's tourism department, in an effort to placate them. It works.

This is a strange press corps. The mainstream American contingent is limited to two writers from the wires. The other Americans are from publications such as the *Minnesota Women's Press* and *W.I.G.* (Women In General). And then there are the freelances. Every feminist freelance writer in the United States, it seems, has anted up the dollars to get to Iceland. Now, unable to cover the workshops, they are sitting around on "pleather" couches talking about the 1979 U.N. Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. Two are debating the upcoming Hillary-Rudy race. "All my friends in New York City work in the sex industry," laments one, "and he's destroyed their careers."

A State Department aide I talk with can't explain the lack of press interest. Since the first lady is finishing a five-day European tour with a major address at the conference, he says, "You'd think we would get more press than a couple of stringers and a bunch of little weird groups."

12:00 p.m. The rain hasn't stopped, and all of Hillary's photo-ops for the day have been canceled, so she is going to moderate a roundtable discussion after lunch. Milling around looking for something to eat that isn't salmon mousse, I bump into Gov. Richards again and decide to try a different approach. I tell her that her "poor George/silver foot" speech was a formative moment in my political life. Her back straightens, a smile of feline delight curls across her mouth, and she looks right into my eyes. "The line really connected didn't it?" she beams. She proceeds to tell me how well the line connected and how, before it connected, her advisers didn't want her to say it, and how sometimes you just have to let it all hang out, and, by the way, that really was a great line, wasn't it? I ask her which workshop she's in, and it turns out her group is the one on women running for public office. How's it going, I ask? "Great," she says, losing interest in the exchange, "except the problem is, none of the women in my group want to run for public office."

1:00 p.m. The roundtable is supposed to broaden the delegates' perspectives by raising the plight of women in parts of the world not represented at the conference. It begins with a 10-minute video collage of feminist testimonials against a soundtrack of African drumming. When the video ends, Hillary is introduced as a "tireless fighter for women's rights and democracy." She walks on stage in a smart black suit with a natty yellow scarf and gets a staggering ovation. The other participants are impressive in their own way. Rasha Al-Sabah, a professor at Kuwait University, says that she would like her government to allow women to run for political office. Vera Stemkovskaya of Belarus expresses her hope that the disappearances in her country will end soon. For her part, moderator Clinton urges more Web sites for women.

7:30 p.m. Women may be more virtuous than men, but that doesn't mean they don't like to disco. The attendees and flaks and press and staff have all gotten together for dinner. In fact, everyone is here except the first lady, who, I am told by a State Department aide, is back in her hotel room polishing tomorrow's big speech. The guys from State are pretty mellow until a devastatingly beautiful Swedish reporter makes the rounds. Her hair is long, curly, blonde, lustrous. She looks like a Pantene ad as she glides through the ranks touching arms and smiling in concentrated bursts. Suddenly every guy is trying to say something, anything, to keep her from moving on.

AP/Wide World Photos

After dessert is served, a fog machine whirs, three disco balls begin spinning, and five young men rise up out of a trap door in the dance floor. Accompanied by an eight-piece band, they embark on an hour long ABBA-Bee Gees medley. I can't believe Hillary is missing this.

Sunday, October 10, 10:00 a.m.—The early results are in and it looks like every one of the workshops was a success! One group has decided that the world "needs more women in politics; women are 50 percent of the populace, so they should have 50 percent of elected positions." An argument offered for this conclusion is that the more equal men and women are, "the better the sex life is for women." Another group has come up with the notion that women should make a feature film about women's rights. Get Jodie Foster on line one.

One group announces that "Some of the ideas that emerged cannot be put into concrete projects—yet." The participants, however, have come up with some pretty nifty non-concrete maxims, such as, "In the politics of the new millennium, to win is not to gain," and what is needed is "a new politics where victory is replaced by inclusiveness." Another chair announces, "We have proved that working together is victory, and we are ready for action!"

At least three of the groups have decided that women need to embrace the Internet (Hillary was right!), and while many of them favor not only mentoring, but also networking, there is general agreement about the media. An American, Jill Merrick, of Merrick Communications, points out the need to change the traditional media to get "more serious coverage of women." As Jill sees it, until a "new girls network" replaces the you-know-what, the media's "traditional male outlook" will prevent events like the conference from getting the attention they deserve.

Hillary thinks these are all fine ideas. She lauds the "commitment to honest dialogue" and the "courage" it took these women to attend. "Women's rights are human rights," she says thoughtfully. "And human rights are women's rights."

It turns out though, that Hillary is largely responsible for keeping the conference out of the news. She canceled the press plane for the trip, and her office campaigned to discourage the networks from coming. This isn't particularly surprising, since her hallmark has always been the ability to think left and live right. Whatever. The girls love her anyway. Conference adjourned.

1:15 p.m. Well, not really. After the formal adjournment, it's off to another luncheon hosted by Radisson SAS Hotels. With all of the wine and haddock and picture taking, the delegates are still obviously networking and building self-esteem. Unfortunately, the buzz is that some of them—a lot of them, actually—aren't particularly pleased with the results. A delegate complains, "This one Norwegian woman was like 'We've got to be inclusive of men, we must be inclusive of men.' And I was like, 'Oh come on!'"

Another delegate, Dianne Post of the American Bar Association's Central and East European Law Initiative, sums up the mood saying, "A lot of potential was wasted." As she sees it, the problem is, was, and always will be men.

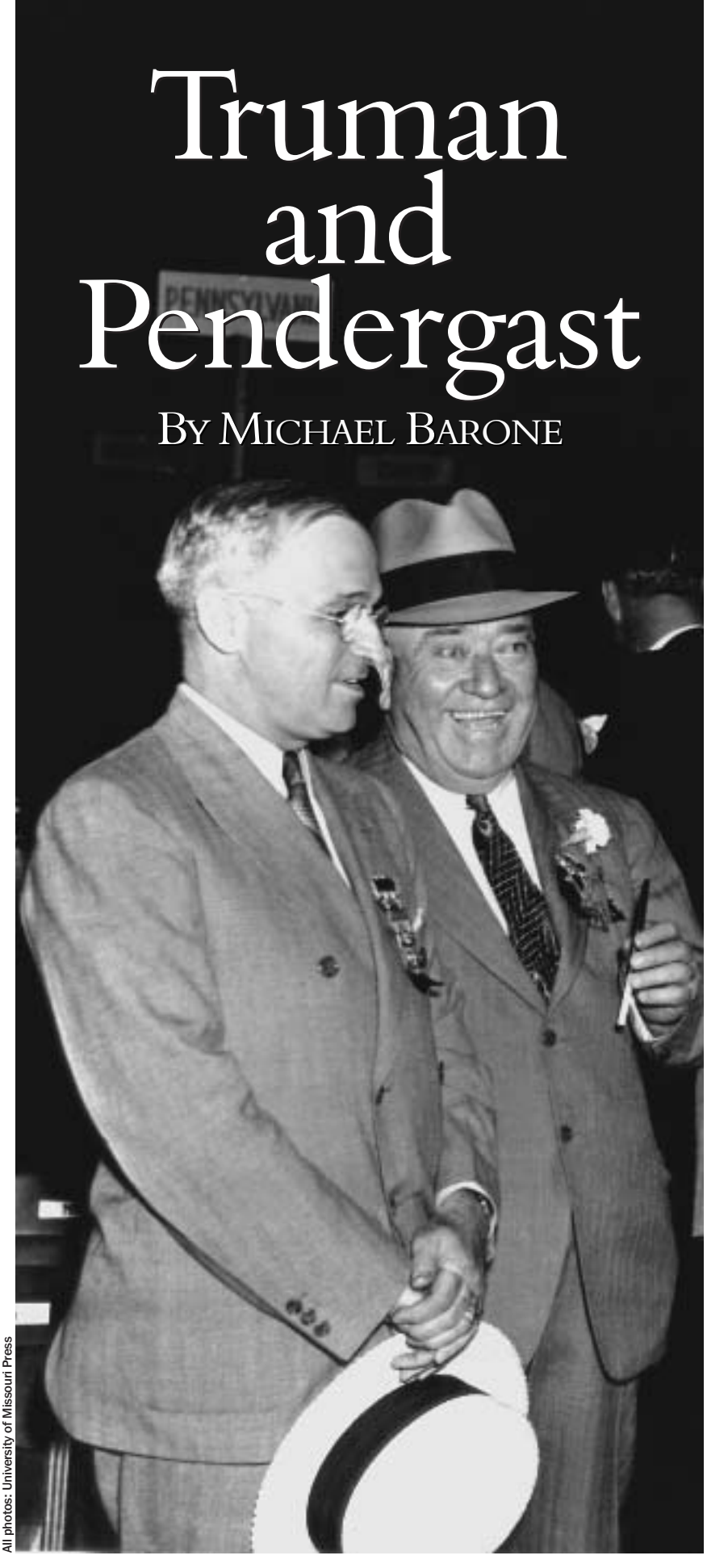
"It's enough of women changing, now men have to change," she hisses. "Sixty-seven percent of all women have been battered by their boyfriends or husbands. You want to avoid being raped and killed? Don't go with men, be a lesbian." Why, I ask, do women ever get married? "I don't know either! I've never been married, I wouldn't get married." In fact, she continues, "I think we should abolish marriage and replace it with legal contracts."

Dianne thinks the conference missed a real opportunity to learn from the Nordic peoples, whose political parties have gender quotas. There is, she explains, hard social science proving that without quotas women can't behave like real women. "There's a critical percentage around the world of about 30 percent of women before they can have their own voice. Otherwise they just got there by playing the boys' rules."

It's enough to make a girl wistful for the days of sit-ins and bra-burnings. "Now we're not marching," Post says sadly, "but I wish we were." Someday, maybe. The follow-up conference has already been planned. ♦

Truman and Pendergast

By Michael Barone



All photos: University of Missouri Press

Was Harry Truman a great president, as has generally been conceded in the last twenty years? Or was he a corrupt bumbler, as was generally believed in 1952, when not only Republicans but Democratic nominee Adlai Stevenson casually blamed him for "the mess in Washington"?

We have absorbed from Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s poll (mostly of liberals) on the greatness of presidents the habit of awarding them one-word verdicts—"near great," "failure," and the like. But one word will not do to characterize Truman, or most other presidents for that matter. Truman was in some ways a great president, in others a disaster, and in still other ways everything in between.

What kind of man was he? Useful information comes from *Truman and Pendergast*, Robert Ferrell's short study of the relationship between Truman and the Kansas City political boss who was his great patron for the first years of his political career. And more can be found in *The Kansas City Investigation*, a report written by Rudolph H. Hartmann, the Treasury Department investigator who brought about Pendergast's prosecution for income tax evasion in 1939. Ferrell unearthed Hartmann's manuscript from "the Morgenthau diaries," which the longtime treasury secretary deposited in the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library. The University of Missouri Press has published it in a handsome format along with Ferrell's book.

Ferrell has published many books on Truman; his latest contains material he has not before had a chance to package. *Truman and Pendergast* reads like the reminiscences of a charming old-timer with political stories to tell—a bit cryptic here, gossipy there, with a cast of characters once familiar to every political insider in Missouri but now brought fitfully back to life by one of the few who still have memories of the old days, a great American political story rescued from the dusty shelves of archives by a first-class scholar.

Michael Barone is senior writer at U.S. News & World Report *and the co-author of* The Almanac of American Politics.

Truman was never quite the utterly ordinary man of legend. He came from Jackson County gentry; his grandfathers were big landowners in a county which was also the site of Kansas City, bound in time to become entirely metropolitan. Young Harry had a serious, though not a college, education; he read widely in history; he took piano lessons from a teacher who had taken lessons from Paderewski, the famous pianist and, at one point, prime minister of Poland. Midwestern culture was not as barren as Sinclair Lewis has had us believe.

Truman, like his father, had an almost Irish capacity for not making money. For years before the First World War, he worked as a farmer following a mule plowing furrows. It did not earn him enough money to marry his childhood sweetheart Bess Wallace, who lived with her mother in a seventeen-room house in the county seat of Independence. Mrs. Wallace was a horrifying battle-axe who, although she lived until 1952, never admitted that Truman had amounted to anything.

Harry Truman's genius was joining. He joined the Masons and in time ascended to the thirty-third degree. He maintained faithful membership in the Baptist church. He once lived in a rooming house in Kansas City with one of Dwight Eisenhower's brothers (did they ever think that he and Ike would both become president?). He joined the Army Reserve and served as an artillery officer in France, showing genuine bravery and skill. He came back to Kansas City, married Bess, and went into the haberdashery business with his friend Eddie Jacobson—and in the recession of 1921-22 went bankrupt, with a staggering debt of $8,900.

At that point he was thirty-eight and in desperate need of a job. Enter Tom Pendergast, the son of Irish immigrants and boss of the First Ward of Kansas City since the death of his brother in 1911. Jackson County government was headed by a board of three judges, one elected county-wide, one from Kansas City, and one from the eastern district, including Independence and the farming townships that had less than one-fourth of the county's population. In 1922 Truman ran for the eastern district, got the support of the high-minded editor of the *Independence Examiner*, and then of Pendergast. He was a beneficiary of malapportionment. One of the attractions of the job was that its holders could not be sued on personal debts.

Truman won the six-candidate Democratic primary with a plurality. He saw that the road to success was to pave the dusty roads of Jackson County. Pendergast owned the Ready Mixed Concrete Company. Yet Truman insisted on giving contracts to the lowest bidder. Pendergast backed him up; he had plenty of business in Kansas City, paving over Brushy Creek and in time building the huge concrete courthouse there. Truman was honest but loyal, an unbeatable combination for Pendergast. Truman was defeated for reelection in 1924, the Calvin Coolidge landslide, but, with Pendergast's support, was elected presiding county judge in 1926 and reelected in 1930.

Truman and Pendergast
by Robert H. Ferrell
Univ. of Missouri Press, 162 pp., $25

The Kansas City Investigation
Pendergast's Downfall, 1938-1939
by Rudolph H. Hartmann
edited by Robert H. Ferrell
Univ. of Missouri Press, 191 pp., $25

Local custom imposed a two-term limit on officeholders. Truman had worked to create a new congressional district after the 1932 election, but Pendergast gave it to someone else, a man who had earned a great reputation as an expert on the Philippines. Truman sought the nomination for county collector, which would have maintained his immunity from debt, but Pendergast gave it to a candidate chosen by banker William Kemper. He seemed stymied, but Pendergast had other ideas.

Meanwhile, in 1926, reformers got Kansas City to adopt a city manager form of government. As usual, reform backfired: Pendergast appointed a stern-looking Presbyterian named Henry McElroy who cast a tolerant eye on Pendergast's exactions from illegal speakeasies and houses of prostitution. In October 1932, the Democratic nominee for governor died. Pendergast substituted Judge Guy Park, from nearby Platte City, who cast a tolerant eye on Pendergast's rackets there. Park was elected in the Democratic landslide, and named Pendergast's man the insurance commissioner. When the state won an $11 million judgment against insurance companies, Pendergast ended up with perhaps $500,000 of the money. In 1935 he got control from Harry Hopkins of WPA patronage in Missouri—80,000 jobs. He built a $125,000 mansion on concrete-paved Ward Parkway, near the new concrete-paved Country Club Plaza shopping center.

It was said that Pendergast ran the state out of the Jackson Democratic Club at 1908 Main Street; the governor's mansion in Jefferson City was called Uncle Tom's Cabin. In 1934 the all-powerful Pendergast decided that the nomination to oppose Republican Senator Roscoe Conkling Patterson should go to Harry Truman. He had a well-earned reputation, even among Pendergast's enemies, for honesty. He had seen to it that Jackson County had more paved roads than anywhere else, except Wayne County, Michigan, and Westchester County, New York. He was a Baptist and a Mason and a World War veteran—great selling points in outstate Missouri, the part of the state outside metropolitan St. Louis and Kansas City. Truman won the Democratic nomination and, in a hugely Democratic year, the general election. A ruined haberdasher at thirty-eight, he was a United States senator at fifty. Then Harry Truman's luck seemed to run out. He was patronized by most senators; only a few would spend any time with him (one was Indiana's Sherman Minton, whom he would later appoint to the Supreme Court).

Pendergast owned race horses and bet heavily on the races; in one season he lost the unimaginable sum of $600,000. He needed more money and got it out of the insurance settlement. In 1936 he thought to maintain his political prominence by casting ghost votes; Jackson County was recorded as casting 295,000 votes in 1936, 73 percent for

St. Louis politicians in 1937: Mayor Bernard Dickman, Governor Lloyd Stark, and Senators Bennett Champ Clark and Harry Truman.

Roosevelt, more than it has ever cast since. (In 1996, though considerably more populous, it cast 247,000 votes.) Pendergast supported the governor elected that year, Lloyd Stark. But Stark, an Annapolis graduate and the nation's leading apple farmer, had national ambitions. He fired Pendergast's insurance commissioner and brought to Franklin Roosevelt's Treasury Department evidence of Pendergast's insurance scam.

Roosevelt had come to see Stark as the key figure who could deliver Missouri to him in 1940. Truman's pro-New Deal voting record counted for little, and he had voted for Pat Harrison over Roosevelt's choice, Alben Barkley, for majority leader in 1937. Roosevelt and Morgenthau encouraged the investigation of Pendergast. He was indicted in 1939, pled guilty, and went to jail for a year and a day.

All of which left Truman, in the calculations of the pundits of his day, a dead duck for reelection in 1940. Stark was running for Senate (though he also boomed himself for president if Roosevelt did not run and vice president otherwise). Also running was Maurice Milligan, brother of the U.S. attorney from Kansas City who helped bring down Pendergast. Truman's campaign was in many ways pathetic. He had far less money than Stark, and was grateful ever after to a man who contributed $500. He had the covert opposition of his Senate colleague Bennett Champ Clark, an indolent alcoholic whose father had been speaker of the House. Truman's campaign manager was a shady character from Republican southwest Missouri, with whom he afterwards broke.

Truman solicited support from black politicians in St. Louis; then and later, Truman didn't much like blacks, but felt they should have equal rights. He dickered with Democrats in southeast Missouri's Bootheel, and traded support with their candidate for governor, and then got them to pressure St. Louis ward heelers to support him. He got the support of Louis Jean Gualdoni, the political boss of St. Louis's Italian neighborhood, the Hill. Gualdoni had been a professional boxer, and could have been a contender if his fiancee had not forced him to leave the ring. This was a formidable man, Ferrell reports. "At the national convention in New York in 1924, Gualdoni asked some Ku Klux Klan people on the floor if they had credentials. When they attacked him he knocked out two and hit the third in the stomach so hard that, so said a newspaper article, 'You couldn't see Gualdoni's fist, it was buried so far into the man's stomach.'" Those were the days when politics was politics.

On primary night in August 1940, Truman thought he had lost; there is dispute about whether he went off with buddies the next day drinking. (He may have lied to the now portly but always adored Bess Truman about that; her father was an alcoholic and killed himself, and she abhorred drinking.) But as the votes came in, Truman surged ahead. He won by a 7,000-vote margin in Gualdoni's ward, and 7,976 statewide: The vote was 41 percent for Truman, 40 percent for Stark, and 19 percent for Milligan.

August 1940, if we can take our eyes off Louis Gualdoni and the Bootheel Democrats for a moment, was the high-water mark of totalitarianism. Hitler had overrun Western Europe in June, and had started the Battle of Britain in August; Hitler and his allies—Mussolini and Stalin and the Japanese—had control of most of the land mass of Eurasia, and were prepar-

ing to take control of the rest; Roosevelt, the devious foe of Truman, was running for a third term, but had not yet embraced the policies of aiding Britain or instituting a military draft; yet these great issues, we may be sure, were not for the moment engaging Harry Truman's full attention. He had some knowledge of history, but few of his Senate colleagues appreciated that; he had a capacity for hard work, which his reputation as Pendergast's senator obscured. These strengths would become apparent in the next four years. As chairman of the special committee investigating the conduct of the war, Truman would earn a national reputation as he gave constructive aid to the war effort—although after sniffing out evidence of the Manhattan Project, he did not look into it further at the request of secretary of war Henry Stimson.

In his wonderful book *The Future of American Politics*, first published in 1952, Samuel Lubell started off with a description of Truman as "the man who bought time." As Lubell wrote, "Only a man exactly like Truman politically, with both his limitations and his strong points, could have been the Democratic choice for Roosevelt's successor." It was a settled rule of politics at that time that no Catholic and no southerner could be president. For the Republicans this was no problem: Most of their officeholders were northern Protestants. For the Democrats it was a problem indeed: Most of their officeholders, those with credentials that could make them remotely conceivable as national candidates, were either southerners or Catholics.

Truman was one of the very few who was neither. He was a Baptist, not a Catholic, which made him a suitable candidate to Pendergast for presiding county judge in 1926 and a suitable candidate to Roosevelt as vice president in 1944. In contrast, Truman's major competitor to replace Henry Wallace as vice president that year, James Byrnes, a man with a far more formidable record in the Senate and a much stronger reputation as a policymaker, was a southerner. Byrnes, who was from South Carolina, had left the Catholic Church as a youngster (if he hadn't, he could never have been elected there); as a southerner he was suspect and as an apostate Catholic he was vetoed by Ed Flynn, the politically canny boss of the Bronx.

Another potential competitor, Alben Barkley, was a Protestant from Kentucky, but was out of favor because he had resigned as majority leader over Roosevelt's veto of a tax bill in 1944. Truman had a New Deal voting record, mostly; he was from a border state; he had supported blacks on issues like the anti-lynching laws, and he had won their support in the key 1940 primary. Yet he was proud of his Confederate veteran uncle, and his mother, who lived to see him president, still bristled at how Yankee troops had treated her family in the War Between the States. With Byrnes and Barkley eliminated, Truman was the only conceivable choice for vice president—and for president, since it was apparent to any who saw him in person that Roosevelt, if reelected, would not live out his term.

The convicted Pendergast in prison, 1940.

So the characteristics that had made Truman the candidate of a corrupt political boss in 1922 and 1934 also made him, after he survived his near-political-death experience of 1940, the only possible successor to the president of the United States four years later. More important perhaps, Truman was honest, which saved him from ignominious political defeat when he was Pendergast's political creature. And of course, he was stubborn and loyal, as he demonstrated when he attended Tom Pendergast's funeral in Kansas City. If not for these qualities, he would surely have ended up an impoverished has-been, henpecked by his wife and her insufferable mother. Instead, in April 1945, Truman became the commander in chief of the largest military force ever assembled by man, and, in August 1945, he made, unhesitatingly and without self-doubting guilt, the decision to use the atomic bomb to end World War II.

Truman's autodidactic but not contemptible knowledge of history contributed to his habit of making swift and remorseless decisions, more of which were right than wrong: the Marshall Plan, the Berlin airlift, the recognition of Israel, the NATO alliance, the defense of Korea, the firing of MacArthur, and, memorably, the characterization of the case against Alger Hiss as a "red herring." (Actually, the phrase was a reporter's, asking him if that was what the Hiss case amounted to, but Truman quickly snapped, "Yes.")

Robert Ferrell's account of the relations of Truman and Pendergast reminds us that we cannot take the triumphs of American history partially, but must take them whole. Truman's career was intertwined with corruption; he was petty and unwisely loyal; he was woefully unprepared for, but worked very hard at, the responsibilities he undertook (in 1945 he would stay up all night reading official papers, trying to figure out what Roosevelt had been up to). But he was also—as Ronald Reagan, who similarly grew up in the Midwest, would be—a man of sufficient intellect, knowledge, and character to get most of the big things right. It leads one to think that there is something in the basic character of this country that produced our great historic achievement of rolling back the high-tide of totalitarianism. And yet, if Pendergast had not needed a Baptist in 1934, or Louis Gualdoni had not delivered the Hill in 1940 . . . ♦

The Descent of Men

Males seem to be in trouble, but evolutionary psychology can't explain why. **BY HUGH LIEBERT**

The patriarchy seems to be crumbling. Men are earning less, fading from higher education, and committing more crimes and suicides. If pressed to locate the origin of men's fall, some might point to a smoky room filled with angry feminists sometime in the 1960s. But if two new studies are to be believed, they are off by about 500,000 years.

Lionel Tiger, author of *The Decline of Males*, and Helen Fisher, author of *The First Sex*, argue that men and women navigate modern society with minds adapted to life in small tribes on the African savanna. For Tiger, men are declining because their hard wiring is ill suited to modern realities. For Fisher, women are on the rise because emerging economic and social trends happen to favor the traits nature selected for them. Tiger bemoans the fact and Fisher applauds it, but both explain the decline of males and the rise of females through evolutionary psychology, the youthful discipline which seeks to understand human behavior by examining its evolutionary underpinnings.

Tiger is an anthropology professor at Rutgers University who worries that men are locked in a downward spiral that will ultimately leave them at the bottom of the social heap. Or worse. "The male is becoming so much trouble for everyone that in the future, in societies willing and able to control such matters, he will be lucky even to be born." Recently women's confidence and power have increased markedly, while men's have decreased. In the "inexplicit and undeclared war between the sexes," Xena the Warrior Princess is routing a disoriented, pitiable Iron John.

The Decline of Males
by Lionel Tiger
Golden, 256 pp., $23

The First Sex
The Natural Talents of Women and How They Are Changing the World
by Helen Fisher
Random House, 320 pp., $25.95

Tiger argues that the decline of males is largely due to female-controlled contraception: "It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the contraceptive pill on human arrangements." By making promiscuity less risky, the Pill allows sex for sex's sake, and, more important, enables women to control reproduction.

Tiger believes women's power over contraception alienates men from the "means of reproduction" and contributes to what he calls "paternity uncertainty." Tiger argues that this paternity uncertainty explains decreased fatherhood, a higher divorce rate, and a higher proportion of single mothers. For men, ensuring one's place in the next generation is the biological meaning of life. When a man is unsure of his place in the march of generations, argues Tiger, he is likely to resort to destructive behavior out of desperation.

Of course, birth control is nothing new. In its most rudimentary forms, it consists of "Dear John" letters and "Let's just be friends" lines—in women's rebuffing male advances. Evolutionary psychologists call this female choice and use it to explain why men were forced to accept monogamy: Because they could refuse sex unless offered commitment, resources, and stability, women have always controlled the means of reproduction.

Tiger seems correct to emphasize the importance of paternity certainty to men. Women want good genes and resources, men seek a guarantee that their genes will be represented in the next generation, so a woman agrees to be faithful, a man agrees to stick around to raise the kids, and marriage results. Marriage emerges from this kind of arrangement in every known society.

Even with marriage, though, paternity certainty was never assured. According to the theories of evolutionary psychology, men want to father children in extramarital relationships, because by doing so they might fool another man into caring for their own children, spreading their genes with little effort and no investment. Thus, a man's optimal evolutionary strategy is to maintain a faithful wife while having as many flings as possible. Humans evolved in an environment which favored marriage *and* adultery, and thus uncertainty was always common in humans' evolutionary environment.

And is paternity uncertainty really growing these days? Any study of the matter would have to track how many babies are products of their mothers' adultery—a touchy subject, to say the least. Despite this difficulty, some studies have been completed, and the results show that somewhere between 5 and 30 percent of babies are conceived by married women in extramarital sex. But even at the worst, 70 percent of men can still be fairly certain about siring their children. And there's no evidence that this figure has declined in recent years.

What has declined is marriage—and here's the curious thing, for evolutionary psychology predicts that it is women, rather than men, who should suffer from the rise of divorce and premarital and extra-marital sex. And, Helen Fisher claims in her new study, *The First Sex*, the exact opposite seems to be true. She argues that "we stand at the doorway of what may become an age of women." This is so because "thousands of generations of [women] performing mental and physical acrobatics as they raised helpless infants"

Hugh Liebert is an undergraduate at Harvard University.

have equipped modern women with an arsenal of skills different from (and superior to) those of men. For instance, women are "web thinkers"; they tend to think holistically, "in webs of interrelated factors, not straight lines." Women naturally excel at language skills. Women are more emotional, more sympathetic, and consequently more personable.

These traits are proving advantageous in today's economy. Flat corporations—companies that eschew the traditional pyramidal hierarchy—resonate with women's web thinking. The information age favors women's knack for language and communication. In fact, it is hard to find a recent economic or social trend unfavorable for women. According to Fisher, everything from the Internet to alternative medicine declares the rise of a new first sex. Fisher ends with a foggy vision of men's equal place in the wonderland that's about to emerge. But the implications of her argument are clear: If women's skills are in high demand, men's are not. There can be only one "first sex."

Fisher uses evolutionary psychology to explain women's rise, but, like Tiger, she shirks the consequences of her choice. Evolutionary psychology insists that lasting marriage is essential for women because it enables them to extract male resources necessary for protection during pregnancy and child rearing. For Fisher, however, contraception and abortion free women to "spend less time pregnant and caring for children than at any other time in human evolution." Likewise, rising divorce rates are an unfortunate result of women's place in the workforce, but do not tarnish her rosy view of women's future.

But even if we set aside the problem that the science Tiger and Fisher use doesn't actually support them—and even if we set aside the problem that evolutionary psychology is fairly questionable science to begin with—a question still remains: Why is it that two commentators with such different perspectives would start from a common observation of the decline of men?

The answer is that they start from the decline of men because it's true and stands as the most stunning sociological fact of our day. Not only are the statistics alarming—on education, income, crime, and much more—but men seem to suffer an affliction that numbers cannot express. Men often seem confused; manliness and gentlemanliness seem empty concepts; the proper socializing of young men seems increasingly difficult. Evolutionary psychology is not going to help us here—indeed, the fact of modern male decline is one of the strongest pieces of evidence *against* evolutionary psychology. But an explanation we certainly need, and quickly. ♦

BCA

Two Cheers for Postmodernism

A southern gadfly makes the conservative case for postmodernism. **BY STEVEN J. LENZNER**

Love is the most desirable end for human beings, just as death is the most inevitable. That's why, in the admirably ambitious *Postmodernism Rightly Understood*, Peter Augustine Lawler's most important ambition is to show how modern life and postmodern thought combine to make it hard for us to address questions of love and death.

Postmodernism Rightly Understood
The Return to Realism in American Thought
by Peter Augustine Lawler
Rowman & Littlefield, 208 pp., $60

But Lawler is a gadfly—of that distinctively southern sort, with an enviable combination of intelligence, learning, and wit—and in *Postmodernism Rightly Understood* he has another ambition as well: to usurp the title of "postmodern" for conservatives, to show how the central insights of postmodernism can be understood in a manner congenial to the Right.

Of course, the notions we typically think of as postmodern have borne more than a casual relation to the most pernicious of politics, Right as well as Left. Lawler therefore attempts to show how postmodernism "rightly understood" would somehow preclude this characteristic immoderation. His answer—with a gadfly's typically ingenious twist—is to invoke the great hero of conservative political theorists, Alexis de Tocqueville. According to Lawler, Tocqueville was a postmodern thinker *avant la lettre* whose observations on the restiveness of American society anticipated the leading postmodernists' most familiar complaints about excessive individualism, anxiety amidst prosperity, and the insidious tyranny of the everyday.

Lawler finds the most compelling spokesman for contemporary postmodernism in the Catholic novelist Walker Percy, to whom he devotes half his book's pages. Indeed, Percy is clearly Lawler's hero, *the* thinker for our time. But Lawler prepares his case for Percy by way of two teachings that have had a certain vogue in recent years: Francis Fukuyama's claim that we have reached the end of history and Richard Rorty's democratic pragmatism.

By Fukuyama's account, the end of history is marked by the triumph of liberal democracy. Man has been pacified by commerce, and all his essential needs have been "satisfied." Through a "spirited" affirmation of his humanity, Fukuyama's post-historical man can still lead a meaningful human life, albeit within the constraints mandated

Steven J. Lenzner is a political theorist in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

by history's coronation of liberal democracy.

Lawler finds Fukuyama's account objectionable in its disregard for our awareness of our own mortality. Fukuyama wants man to be historically "wise," to recognize that nothing exists outside the realm of history. Yet how, Lawler asks, can a "spirited" man possibly be "satisfied" with the idea of his own radical contingency? The certain prospect of eternal nothingness does not make for a good night's sleep.

Lawler turns from Fukuyama to Richard Rorty, an intellectual who self-consciously places his intelligence in the service of superficiality. Lawler shows that Rorty's doctrine is an attempt, wildly unsuccessful, to combine Martin Heidegger's teaching on death with John Dewey's faith in progress and democracy. According to Heidegger, the fundamental human experience is anxiety in the face of one's own mortality. Nature and the universe are indifferent: Every man is entirely alone. The best a human being can do is resolutely to confront radical contingency. An "authentic" life is an anxious one.

And yet, though Rorty is not oblivious to the problem of death, he would like to be. As long as man is troubled by death—as long as he is human—he will act in troubling, passionate ways. He will not always be nice. He will even occasionally be cruel. And cruelty is to be avoided at all costs. So Rorty preaches ignorant indifference to our true situation. He sets forth a doctrine of unseriousness that he hopes will be taken seriously: Passionless vulgarity will be the salvation of mankind. The Rortyan pragmatist, Lawler concludes, "cannot face without flinching what he really knows about his own existence."

Lawler's devastating critique of Rorty is coupled with a short analysis of Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* that is Lawler's least satisfactory section. Though Lawler variously describes Bloom as, among other things, a disciple of Rousseau, an "atheistic Socratic," and an "ambiguous modern," his Bloom is at his core a twentieth-century man, influenced above all by History and Heidegger. Lawler fails to do justice to Bloom as a student of Tocqueville, and he ignores Bloom's obvious purpose in *The Closing of the American Mind*: to counteract, in the name of genuine liberal education, the harmful influence of the very ideas Lawler attributes to him.

UPI / Corbis-Bettmann

Our first good postmodernist and our last? Alexis de Tocqueville and Walker Percy.

And yet, in describing Bloom as an "atheistic" Socratic rather than simply a Socratic, Lawler does suggest that modern life and ideas *necessarily* color even those who seek to return to earlier points of view. Modernity, Lawler contends, is at the same time inescapable and unacceptable. As such, we have no choice but to be postmoderns. And since we cannot reject postmodernism, we must seek to understand it "rightly" and "realistically." For Lawler, postmodernism *is* realism, albeit of a sort not frequently encountered. Postmodern "realism" has its roots in Pascal, not Machiavelli; it is Christian and haunted. Having faith in the good sense of common people, it is democratic as well. And as a guide for this genuine postmodernism—a sort of Christian existentialism leavened by democratic sensibility—Lawler nominates Walker Percy.

Lawler finds in Percy a persuasive critic of both the reductionism of modern science and the irrationalism that arose in reaction to that science. According to Lawler's Percy, the evidence in regard to the cosmos is murky and confusing. At least in the singularly insane modern world, the most powerful and evident news is bad news. Yet we do not have to give in to fashionable despair.

Certain experiences—love, in particular—suggest that human beings are not without support in the cosmos, and those experiences cannot be dismissed as some kind of self-forgetting of our true situation. Good news must be given its due. In short, according to Lawler and his Percy, honest—and therefore honorable—confusion with an openness to the Good, be it philosophical or religious, is the true postmodern solution.

Lawler's account far surpasses the leading scholarship on Percy. He has something important to teach both of the reigning camps of the author's interpreters—the postmodernists (wrongly understood) and the pious. To the former, he shows that Percy more than took morality seriously, that his fundamental motivations were at least as much moral as artistic. And to those Christian scholars who see nothing problematic in embracing Percy, Lawler brings out the very ambiguous character of their hero's Christianity. Lawler's Percy is ultimately a believer,

but he is no simple believer. Percy's chief targets were dogmatic atheists, but his thought stands in a certain tension with traditional piety.

Despite its brilliance, Lawler's case for Percy is ultimately unpersuasive. He is far too uncritical, and he claims for Percy far too much. Lawler cannot help showing that Percy does not possess opinions that can be plausibly presented as a coherent whole. According to Lawler, Percy is somehow at the same time "a twentieth century Thomist," "a Catholic Socratic," the century's foremost Tocquevillian and someone who "joins Pascal in emphasizing [man's] strangeness and perversity, while remaining as devoted as Aristotle to the possibility of a science of human nature." Lawler describes Percy's "Thomistic science, his theory of evolution and of man as a languaged being by nature" as "a combination of Peirce's semiotic empiricism and Heidegger's existentialism." If Percy were somehow able to cobble together a consistent Tocquevillian, Thomistic, Socratic, Pascalian, Heideggerian, Peircian, Aristotelian teaching, he would deserve all the respect Lawler accords him and more. It should come as no surprise that he cannot.

It's with Tocqueville that Percy most fails to be what Lawler wants. Percy's debt to Tocqueville consists almost exclusively of an endorsement of Tocqueville's famous statement about Americans being Cartesians without having read Descartes. Percy enlarged upon that insight to construct a critique of the shallow "pop-Cartesianism" of those Americans whose boundless faith in technology leads them to embrace the solutions of "experts."

Yet it takes more to be a Tocquevillian than to recognize the soul-deadening effects of modern technological society. Percy divorces Tocqueville's statement from the general analysis of democratic society in which it appeared. Percy provides the singular spectacle of a Tocquevillian with nothing to say about democracy and equality. So too, Percy is a Thomist with nothing to say about natural law, a frequent mentioner of Heidegger with nothing to say about the connection of Heidegger's thought to his being a Nazi. In short, Percy ignores the political.

Ignoring the political is not Lawler's own failing. Political reasons both inform and animate his attempt to redefine postmodernism. He teaches us that how "we postmoderns" speak of ourselves plays no small part in how we act. And he wants us to act morally and *democratically*. He entreats us, almost at all costs, to reclaim control of our lives from the experts, bureaucrats, technocrats and gurus. "Elitism" is bad. "Populism" is good.

It's easy to sympathize with Lawler's attacks upon some of his targets, not least the mental health industry that seems on the verge of therapeutically dispensing with human experience altogether. Yet Lawler fails to distinguish between good elites and bad elites. Modern conservatism, by contrast, almost began with *The Federalist Papers*' case for a government in which the learned professions predominate and Edmund Burke's defense of a "true natural aristocracy." Conservatives would do better to rehabilitate a healthy form of elitism and its accompanying respect for genuine excellence than to appropriate postmodernism. Considerable as Lawler's accomplishment is, his advocacy of a conservative postmodernism does not fly. Let the postmodernists vote Democrat. ♦

Waste Not, Want Not

Susan Strasser digs her way through the trash of history. **BY MAUREEN SIRHAL**

Trash is not exactly fodder for a page-turning book. Why would anyone want to delve into the bowels of history to discover how people recycled dirty rags? But in the same way those late night TV documentaries suck in viewers with a mix of melodrama and fact, so historian Susan Strasser entertains, for her *Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash* is more than a laundry list of the mundane chores associated with trash in America over the last two centuries.

Waste and Want
A Social History of Trash
by Susan Strasser
Metropolitan, 355 pp., $27.50

Strasser—who previously penned *Never Done: A History of American Housework* and *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market*—paints a vibrant portrait of domestic culture before the advent of trash collections. Through her rich details, Strasser documents how American culture shifted from waste consciousness to consumer consciousness. And how a society that once criticized the act of disposal now encourages it.

Ironically, Strasser points out, trash can be viewed as a measure of our advancement: The more we create, the better our standard of living. Trash, we are to understand, has played a significant role in the rise of consumer culture and the "planned obsolescence" that now propels the economy. The notion that one can quickly and easily dispose of unwanted items, either because they had outlived their usefulness or become outdated, gave rise to consumer demand, translating into an increase in manufactured products. Yet Strasser downplays the benefits made possible in the cultural shift. Economic growth freed Americans from the burdens of a century ago when trash picking was necessary, while tightening the gap between middle-class America and the rich—a divide that until the twentieth century was far more pronounced in daily life.

Maureen Sirhal is editorial assistant at Policy Review.

The Fresh Kills landfill on Staten Island

AP / Wide World Photos

Long before government agencies peddled recycling for the benefit of Mother Earth, Americans recycled everything for personal survival. "Wastebaskets were actually rare in households where refuse could be burned for fuel or sold to peddlers and where much of the clothing and everyday objects were still handmade by women who might put any scrap to good use."

Objects served a variety of functions after their primary use. Women boiled food scraps into soup or fed it to animals. Clothes were worn until they wore out and then dissected for rags. Since most products were not available for general consumption, each household was responsible for providing for its own. Grease, for example, was valued as an ingredient for making soaps and candles. And any leftovers were saved for their trade-in value.

As a result, collecting and scavenging became an industry. Itinerant peddlers journeyed across the country, collecting broken household goods, repairing them and trading or selling their inventory to rural and city folk. "This trade in used goods," writes Strasser, "amounted to a system for reuse and recycling that provided crucial domestic sources of raw materials for early industrialism."

This does not make for a picturesque life. When items could finally be trashed, they were simply thrown into the streets, or out the back windows and doors. The garbage problem made municipal intervention a necessity. "The Washington D.C. city council," writes Strasser, "set aside fifteen hundred dollars during the summer of 1837 . . . intended for 'purging the streets and alleys of accumulated filth and garbage." Diseases spread, and with public health a growing concern by the late 1800s, progressive policy advocates and leading home economists lobbied for refuse practices that would promote better hygiene.

The ranks of manufacturers, advertisers, and home economists soon began to preach the benefits of disposable products. Disposable paper products promoted cleanliness, and public service announcements and pamphlets paved the way for their demand. The major shift, Strasser laments, came when manufacturers adopted the notion that objects should become outdated and trashed, even if they functioned perfectly. People began to buy as much for styling and modernizing as they did out of necessity.

Yet Strasser downplays the benefits middle-class America enjoyed as a result of the trend. The ability to dispose of an item simply because it was outdated lent more people the distinction of a leisured lifestyle. And planned obsolescence did not mean that everything ended up in the trash. In fact, these practices enabled the institutionalization of charitable networks, long before government welfare. Groups like Goodwill, the Salvation Army, and the St. Vincent de Paul Society became vital organizations for both the waste trade and for poorer citizens.

Strasser seems to mourn the loss of the wasteless culture. As she brings her history to the present day, she pays significant attention to the rise in garbage over the years, replacing the systematic reuse of every single household item. The same progressives who once advocated disposing refuse (for health's sake) have evolved into a different voice, now critical of consumer America's waste-making mentality.

And yet, it is precisely the shift to consumerism that enabled environmentalism to become a political priority. Strasser notes that individuals will endure some inconvenience for a perceived public benefit. But for all the guilt laid at the consumers' feet by environmental activists, the ability to create trash symbolizes the improved standard of living everyone enjoys. Americans' willingness to discard and acquire—something inimical to nineteenth-century mentalities—ushered in an era that made improved technologies marketable.

In a society where time is money, few would sacrifice disposables in order to return to the days of saving grease to make candles. But the old saving mentalities have not entirely disappeared. People still buy used products for repair and reuse. The distinction is that people refurbish as a hobby rather than by necessity. Americans now spend millions on an industry devoted to the "art" of restoring and making new or stylish what once might have been trash. A multimedia industry—including Home Depots, cable networks such as *Home & Garden* Television, and the Bob Vila and Martha Stewart empires—has boomed over the last decade, playing on the notion that one man's trash can be another man's treasure.

But Strasser succeeds in proving that "matters deemed inconsequential are often significant." Things that were luxuries a century ago are now considered necessities. The environment is indeed a concern, as is the growing problems of where to put trash. But that is the price to pay for progress. Certainly it is progress that would not have occurred so quickly if not for the willingness of Americans to toss away what they don't need anymore. ♦

With the imminent resignation of Kenneth Starr, a three-judge panel has been interviewing a number of possible candidates to succeed him as independent counsel.

—News Item

Application for Employment
OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT COUNSEL
"Investigating This, That, and the Other for Over Seven Years"

Personal Data:
Last name _____ First name _____
Mailing address _____
City/State/Zip _____
FreeRepublic.com username _____

(Please use separate sheets for the following)
Employment History:

List other current employers alphabetically (e.g., Philip Morris before Meineke Muffler)**:**

Favorite Hymns:

General:
How long have you known Mr. Scaife? _____

Are you a military veteran? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If yes, then do draft dodgers make you physically, literally ill? Yes [ ] No [ ]

Could you stand being interviewed by Diane Sawyer on 20/20? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If yes, how? _____

On the form provided, compose a personal essay, not to exceed 40,000 words, on one of two subjects: "What Fort Marcy Park Means to Me" O R: "If Oral Sex Isn't Exactly Illegal, It's Still Gross."

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, all of the information I have submitted on this form is true, depending on how you define "true." I further assert that if I am selected as Independent Counsel I won't suddenly drop everything and take a cushy gig as a dean at some party school in California. In fact, I will consider this job a lifelong career and look forward to obtaining many fine indictments and convictions in the Gore administration.

SIGNATURE: _____ Date signed: _____

American Spectator subscription expiration date
(for verification purposes only) ____-____-____