the weekly Standard

APRIL 17, 2000

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TAKE ME OUT TO THE MOVIES
MATTHEW BERKE

Castro and His American Friends

The National Council of Churches
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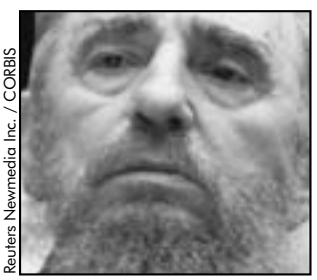

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Al Gore's Risky Theme

Every journalist from the lowliest wire-service stringer to the *New York Times*'s William Safire in a recent "On Language" column has by now noticed Al Gore's favorite term of abuse for any George W. Bush initiative: "risky scheme." The phrase was a favorite of Gore and Clinton in their 1996 campaign against Bob Dole, who himself had used it earlier that year to mock Steve Forbes's plan to privatize Social Security.

The question is whether "risky scheme" will continue to work its demagogic magic for Gore as he uses the phrase with ever greater frequency this year, or whether it will become as cloying to voters as it already is to campaign junkies. In mid-March, *Los Angeles Times* reporters noted that at one Florida appearance, "Gore called [Bush's tax-cut proposal] a risky scheme a dozen times in 20 minutes," which may be a record.

A Gore 2000 press release on April 4 (headline: "Bush's Risky Tax Scheme Endangers the Future of Social Security") comes close to equaling that high-water mark. Here are excerpts: "Gore has a plan to keep the economy booming. . . . George W. Bush, however, will return to the Bush-Quayle era of deficits and recessions with his risky tax scheme. . . . It is not time for a risky tax scheme that could turn back the clock. . . . Gore will oppose risky privatization efforts that would jeopardize Social Security benefits. . . . BUSH'S RISKY TAX SCHEME ENDANGERS SOCIAL SECURITY [caps in the original] . . . BUSH'S RISKY TAX SCHEME EXCEEDS SURPLUS . . . BUSH SUPPORTS RISKY PRIVATIZATION SCHEME . . . Bush favors a risky privatization scheme for Social Security . . . Bush's risky scheme could jeopardize Social Security benefits."

THE SCRAPBOOK counts at least eight "risky schemes" in this particular press release and invites correspondents to submit similar Gore transcripts or press releases to scrapbook@weeklystandard.com. Submissions that exceed the robotic dozen-times-in-20-minutes or eight-times-in-one-press-release benchmark will receive suitable airing in THE SCRAPBOOK. ♦

Kenneth Bacon's Long Goodbye

Surprise! The Clinton Justice Department will not be prosecuting Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon for violating the federal Privacy Act, even though he did. Bacon approved the release of Linda Tripp's personnel information to *New Yorker* reporter Jane Mayer, thereby causing embarrassment to Tripp at a time when she was instrumental in the investigation that led to the president's impeachment. After sitting on a report from the Pentagon's inspector general for 20 months, the Justice Department, according to the inspector general, concluded there was "no direct evidence upon which to pursue any violation of the Privacy Act."

Note that they did not say there was no violation of the Privacy Act. Indeed, Bacon's deputy Cliff Bernath blithely confirmed to THE WEEKLY STANDARD's Tucker Carlson the day after Mayer's story appeared that he had released "an 'X' in a box" to Mayer from the highly sensitive "personal history" form filled out by government employees seeking security clearances, which *is*—there is no respectable argument to the contrary—a violation of the 1974 Privacy Act. (Bacon's office let Mayer know that Tripp had not reported an arrest that occurred when she was a juvenile.) Bacon and Bernath both later defended their leak to Mayer as something they thought was fine and dandy because the information didn't strike them as harmful to Tripp. The Justice Department, one can only conclude, is letting Bacon off in keeping with its unwritten prosecutorial guidelines: He was loyally serving Bill Clinton's interests; by definition, any Clinton administration colleague must have his heart in the right place, unlike the president's critics; and besides, we have discretion. Which is certainly true.

Republicans on Capitol Hill hope Secretary of Defense William Cohen will axe Bacon once the Pentagon's internal report is final in another month. But why wait? They should instead cite President Clinton, who once promised to fire "the next day" anyone who rifled through personnel files, and hold hearings immediately at which Bacon can be invited to explain why his office shouldn't be zeroed out of the Pentagon budget. ♦

Democrats and the N-word

In mid-June 1994, Pennsylvania's Democratic governor, Robert Casey, was attempting to marshall support for a welfare-reform package in the state House of Representatives. Those House Democrats who supported the reform had been repeatedly thwarted by fellow Democrat Dwight Evans, chairman of the Pennsylvania House appropriations committee and the state's highest ranking black lawmaker. And one of Evans's antagonists had finally had enough.

Evans, state representative Terry Van Horne told the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, is all too often "preachy," "glib," and "condescending" about budget matters.

Which makes him, Van Horne went on, just "another inner-city nigger." And "I don't use that word lightly."

Oh dear.

Fast forward six years. Today, Terry Van Horne is a candidate for Congress in Pennsylvania's fourth Congressional District. And the word he does not use lightly is—properly so—a campaign issue.

Or at least it was one until he won the Democratic nomination. During the primary, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), concerned about the N-word problem, broke with standard practice, and openly funded Van Horne's principal opponent. But now that Van Horne faces a Republican in the general election, Washington's Democrats have suddenly developed selective amnesia.

"I did not know about it beforehand," House minority leader Dick Gephardt says in response to criticism of Van Horne from RNC chairman Jim Nicholson and Republican Congressional Campaign Committee chairman Tom Davis. "But as I understand it, he has apologized for this statement"—the one that Gephardt didn't know about, the one that inspired the DCCC to fund Van Horne's opponent. Van Horne, Gephardt goes on, "has gotten the support of his colleagues in the Pennsylvania House, including the person the statement was directed to." And so "we will support him and we'll try to help him win this seat." You know: "It's an old event. It's six years ago."

So forgiving, these Democrats.

If Van Horne were a Republican, THE SCRAPBOOK imagines, Dick Gephardt would quite vividly remember that he is a vicious bigot. ♦

Rocket Science

In the category of you-heard-it-here-first: The State Department has announced it is charging Lockheed Martin with violating the Arms Export Control Act by providing Chinese companies with information on satellite rocket technology that could be used to improve ballistic missile capabilities. Almost two years ago, in the wake of similar charges against Loral Space and Hughes Electronics, Henry Sokolski wrote in these pages ("Selling China the Rope . . . ," June 1, 1998) that Lockheed Martin's assistance to the Chinese launch industry also needed investigating. As Sokolski pointed out, however, the scandal is not limited simply to the transfer of valuable rocket know-how. Every time a U.S. corporation pays tens of millions to launch a satellite on a Chinese rocket, it subsidizes the very entities that are building new and improved missiles aimed at Los Angeles and Taipei. Even rocket scientists should be able to understand this point.

In a related matter, it's clear no one is going to accuse the new U.S. ambassador to China, former commander in chief of America's Pacific forces, retired Admiral Joseph Prueher, of being a rocket scientist. The ambassador recently hosted a friendly get-together for the three U.S. corporations under investigation and the state-owned Chinese company that runs that nation's missile programs. Who says ambassadors have outlived their usefulness? ♦

Casual

The New Dodge

"Are you sitting down?" the mechanic asked, and I knew I was in trouble. I chuckled nervously and told him to shoot. By the time he took a breath, the bill to get my old Buick running again was over $4,000, and I suddenly felt like someone considering whether to take a close relative off life support. A decision had to be made, but I wasn't prepared to make it.

So I called my financial adviser—my dad. Instinct told me not to spend $4,000 on a car as old as mine, but I needed confirmation. I thought back to all the times I had wished for a new car, and wondered if I had just willed the current car dead. It was a bad time for a lesson in the power of negative thinking.

The new car I'd always imagined was a driver's dream, well appointed and stylish, with an engine best suited for an autobahn. But finances forced me to be rational. A terrifying thought flashed through my head: "A '72 Pinto can't be *that* bad . . . "

My dad offered to do some shopping for me. He's always been more frugal than I, trained to look at Buicks rather than BMWs. With Dad doing the searching, I had a better chance of staying within my price range.

In a couple of days, he reported back. Given that I couldn't afford to spend more than $42 a month, he was having trouble making it happen. But there was hope: a small Dodge, new, with an interest rate that added almost nothing to the price.

I'd never been a fan of this car. It seemed to have a face, like a cartoon car, and its record of reliability made it the Gen-X slacker of the automobile universe. But considering my options, I decided I'd better resign myself to buying in the below-luxury market. Besides, isn't Dodge now a close cousin of Mercedes-Benz?

I went to the Dodge website and checked the available options and styles and thought about what upgrades would be necessary to make the car bearable. Surfing, I discovered that the new 2000 styling was nowhere near as offensive as the old. And maybe that silver-grey would actually make it look sporty. The bigger tires would definitely add some heft to a car that ordinarily looks like it's just a step ahead of a moped on the evolutionary chain. So I dashed off an e-mail to my dad asking him to look for the silver-grey finish and the bigger tires.

Darren Gygi

At work the next day I got his response: "How about forest green and the smaller tires?" It was like asking a man primed for cake if he'll take a saltine. . . . Sure. But there had to be a silver(-grey) lining. What other colors were available? Cranberry and cinnamon. . . . So, okay, forest green could work. And small wheels are better than no wheels.

I picked up the new car two days later.

The color really wasn't too bad, and the wheels weren't glaringly tiny given the car's diminutive frame. The motor took some getting used to. Gone was the husky V-6 engine that would muscle my old car through its gears, replaced by a four-cylinder that sometimes reacts indignantly when I ask it to power the new car uphill. No more automatic door locks and windows, either, a true mark of the idle rich. Now I have to stretch across the front seat to let my proletarian brothers in. And while I once could have carried four passengers easily, I now feel sorry for anyone forced to squeeze in behind me.

But not all the changes are bad. The old odometer read 151,063 miles; the new digital display showed just 5 miles as I drove off the lot. The jittery suspension that used to make my body tense as though I could somehow stiffen the ride by sheer concentrated bodily effort—gone. The new, softer ride made me worry I might fall asleep as I trekked back to Washington that first day. And no more rattling window in the back. The tighter finish let just a hint of air whisper through the window as I rolled along the Interstate.

Then there's the new car smell. And for the first time in my life, it's *my* new car smell.

So I've grown accustomed to my economy Dodge—even protective of it. I'm getting increasingly anxious about subjecting it to the District's crater-filled streets. It's just a matter of time before a wheel rim gets bent or the alignment goes off kilter.

But there's a certain peace of mind that comes with owning a brand-new car. Even if minor repairs need to be made, the thing won't likely fall apart in the next few years. I'll be able to stand confident when the repairman calls with his estimate, secure in the knowledge that our conversation won't involve life and death decisions. And that's a luxury I'm glad I can afford.

Edmund Walsh

Correspondence

The Bioethics Debate

In his article "Is Bioethics Ethical?" (April 3), Wesley J. Smith raises a series of issues that directly impact medicine and subsequently the whole of society. The mainstream movement in bioethics largely eschews opinions that are pro-life and grounded in religious belief. By definition then, all principles are relative, arrived at by consensus, and subject to change with changing social situations. Tolerance is afforded to all views except those that appeal to absolute standards of moral decision-making that are unchanging.

As a physician who has completed a Master's degree program in Bioethics from a Christian perspective at Trinity Graduate School in Chicago, I do not subscribe to the ideology or intellectual underpinnings of mainstream bioethics. It is unfortunately true that, while a great majority of Americans are struggling to incorporate their religious convictions into the understanding of these issues, social policy is being formulated based heavily on the input of a secular, agnostic group of intellectual academics.

At its inception, medical ethics represented an attempt on the part of physicians and hospital personnel to address problems arising from technological advances in the practice of medicine. The need for input from clergy and others was understood and incorporated into the process of evaluation. Within a relatively short span of time, the physicians and clergy were replaced by philosophers and other academics who suddenly saw a golden opportunity to advance philosophical theories, previously little known or read, into the country's public policy. In retrospect, given our propensity to cede important decisions to experts, the rapidity of this process is not surprising. Physicians and many of the clergy were simply not trained to engage in these discussions and, in addition, the seriousness of the threat to Western culture was unappreciated.

I am writing to inform your readers that the counter-bioethics movement encouraged in Smith's article is underway. The 15,000-member Christian Medical and Dental Society (*www.cmds.org*) and Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity (*www.bioethix.org*) are both organizations that are addressing these issues around the country and routinely within the halls of Congress. These are but two of the groups that are responding to the danger of a purely secular bioethics agenda. It needs to be remembered that the Hippocratic School of Medicine in ancient Greece, and its associated oath, arose in reaction to a society where abortion and physician-assisted suicide were common and accepted. Its appeal to human worth and dignity resonated through a culture where those features were lacking. The same appeal to human worth may be more and more effective in our times as utilitarian approaches become more predominant. My thanks to Smith for a

helpful and insightful article.

Samuel Hensley, M.D.
Jackson, MS

Wesley J. Smith's excellent article summarizes the assault of modern bioethical ideology on traditional Hippocratic medical ethics. Left unsaid are the effects on these deliberations of economic concerns and plain old venality.

In the last 50 years or so, medical practice retreated from the traditional duty of a physician to his patient and became accepting of a less direct, more diffuse responsibility to the society-at-large, health-care organizations, and, of course to payers. This has had an insidious, but profound, effect on what is termed "medical ethics." It cannot be surprising that payer-directed medical care has attempted to ennoble itself with its own ethology, though perhaps not always adhering to the dictionary's definition of "ethics."

Today's patient is very likely to have critical, life-support decisions made by a physician practicing in a hospital owned or greatly influenced by the patient's insurance company, and himself an employee of that insurance company remunerated in a capitation scheme so that the physician is directly rewarded for withdrawing or limiting care.

Ethical issues of this sort are rarely, if ever, discussed in the "medical ethics" literature or in the lay press, while relatively minor concerns are debated and critiqued endlessly. Has the term "medical ethics" become fully Orwellian—that is to obfuscate, rather than reveal, ethical issues? Let the ill beware.

Frank D. Brodkey, M.D.
Janesville, WI

Clarifying Connerly

Noemie Emery's otherwise fine review of Ward Connerly's important book *Creating Equal* ("Connerly's Courage," April 3) implies that professor Glynn Custred—who was in fact, along with California Association of Scholars chairman Dr. Thomas Wood, one of the co-authors and principals of the California Civil Rights Initiative—became a supporter of an initiative planned and headed by Connerly. The reverse is the case. Ward joined us, for which I will be forever grateful, in the midst of our stalled campaign to gather signatures. His fund-raising abilities, drive, and political contacts saved the day. He was an imposing and forceful chairman of the successful electoral struggle. Without him, we would not have finished the work. But Custred and Wood started it, not Ward.

I was a vice-chairman of the 209 campaign, and did most of the early radio work, starting at least a year before Ward joined us. I also helped train the volunteer speakers, and gave numerous speeches myself, both before and after Ward came on board. Ward gave me the honor of introducing him at our victory celebration on election night 1996. I had the

deepest respect and appreciation for his work then, as I do now. But it was Custred and Wood who wrote, and did "the groundwork" on, CCRI.

DR. RICHARD FERRIER
Vice-Chair, "Yes on 209!"
Santa Paula, CA

Reform with Bad Results

NORMAN ORNSTEIN has unveiled his very latest nine-point master plan for a Great Compromise on "campaign finance reform" ("The Coming Deal on Campaign Finance," April 3). Sly fellow that he is, Ornstein presents his latest "compromise" as free advice to George W. Bush and other Republicans as to how they can help save themselves.

It is noteworthy that the latest scheme lacks some of the specific contrivances contained in some of Ornstein's earlier lists. Absent, for example, is Ornstein's 1996 proposal to subject all contributions to PACs to a 50 percent tax. Perhaps he no longer advocates such a tax out of deference to John McCain, who has just announced that he is forming his own PAC. (This is permissible only because of the defeat of the 1996 McCain-Feingold bill, which would have banned *all* federal PACs.)

Ornstein was also the originator, in 1997, of a proposal to effectively ban any advocacy group (other than a federal PAC) from sponsoring any ad or mailing that mentions a federal politician's name for six months out of each even-numbered year. (Your group wants to ask citizens to urge their congressman to vote against a bill that's coming up in the House next week? You have Ornstein's permission—so long as you don't mention the congressman's name.) His new plan contains a slightly diluted form of this same "name ban."

Ornstein attempts to preemptively dismiss prospective critics with his prediction that "any real and realistic reform compromise will provoke screams of outrage from the Hezbollah of the Right, led by Douglas Johnson of the National Right to Life Committee and the Rev. Pat Robertson (as well as by the Shiites of the Left, led by Ellen Miller of Public Campaign and John Moyers of the Florence Fund). But what could be better for Bush now than to show that he is not too timid to take on the loony elements of his own party?"

Such strident name-calling by a resident scholar of the American Enterprise Institute may raise some eyebrows, but Ornstein is obviously terribly frustrated that his many marvelous Rube Goldberg speech-regulation devices keep ending up on the legislative junkheap. That result is indeed due in part to opposition by National Right to Life and many others who believe that the intent and effect of some of Ornstein's proposals would be to concentrate even more information-filtering power in the hands of narrow political elites, to the detriment of democracy.

DOUGLAS JOHNSON
National Right to Life Committee
Washington, DC

THERE IS ONLY ONE THING wrong with Norman Ornstein's proposal for unions "to disclose their spending of dues moneys on so-called 'issue advocacy' campaigns and get-out-the-vote efforts" and then "let union members who don't like how their money is spent vote for new leaders." The Supreme Court says it's wrong.

In *Communications Workers* v. *Beck* (1988), the Court held that the National Labor Relations Act prohibits the use of compulsory dues for political, ideological, and other non-bargaining activities. Period. In an opinion written by liberal icon William Brennan, the Court ruled that Harry Beck shouldn't have to support candidates and causes he found abhorrent, even if 50 percent plus one of his fellow union members felt otherwise.

It would not be reform of any kind to allow union leaders to extort money not used for union-related activities, even if by majority vote of union members. A special master in the *Beck* case found that only 21 percent of the dues collected by the Communications Workers of America went for bargaining-related activities and that Beck, a telephone lineman and union shop steward, was entitled to get 79 percent of his dues back, plus interest.

According to election-day exit polls, an average of 44 percent of voters from union households supported Reagan and Bush over Carter, Mondale, and Dukakis in the elections of 1980, 1984, and 1988. In the nine U.S. House races since 1980, exit polls reveal GOP candidates receiving an average of 36 percent of the union vote. Yet Democratic candidates and campaigns consistently receive upwards of 90 percent of union money.

A recent poll conducted by McLaughlin and Associates found that 68 percent of union members were unaware that their dues were being used for political purposes, and when informed of the practice, 80 percent favored changing the law. It appears even union members agree with Jefferson that "To compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves, is sinful and tyrannical." Even if by majority vote.

George W. Bush is right: Enact paycheck protection and codify *Beck* into law.

DANIEL JOHN SOBIESKI
Chicago, IL

Waugh Revisited

IN HIS PERCEPTIVE CRITIQUE of Evelyn Waugh, David Skinner describes Ronald Knox as a Jesuit ("The Soul of Waugh," April 3). Monsignor Knox was not a member of the Society of Jesus, but a diocesan priest. Skinner also calls Edmund Campion, another Waugh biographee, a "Tudor martyr." Since "Tudor" encompasses a small mob of monarchs, would it not have been more helpful to state that Campion was executed (in 1588) during the Elizabethan era?

JOHN T. ELSON
New York, NY

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the weekly Standard

The "Justice" Department and the Rule of Law

One of the first news photos of Juan Miguel González arriving at Dulles International Airport to reclaim his son Elián showed him in mid-stride, so you could see the soles of his shoes. They were unmarred by any contact with pavement; they'd obviously been in a box when the plane took off from Havana. Had he bought himself a new pair of shoes for the trip? Unlikely, once you looked at his shirt-collar, which was two inches too big for his neck. Clearly it was the Cuban government that had decided how to present Juan Miguel to the American public, and that should not be surprising. With the collusion of the Clinton administration, they've called the tune of this custody battle since last Thanksgiving, when Elián was found tied to an inner tube three miles off the Florida coast.

Standing in his fishy suit, Juan Miguel gave a bizarre speech. "For exactly 137 days," he said, "I have lived unjustly and cruelly separated from my son." Whose injustice would that be? Whose cruelty? "I became aware how during this time my son was being subjected to cruel psychological pressures intended to influence his character. . . . And as if that were not enough, Elián has been exhibited in parades . . . " When? What parades? Most stunning was his description of the Lázaro González family of Miami as "distant relatives he had never seen or who had met him only once." Your *father's brother* is hardly a "distant relative." And "met him only once" is a dismissive way to describe the extraordinary two-week visit that Lázaro and Delfín González made to Cuba in 1998, for the express purpose of visiting Juan Miguel and his son. Said Juan Miguel González to his Cuban TV audience on the night of his arrival, "Those people really don't want the best for my son." That's a weird way to characterize the very people Juan Miguel phoned the day after Elián's departure to alert them that their nephew was on his way.

Mr. González's statements since arriving from Cuba last Thursday to claim custody of his son have been so far removed from reality as to raise the possibility that he is out of his mind. But we pass no judgment on Mr. González's decency or his fitness as a father. We do not underestimate the pressures he is under, political and otherwise. NBC reported last week that Mr. González's mother, who remains in Havana, has been moved to a secure government building for the duration of his trip. We think it likely he is operating under coercion, or at least strong influence.

There is another possibility, of course—that Mr. González is the sincerest of Communists. There's some evidence for this. He has been described in press accounts as a doorman, security guard, cash register operator, and the employee of a tourist agency—a protean job description that fits many an Interior Ministry secret policeman. Mr. González lives in a protocol house in a diplomatic neighborhood, of the sort the writer Gabriel García Márquez lives in; he has air conditioning in a country where many lack electricity.

There may be a good explanation for Mr. González's cushy setup and his strange comportment in the United States. But whatever that explanation is, we don't yet have it, and only a court of law can give it to us. So why is the Clinton administration doing everything it can to keep this case out of a court of law?

To listen to the Clinton administration, the sudden visit of Juan Miguel González, after four months' absence spent largely calumniating the United States, should arouse no suspicion and requires no explanation. "The law is very clear," says Attorney General Janet Reno. "A child who's lost his mother belongs with the sole surviving parent." What law is that? The Child-Who-Lost-His-Mother Law? If this is what the debate was about, why didn't you tell us in the first place?

Because this is the exact *opposite* of what the administration argued in the first place. The administration now insists emphatically that it has no way to stop the process of hustling Elián back to Cuba. (Although it claims to *prefer* that Juan Miguel and his Castroite handlers stay until the appeal by Elián's Miami relatives of the INS decision reaches the appeals court.) But the administration's insistence is simply not true. The INS can issue a no-exit order for anyone—including you or me—at its discretion. It can mandate that Elián stay by

the very same authority under which it now mandates—yes, *mandates*—that he be sent back to Cuba.

Nor has this always been the administration's position. In the days following Elián's rescue, spokesmen for the U.S. Border Patrol announced that Elián could stay, the INS issued a statement that Elián's fate was a matter for state court (or family court if it came to a custody battle), and the State Department concurred. It's the INS that paroled Elián to the Lázaro González family to begin with. Then in December of last year, two things happened. First, Castro demanded that Elián be returned within 72 hours, implicitly threatening to send a flotilla of unsavory refugees towards South Florida. Then he agreed, in an unprecedented, if minor, act of neighborliness, to accept the return to Cuba of eight Cuban nationals who had been rioting in a Louisiana prison.

We're beginning to see what the big rush is about. Clearly, the administration has cut a deal with Fidel Castro, in which Elián is a pawn. The officials involved in the case want to make sure that this is taken care of before anyone has a chance to find out what the terms of that deal are. We know certain of its conditions—and they're an affront to America's conscience. One was that Juan Miguel stay in the home of the head of the Cuban interests section—and by what right does our government negotiate with Fidel Castro about the movement of a human being on American soil? The second was that Juan Miguel be given custody of Elián with no questions asked—and by what right does our government deliver a 6-year-old guest of the nation to a dictatorship his mother died trying to escape?

In cutting this sneaky deal, the administration has contaminated our own system with a little bit of the mendacity, opacity, and brutality of the Cuban one. The INS, after having interviewed Juan Miguel González only under the eyes of a Communist regime that rules by terror, saw no need—had no inclination, even—to conduct a fresh meeting once Mr. González arrived on free soil.

Mr. González's meeting with Reno and INS commissioner Doris Meissner, meanwhile, seemed to consist of receiving unilateral assurances that his suit would meet no obstacles. "All you had to do was look at him and listen to him and see how much he loves the little boy," said Reno, as if that were dispositive. (What was that about the rule of law, again?) Reno's assistant Eric Holder then added, "We have engaged psychologists, who have told us it is in Elián's best interest to reunite him with his father as quickly as possible." What psychologist—outside of Cuba—would make such a judgment without having *met* Elián? President Clinton, meanwhile, assures us that Juan Miguel is a "fit" father. On what grounds? Are there any other custody battles he'd like to weigh in on?

For all Janet Reno's pretty talk, this case is *not* about the rule of law. The administration's ultimate weapon is not the courts but its threat of criminal contempt charges against Elián's Miami family if they refuse to abide by executive-branch dictates. Here as elsewhere, the Clinton administration is invoking the "rule of law" as cover for an increasingly arbitrary set of make-it-up-as-you-go-along fiats and executive actions.

And in this power struggle, Bill Clinton's impeachment lawyer, Gregory Craig, plays a murky role. We now know that at least part of his legal fee is being paid by the National Council of Churches. But we have plenty of other questions. Who hired him? We'll bet it wasn't Juan Miguel who picked up the phone. If Mr. Craig's client really is Juan Miguel and not Fidel, why was Castro present at their Cuban meetings? Has Mr. Craig told his client he has the right to meet alone with Americans—without Cubans? If not, why not? Does Juan Miguel know his rights as a client? Or is he being played for a fool in a game of *raison d'état*?

There used to be an institution that could be trusted to remain vigilant about the actions of Communist regimes, and to ask such questions about the way they operated. It was called the Republican party. But Senate majority leader Trent Lott has refused to bring to the floor a bill to give Elián citizenship—or even permanent residency—until he can be assured it will pass in a rout. House speaker Dennis Hastert is AWOL. Steve Largent, after a political career built on describing Christian worship as a bulwark of citizenship, has suddenly agreed to deliver a boy to a regime where Christian worship has been *illegal* for almost all of the past 40 years. George W. Bush, preoccupied with trivial education-policy speeches, has been more interested in snickering at Al Gore's vacillation on Elián than in Elián himself. Shame on them all.

It's a shame for the United States, but not just for the United States. Whether we like it or not, Cubans view this situation much as Fidel Castro does—as a straightforward power struggle. They'll draw the correct, if demoralizing, conclusion—that the one power that could have stood *with* them against communism refused to do so, whether out of cowardice or outright Communist sympathy. Here it's worth repeating the position of Cuba's constitution on parenting. Parental rights exist "only so long as their influence does not go against the political objectives of the state." We are not returning Elián to Juan Miguel González; we are returning him to *Cuba*. When Elián gets on the plane, Juan Miguel doesn't get the little boy; *Cuba* does. Juan Miguel will not make the final decisions that shape Elián's life; *Cuba* will. Under the guise of the "rule of law," we're returning a little boy to a world where no rule of law exists.

—Christopher Caldwell, for the Editors

The Do-Nothing Congress

Republicans sit on their hands as the Clinton administration sides with Castro. BY MATTHEW REES

DURING AN APRIL 4 press conference in the Capitol, Dick Armey, the House majority leader, was asked whether Congress should get involved in the dispute over Elián González. "I think Congress has done a good job of restraining itself," replied Armey. "While we still feel some sort of residual responsibility to be alert to protecting this child's safety and security and rights, . . . I know of nobody in the House or Senate leadership that is anxious to . . . interject ourselves here."

What Armey sees as the GOP's commendable reticence, however, can also be construed as the party's abdication on the issue of the day. From the Thanksgiving morning when Elián was retrieved three miles off the coast of Florida, congressional Republicans could have mounted a campaign highlighting precisely why this 6-year-old should not be returned to a decaying dictatorship that his mother gave her life trying to escape. Indeed, they could have sought to pass legislation giving him permanent residency status, which would have taken the case away from the immigration authorities and made it a pure custody dispute. Instead, the overwhelming majority of them have spent the past four-plus months saying, and doing, nothing.

For a party that not long ago mustered the courage to impeach a president in the face of polls showing the public opposed to the move, this silence is remarkable. Elián's extraordinary situation created a rare opportunity for the GOP to show leadership and set the terms of debate on an issue that transfixed the nation. But most Republicans have preferred to treat the subject of Elián the way they would treat a migraine headache: take two aspirin and hope it goes away.

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There have been exceptions, of course. Lincoln Diaz-Balart, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, and Tom DeLay in the House, and Connie Mack and Bob Smith in the Senate, have been outspoken advocates for measures that would enhance Elián's chances of remaining in the United States. DeLay in particular has been on the offensive. In a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed on April 5, he pronounced "the government's treatment of Elián to be the lowest point of the Clinton administration's tenure." John McCain has also spoken out. "We should have been more forceful in our advocacy of his remaining in this country," he told me.

But other members of the GOP leadership haven't shown any such initiative. Trent Lott has been extremely supportive of the efforts by Mack and Smith, but some senators believe he could have used his perch as Senate majority leader to rally more support for keeping Elián in the United States. As for the speaker, Denny Hastert, his office declared last week that there are no plans to move any Elián-related legislation. And one of the speaker's Illinois colleagues, representative Ray LaHood, told me Hastert "wants to avoid this issue like the plague."

I encountered similar sentiments speaking with more than a dozen rank-and-file congressional Republicans last week. Most displayed a combination of indifference and naiveté about the Elián issue, saying that because their constituents weren't ginned up about it, they hadn't given it much attention. Or they robotically declared Elián should join his father, regardless of the circumstances. A few even said openly what seemed to be on the minds of many: While they might like to call for keeping Elián in this country, they'd chosen not to because national polls showed majorities favoring reunification with the boy's father.

Many in the GOP also begged off on the grounds that they didn't want to "politicize" the issue. But as a *Wall Street Journal* editorial noted on April 6, the genie is already out of the bottle. Fidel Castro has milked the issue for political gain from day one. And domestically, it has been politicized by the flip-flop of Al Gore and the militant anti-anti-communism of Democrats like Maxine Waters and Charlie Rangel. Even George W. Bush has jumped into the fray.

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Yet the GOP-controlled House has never held so much as a committee hearing on Elián. Why? One explanation is that Lamar Smith, who supports reductions in immigration, chairs the subcommittee with jurisdiction. Whatever has caused it, this inactivity speaks volumes. Since Congress reconvened in January, the House Republican conference has discussed the dispute over Elián only once.

In the end, inaction begets impotence. Because the GOP hasn't made the case for keeping Elián in the United States, it can't muster the votes in either chamber to pass a bill giving the boy permanent residency. And so last week, when Democrats could have been thrown on the defensive if forced to debate a high-profile issue on which they differ with Gore, Republicans did nothing, fearing a filibuster in the Senate and defeat in the House. That in turn gave a pass to the White House, which didn't have to expend any political capital opposing a residency bill.

The current fear being expressed by Bob Smith and others is that the Elián saga will play itself out before a vote is held.

"After all he's been through," says Smith, "the least Elián deserves is a vote on his status by Congress, and a veto or an endorsement by the White House." Indeed, declaring one's opposition to a residency bill is infinitely easier than actually voting against it, or vetoing it.

"On a difficult issue like this," says Mack, "when members don't know whether there is going to be a vote or not, they are not inclined to tell you how they are going to vote."

As for the famously flexible president, he claims to remain opposed to the Smith-Mack residency bill. But senator Bob Graham, the bill's Democratic sponsor and a Gore ally, recently told the Fox News Channel that if the bill passed Congress, Clinton would sign it. Thanks to the Republicans, he'll never have to make the choice. ♦

The Slanderers of Cuban-Americans

There's one ethnic group it's still politically correct to smear. **BY VICTORINO MATUS**

THE AGE WHEN politicians and journalists publicly denounced entire ethnic groups as "a bunch of wackos" or "crazies" or possessing a "mob" mentality is long gone, right? Not if the group in question is Cuban-Americans. It's been open season on Cuban-Americans ever since they took the lead in trying to keep Elián González in a free country. Perhaps not since the Irish-Americans of South Boston resisted a federal judge's school busing order a quarter century ago have *bien-pensant* newspaper editorialists and liberal pols felt so free to express open contempt and loathing for a group they look down on.

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Pete Waldmeir of the *Detroit News*, for instance, laments Al Gore's decision to break with the Clinton administration's policy on Elián González: "If he'd cave in to a bunch of wackos just because they hint at civil disobedience if they don't get their way, what would Gore do as president if some Third World nut case got in his face in a real crisis?" The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* views the efforts of Cuban-Americans to keep Elián in the United States as "mob rule," saying the demonstrators have a "blindingly obsessive hatred of Fidel Castro." The *Seattle Times* thinks Elián should not be "a trophy to be paraded around by zealots." Syndicated columnist Mark Russell refers to "the crazy Cubans in Miami" (though maybe that's part of his comedy routine). The *San Francisco Chronicle*, for its part, calls the peaceful demonstrators near Elián's Miami relatives a "racket of rabble rousers" and "shouting street mobs." (Such rhetoric for the *Chronicle* is highly unusual, to say the least: When its own city erupted in violent riots along with Los Angeles in May 1992, the *Chronicle* sympathetically noted that the "riots spring from years of injustice.")

Other journalists not ordinarily identified with the cause of law and order have lost patience for the first time in their professional lives with the venerable idea of civil disobedience. "Are we going to be governed in this country by law or by mob?" asks Anthony Lewis in the *New York Times*. David Rieff, author of *The Exile: Cuba in the Heart of Miami*, also felt free to vent in the *New York Times*: The "most extreme and fanatical elements in the Cuban exile community" want "to defy both the United States and common-sense morality." Miami, claims Rieff, is "an out-of-control banana republic within the American body politic."

Perhaps most remarkable in the

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Times was columnist Bob Herbert, a man who calls his own city a "police state" even as he urges Miami police to unsheathe their batons and go after "the crazies": "These kinds of disputes," says Herbert, "are usually resolved peacefully. The authorities are called in, the crazies are routed and the rule of law prevails. But in this case the authorities have largely linked up with the crazies." Al Gore, he complains, is "giving aid and comfort not to the rule of law but to the mob."

It's been much the same story in the broadcast media. The *Nation*'s David Corn sneered at "those extreme Cubans" on public radio without a demurral from the usually let's-be-nice-now host, Diane Rehm. On the *McLaughlin Group*, Eleanor Clift offered this nuanced view of Cuban-American political attitudes: "Frankly, for a community which fled a dictatorship under Batista, they have come over here, and now they are trying to set up their own dictatorship." Lawrence Kudlow was on hand to point out that the Cubans fled Castro, not Batista. Not that this slowed Clift down: "Yes, they fled Castro, but they seem to enjoy living under a dictatorship. And my point is they are establishing their own dictatorship in this country!"

This was the big-city version of the hoary love-it-or-leave-it trope, which was actually pulled out of cold storage by the *Fort Wayne Journal Gazette* in Indiana, which chastised politicians of both parties for not having "the guts to tell the most obnoxious Cuban immigrants that if they don't like it, they can go back to where they came from."

Wackos. Crazies. Mob rule. Banana republics. Dictatorships. One starts to visualize Al Pacino as Tony Montana, the Cuban émigré in *Scarface* who "loves America . . . with a vengeance," prowling the streets of Miami. But, it bears repeating, all the anti-Cuban slurs came at a time of *peaceful* protest by citizens concerned that Janet Reno's Justice Department was unjustly trying to deprive a young boy of the freedom his mother died to procure for him.

Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Liz Balmaseda of the *Miami Herald* told Katie Couric she expects "the next thing we're going to see is the Discovery Channel coming down here and documenting us eating mangoes and talking really fast with our hands. We have been called a banana republic, an out-of-control banana republic." The critics don't understand, she continued, the "city essentially is asking two things. It's asking that the boy be given a fair asylum hearing, which he has not had. And it's also asking, where [was] the father? Why wasn't he here day one?" Or maybe the critics understand all too well. They just can't stand the idea of uppity, anti-Communist Cuban-Americans standing up for a boy's freedom. ♦

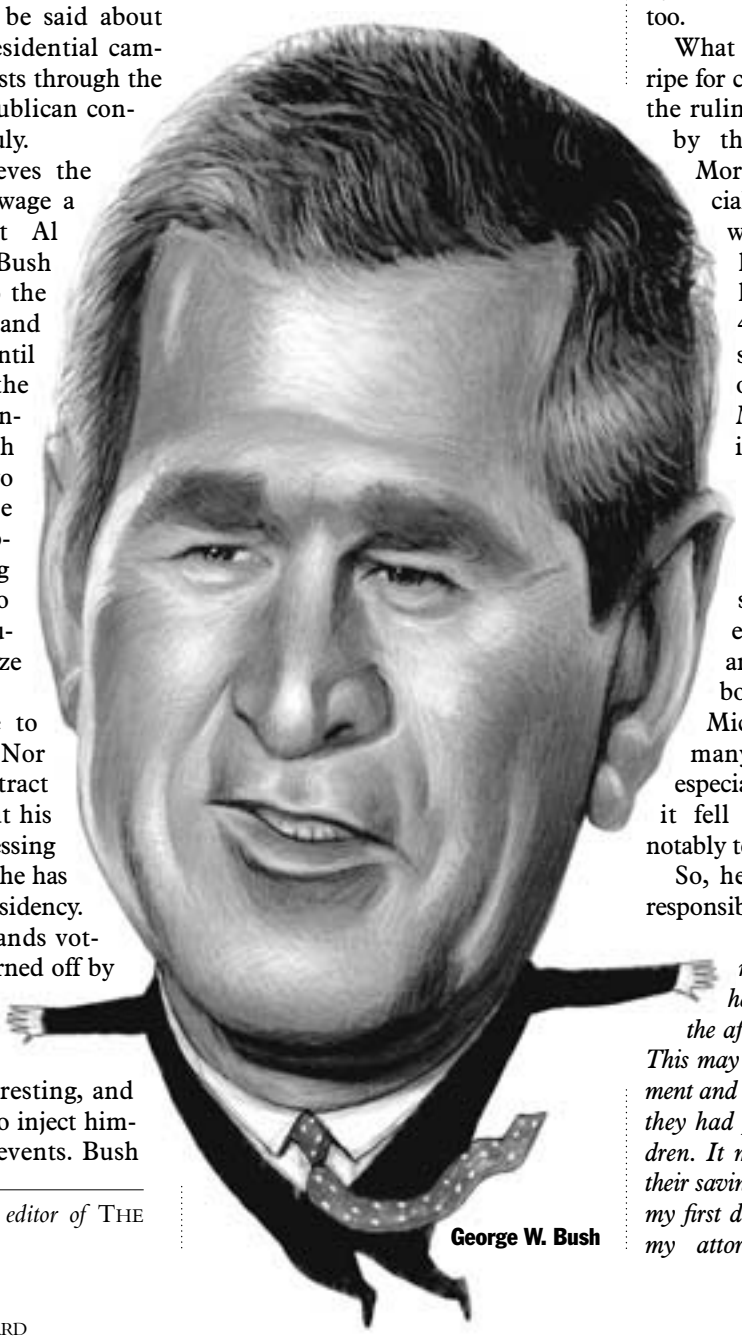
The Do-Nothing Candidate

George W. Bush's campaign shifts into neutral. BY FRED BARNES

ABBA EBAN, the Israeli diplomat, used to skewer the Palestinians by saying they "never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity." The same could be said about George W. Bush's presidential campaign, at least as it coasts through the weeks before the Republican convention at the end of July.

Bush himself believes the time is not right to wage a major effort against Al Gore. The nation, Bush feels, is indifferent to the presidential race now and will become more so until a few weeks before the convention. So he's content to sit on a tie with Gore until the final two or three months. The problem with this approach: Bush is passing up opportunities to gain on Gore, opportunities Gore would seize if roles were reversed.

Bush doesn't have to take cheap shots. Nor should he try to attract attention by laying out his entire agenda or expressing every fleeting thought he has about a George W. presidency. Bush already understands voters are increasingly turned off by politicians who are in their face day after day. But he does need to be visible and interesting, and one way to do that is to inject himself into major news events. Bush doesn't have to create front-page news, only jump at the chance to comment trenchantly on it.



George W. Bush

For example, when a federal judge ruled on the Microsoft case last week and the stock market tanked, Bush missed an opportunity. He said he didn't want to get involved in an ongoing legal matter. For one thing, he has supporters on both sides of the case. His campaign's information technology advisory council includes James Barksdale, the former boss of Netscape and a fierce Microsoft foe, and officials from Microsoft. Besides, a campaign aide said, Microsoft notified the campaign that Bush's hands-off attitude was fine with the company. No doubt it was fine with Gore too.

What made the Microsoft episode ripe for comment was not simply that the ruling came in a lawsuit pushed by the Clinton administration. More important is the new financial environment in America in which it occurred. Now, nearly half of American households own stock in IRAs, 401(k)s, mutual funds, personal investment accounts, or other financial instruments. Microsoft itself has 3 million individual investors. Karl Rove, Bush's chief strategist, often talks about an "investor class" in America, and it probably constitutes a sizable number of likely voters. Also, Microsoft has been an engine of the stock market boom of the 1990s. As Microsoft's stock soared, so did many stocks of all kinds, but especially technology stocks. When it fell last week, so did others, notably tech stocks.

So, here's what Bush could have responsibly said:

The savings of millions and millions of working families have been dealt a heavy blow in the aftermath of the Microsoft ruling. This may jeopardize or delay their retirement and substantially reduce the nest egg they had planned to leave to their children. It may be months or years before their savings recover. In the meantime, on my first day as president, I will instruct my attorney general to review the

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Microsoft case and make a recommendation on whether the lawsuit should be pursued. I make no judgment at this time on the legal issues in the case.

Had Bush read such a statement, he would have thrust himself into every network evening news show and onto the front page of almost every newspaper. He would have made a significant and fair point and planted himself on the side of middle-class and lower middle-class Americans. He would have pointed up a difference between himself and Gore, who has defended the Microsoft lawsuit. He would have, in effect, sided with Bill Gates without taking a position on the legal issues. And, as strange as it seems, he would have made a populist appeal. Gates is popular with everyone except elites. (Bill Clinton astutely invited Gates to the White House the following day.) Instead, Bush's photo op and news peg that day—the environment—got minimal media attention.

Bush aides insist that he actually *did* seize the opportunity to capitalize on the Elián González controversy. The truth is, he could have done more. Bush early on endorsed permanent residency status for Elián and said what's best for the boy should determine whether he stays in Miami or is shipped back to Cuba. Later, after Gore endorsed the same thing, Bush said this wasn't enough and Gore should lean on President Clinton and the Justice Department to halt their efforts to deport Elián. Of course, no one expects Gore to do that, but it was fair for Bush to point out the emptiness of Gore's position.

What Bush failed to do was take center stage in the Elián case. He could easily have done so by making a few strong but non-demagogic statements and perhaps visiting Elián's relatives in Miami. Among Republican leaders nationally, there's a vacuum on the pro-Elián side. Most congressional Republicans are uninterested (among the exceptions are senator Bob Smith and representative Tom DeLay). Bush could easily have emerged as the leading Republican opponent of the Clinton administration's effort to send Elián back to Cuba without a custody hearing. His brother, Florida governor Jeb Bush, could have hosted George W. on a visit to Elián's relatives. All this would have been big news, Bush versus the Clinton administration. But again, he chose to be a peripheral player.

Bush may not have to grab at targets of opportunity in the spring and summer to win the presidential election. On the contrary, Rove insists Bush's low-key campaigning is helping him against Gore. "Movement around the country doesn't equal forward movement in the polls," he says. Rove cited three new polls released on April 7. They showed Bush taking the lead in Pennsylvania and Michigan, gaining 7 percentage points in each state, and opening a 14-point lead in North Carolina, a pickup of 8 points.

Gore's surge over the winter, Rove argues, came while Bush was being challenged (and attacked) by John McCain in the GOP primaries. At that time, Gore got far less press and public attention. But once the spotlight again falls on Gore, he will sink, Rove says. And this will occur by mid-summer. Then, the Bush campaign will be airing ads reminding voters of Gore's fund-raising visit to a Buddhist temple and other campaign finance excesses.

Still, it certainly would please restive Republicans if Bush were more active now. They're eager for him to be visible, to show a spark, to jump quickly on a new issue, to say something worthwhile, to dispel the (unfair) caricature of him as slow-witted. I suspect Bush fears he'll come across like Gore if he pounces aggressively on issues that come up. With Gore, nearly every shot is a cheap shot. According to him, every Bush proposal would ruin one American institution or another. Last week, Gore said Bush would cause "a right-wing U-turn back to the Bush-Quayle deficit, the Bush-Quayle recession, the Bush-Quayle assault on working families." Bush will never sound like that, even when taking advantage of a fresh development. It's not in the genes. ♦

Little Womyn

A new generation of feminists learns to fear the radical right. BY JESSICA GAVORA

IT'S SATURDAY AFTERNOON at the Feminist Expo 2000, and generational change is in the air. Seven thousand women—mostly young, mostly pierced, and mostly earnest—have gathered in the cavernous main hall of Baltimore's Convention Center. Blue and purple coiffures nod in nervous anticipation of the festivities. Nose rings glint under the klieg lights. Chunky sandals on ungroomed legs rustle through the McDonald's trash that covers the floor.

They have come—many of them on the dime of the universities, junior colleges, and high schools they attend—to discover what unites them as American women. And they are about to be told by the likes of Eleanor Smeal, U.S. senator and would-be Gore veep Dianne Feinstein, and former senator Carol Moseley-Braun that what brings them together is not a common agenda but a common enemy: the "radical right."

Twenty-four hours earlier, the same crowd had endured an endless ceremony of tribute to the "foremothers" of the feminist movement. One young woman after another had stepped up to the microphone to recognize an elder for her tireless work in "challenging the patriarchy," "winning the right to Control Our Bodies in Health, Sports & Reproductive Rights," and "winning Lesbian and Gay rights." And one after another, the aging activists of the feminist left had shuffled onto the stage to take their bows.

The foremother of all foremothers, Betty Friedan, claimed to be happy that today's young women are blissfully ignorant of the fact that they are standing on the shoulders of she-giants. And Smeal seconded the emotion. "Am I angry that young women are taking for granted the rights we fought so hard for?" she yelled at her young audience. "No way. No how."

Still, Friedan and Smeal weren't taking any chances. Saturday's session, "Countering the Radical Right," was devoted to keeping the little sisters in the fold by dispelling dueling "media myths" that (a) the feminist movement is dead and (b) its enemies on the right are in a state of harmless disarray.

In the beginning, Woodard intoned, there was Joseph Coors and Richard Scaife. They got together with Paul Weyrich and Richard Viguerie. They approached Jerry Falwell with the goal of "taking over at least one political party."

Not true, a parade of speakers assured their young charges. "The right wing has spent its vast resources very wisely in its campaign to curtail the rights of women, gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people," said the Feminist Majority Foundation's Lorraine Sheinberg. Far from having retreated, said the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Urvashi Vaid, the forces of the right continue to wash over American politics in waves. One lady from Iran even likened American conservatives to the Islamic fundamentalists who terrorize her countrywomen.

To drive home the point to the MTV generation, a slickly produced video provided a history lesson. Over grainy shots of Ronald Reagan and a cross hoisted to obscure an American flag, actress/narrator Alfre Woodard described the evolution of a "powerful trinity" of money, right-wing politics, and God that has "spread like a malignancy" over the land.

In the beginning, Woodard intoned, there was Joseph Coors and Richard Scaife. They got together with Paul Weyrich and Richard Viguerie. They had the money. They had the desire. But they lacked "religious cover" for their unholy plot to rob women, people of color, children, and animals of their civil rights. They approached Jerry Falwell with the goal of "taking over at least one American political party." The Moral Majority was born.

And so it went. Undergraduates gasped in horror as the film described how Phyllis Schlafly and Beverly LaHaye were brought in to give the mission a "female façade." Right-wing universities—behemoths like Liberty and Regent—sprang up across the country, churning out foot soldiers of the right. Helms, Hatch, Hyde, Dornan, and Thurmond were enlisted to the cause. Pat Robertson teamed up with that "master of stealth tactics," Ralph Reed, and founded the Christian Coalition. By the end of the Reagan-Bush era, the film continued, "the radical right had a stranglehold on all branches of government."

Enter a president "more committed to women's rights than any other in history"—Bill Clinton. But as the viewers braced themselves for a depiction of the vast right-wing conspiracy that had turned Clinton's middle-aged peccadilloes into an impeachable offense, the film instead took a dizzying detour. Care-

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fully avoiding any grainy images of Ken Starr, any muffled cries of "sexual McCarthyism!" or uncomfortable explanations of the feminist movement's complicity in the president's defense, the film zeroed in on the reigning right-wing threat to women in America: Promise Keepers. "Self-denigration has been raised to a new level," it droned over shots of the women who support this religious movement calling on men to live up to their duties as husbands and fathers.

By the time the lights came up, there wasn't an unclenched fist in the house. A thunderous standing ovation greeted Barry Lynn of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State. Don't let the religious rhetoric fool you, the Reverend Lynn exhorted the audience. The pieties of the right are not expressions of religious faith but a call to arms in the culture war. Religious rhetoric, Lynn implied, is responsible for the fact that "one-in-five abortion clinics suffered some kind of terrorism" in 1999. "When there is violence against Matthew Shepard and Brandon Teena, the right cannot say they don't have blood on their hands," said Lynn, referring to the gay man killed in Wyoming last year and the transsexual depicted in the Oscar-winning film *Boys Don't Cry*.

By the time it ended on Sunday, feminists could justifiably declare Expo 2000 a success. Press coverage in the *Baltimore Sun* and the *Washington Post* had been fawning. Attendance had nearly doubled from the 4,000 who came to the first Feminist Expo in 1996.

Most of all, as the aging foremothers of the women's movement watched their nubile acolytes boarding vans and buses back to Harvard, Yale, and Portland Community College, they knew that a new generation of feminists was at hand, raised under the blanket of liberty that they themselves had woven, and scared to death of the Bradley, Olin, and Scaife Foundations. Mission accomplished. ♦

Equal Opportunity Works

The end of racial preferences in California has been an unheralded success. BY GAIL HERIOT

In the spring of 1998, the fax machines at certain University of California campuses must have worked late into the night. Humming away, they pumped out press releases designed to create the impression of a racial crisis in higher education—and they were quite effective in doing so. "Acceptance of Blacks, Latinos to UC Plunges" one *Los Angeles Times* headline screamed. For a few days, the new color-blind admissions policies of the University of California system permeated the national airwaves.

Many of the statements in the press were literally true. Under the newly implemented Proposition 209, which eliminated racial favoritism in admissions to state schools, Berkeley, the UC's flagship campus, had indeed extended fewer offers to minority applicants for seats in the Class of 2002 than in the previous year. In 1997, 58.6 percent of its freshman admissions went to students who had checked minority boxes on their applications—primarily blacks, American Indians, Asian Americans and Hispanics. When Proposition 209 went into effect, that figure declined to 48.7 percent. Still, only a bare majority of seats went to whites.

Most of that decrease was attributable to blacks, American Indians, and Hispanics, who went from 23.1 percent of the freshman class to 10.4 percent. Since these were the groups that had benefited most from preferences, it was hardly surprising that their numbers would decrease when preferences were removed.

Gail Heriot, a law professor at the University of San Diego, co-chaired the Yes on Proposition 209 Campaign.

The press directed far less attention to other campuses like UC-Riverside and UC-Santa Cruz, both of which posted impressive gains in minority admissions. At Riverside, for example, Black and Latino student admissions shot up by 42 percent and 31 percent respectively. Santa Cruz's increases were less dazzling, but still notable.

And those campuses that reported mixed results received almost no attention at all. Evidently, mixed is boring and unlikely to sell newspapers, much less hold the attention of television viewers. For example, at UC-San Diego—the third most selective campus in the University of California system—black enrollment was down 19 percent, but the enrollment of some other "underrepresented" groups like Filipinos and Latinos actually went up by 10 percent and 23 percent. Few ever heard about it.

The message of the press coverage was clear: If California voters had only foreseen the devastating effects of Proposition 209, they would never have voted for it. It would have been unthinkable.

But the voters didn't share the media's professed astonishment. They knew that the advantage conferred on certain minority applicants had been anything but subtle. At UC-San Diego, for example, being black or Mexican-American had been worth an additional 300 points on a student's admissions score (the equivalent of 300 SAT points). Under Prop 209, some decline was inevitable.

Moreover, minority students who would have attended Berkeley in the past had not simply vanished. They had been admitted to somewhat less

highly ranked campuses—often UCLA or UCSD—based on their academic record rather than their skin color. In turn, students who previously would have been admitted to UCLA or UCSD on a preference had been admitted to schools like Davis, Irvine, Santa Cruz, or Riverside—somewhat less competitive schools, but nevertheless still part of the prestigious UC system, which caters only to the top 12.5 percent of California's high school graduates. The term "cascading" was coined to describe the phenomenon.

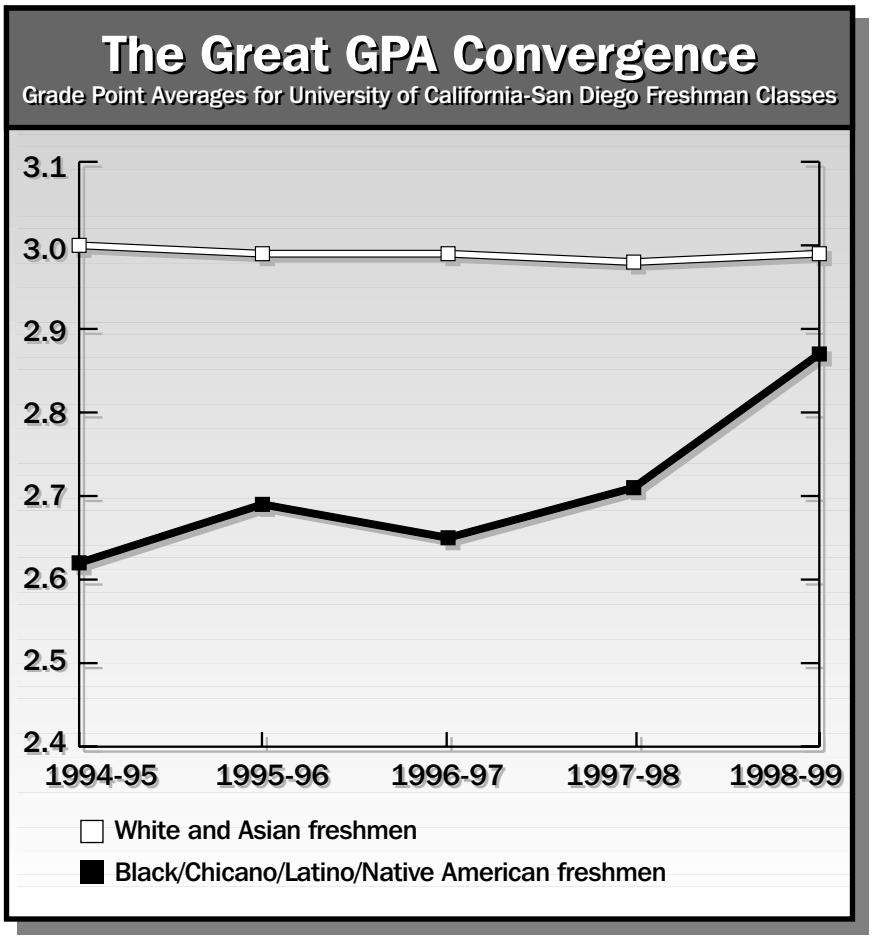
Racial-preference advocates use the term derisively, arguing that cascading is a disaster for minority students. The truth is quite the opposite; few changes in educational policy have been better news.

The reason should be obvious, but for some reason isn't to many. Despite what affirmative action zealots would have us believe, academic ability matters. Although some students will outperform their entering credentials and some students will underperform theirs, most students will perform in the range that their entering credentials (high school transcripts, SAT scores) predict.

At UCSD, for example, in the year before Prop 209's implementation, only one black student had a freshman-year GPA of 3.5 or better—a single black honor student in a freshman class of 3,268. In contrast, 20 percent of the white students on campus had such a GPA.

Was this because there were no black students capable of doing honors work at UCSD? Of course not. The problem is that such students were usually at Harvard, Stanford, or Berkeley, where often they were not receiving honors. Nationwide, misguided affirmative action was creating the illusion that few black students could excel.

Proposition 209 has changed that at UCSD, where the performance of minority students has now improved dramatically. No longer are black honor students a rarity. Instead, a full 20 percent of the black freshmen could boast a GPA of 3.5 or better after their first year. That's higher than the rate for Asians (16 percent) and extremely close to the rate for whites in the same year (22 percent).



UCSD's academic performance experts who once bemoaned the performance gaps that were the direct result of affirmative action admissions are now quietly cracking open the champagne. Their most recent internal academic performance report announces that while overall performance has not changed, "underrepresented students admitted to UCSD in 1998 substantially outperformed their 1997 counterparts" and "the majority/minority performance gap observed in past studies was narrowed considerably."

"Narrowed" is an understatement. The report finds that for the first time since such studies have been done at the school, there are "no substantial GPA differences based on race/ethnicity." A discreet footnote makes it clear that the report's author knows exactly how this happened: 1998 was the first year of color-blind admissions.

The bottom of the class is also changing. Prior to Proposition 209, 15 percent of black students and 17 percent of American-Indian students were in academic jeopardy (defined as a GPA of less than 2.0), while only 4 percent of white students were. Since UCSD doesn't keep separate statistics for those minority students who need a preference in order to be admitted, it is impossible to say with precision how high the failure rate was for preference beneficiaries. But it was high. The proof is in the sudden improvement in minority failure rates when racial preferences were eliminated. The difference between racial groups has all but evaporated, with black and American Indian rates now standing at 6 percent. As a consequence, average GPAs have almost converged.

It's probably too soon to say that UCSD's academic climate has under-

gone a transformation. Right now UCSD is the beneficiary of Berkeley's compliance with Proposition 209. If Berkeley stops complying, thereby choking off the cascade, UCSD may feel compelled to alter its strategy. But if compliance with Proposition 209 continues, minority students at UCSD will never again find themselves on a campus where achieving academic success is considered "acting white" or "acting Asian." Education scholars like Signithia Fordham who accuse black honor students of "internalizing oppression" will have to eat their words.

Some will argue that UCSD has paid dearly for all this. But the facts suggest otherwise. The school had 12 fewer black freshmen this past year, forced as it was to reject students who did not meet the academic standards of the rest of the class. But it also had 7 fewer black students with a failing GPA at the end of the first year. Meanwhile, those 12 students probably attended a school where their chances of success were greater. That's good news, not bad.

Thanks to Proposition 209, student performance is no longer predictable on the basis of race, and the University of California campuses are on the road to racial comity. To be sure, the struggle isn't over. Continued compliance with Proposition 209 is by no means assured. Judging from the entering credentials of its students, for example, UCLA Medical School appears to be in open rebellion against the law. The gap between the least-credentialed white and Asian students and the least-credentialed black and Hispanic students there is too large to be accidental. And admissions officials candidly admit developing policies for Berkeley and UCLA undergraduates that they hope will recreate the pre-209 world—a world in which white and Asian students are destined to excel while their minority counterparts struggle.

Will they resist the temptation? UCSD's experience should dampen enthusiasm for such counterproductive measures. If it doesn't, litigation surely will. ♦

The Battle of the Bishops

Conservative Episcopalians and their allies abroad prepare to evangelize America. BY DIANE KNIPPERS

THE LATEST SKIRMISH in the struggle for the soul of the Episcopal Church in the United States is over the consecration on January 29 of two American priests as bishops without dioceses to serve as missionaries to the United States. Odder still, the two were consecrated at St. Andrew's Cathedral in Singapore, with the archbishop of Rwanda and the archbishop of Southeast Asia presiding. This provocative action by dissident Americans and former colonial churches is a first step toward what some hope will become a second, parallel American "province," theologically conservative and fully recognized by the international Anglican church.

Already the mainstream U.S. Episcopal Church is distinctly out of step with the worldwide Anglican Communion, headed by the archbishop of Canterbury and made up of 38 independent, self-governing provinces or national churches. While the Americans' acceptance of homosexuality is the liveliest source of controversy at present, the broader issue is their drift from orthodox teaching generally.

The task of the new upstart bishops—Charles H. Murphy III, a priest in Pawleys Island, South Carolina, and John H. Rodgers Jr., dean emeritus of Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania—is to plant Anglican missions in areas where there are receptive communities in the United States. They will seek to win converts, minister to believers, and found churches without regard to existing diocesan boundaries—and even on the turf of leftist bishops.

"Crossing diocesan boundaries" is breaking the last taboo in the Episcopal Church, and the threat of such incursions has elicited hostile reactions—these from a church establishment that hardly blinks at the installation of openly homosexual deans of cathedrals or at bishops who deny basic Christian teachings such as the Resurrection of Christ. The response of North American left-wing clerics has been colorful, if hysterical.

"Bishops are not intercontinental ballistic missiles," said Archbishop Michael Peers of Canada, "manufactured on one continent and fired into another as an act of aggression. The recent irregular ordination in Singapore is, in my opinion, an open and premeditated assault on Anglican tradition, catholic order, and Christian charity." The dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in San Diego, John Chane, contemptuously called it "'Dial-a-Bishop,' . . . the latest service provided by a few Provincial Bishops of the Anglican Communion to those Provinces they presume to be wayward."

"Some real smart prelates have come up with a novel idea," observed Bishop William Swing of San Francisco in an online opinion piece. "Let's start an Anglican Airlines and fly in peculiar bishops for special occasions, they suggest. If in your diocese, you want a bishop who is more charismatic than the one you presently have, just dial 1-800-Rent-A-SCAB, and one will be flown in to you. . . . For more bargain information about Anglican Airways, see our

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advertisement under Apostolic Succession: Cheap." Bishop Swing is probably best known for organizing something called the United Religions Initiative. Presumably, his tone is more charitable when he is seeking unity with folks in religions other than his own.

Frank T. Griswold, the presiding bishop (or archbishop equivalent) of the U.S. Episcopal Church, immediately wrote his fellow American bishops: "I am appalled by this irregular action and even more so by the purported 'crisis' that has been largely fomented by them and others, and which bears very little resemblance to the church we actually know."

Griswold was so distressed he flew to London on February 7 to consult with George Carey, the archbishop of Canterbury. Carey is theologically orthodox and upholds church teaching on sexuality, but his traditionalist instincts also extend to matters of church structure. Ten days after his meeting with Griswold, Carey sent a letter to the world's Anglican bishops. He recognized Rodgers and Murphy "as faithful and committed ministers of the gospel," but concluded, "I cannot recognize their episcopal ministry until such time as a full rapprochement and reconciliation has taken place between them" and leaders of the American church.

Carey wasn't the only conservative disturbed by the consecrations. Three conservative archbishops from Australia, Africa, and South America expressed their disapproval of the consecrations, while also noting their "regret that pressures upon traditionalists within the Episcopal Church in the U.S. should have accumulated" to provoke them.

Those pressures are epitomized in the person of John Spong, the recently retired bishop of the Diocese of Newark. Spong's penchant for offending ordinary religious sensibilities has led him to deny an escalating series of doctrinal points—most recently, the very existence of a transcendent God. For all his efforts to shock, Spong is greeted in the church more often by fawning deference than by robust critique. Griswold need look no further than Spong and his followers to discover the crisis that eludes him.

In short, Bishops Rodgers and Murphy say they want to "provide pastoral support, guidance, and oversight" to congregations that choose to "continue in the doctrine, discipline and worship of Christ as the Anglican Church has received them." Already they have seen some success. As of early April, at least three local congregations had broken with the U.S. Episcopal Church to join the Anglican Church of Rwanda: St. Andrew's Church in Little Rock, Arkansas, the Church of the Holy Spirit in Roanoke, Virginia, and St. Andrew's Anglican Church in Morehead City, North Carolina. Arguing that the unity of the church has already been violated "by the unrebuked ridicule and denial of basic Christian teaching," the dissidents aspire to "give the faithful in the United States a place to remain Anglican."

But why, one may wonder, would the church in Rwanda—whose ministers have their hands full in their own land dealing with perennial poverty and the terrible aftermath of genocide—bother with theological controversies in North America? Archbishop Emmanuel Kolini explained: "At the genocide in 1994, the whole world stood back, and no one came to Rwanda's aid. We will never stand back when others are similarly threatened, physically or spiritually." In fact, most of the current bishops of Rwanda are themselves the product of extraordinary, irregular procedures. Their predecessors were removed by action of the archbishop of Canterbury and the East African House of Bishops for complicity in the genocide.

The scope of ministry of the new American bishops remains to be seen. In late March, the heads of the 38 Anglican provinces gathered for their biennial consultation, this year in Portugal. While deploring the rogue consecrations, they called for dialogue that could lead to regularizing the new bishops' status. Ominously, the Anglican leaders warned that pro-homosexuality actions in the American church "have come to threaten the unity of the communion in a profound way." That's a clear warning to the General Convention of the U.S. Episcopal Church, which meets this July to consider whether to authorize local dioceses to bless same-sex unions. Whatever the fate of Murphy and Rodgers, the intra-church battles that sparked their consecration are not going away. ♦

Let's Trade with Both Chinas

Taiwan should be in the WTO, but if Beijing is in first, watch out. BY GREG MASTEL

FRIENDS OF CHINA both inside and outside the Clinton administration are quick to assert that China's accession to the World Trade Organization will also mean WTO membership for Taiwan, as if the two actions were inevitably linked. But this is wishful thinking. China has acted for years to keep Taiwan out of the world trading system, and there are no grounds for believing that Beijing, once itself a member, will be any more hospitable to Taiwan.

On the contrary, there are grounds for expecting trouble. They begin with China's poor record of keeping its trade promises. Then there is Beijing's history of throwing up barriers in Taiwan's path, despite the latter's strong trade credentials and efforts at accommodating its giant neighbor.

Patrick Arrasmith

Thus, to avoid formally challenging China, which claims sovereignty over it, Taiwan in 1990 applied for admission to the world trading system as a customs territory, not an independent country. A similar formula had been used to bring Hong Kong into the trading system in 1986. Ignoring this good-faith gesture, China has acted through surrogates—notably Hong Kong, since Beijing's takeover there in 1997—to block the admission of Taiwan, even though Taipei has diligently completed bilateral negotiations with all of its trading partners.

The United States and other democratic countries have failed to confront this obstructionism. When pressed about it, Clinton administration officials cite an unwritten understanding they have with Beijing that Taiwan will join the WTO once China is a member. So confident are they that China will keep its word that they routinely list Taiwan's joining the WTO among the benefits of China's eventual membership, even though this unenforceable understanding has no more status than a whispered promise, a promise whose existence China has never squarely and publicly acknowledged.

Recent reports in the Taiwanese press are not reassuring. They cite unnamed Chinese sources who say that China might bar Taiwan's entry by insisting on some last-minute deal-breaker, such as a requirement that Taiwan change the name on its application to acknowledge Beijing's sovereignty. Such a move would be not only an affront to the United States, but also a blow to its economic interests. Taiwan is, and is likely to remain, a much better export market for the United States than China. Last year, Americans sold $17.6 billion worth of exports to Taiwan and only $12.6 billion to China; American farmers, in particular, exported more than twice as much to Taiwan ($1.5 billion) as they did to China ($750 million). And in the future, Taiwan is much more likely than China to meet its commitments to opening its market further.

If the administration were serious about securing Taiwan's entry to the WTO, it would obtain a specific, public commitment from China that Taiwan's application will be accepted simultaneously with China's. Instead, there is a good chance that the diplomatic maneuvering on this issue will occur late this year—in the last days of the Clinton administration, when the White House is eager, perhaps overeager, to cement its legacy on China. To make matters worse, by then, key Clinton personnel may already have departed, creating a situation ripe for a mistake or a last-minute Chinese deception.

Plainly, Congress alone can devise a solution binding on both this president and his successor. And the means is at hand: Congress should pass a law making Taiwan's admission to the WTO a precondition for China's permanent normal trade relations with the United States. Until such a statute can be passed, meanwhile, Congress should make it clear to the Chinese through lesser measures—resolutions, letters, and public statements—that any duplicity regarding Taiwan would jeopardize China's trade relations with the United States. ♦

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The National Council of Castro Worshippers

The disgraceful behavior of the National Council of Churches didn't begin with Elián González.

By Tucker Carlson

In 1975, the National Council of Churches, an organization of about 30 mainline religious denominations, published an informational pamphlet entitled *Cuba: People-Questions*. Written in perfect irony-free Albanian-farm-report prose, the pamphlet offers church members a short history of U.S.-Cuban relations.

"All through the 1960s," it begins, "the U.S. did its best to make Cuba buckle under." America used "cold war tactics," blackmailed Cuba's neighbors, "slapped a trade blockade around the island," and even trained a CIA-led army to "act against the revolutionary government." Thankfully, the pamphlet explains, the Cuban people "overwhelmed the invaders" at the Bay of Pigs, and so allowed Fidel Castro to continue providing "free or virtually free" health care and education. "Later on the leaders are to call that socialism. The poor people call it great."

The pamphlet goes on to mock the thousands of penniless refugees who have fled Castro's regime, dismissing them as plutocrats "disgruntled with the equalization process" who have since been "'liberated' from their positions of wealth." It applauds the "guerrilla and other grass roots movements" around the world that are "drawing courage from Cuba." It ends with this paragraph:

> The Cuban people, as well as Fidel, have always made careful distinctions between the U.S. government, which they oppose, and the U.S. people, with whom they feel an affinity. In short, the Cubans think their revolution is proceeding apace—and it is the American revolution that is in trouble. It is their fond hope that as U.S. citizens prepare to commemorate the bicentennial of 1776, a new spirit will put them more in touch with their roots . . . and with reality.

You can't order *Cuba: People-Questions* from the National Council of Churches' website (the Institute on Religion and Democracy, in Washington, however, has reprinted parts of the pamphlet as a public service). But if you're interested in slightly more sophisticated pro-Castro propaganda, the NCC is still providing it. Tons of it.

By now, anyone who has followed the saga of Elián González knows that the NCC is deeply involved in the story. NCC officials were instrumental in convincing Greg Craig, the Washington lawyer whose previous clients have included Bill Clinton and John Hinckley, to represent Elián's father, Juan Miguel González. Last week, the NCC chartered the jet that flew Juan Miguel to Washington. From its offices in New York, the NCC press office has issued statement after statement demanding that the U.S. government return Elián to Cuba. At every point, the NCC's positions on the case have been indistinguishable from those of the Cuban government, down to its insistence that the boy not be given American citizenship.

Why would a church group spend so much time and money propagandizing on behalf of an atheist government famously intolerant of religious expression? The official NCC explanation makes vague references to "human rights." The more accurate answer might be: habit. The National Council of Churches has long gone far beyond the call of fashionably liberal Protestantism in its defense of Fidel Castro.

Over the years, the NCC has produced a mountain of paper relating to Cuba—books, statements, Official Declarations. Much of it has consisted of predictable (though in some cases, not entirely baseless) attacks on the U.S. embargo. But the NCC has also published a number of first-person accounts of life in revolutionary Cuba. Most of them could pass for press releases from the Cuban ministry of tourism. One such travelogue, characteristic of the genre, is an account of a church delegation's trip, entitled *Summary Report of a 1976 Visit to Cuba*. The report dwells lovingly on "the spotless state of the streets," "the purposefulness of the people as they commuted to and from work," the "vibrant and positive theological awareness" of

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Thomas Fluharty

state-sanctioned churches. Then it goes over the top.

Even allies of the Cuban regime rarely defend Castro's methods of social control. The NCC has often seemed more than happy to. The country's Stalinist Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, the 1976 report notes approvingly, are now "being administered with maturity and confidence." The political indoctrination of elementary school students? A positive good, the report declares:

> Bright children between the ages of five to fourteen years volunteer [sic], after parental consent is given, to dedicate themselves to complete knowledge of and for the Revolution at the provincial Palace of Pioneers. Our group was absolutely impressed by the level of learning, zeal and intelligence of the young boys and girls. Their educational training is truly remarkable.

Can political naiveté account for statements like this? It's plausible; other defenders of 1970s totalitarianism have since repented, or at least become New Democrats. The NCC, however, has never renounced its infatuation with Third World police states. As late as 1983, Paul

AP / Wide World Photos

Joan Brown Campbell of the National Council of Churches, meeting in Cuba with Juan Miguel González and Elián's grandmothers

McCleary, the head of the NCC's international office, testified before Congress in defense of Vietnam's infamous reeducation camps. At the time, tens of thousands of political prisoners had died in the camps. McCleary described one he visited as resembling "a small tropical resort area." In general, McCleary concluded, "the entire process of reeducation is one reflecting the government's commitment to encouraging and enabling people to exercise their rights, restored as full participants in Vietnam's future."

The NCC has never apologized for McCleary's statement. Nor, apparently, has it revised its view of Cuba. The NCC boasts that, all told, it has "adopted over 130 resolutions denouncing human rights violations in many countries." This is true. NCC administrators are avid resolution-adopters. Since 1951, the NCC has written resolutions attacking an awe-inspiring array of injustices, from racism at Bob Jones University to the tragedy of non-union lettuce. It has produced at least three statements expressing solidarity with American grape-pickers. It has weighed in on matters as esoteric as Japan's alien registration law and the crisis in Micronesia (whatever that was). It has never called on Fidel Castro to bring democracy to Cuba. NCC resolution-writers have been staunch in their support of gay rights. Yet they have never pitched a fit about Castro's longtime policies of sending homosexuals to labor camps and of quarantining AIDS patients.

Then there is the matter of religious freedom: There isn't much in Cuba. Castro expelled thousands of priests when he took power in 1959. He declared the island an atheist state, closed Christian schools, banned religious publications and radio stations, made it illegal to proselytize in public. In 1969, he eliminated Christmas.

Christmas returned a couple of years ago, after a personal appeal from the pope. Religious liberty did not. There are still no Christian media outlets in Cuba (in dramatic contrast to the rest of Latin America). Pastors are still arrested. Home churches are routinely shut down. You'd never know any of this from listening to the leaders of the National Council of Churches. At the moment they're too busy arranging charter flights for Greg Craig.

Last year, Joan Brown Campbell, then the general secretary of the NCC, took one of her many trips to Cuba. At a rally in Revolution Square in Havana, Campbell shared a stage with Fidel Castro. At one point she addressed the crowd of 100,000. Characteristically, Campbell used her platform to make a call for freedom—not from totalitarianism in Cuba, but from the tyranny of its capitalist neighbor. "We ask you to forgive the suffering that has come to you by the actions of the United States," she said. The crowd cheered. ♦

The Assault on the Portrait Gallery

One of the Smithsonian's finest museums is under attack by one of the trendiest.

By David Brooks

The National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C., is one of the finer history museums in the country, so naturally the people in charge are trying to muck it up. Unlike the Museum of American History, which has become a breeding ground for fashionable multicultural grievances, the Portrait Gallery has always held true to its core mission, telling the American story through the lives of the great individuals who shaped it. The museum houses famous portraits of George Washington and Benjamin Franklin and boasts a complete Hall of Presidents, but it has devoted galleries and shows to a wide range of Americans: the organizers of the 1848 Woman's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, novelists such as Hemingway and Fitzgerald, photographers ranging from Matthew Brady to Annie Leibovitz, as well as musicians, jurists, and military leaders. But the National Portrait Gallery is also part of the Smithsonian Institution, and therein lies the problem.

The gallery shares the Old Patent Office Building, at 8th and F Streets Northwest, with another museum in the Smithsonian system, the National Museum of American Art. That museum is headed by Elizabeth Broun, who is known around town as a skillful political player. Ms. Broun has asked Hillary Clinton to serve as honorary curator for special exhibitions. She put on an exhibition of Tipper Gore's photographs. And she hired the wife of then Smithsonian head I. Michael Heyman to serve as guest curator. On Mr. Heyman's last day as director of the Smithsonian, he announced a renovation plan for the Old Patent Office Building. When the work is done in a few years, Ms. Broun's museum will dominate the building. Now, the Portrait Gallery has the lion's share of the space, as envisioned by the original legislation creating the museum. But under the new arrangement, the Museum of American Art will enjoy 62,000 square feet of exclusive space and the Portrait Gallery about 21,000 square feet.

Moreover, there will be a dramatic change in the quality of the museums' spaces. The National Portrait Gallery will lose its grandest galleries. At the moment, it maintains the Great Hall on the building's third floor as well as half of the galleries on the second floor, with their vaulted ceilings and ornate designs. After the renovation, the gallery will lose its second and third floor spaces and be relegated to generic spaces on the ground floor. That's important because it affects fund-raising. Donors are more likely to give money to have a handsome gallery named in their honor than they are to have a plain room bear their moniker, so the Portrait Gallery will find it much harder to woo contributors.

The curators at the Portrait Gallery are outraged by what many see as a slow and steady effort to destroy their museum and dissolve their collection into the Museum of American Art. They tried to rally support for their cause, but the new head of the Smithsonian, Lawrence Small, placed a gag order on all staff. Though the Smithsonian is funded in large part by the taxpayer, the whole controversy is now shrouded in secrecy, as Portrait Gallery curators remain mute for fear of losing their jobs. Broun, again showing her superior savvy, has been openly talking to the press. She says it would be better for all concerned if they would stop revisiting the renovation decision, which is in the past, and instead start planning for the future. Those at the Portrait Gallery "prefer to retain the status quo, and we prefer to move forward," she says. "When the decision has been made, the proper thing for grown-up, mature people to do is to say, 'Okay, chief. We'll move forward.'"

Broun has succeeded in shaping most of the press coverage of the controversy (with the exception of some fine pieces by Michael Kilian in the *Chicago Tribune*). For example, Broun adamantly denies ever trying to merge the Portrait Gallery's collection into hers, a claim some reporters have accepted. In her interview with me, she said

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she has merely hoped to bring in some disinterested outside observers who would be able to explore all possible futures for the museums. But in this regard, she is being Clintonian. In fact, last April she distributed a report she had commissioned that argues vehemently for merging the National Museum of American Art, the Portrait Gallery, and the Archives of American Art into one institution called the "Public Center of American Art and Culture." The report doesn't explicitly say that Broun should head the center, but it treats her museum as the core of the new institution, with the other two entities as adjuncts. The report describes this consolidation as if it were the Holy Grail of museumology, and in her cover sheet, Ms. Broun endorses the idea. The Portrait Gallery people are not paranoid to think that their museum is in peril. It took an angry delegation to Heyman from the gallery's board of governors to head off that proposed consolidation.

The struggle between the two institutions is interesting not only because it affects two of the country's better museums, but because it shows which way the cultural winds are blowing, which sorts of cultural institutions thrive in this day and age and which sorts do not. Ms. Broun and her staff at the National Museum of American Art earned their greatest burst of publicity in 1991 when they mounted a notorious exhibition called "The West As America." It was a tendentious, quasi-Marxist depiction of the settling of the American frontier. It showed classic Western paintings by Remington and William Jewett and then undercut them with polemical wall-texts designed to show that the Westward expansion was little more than a tale of capitalist greed and exploitation. For example, Remington's *Fight for the Water Hole*, a standard depiction of cowboys fighting Indians, was identified in the wall copy as a metaphor for "the plight of the embattled capitalist elite in an era of strikes, violence and widespread immigration." As many critics pointed out, the paintings actually offered a more nuanced view of the mixture of idealism, opportunism, and oppression that characterized the Westward expansion than the exhibition's interpretive texts. Historian Daniel Boorstin toured the exhibition and wrote in the guest book that it was "perverse, historically inaccurate and destructive." The exhibit was supposed to travel to Denver and St. Louis, but museums in both those cities canceled their participation. Ms. Broun admits that some of the wall texts were clumsy, but says she is proud of the ideological content of the show, "We feel it has been to a fair degree vindicated as to its ideas."

But the conflict between her museum and the National Portrait Gallery is not primarily an ideological fight. Any ideological component to the art museum's more flamboyant shows is merely one manifestation of a whole approach to running a museum: The crucial contrast between the

two museums is that Ms. Broun seems in step with the cultural climate, while the leaders of the Portrait Gallery seem out of step and unsure of themselves. Ms. Broun is doing what every successful museum curator does these days. She is putting together controversial shows that generate buzz, networking and fund-raising aggressively, and engaging in modish multicultural politics and sometimes heavy-handed power plays. She happens to share a building with a museum that does not do, or is slower to do, these things, so almost by force of nature her institution dominates its less assertive neighbor. Not to push the analogy too far, but the National Portrait Gallery is a bit like the *New Yorker* of the 1970s, worthy but dated, and Ms. Broun is vaguely akin to a Tina Brown, introducing brassier methods well adapted to a faster world.

The National Museum of American Art is woven into the fabric of elite Washington. Among other things, 80 percent of the art that the Smithsonian lends to government offices is lent by Ms. Broun's museum. She worked closely with Tipper Gore to select and supply the art that now hangs in the reception rooms of the vice-president's residence. If you do a Nexis search on the museum you come across small newspaper filler items that quote cabinet secretaries and Supreme Court judges expressing their delight and gratitude for loans from Ms. Broun's museum.

Members of Congress sometimes seem less interested in

The Lincoln Gallery, pre-renovation, in the Old Patent Office Building the museums share; Julia Ward Howe's 1861 Lincoln

Library of Congress; inset: AP / Wide World Photos

preserving the cultural holdings of the museums they oversee than in making sure some of the contents tour their districts. The National Museum of American Art has been a leader in making its collection accessible to people who never come to Washington. Its award-winning website is exactly the sort of thing appropriators like to hear about. Meanwhile, the museum has put on desperately with-it and contemporary shows that appeal to the art establishment: installations with Jimi Hendrix music and names like "Megatron/Matrix." That last exhibit consisted of a massive wall of 215 television monitors showing a riot of images and centrally featuring two young women clad only in pink panties striking classic poses.

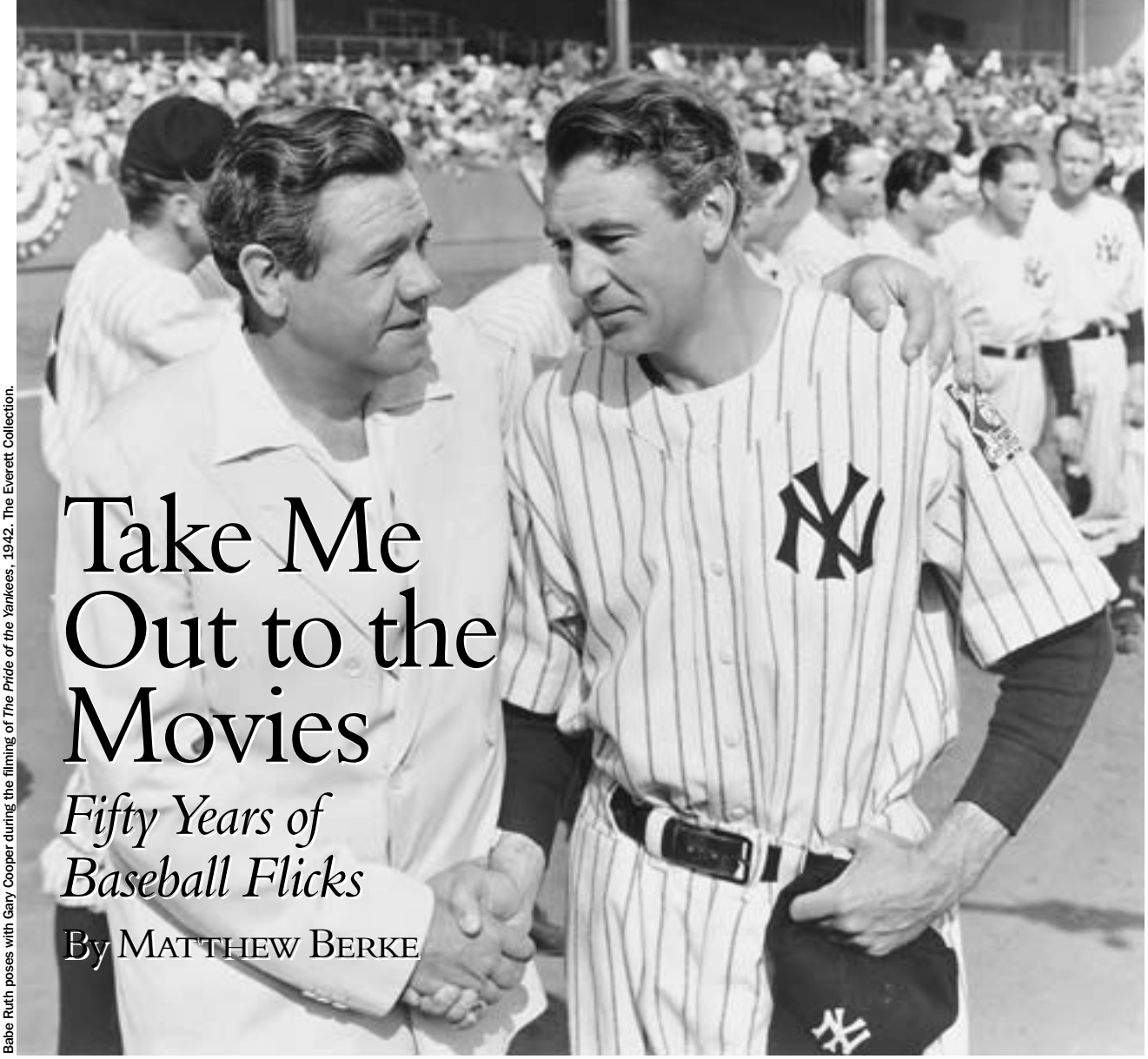
During the fight over the renovation plans, by contrast, the National Portrait Gallery was headed by Alan Fern, who is now retiring at age 69. Mr. Fern was a teacher at the University of Chicago who then worked at the Library of Congress for 20 years. He moved to the Portrait Gallery 18 years ago and set a standard for professorial, effective, but not flashy leadership. When the *Washington Times* ran a nice profile of Mr. Fern upon his retirement, he wrote a gracious and self-effacing letter to the editor pointing out that the bulk of the credit for the museum's accomplishments should go to the staff and not him—a generous if somewhat old-fashioned gesture. During the fight over the space, Fern and his staff never went outside the Smithsonian to rally political support, though they probably would have found it on Capitol Hill. They seem unaware of how to pull strings in Congress or generate favorable publicity. During the turf war, the Portrait Gallery has played, and continues to play, the good Smithsonian soldier, hoping for some act of charity from the higher-ups.

If anything, the Portrait Gallery staff seemed a bit apologetic about their mission. History that focuses on individual achievement may be popular on C-SPAN and among the general public, but it is out of fashion in professional circles, where the focus is on the daily life of the masses, not the doings of elites. Instead of defiantly championing their beleaguered cause, Portrait Gallery staffers sometimes seem to have, as Marx would say, internalized their own oppression—accepted the profession's verdict that portraits celebrating the illustrious are fusty and elitist. Relegated to the lower depths of a building that is off the Mall and therefore remote from the tourist hordes, the gallery may see its already-low profile dwindle. Then the day will come when one and all agree that the reasonable thing to do is merge it with some other museum. That would be a tragedy, because right now the National Portrait Gallery is the best place in Washington for wandering around talking about the scope of American history.

It's also ironic that the Portrait Gallery should be in such danger now, when the Smithsonian is making strides to trim its ideological sails. Controversies proliferated in the early nineties, as the institution put on one agitprop exhibition after another. But for the past few years, the officials in the Smithsonian castle have been trying to rein in the academic shock troops. Lawrence Small, the new director, promises a more businesslike approach and has already streamlined the administrative structure. He has hired Sheila Burke to head what is effectively the American history group of museums.

When Burke was Bob Dole's top staffer, she was something of a *bête noire* to movement conservatives. She then went on to the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, which couldn't have done her any good. But nobody doubts that she is superbly competent. And measured by the ideological standards of the Smithsonian, she counts as a raving right-winger—which is to say, she has actually met and talked with Republicans. So perhaps she will bring a different perspective to an insular institution.

What the Portrait Gallery so obviously needs is a leader who will vigorously champion its mission and take on the current academic orthodoxy. After all, outside the world of museumology and the professoriate, historical biography is thriving. Surely there must be a curator out there—part Robert Maynard Hutchins, part Tina Brown—who could take the Portrait Gallery, now a victim, and turn it into an aggressor. ♦



Babe Ruth poses with Gary Cooper during the filming of *The Pride of the Yankees*, 1942. The Everett Collection.

Take Me Out to the Movies

Fifty Years of Baseball Flicks

By Matthew Berke

Baseball movies are seldom about baseball. For American cinema, baseball is a metaphor for something about the human condition: manhood, mortality, love, justice, reconciliation, second chances, dignity in defeat, the mystery of compassion, the value of friendship, simple grace, and impossible dreams.

Perhaps that's because baseball appeals to some deep structure in the imagination. Football, basketball, soccer, and hockey are reenactments of war, of violating other people's sanctuaries. But baseball is about life: You venture out into the world—all the while seeking temporary haven against hostile forces—and, at long last, return safely home.

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Though baseball movies are as old as the motion picture industry, the first to be important in its own right is the 1942 classic *The Pride of the Yankees*. A sentimental biography of Lou Gehrig, the slugging first-baseman for the New York Yankees during the 1920s and 1930s, it remains the benchmark for all subsequent baseball movies. As a World War II-era morale-booster, *The Pride of the Yankees* gushes with appreciation for American institutions and the American way of life. The story opens with picturesque glimpses of New York, circa 1913, with its trolleys and horse wagons, tenements and clothes lines. Gehrig's German-immigrant parents don't understand their son's passion for baseball, but they recognize that "In zis country you can be anysing you vant."

Teresa Wright plays Gehrig's wife Eleanor as a proper, wholesome heroine, but with a sexual edge that gives the film a real lift, and Gary Cooper is perfectly cast as the awkward, humble, and lovable hero. He brings a convincing masculine presence to the role, even if he never quite mastered a ballplayer's movements. (Lefty O'Doul, a big leaguer brought in to coach the actor, thought he "threw the ball like an old woman tossing a hot biscuit.") The baseball action is helped along by headline montages and newsreel footage, and several of Gehrig's real-life Yankee teammates—including Babe Ruth and Bill Dickey—make cameo appearances.

The Pride of the Yankees is essentially the story of how a boy becomes a man, and, in Lou Gehrig's case, a leader of men. The essence of baseball—venturing out into the world, completing a series of required passages, and coming back home—is beautifully mirrored in

the life of one man. To follow his dream of playing Major League baseball, Lou must overcome obstacles: his parents' resistance, for instance, and, later, his own discomfort around rough, profane companions. Despite Lou's reputation as "the Iron Horse"—a reference to his courage and durability—he remains something of a mama's boy (repeatedly addressing his domineering mother as "my best girl"). But when he does finally leave his parents' house and cleave unto his wife, his manhood is completed, and the love story between Eleanor and Lou becomes the real center of the movie.

In the end, the seemingly vital thirty-six-year-old is diagnosed with a fatal neuro-muscular illness (now commonly called Lou Gehrig's disease). He had lived well, and now he is called upon to die well. "All the arguing in the world can't change the umpire's call," he says to his doctor. Gehrig's famous farewell address at Yankee Stadium is recreated as a classic moment in American cinema: "Today I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth."

Curiously, there has never been a decent film about Babe Ruth, the man who—as both player and icon—overshadowed Gehrig. His biography could not be told as an exemplary life. Ruth was an outrageous man-child, a wild dionysian in Yankee pinstripes, a glutton, drunk, vulgarian, and sexual predator. At the same time, he was a kind and generous soul with an affection for children (even if he couldn't be trusted with their older sisters). Making sense of this complicated life would have been a cinematic triumph. Unfortunately, *The Babe Ruth Story*, a 1948 production starring William Bendix, is widely regarded as the worst baseball movie ever made. It distorts the Babe's life by presenting him as a cardboard saint with a Brooklyn accent. (Ruth, of course, grew up in Baltimore, but Bendix was very much from Brooklyn.) Just weeks before he died of cancer in 1948, Ruth attended a screening of this silly, untruthful hagiography and was unable to watch it all the way through.

A better but still disappointing effort at capturing Ruth's life is *The Babe* (1992), starring John Goodman. Though sympathetic, it does show at least some of Ruth's misbehavior, with special emphasis on his vulgarity, giving the audience more belching and flatulence than necessary. *The Babe* takes far too much liberty with the facts to be a serious biographical interpretation, and, though it tries hard, it never approximates the fun and excitement that Ruth always generated. (Also, the real Babe Ruth, even when he developed his trademark beer belly, was never as corpulent as John Goodman, who looks more like Ralph Kramden than the Bambino as he chugs around the bases.)

The Babe hints that Ruth's wild lifestyle began to calm down by the

1930s, thanks in large measure to the influence of his second wife, Claire. The importance of a good woman is a critical motif in almost every baseball movie. Without the woman who sets boundaries, offers companionship, and completes his incompleteness, a man is unfit for the game of life. A moving, if conventional, illustration of this theme occurs in *The Winning Team*, a 1952 production claiming to be "the true story of Grover Cleveland Alexander," pitching superstar of the 1910s and 1920s. Ronald Reagan as Alexander provides a model of manly grace under pressure, cool and confident in the most trying circumstances, chewing gum and rubbing up a baseball. A young, wholesome Doris Day got top billing as Aimee, the devoted wife. After his initial triumphs, Alexander has a mid-career slide and turns to the bottle. Aimee rescues him from skid row, and he delivers by pitching the Cardinals to victory in the 1926 World Series. In gratitude he tells her, "I've been stealing strength from you all season—every game, every pitch. . . . Without you I'm just half a man, waiting to black out. God sure must think a lot of me, for giving me you."

Unfortunately, the real life of Grover Cleveland Alexander was not so happy: His deep plunge into drunkenness and destitution occurred not in mid-career, but *after* his World Series heroics and supposed reconciliation with Aimee, and he died a lonely alcoholic in a rooming house in 1950. (*For the Love of the Game*, a 1999 film starring Kevin Costner and Kelly Preston, plays a similar theme in contemporary settings and with greater realism; the Costner character, however, is not a drunk but a recovering egomaniac. Another good overcoming-a-handicap movie is the 1957 *Fear Strikes Out*, the story of Boston Red Sox outfielder Jimmy Piersall and his struggle with mental illness. It's overwrought, of course, in the way all 1950s psychological dramas are, but still interesting.)

The Pride of St. Louis (1952) stars Dan Dailey as Jerome "Dizzy" Dean, the gangly, wisecracking huckleberry from the Ozarks who becomes the St. Louis Cardinals' pitching ace during the 1930s. He too depends heavily on his wife's stabilizing influence when an injury forces him into early retirement. Unlike the laconic Alexander, Diz is blessed with the gift of gab, and so he becomes a broadcaster, offering such colorful observations as, "He mighta scored if he'd a slud." A group of school teachers force him to resign because he's corrupting the youth with bad grammar. In his radio farewell, Dizzy urges children to get as much schooling as they can, because "The thing for you to do is talk educated." Moved by his sincerity, the old biddies regret their meddling and ask the great man to return. "We'll keep teaching them English," says the head teacher, "and you keep on learning 'em baseball."

After *The Pride of the Yankees*, the best baseball movie in the historical-bio-

graphical mode is probably *Eight Men Out*, John Sayles's 1988 film about the "Black Sox" scandal of 1919, in which eight Chicago White Sox players threw the World Series after receiving $10,000 apiece from gamblers. *Eight Men Out* gets a lot of things right, stylishly giving a sense of the time and the place with ragtime music, Model-T's, straw hats and high collars, realistic baseball action, and period uniforms and ballparks. It also debunks the myth of baseball's pastoral innocence by revealing the economic and social context of the newly emerging world of professional sports on a national scale.

Yet *Eight Men Out* utterly lacks dramatic tension. Once the fix is in, the story unfolds with no interesting plot turns or surprises. Players take money, everybody suspects something, players blow the Series anyway, investigations follow, players are banned from baseball for life. Though it's clear that the eight were horribly underpaid and underappreciated by White Sox owner Charlie Comiskey, the movie never makes a convincing case that they were driven by desperate economic need. What succeeds in terms of history fails in terms of drama.

The Black Sox receive their drama, if not their history, in *Field of Dreams*, the 1989 screen adaptation of W.P. Kinsella's novel *Shoeless Joe*. Kevin Costner stars as Ray, a burnt-out 1960s type, about to enter middle age, who has implausibly become a farmer in Iowa. One day while he's out in the fields he hears a strange voice commanding him, "Build it and he will come." This turns out to mean he should plow under part of his cornfield and construct a regulation-size baseball park so that "Shoeless" Joe Jackson, the greatest star among the banished players, can return. Joe is followed by other Black Sox, and later by an all-star team of deceased diamond heroes, who drop in to play ball, then disappear into the tall corn at the edge of the outfield. Their games seem to be played for the sheer joy of play, combining childlike innocence with adult excellence. The salty old-timers sometimes give Ray a bit of ribbing, but for the most part, they're nice fellas; they always stop cursing, for instance,

Right: The Everett Collection. Opposite and below: Citadel.

Above: William Bendix as Babe Ruth (1942). Left: Doris Day and Ronald Reagan as the Grover Cleveland Alexanders (1952). Opposite: Dan Dailey as Dizzy Dean (1952).

when Ray's wife and daughter are present. The family takes it all in stride. "This is very interesting," says Ray, in one of many hilarious understatements.

Ray's magical field provides a second chance for the old players and for the various strays whom Ray gathers along the way. But in the end, they really prefigure a more important second chance. One evening, after a ballgame, Ray's father turns up, resurrected as a young man. He is no longer the cranky authoritarian who was his son's constant nemesis. Father and son play catch on the perfect field—for the first time as friends rather than antagonists. The perfect reciprocity of the throwing and catching symbolizes communication and reconciliation—but in a distinctly masculine doing-things-together way rather than a tearful heart-to-heart conversation. The perfect field on the family farm is really any old backyard where such father-son bonding occurs.

Much closer to earth is *Bull Durham*, Ron Shelton's 1988 tour de force about life in the minor leagues: the bandbox stadiums piping out corny organ music, the long bus rides from one gritty city to the next, the cheap motels, the shabby locker rooms where players hang their clothes on a nail. Those who inhabit this strange little world are sustained by the dream of someday getting into "The Show," as they call the Major Leagues. But behind *Bull Durham*'s veneer of unsentimental realism is an idealistic message about salvaging honor despite failure and disappointment.

Crash Davis (Kevin Costner, again) is an aging catcher who has spent his entire career in the minors, save for

All pictures: Citadel.

Above: The Bingo Long All Stars (1976).
Right: Robert De Niro in Bang the Drum Slowly *(1973)*
Opposite: Lola in Damn Yankees! *(1958)*

three weeks when he was called up "for a cup of coffee"—a short stay in the Majors. Now he has been acquired by the Durham Bulls for the sole purpose of mentoring a hot new pitching prospect, Ebby Calvin "Nuke" LaLoosh (Tim Robbins). Nuke has a Major League fastball but he is an arrogant young man who pitches—and lives—with self-defeating wildness. Rounding out the cast of characters is Annie Savoy, a part-time English teacher and full-time baseball groupie, played by Susan Sarandon at her sultry best. Each spring she selects one Durham Bull as her lover and protégé for the duration of the season: She cheers him at home games, advises him about baseball and life, ties him to the bed naked and reads him Walt Whitman by candlelight.

Both Crash and Annie know they will become superfluous once Nuke moves up to the Majors, but they remain true to their function as surrogate parents for the young hotshot. Things don't quite unfold in a storybook manner (much *non*-family viewing follows as the two outcasts give in to the sexual tension that has been building between them), but there is hope even in these very broken lives—and that, finally, may be the idealistic core behind *Bull Durham*'s seemingly comfortless realism.

If *Bull Durham* redefines the second chance as saving the pieces of a dream, *The Natural*, released in 1984, is the ultimate second-chance fantasy. It easily wins the triple crown for most clichés, stereotyped images, and predictable plot devices packed into one baseball movie. It also provides early examples of now-familiar cinematic techniques: the overuse of soft golden lighting and the lush, overwhelming background music that tells you precisely what emotion you're supposed to feel at any given moment. *The Natural* is a compendium of tropes and archetypes from America's collective baseball unconscious.

The title and the plot are taken from a 1952 Bernard Malamud novel. The old popular baseball narratives always told a story in which a pure-hearted country boy leaves his family farm and childhood sweetheart to play ball in the big city; is tempted by gamblers, greedy team owners, evil sportswriters, and femmes fatales; comes to his senses, defies the bad guys, hits the winning home run, recovers the purity of the game, and returns triumphantly to the farm and the girl next door. Malamud had read those old narratives closely, and in *The Natural*, he constructed a cruel parody of them in which the protagonist gets a second chance—only to repeat his mistakes and end up a ruined man.

The movie version of *The Natural* simply restores the happy ending—in spades. Robert Redford is Roy Hobbs, the Nebraska farmboy who wants to "reach for the best that's in me" and to become "the best there ever was." Glenn Close is Iris, the eternally patient and forgiving girl he leaves behind. On his way to a Major League tryout, Roy is shot, apparently to death, by a mysterious lady in black (Barbara Hershey). He returns sixteen years later, in 1939, seemingly brought back from the dead. As a thirty-six-year-old, he seems in fact to be the greatest player ever, hitting with such power that he breaks the scoreboard and even knocks the cover off the ball. "Anything he wants to do, he does," someone says. "How can somebody play that well who came from nowhere?" (We are teased with the idea that there might be supernatural forces involved in Roy's return.)

Of course, Roy is nearly ruined by the team's crooked owner, the gambler, and a new vamp (Kim Basinger). But then Iris returns, resplendent in white

dress, white hat, and backlighting. She comes to the crucial games and her aura restores Roy to championship form. It's hard to speak of this humorless, cliché-ridden film with a straight face. But it is a feast for the eyes, and Robert Redford, already well into his forties, still manages to appear boyish, looking as much like a real ballplayer as any actor has.

Bang the Drum Slowly, a 1973 screen adaptation of Mark Harris's novel, is, like *The Pride of the Yankees*, about confronting mortality. But here imminent death is the occasion not for stoic fortitude but for reflection on the source of human sympathy and fellowship. The main character is Henry Wiggen, ace pitcher and writer of a book on baseball, whose teammates have nicknamed him "Author." Played by Michael Moriarty with glib insouciance, Author unexpectedly ends up befriending Bruce Pearson (Robert De Niro), a marginal young catcher whose value to the team consists mainly of being an easy target for ridicule. Except for Author, no one knows that Pearson, a dim-witted yokel from Georgia, is dying of Hodgkin's disease. When the team moves to release him, Author intervenes, negotiating a lower salary in exchange for a contract clause "saying that I and Bruce Pearson must stay with the club together."

De Niro, as Bruce Pearson, delivers what might be his best performance as a character who is *not* a tightly coiled psycho waiting to explode. He brings real poignancy to Pearson's bewilderment and agony. Unlike Lou Gehrig, Pearson has no adoring wife to comfort and sustain him through his trial, only the gold-digging madam of an escort service, who pretends to love him in hopes of becoming the beneficiary of his life insurance policy.

When the players finally learn of Pearson's condition, they stop ragging him. As Author explains: "Everybody knows everybody's dying. That's why people are as good as they are." The players rally around their sick comrade and begin to play better: "It was a club like it shoulda been all season, but never was, but all of a sudden become." They go on to win the pennant and the World Series, a happy ending except for the fact that Pearson dies. Author has finally arrived at what the Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno called "the tragic sense of life." He realizes that if suffering and death are the primary facts of human existence, then all that really matters is compassion and kindness, the only proper responses for beings laboring under what Unamuno labeled "the common yoke of a common grief."

Of course, not every good baseball movie has a deep message to convey. *The Bingo Long Traveling All-Stars & Motor Kings* (1976) never does for the old Negro Leagues what the excellent *A League of Their Own* (1992) does for the women's leagues of the 1940s, but as a

fantasy set in those pre-Jackie Robinson times, it is good entertainment. A group of Negro League players, excluded from the all-white Major Leagues and exploited by their own black bosses, decide to form an independent, player-owned team.

Led by pitcher Bingo Long (Billy Dee Williams) and catcher Leon Carter (James Earl Jones), the All-Stars barnstorm the country in gaudy, colorful uniforms, playing whatever local talent will take them on. Richard Pryor, with little more than a cameo role, nearly steals the show as a black player who wants to reach the Majors by posing as a Cuban—but his efforts to learn Spanish are as futile as his many attempts to calculate his own batting average.

Bingo Long has affinities with the baseball "jock comedy," an *Animal House*-like blend of slapstick, vulgarity, and sex involving a cast of wacky eccentrics and at least one romantic subplot. The best-known, and perhaps best, example of this genre is *Major League* (1989), an implausible underdogs-come-from-behind-to-beat-the-odds fairy tale. For fans who think that *Field of Dreams* and *The Natural* are pretentious, *Major League* is usually the baseball film of choice. The plot is predictable, the characters are mostly stereotyped clowns, and the laughs are pretty cheap—but they are real laughs. Of all the has-beens and underachievers who make up this fictional version of the Cleveland Indians, the most memorable is Ricky Vaughn (Charlie Sheen), the ex-con pitcher with a blazing fastball and no control. Former catcher and comic actor Bob Uecker appears as a jaded, cynical broadcaster who observes, for instance, that a player with a big mustache leads the league in nose hairs, and says things like, "Today's postgame is brought to you by . . . I can't find it. . . . Oh, the hell with it." *The Bad News Bears* (1976), the first movie of any kind to have kids cursing (how adorable!), worked a similar plot at the Little League level. It's not believable in this context, however. This film doesn't wear well.

Another jock comedy is *Mr. Baseball* (1992), the story of Jack Elliot (Tom Selleck), a veteran ballplayer in such a bad slump that he gets traded to a Japanese team, the Chiunichi Dragons. This can't happen in real life, of course, but it sets up nicely the comic possibilities of an East-West culture clash. Jack eventually becomes a better player and a better man by doing things for the team, taking advice, respecting other people's customs; the Japanese, for their part, become a bit less rigid and, unfortunately, a lot more boorish. The baseball action is especially well presented here (especially the zip of the fastball), and Tom Selleck is *very* convincing as a professional ballplayer. His willingness to change wins the heart of the beautiful Hiroko (Aya Takanashi) as well as a new contract in the Major Leagues.

There's at least one kind of lighthearted baseball comedy that viewers can take semiseriously: the magical transformation of an unathletic individual into a diamond star. Sure, it's nobler for a hero to raise himself up by his

cleats through hard work and will power. But let's face it, some people will never succeed in sports no matter how much effort they put into it, and they deserve their fantasies as much as anyone else. So don't forget *It Happens Every Spring* (1949), the story of a college professor who invents a substance that repels wood, thus catapulting him to fame as a pitcher (anticipating by more than a decade such films as *Flubber*). In a similar vein check out *Roogie's Bump* (1954) and *Rookie of the Year* (1993), both about young boys who aren't good enough for their own Little League teams—but after suffering minor arm injuries miraculously become good enough to pitch in the Majors. (*Rookie of the Year* is by far the better picture, but *Roogie's Bump* boasts appearances by a number of real-life Brooklyn Dodgers, the fabled 1950s "Boys of Summer.")

For pure musical fun, nothing beats *Damn Yankees!*, the 1958 screen adaptation of the Broadway hit, with Tab Hunter as the middle-aged shlub who sells his soul in exchange for the ability to play for the Washington Senators. Some of the saucier musical numbers are left out of the movie (so the kids can watch), though Gwen Verdon's classic "Whatever Lola Wants" is retained. "You Gotta Have Heart" alone makes the movie a must-see.

Last but not least, there is *Angels in the Outfield* (the 1951 original is much better than the 1990s remake). Real angels from Heaven come to the aid of Pittsburgh Pirates manager Guffy McGovern. They get him to stop his swearing and bullying, they improve the team's fortunes, and they arrange for him to fall in love with a pretty sportswriter and adopt the little orphan girl whose prayers brought about the divine intervention in the first place. "Somebody must've been helping me—and not just on the field," says Guffy, one arm around each of his girls. "Look what I've *got*!"

The appreciation for small graces, the one-in-a-million-chance-but-you-still-gotta-believe spirit: It's all true to the game. And, of course, to more than the game—which is why baseball movies are seldom about baseball. ♦

Hopelessly Hoping

Can we still dream the American dream?

BY THOMAS HIBBS

Despite its author's best hopes, *The Real American Dream: A Meditation on Hope*, is decidedly a tale of decline. As Andrew Delbanco admits, it is "a history of diminution." In chilling prose, he depicts culture as "locked in a soul-starving present," where "hope has narrowed to the vanishing point of the self alone."

The Real American Dream
A Meditation on Hope
by Andrew Delbanco
Harvard Univ. Press, 143 pp., $19.95

For a self-professed "secular liberal," Delbanco has a surprising and disturbing gift for conveying deprivation and loss. Just as he did in 1995 with his other major study, *The Death of Satan: How Americans Have Lost the Sense of Evil*, he manages by the end of *The Real American Dream* to make the reader feel almost haunted by God's absence.

And yet, Delbanco still has hope for America—hope for the return of hope. The problem is that he wants to bring back hope with the thing that is the major cause of hope's decline. His failure comes not in his convincing account of the origins of American hopefulness among the Puritans, nor in his tale of the decline of that hopefulness with the loss of the things that the Puritans and most of the succeeding generations of Americans believed. The failure of *The Real American Dream* comes in Delbanco's Emersonian desire to "rekindle the smouldering nigh-quenched fire on the altar" with the liberalism to which he is committed—even as that liberalism continues to douse the flames of hope.

Like all respectable historians, Delbanco tries to avoid a simplistic tale of decline. Drawing upon impressive erudition, he shows that we have often thought of ourselves as in decay. He quotes Henry Adams's remark that the decline of the presidency from George Washington to Ulysses S. Grant is "evidence enough to upset Darwin." And yet our current situation is unprecedented. We lack a "coherent symbology" to satisfy our "unslaked craving for transcendence." Delbanco breaks down the history of the American hope into three stages, but our own era eludes categorization. He speaks of "three ideas—God, nation, and . . . what? the market? the recreational self?—by which Americans have tried to save themselves from the melancholy that threatens all reflective beings."

In the past, Americans kept melancholy at bay by recourse to transforming narratives of hope. America began not with the absence but with the presence of God. Delbanco focuses on Puritan New England not because it encompasses the whole story of early America, but because it embodies the "purest strain . . . of the first American form of hope," a form that gave "meaning to suffering and pain alike and promised deliverance from death." Puritanism accentuates human hopelessness, leaves no room for chance, randomness, or the notion that human beings make "their own history." In this, puritanism seems alien to contemporary sensibilities. But, in its suspicion of tradition and external authority, puritanism also provides an early example of the "American hostility to inherited privilege." In its insistence, moreover, that beliefs are authenticated by the effects they produce in the individual's life, puritanism is an early form of American pragmatism.

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In the nineteenth century, under attack from rationalism and deism, puritanism began to wane. In the 1830s, Emerson wrote that its "creed is passing away and none arises in its room." Not long after Emerson's lament, the country found a new creed in the form of America herself. In this, the second form of American hope, the sacred nation became the symbol and incarnation of transcendence. Walt Whitman described it as the era in which the "divine literatus" would replace the priest. The transference of the sacred from religion to the state is palpable in Herman Melville's insistence on the providential role of America and his reference to the "great God absolute, centre and circumference of all democracy."

Lincoln, of course, is the one most responsible for identifying the nation as the embodiment of transcendent ideals. To Lincoln, for instance, we owe the elevation of the Declaration of Independence to a sacred document. But Lincoln's shrouding of nationalism in the language of religion did not involve the celebration of a *Volk* or *Patria* rooted in ties of blood. Rather, he proposed a community based on universal human rights, counterbalanced by responsibilities and the opportunities afforded by free labor. Lincoln's vision of an entrepreneurial society whose participants are unencumbered by their origin dominates American culture from Lincoln's death well into the 1960s.

Ah, the 1960s: Vietnam, the civil rights riots, the assassinations, and Nixon's coming. This is the period when America lost its nerve, its aspiration, its ability to affirm the future, and thus its hope. In the aftermath, we have become skilled at deconstructing old stories but inept at constructing new ones. Delbanco laments the absence of any "genuine engagement with the polity," the loss of a sense of our common destiny, of an ideal that is worth "tears, sacrifice, and death." But he does not believe that the current situation of cultural deprivation can endure. Relying on Tocqueville's assertion that faith is the natural state of humanity, Delbanco insists that "something new is coming," that we cannot for long endure as a people without some affirming narrative of who we are. Just as Emerson was wrong to suggest in the 1830s that nothing would replace puritanism, so it would be hasty for us to assume that nothing will replace the religious nationalism that informed our public life from the Civil War to the 1960s. Like Emerson, Delbanco now waits for a new creed, a new form of democratic hope.

But here the analogy with Emerson falters, since the situation at the time of the marginalization of the Puritan God is quite different from our own. The second form of American hope drew upon the resources of the first. Delbanco's book reads like a defense of Whitman's claim that at the "core of democracy is the religious element." We have, it seems, been living off the religious capital of our tradition, and we have so depleted our capital that it is now unclear what resources are left to us.


Cotton Mather

UPI / Corbis-Bettmann.

Delbanco is rightly wary of suggestions that we should just pick a story arbitrarily or each construct a self out of the fragments we have inherited from the past. This would only exacerbate the situation by feeding the tendency to see the self as supreme, as beholden to nothing other than its own preferences. He quotes Emerson: "Faith makes us, and not we it." The difficulty is that, according to Delbanco, we no longer inhabit a world of transcendence. It is not just the case that we cannot return to the old narratives in their old forms; that would be reactionary and doomed to failure. The deeper problem is that, by Delbanco's account, we cannot believe in the truth of any grand narrative the way our ancestors did. Puritanism contained pragmatic elements within a cosmic vision of good and evil. But we have become self-conscious pragmatists, attempting to stand outside or above any particular cultural vision and choose whatever suits us best. In spite of his acute sense of our predicament, Delbanco himself seems to think that when it comes to the question of truth, this sort of pragmatism is the best we can do. His noble and classical longing, the "unquenchable human need to feel connected to something larger than the insular self," is at odds with the fashionable epistemology he bemoans but seems nonetheless to accept.

A similar contradiction afflicts Delbanco's previous study of how we came to be where we are now. In *The Death of Satan*, Delbanco examines the "gulf" that "has opened up in our culture between the visibility of evil and the intellectual resources available for coping with it." His darkly apocalyptic thesis is that, "if evil . . . escapes the reach of our imagination, it will have established dominion over us all." In an attempt to reinvigorate the sense of evil, Delbanco covers roughly the same terrain as he does in *The Real American Dream*, beginning with the Puritan strategies for naming and wrestling with evil and proceeding to tell a story of the erosion of our ability to name evil. We now approach an "unprecedented condition of inarticulate dread."

Faced with this prospect, what are we to do? In both *The Death of Satan* and *The Real American Dream*, Delbanco attempts to carve out a middle ground between such liberal ironists as Richard Rorty (who think that we should simply dispense with the traditional metaphors for grappling with evil) and serious Christians and Jews (who embrace those metaphors as something more than metaphors). His solution is to agree that "we no longer inhabit a world of transcendence," but to claim that we can nonetheless use traditional metaphors to maintain "the health of society."

This pragmatic recourse to metaphor proves, in the end, a feeble basis upon which to erect a robust, imaginative vision of good and evil. In *The Death of Satan* and now in *The Real American Dream*, Andrew Delbanco is caught, aware of the problem but unable to face it squarely. Despite his stunning acumen and his admirable longing for a new form of democratic hope, Delbanco ends up confirming something we suspected all along: the woeful inadequacy of secular liberalism to address our current predicament. ♦

My Expensive Book

Take my dictionary, please! Only $289.25 on Amazon.com! By Richard Kostelanetz

My editor told me that my latest book, the second edition of my *Dictionary of the Avant-Gardes*, would cost $60 before Christmas and $90 after. Those prices seemed a bit high, even for a book that is 670 double-columned pages, but not outrageous.

A Dictionary of the Avant-Gardes
by Richard Kostelanetz
Schirmer, 670 pp., $???

So you can imagine my surprise to discover at the beginning of this year that the nouveau legendary Amazon.com—with its reputation for deep price-cutting—was offering the book for a whopping $289.25. What world were they in? Part of the popularity of Amazon.com's on-line format is the option it offers for customer responses, and one of the contributors to my dictionary submitted a letter saying the price was way too high. His comments appeared on the book's web page for a while, then mysteriously disappeared, only to reappear later. The Amazon.com format also offers an option labeled "I am the Author, and I want to comment on my book," so I wrote that readers could get the book far cheaper elsewhere. This advice, however, "Earth's Largest Bookstore" decided not to publish.

Meanwhile, Amazon.com's principal online competitor, Barnes & Noble, was offering the book for $60 throughout January. Sometime during February, however, the BarnesAndNoble.com price jumped to $90, and then to $95, escalations made without explanation. During February, Amazon.com, reconnecting to Mother Earth, lowered the price to $98—claiming, however, that this price represented a marvelous bargain, "reduced $191.50," which is not quite the same as admitting a previous inflation. Nonetheless, at the beginning of April, Amazon.com went back up to $289.25, adding that the book is "back ordered." Borders, not to be overcut, wants $312.50 on-line, while Books-A-Million asks $289.25 (though its "club members" can get the book for a mere $260.32), and Cody's in Berkeley also wants $289.25.

A friend with Internet time to kill tells me that a smaller website called VarsityBooks.com has the *Dictionary of the Avant-Gardes* for $90.25 reduced from the "suggested price" of $95; even establishing authority of a sort by offering a picture of the cover, which they must have obtained by having the book securely in hand. Another site, called BigWords.com, promises to deliver it for $55.80. (BestBookDeal.com offers a $10 discount for BigWords orders over $100, which means you can get six copies of the book for the price of one at Border's; hunt down enough deals like that, and you could start your own online bookstore.) A site called Fatbrain.com asks $60 for "450 pages; not yet published," while Blackwell's wants £40.95 for a book still described as "not yet printed." Time has apparently passed them by.

Perhaps the Internet is a less efficient retailing channel than most of us suppose. I don't believe that discrepancies in book pricing were previously so huge, but one advantage offered by the Internet is comparison shopping without leaving your desk. The proprietor of St. Marks Books, an independent store in New York's East Village, told me that none of his regular wholesalers has the book. He surmised that it must have a "short discount," meaning a retailer's discount insufficient to warrant wholesalers' stocking it. Perhaps, I replied; but if one Internet retailer can sell it for $55.80, it must be getting the book from somewhere for less.

Great discrepancies in prices prompt strange thoughts. One notion occurring to me is that either my publisher or my wholesaler is trying to price some Internet retailers out of business. (After all, more than one bookseller would be relieved if Amazon.com disappeared.) It's unlikely, of course, but consider that the major online bookstores don't actually have the book. None of them offers a photo, as they do with many of their books; they merely list the dictionary to bolster their claim that they have a far larger selection than any local retailer could manage. Were someone to place an order, Amazon.com would reply that it was "back ordered," which is a euphemism for "get it elsewhere." (Or perhaps, if a customer persisted, they'd purchase a copy from BigWords.com before shipping it out for $289.25.)

My editor tells me that none of his colleagues can account for the discrepancies. "Retailers," he adds, "can charge whatever they want." Nonetheless, I wonder if other new books are priced so capriciously. While an author can be amused by the variety of retail prices, all apparently concocted without consulting the wholesale cost, I'm pained by the thought that there might actually be a reader out there who will decide against purchasing my poor, orphaned dictionary, not because anyone forbade it but just because of bad salesmanship. Why, it's checkout-counter censorship. ♦

Richard Kostelanetz has published many books of poetry, fiction, experimental prose, and criticism.

Spyglass Entertainment

Hollywood's Bad Joke

Did you hear the one about the rabbi and the priest?

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

At some point in the past few years, a screenwriter named Stuart Blumberg went to a meeting with Hollywood bigwigs and delivered a pitch that went something like this: "See, there's this priest and this rabbi who want to bring religion to the people—yeah, I know, *boooring*—but see, they're young, and they're really cool, and they're best friends, and they use all sorts of New Age techniques to get people to church and to synagogue. Anyway, here's the deal: They both fall in love with the same woman! It's hilarious, see, because one of them is a priest—a Catholic priest, get it, in love with a girl? And now get this: The girl isn't Jewish, so it's a big problem for the rabbi too!"

Forget the fact that the script in question, which has been made into a new movie called *Keeping the Faith*, is an exceptionally witless comedy with no jokes—except, that is, when people fall down. The priest falls down trying to read big old books. A horrible Jewish-American princess falls down when the rabbi punches her in the stomach (don't ask why) and later falls down into a New York gutter when she grabs at his taxicab door as he makes a break from her voracious come-on. (The priest also sets himself on fire swinging incense and has to put himself out by sitting in the holy-water font, which is kind of like falling down.)

Forget that the dialogue is almost unbearably cute: When playing basketball, the rabbi and the priest injure themselves. "Oy," says the rabbi, and the priest responds: "Amen to your oy."

Forget that the direction, by the talented young actor Edward Norton, is remarkably amateurish and that the performances in the two leading roles, by Norton as the priest and Ben Stiller as the rabbi, are surprisingly lacking in grace, charm, and lightness of spirit.

Forget, in other words, that *Keeping the Faith* is terrible and that you shouldn't see it unless you want to feast in the undeniable visual glories of the Amazonian TV actress Jenna Elfman, who plays the love interest.

Forget all this and journey back in time to the meeting where Stuart Blumberg sold his script to the folks at Spyglass Entertainment. These people are in the movie business to make money. Aside from the fact that the script is wretched, what on earth could have convinced them that *Keeping the Faith* was a sensible commercial idea?

It's not necessary to be a faithful Catholic, or a Catholic at all, to understand that Catholics make up the largest religious denomination in America—and that a good many of them might object to seeing a priest in full liplock with a beautiful blonde. There's nothing necessarily offensive about a cinematic portrayal of a priest who undergoes a crisis of faith—but the movie doesn't resolve that crisis of faith in any way. Its makers do not show the slightest understanding of priestly vows, except that priests are not allowed to have sex, which is probably the worst possible thing a Hollywood executive could imagine aside from getting a bad table at Morton's or the Ivy.

Nor is it necessary to be a synagogue-going Jew to understand that the notion of a Conservative rabbi engaging in wild premarital sex with a Gentile might make a lot of people uneasy.

Actually, Americans who don't attend church or synagogue may well find *Keeping the Faith* just as disturbing as traditional Catholics and Jews will. Such people generally don't like to confront religion in any guise. And the confusion and cowardice on display in *Keeping the Faith* can only make its audience feel ill at ease.

It's bad enough for a Jew to sit through the movie's low point—a Yom Kippur sermon in which the rabbi asks forgiveness from his congregation because he didn't tell all of them he was sleeping with a shiksa.

But what are people ignorant of the ways of Judaism supposed to make of such a scene? And how are they supposed to react to the scene a few minutes later when our hero is rewarded with the head rabbi position at his synagogue?

The truth is that Norton, Blumberg, and the people who made *Keeping the Faith* don't know what to make of their own supposedly comic love triangle. They have borrowed the opening lines of a dirty joke and concocted a mild and confusing sitcom out of them. But sitcoms only work when they're familiar and made with panache and command. *Keeping the Faith* would have been better told as a dirty joke, instead of just a dirty trick played on an unsuspecting public. ♦

John Podhoretz is a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard *and a columnist for the* New York Post.

MEMORANDUM, APRIL 14, 2000

TOPIC: Census Fight
TO: Trent Lott
FROM: Tom DeLay

Trent,

We're getting clobbered in the press for our brave fight to ward off the nanny-state Census forms. The problem, as we have discussed so many times, is that we come off as too negative and aren't offering any POSITIVE ALTERNATIVES. I suggest that instead of just opposing the current Census, we propose our own alternative Census form that will give the government the information it really needs without invading the privacy of hard-working Americans. Let me suggest the following:

CENSUS 2000
THE REPUBLICAN LONG FORM

Name: _____

Race: ❑ White ❑ Caucasian ❑ Cuban-American

Religion: ❑ Baptist ❑ Southern Baptist ❑ McCain supporter

Number of people who typically attend services each Sunday at your church:
❑ 1,000 to 3,000
❑ 3,000 to 5,000
❑ Over 5,000

Family status: ❑ Married ❑ Living in sin ❑ Sodomite

Number of children: ____

If your wife is pregnant, how many unborn children is she carrying? ____

How many concealed handguns do you normally carry? ____

If somebody tried to take your guns away, how many cold, dead fingers would he have to pry open to get them? ❑ 5 ❑ 10

Please indicate the flags you fly over your house: ❑ U.S. ❑ Confederate
❑ POW/MIA ❑ "I believe Paula Jones"

In your gated golf community, which green is closest to your house? ____

As you know, information from the Census helps determine the distribution of government services. Please note the distance from your house to these public services:
____ School
____ Hospital
____ Cigarette vending machine
____ I don't want any damn government services.