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EATING OUT
JOSEPH EPSTEIN

RIDIN' HIGH

SPECIAL REPUBLICAN CONVENTION COVERAGE
Fred Barnes · David Brooks · Christopher Caldwell
Tucker Carlson · Matt Labash · Matthew Rees · David Tell

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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The *Times* Repeats Itself

The *New York Times* greeted delegates with a front-page scoop on the first day of last week's Republican convention in Philadelphia. After conducting an exhaustive, expensive opinion survey, conforming to the very highest standards of scientific rigor, the newspaper of record discovered that the delegates to the convention of America's conservative political party were—hold on to your hats—conservative!

"The poll," said the Times, "found that delegates stand significantly to the right of much of the nation," not to mention to the right of the newsroom of the *New York Times*, which, in an eerie coincidence, stands significantly to the left of just about all of the nation. Perhaps this explains why the *Times* found its poll of delegates not only newsworthy but even front-page worthy. The story's thesis, of course, is that George W. Bush is trying to pull off a shell game—distract the population with his moderate image while hiding the horrifying right-wing reality beneath. Or as the *Times* put it, the delegates are conservative "even at a time when Mr. Bush has sought to portray the Republican Party as increasingly moderate."

It's not so, America! "The delegates who began arriving here this weekend are, the poll found, overwhelmingly white and mostly male and middle age," the *Times* went on. "They are relatively wealthy: one in five put their net worth as $1 million."

Times readers have heard all this before. The they-say-they're-moderate-but-they're-really-a-bunch-of-loons story has become a fixture of the *Times*'s coverage of Republican conventions. Here, for example, is the *Times* from the first day of the 1996 convention in San Diego: "The Republican party is taking great pains to present an image of diversity at its convention here. . . . But away from the stage and the video screens, the nearly 2,000 delegates are overwhelmingly white, mostly male and middle-aged, and impressively wealthy. Almost one-in-five is a millionaire, according to the *New York Times*/CBS News poll."

Hear the echo? The *Times* story last week is essentially a rewrite of the story four years ago. "The delegates . . . are more conservative than Republicans generally—indeed, more conservative than their own candidate."

No doubt the *Times* will say in defense of its self-plagiarism that the composition of the delegates hasn't changed much in four years. But the real lesson here is that the *Times* hasn't changed either—it still has difficulty with the rudiments of American politics. So let THE SCRAPBOOK explain: Conventions attract activists. Activists are more ideological than other people. There are two parties in America, one liberal, the other conservative. The conservative party will draw conservative activists.

And the liberal party, of course, will draw liberal activists. We can hardly wait to read the *Times* front-page blockbuster from Los Angeles next week, explaining how all those ultra-liberal Democratic delegates are so far to the left of the mainstream of American politics. ♦

Bubba, Poppy, Dubya, and the Oval Office

Come on, admit it. You enjoyed it and so did just about everybody else. And why not? It was fun while it lasted—"fun" being a relative term, of course, but one suitably applied to a spontaneous outbreak of malice and rancor, so out-of-step with the enforced cheeriness and good manners of last week's Republican National Convention.

We refer to the minor contretemps between President Clinton and the man he defeated in 1992, former President Bush. It all began, as the world knows—or, more accurately, as the .00001 percent of the world knows that's paying attention to politics this summer—when President Clinton, looking dapper in a royal blue shirt and a khaki two-button suit, went on a riff about the coming election at a Democratic fund-raiser. "As near as I can tell," the president said, his accent thickening, as it often does when he's trying to launch a quip, "the message of the Bush campaign is: 'How bad can I be? I've been governor of Texas. My daddy was president. [Pause for laughter—rich Democrats will laugh at anything!] I own a baseball team . . .'"

To which President Bush testily replied, on NBC News a few days later, "I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to wait a month. . . . And if he continues that, then I'm going to tell the nation what I think about him as a human being and a person."

Now, there are a few points to be made about this little episode. First, how come President Clinton always dresses better when Mrs. Clinton is out of town? Second, it should be noted that, even by the standards to which he has habituated us all, the president's performance was singularly without class. Watching these strange stand-up routines of his, it is increasingly difficult to remember that Bill Clinton is still president of the United States. This is a fact of life that he himself has forgotten often over the last seven years. But now, as he lowers himself into the role of his vice president's attack dog—

subordinate to his own subordinate—he looks less presidential than ever, if such a thing is possible.

Which leads us to the third point. THE SCRAPBOOK is a big fan of family loyalty and applauds President Bush's spirited defense of his son and the implicit criticism of Bill Clinton. We only wish we'd seen it before. He says that he has refrained from criticizing Clinton until now out of "respect for the office." But there have been times over the last two years, particularly during the impeachment unpleasantness, when President Bush could have paid that office its highest tribute by making clear how its current occupant had degraded it. Many Republicans did just that, at considerable political risk. Only now, after some unkind remarks directed at his son, does the former president rise to the defense of the office he himself filled so honorably.

Well, better late than never, we suppose—and, as we say, it was fun while it lasted. ♦

Hidden Hyde

One of those Republicans who defended the presidency at some peril was Henry Hyde, who served as guest of honor at a *National Review* reception Wednesday. The chance to pay him his due attracted one of the week's best guest lists: William and Pat Buckley, the editors of *NR* and *NR* online, Ralph Reed, Michael Gerson, and a rather nervous looking Joe Klein, among others.

Hyde didn't say much. He told one or two jokes and offered a political toast that had not been new when the Republicans last gathered in Philadelphia. But then, he didn't have to say much. His mere presence was a reminder of the principles at stake this year.

Unfortunately, for all the New Republican talk of diversity spicing up the American character, somebody decided that Henry Hyde was too hot a jalapeno for the convention as a whole. His name was not so much as whispered from the podium all week. Maybe it's just as well: The Republicans face an expensive election campaign. Who would have paid to have the roof bolted back onto the First Union Center? ♦

The Legacy

Tuesday night's video tribute to George Bush and his presidency presented him as a decisive leader whose "tough stand" against Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait "let the world know we had regained our strength" after Vietnam. That much was unsurprising.

More startling was that the video highlighted only one other legacy of the Bush presidency: his signing of the Clean Air Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, which the video narrator described as among his "proudest achievements." Hello? These two laws, which dramatically expanded the reach of government—the ADA in particular has been wildly abused—remain at the center of the conservative critique of the Bush presidency. A bright spot:

The video at least didn't tout the deeply flawed 1991 "civil rights" bill as one of Bush's "proudest achievements." Then again, his nomination of Clarence Thomas—for which he should be deeply proud—didn't make the list either. ♦

The Salsa Republicans

Remember when the Oak Ridge Boys were the acme—the bee's knees, the *cat's pajamas*—of Republican entertainment? No longer. This year's convention replaced the grits with salsa: A small army of Latino musicians strode the boards in official capacities, including, significantly, at George W. Bush's arrival rally outside the Museum of Art.

Bush got one of his biggest roars when he introduced (in Spanish) his nephew George P., son of Jeb and Columba Bush and the reigning matinee idol among young Republicans. "The handsome man," W. called P., drawing oohs and aahs of agreement from Latinos and Anglos alike. Bush campaign staffers have given him a catchier nickname: Ricky Martin.

Republican "outreach" to Hispanics has often had a certain paint-by-numbers quality (think mariachi bands, sombreros with floppy elephant ears, "little brown ones," and so on). This felt different. The art museum event was put together by the veteran producer Emilio Estefan and featured a sea of signs proclaiming "Amigos de Bush," "Juntos Si Se Puede," and, of course, "Viva Bush," against a backdrop of three huge, colorful banners proclaiming "Un Nuevo Dia."

Carp all you want about "ethnic pandering"—there's one significant benefit to infusing Republican events with Latino and Caribbean flavors: It's a lot more fun this way. As the crowd joined Latino singer Jon Secada in belting out an upbeat "Spanglish" version of "America the Beautiful," we found it hard to miss the Oak Ridge Boys. Or grits. ♦

Mr. Bowdler at the *Times*

New York Times readers who were unlucky enough to miss Colin Powell's Monday night barnburner got a raw deal the next morning. As is its custom for major events, the *Times* reprinted excerpts from the speech for its readers. But it's a strange principle that guided the selection of those excerpts. Plenty of mentions of Governor Bush survived—even the *Times* couldn't edit an endorsement speech to exclude all references to the man being endorsed, no matter how unpopular he is with the boys and girls in the newsroom. And of course they left in Powell's brief but energetic defense of affirmative action and his call for racial inclusiveness. All that was missing in the *Times*'s version, really, was the heart of the speech.

Fully the last third of Powell's remarks were intended to place Bush's campaign in a larger context—indeed, Powell tried to make the case that of the two major candidates for president, Bush seems uniquely suitable to the world-historical task awaiting the country's next leader. "The Bush-Cheney team will be a great team for America. They will put our nation on a course of hope and optimism for this new century," Powell said. "For all our children's sake, above all, let us as a party strive from this moment on to make that century a reality. Fellow Republicans, fellow Americans, let's elect George W. Bush and Dick Cheney."

The warmth—extravagance, even—of this endorsement must have exceeded the fondest dreams of Bush and his supporters. When the most popular man in America—a hero who carefully husbands his reputation for non-partisanship—delivers this kind of endorsement, it's news. Or so you would think. Too bad it wasn't fit to print in the *Times*. ♦

Spin Central

What do Republican operatives, fund-raisers, talking heads, and consultants do during a GOP convention when there's no drama, no suspense, and almost nothing to spin? Why, they spin anyway. And how do they know *what* to spin? In Philadelphia, they got their marching orders at a 9 A.M. daily meeting in the hotel room of Charlie Black, who's been involved in every GOP presidential campaign since Barry Goldwater's.

The best and the brightest of the Republican professional class showed up: California strategist Ken Khachigian, pollster Linda DiVall, Washington publicist Craig Shirley, conservative leader David Keene, lobbyists Wayne Berman and Craig Fuller, and many others. Each morning, an envoy from the Bush campaign appeared to give a briefing. On Tuesday, the Bushie was Matthew Dowd, a polling expert, former Democrat, and assistant to Karl Rove, Bush's chief strategist. He had good news. A Gallup poll had asked a different sort of question: Will you vote or *consider* voting for Bush? What about Gore? Bush fared wildly better, with 62 percent. Gore got 46 percent.

A prime talking point emanating from the Black group was one you've probably already heard: Those Demo-

cratic TV ads attacking running mate Dick Cheney didn't work. Post-attacks, Cheney's favorable rating stood at 47 percent, unfavorable at 17 percent. "So much for negative ads," concluded a Black attendee. He might have been spinning. ♦

Black Mischief

Besides hosting the spin-prep meetings, Charlie Black found other ways to keep busy. While everybody but the press seemed intent on burying those bad old partisan right-wing ultra-conservative mean-spirited hard-edged days of 1992 and 1996, Black was trying to rewrite one of that era's signal episodes. Black helped run President Bush's reelection campaign in '92, and he has an odd recollection of Pat Buchanan's infamous "culture war" speech from that year.

"We were upset with Buchanan," Black told the *Washington Post* in a story published last week. "He didn't say what he said he would. He threw all that culture war stuff in there without telling us."

Unfortunately, the true story of Buchanan's speech has been told too often and in too many places—in *Newsweek* magazine's *Quest for the Presidency 1992*, for example, and in Witcover and Germond's *Mad as Hell*—for old Bush hands to try to make it up from scratch at this late date. Buchanan wrote the speech himself, and then, at the insistence of higher-ups in the Bush campaign, submitted it for approval. And then he delivered it—just as he wrote it.

Newsweek's book sums up the episode: "In the aftermath, some of the president's shamefaced handlers would try to spin the story that Pat had double-crossed them after all"—an effort that is apparently still under way. "In fact, everybody who mattered, including Bush himself, had seen it and stamped it APPROVED." Nice try, Charlie. ♦

Naked City

Of course, it was not all fun and games and frivolity for The Scrapbook in Philadelphia. When we read in Tuesday's *Philadelphia Inquirer* that porn star Nina Hartley would appear at Scorpio Adult Bookstore, we knew some shoe-leather reporting was in order. What we didn't know was that the *Inquirer* had neglected to mention a crucial detail. Hartley would be talking politics . . . completely naked.

Well, not completely. She did have on stiletto heels and tasteful nail polish. Reassured, we chose to stay (we sacrifice, so that you, Reader, needn't). Navigating a slalom of sweaty men who we don't think were playing hooky from the Utah delegation, we picked Ms. Hartley's brain while standing amidst racks of porno videos (multiculturally diverse, too: from "White Trash Whore 3" to "Black Knockers Volume 60") .

Hartley, it turns out, is a "sex-positive feminist," a Red Diaper baby, and a political observer with surprisingly conventional views. The GOP convention, she said, was a snore (but so did Al Hunt). She worried that George W. will be indebted to the dreaded Religious Right (but so does Frank Rich). She opined that Bush's Supreme Court nominations alone will be worth "the price of Gore." (That's what Richard Cohen thinks, too.) But on the subject of Bill Clinton, she brings a professional expertise. The president, she said, is a "highly sexed man. I like that in my leaders. I want a lot of mojo there." But she does disagree with him, explaining that, *pace* the commander in chief, "oral sex is sex."

Unaccountably, given her political fluency and other assets, Hartley has yet to land a contract with MSNBC. ♦

Profiles in Courage

Elizabeth Dole ran a brief, remarkably tense presidential campaign, dropped out, and almost immediately sank beneath the political waves. She resurfaced in Philadelphia with a much-prized slot in the prime-time schedule. The prize was fitting, if only because so much of the convention descended, stylistically at least, from Mrs. Dole's fateful speech in San Diego four years ago, when she wandered Oprah-like through the audience, extolling the virtues of her husband, Bob.

Her first appearance for convention week came Monday, at a tea held in her honor at the Four Seasons. Sponsored in part by the Lifetime cable television network, the event featured a video montage designed to highlight Mrs. Dole's "courage"—her "tremendous courage," her "physical courage"—in the pursuit of . . . well, exactly what wasn't clear, though one speaker pointed out that Mrs. Dole helped raise the national drinking age to 21.

Still, there were a lot of interesting visuals. There was a tribute from former FDA commissioner David Kessler (who called her "heroic"), a fawning clip from Rosie O'Donnell (who declared her "courage" nothing short of "thrilling"), and, best of all, silent footage of Mrs. Dole with the late Princess Diana, a princess with a purpose if there ever was one. "Princess Di," explained Cathy Keating, wife of Oklahoma governor Frank, "will always be remembered as the queen of our hearts, just as Elizabeth Dole will be remembered as the queen of our hearts of the American Red Cross."

Make that, the *courageous* queen of our hearts of the American Red Cross. And now another honor: Mother of the 2000 GOP Convention. ♦

Casual

Mumia Fatigue

When a group billing itself as "Academics for Mumia Abu-Jamal" held a press conference in Philadelphia during the Republican National Convention, it was inevitable that Jonathan Kozol would be a featured speaker. A publicity hound of the first order, Kozol has made a nice career out of writing books about the unfortunate.

Naturally, Kozol has latched like a barnacle onto Mumia, the biggest liberal icon since Che Guevara. Mumia's claim to fame? He's black, and he's on death row for the 1981 murder of one of Philadelphia's finest ("pigs" to the "Mumiacs" outside the press conference). Pro-Mumia rallies have become a staple of civic life in Philadelphia, and the cause has even gained adherents overseas. Demonstrations in Paris have attracted thousands.

More like 200 squeezed into the Old Reformed Church in Society Hill last week, but with 11 television cameras filming, the event was guaranteed to win Mumia yet another burst of media coverage. In honor of the occasion, the imprisoned former cab driver even sketched a special self-portrait, printed on fliers (and reproduced here).

There was just one problem: The speakers were more interested in talking about their own pet causes than in proving Mumia's innocence. Kozol dutifully denounced the death penalty as racist. But he quickly moved to other subjects, excoriating George W. Bush, the Republican party, the prison industry, environmental racism, and performance-based standards in schools.

As Kozol droned on, littering his talk with references to himself, the crowd began nodding off in the 100-degree heat, or simply leaving. A tie-dyed hippie started clipping his toenails.

The problem with covering leftist press conferences is that performances like Kozol's are the rule rather than the exception. Another speaker, Robert Meeropol, the son of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, bloviated for what seemed two hours. Subtlety wasn't his strong suit. He called Tom Ridge "Governor Death Warrant," while George W. Bush was simply "Governor Death."

I would have liked to ask this pair what they made of Mumia's statement

on the night of the alleged murder, "I shot that m—f— and I hope he dies." But the event turned out to be a press conference in name only. There would be no questions until everyone on the panel had spoken, so 75 minutes passed before reporters got the floor. And even then, there was time for only two questions—one from a children's news network—because Jesse Jackson was arriving. I decided to leave.

But later in the day, something called the "People of Color Network" held another Mumia rally. As best I could tell, the network's only "person of color" was its redheaded spokesman. He announced to a small clutch of reporters that 100 members of a pro-Mumia splinter group, the Anarchist Clowns, were meeting at the corner of 18th and Franklin—a happening not to be missed.

But a few blocks away, at Spruce and Broad, the Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade had shut down the streets. Outfitted in black T-shirts reading "I was born in this sewer called capitalism, but now I'm living for revolution," the brigade distinguished themselves by chanting slogans nearly as vacuous as the Bush campaign's. (My favorite: "Ain't no power like the power of the people because the power of the people don't stop.")

The brigade's antics were rich with irony. Ostensibly protesting to benefit minorities and the poor, many in the overwhelmingly white crowd carried high-priced video cameras. They sang "We Shall Overcome," as the latex-gloved police force, including many blacks and Hispanics, carted them off to jail. I would find myself recalling this scene the next night when I crossed paths again with Jonathan Kozol, scourge of capitalism—at a star-studded party hosted by clothing designer Kenneth Cole.

Meanwhile, a few miles away, in South Philly, another Mumia-related protest was unfolding. But the 500 people present—burly Frank Rizzo types—were honoring the memory of Danny Faulkner (*www.danielfaulkner.com*), the Philadelphia policeman Mumia killed.

Though taking place just a few miles from the site of the Republican convention, this rally didn't have much to do with the convention's theme of "Renewing America's Purpose Together." Vendors were selling T-shirts bearing a photo of the dreadlocked Mumia with a slash through it and a simple message: "Officer Danny Faulkner was murdered. The jury said death. Now do it."

Los Angeles, supposedly a better city for a political convention, will have a hard time topping this.

Matthew Rees

California Counts

Fred Barnes is right about some things ("California Doesn't Matter," July 31): The short-sighted Proposition 187 (illegal immigration) ended up hurting Republicans, less because the capable Gov. Wilson embraced it, more because he obsessed about it. Indeed, Wilson's overkill television spots offended people long after his easy win over the incoherent Kathleen Brown.

But Barnes is wrong about Proposition 209 (race and gender preferences). Absent the Republican party's equivocation, the issue would have helped Republican candidates. Proposition 209 co-author Tom Wood properly feared Bob Dole's late-term exploitation of 209. Campaign chair Ward Connerly eloquently opposed the party's clumsily linking the credible 209 to the discredited 187.

Yet Barnes makes the same mistake (linkage) today. The fact that Republican opportunism on 209 backfired has been well documented, contemporaneously and later. Importantly, when an updated Proposition 209 appeared on a Washington state ballot in 1998, it won by a higher margin. The reality is that California's 209 remains an undeniable catalyst for change.

Proposition 226, a California ballot measure to let union members control their own political money, was supported broadly until Republicans incompetently made the issue partisan. Otherwise, Prop. 226 would have passed and California "would have mattered."

Strangely, Barnes does not give credit to Ron Unz for his Proposition 227, designed to end the state's disastrous bilingual education programs. Surely the revolutionary Prop. 227 showed, among other things, that California does matter. Los Angeles mayor Richard Riordan, a "moderate" Republican, had the good sense to support this popular measure while other Republicans ran for cover.

Barnes's spin on Proposition 22 (man-woman marriage) is wrong. The campaign buildup was strident and right-wing, seemingly a predictable debacle. But, miraculously, while Republicans finally moved from hysteria, opponents became shrill. Prop. 22's winning mandate for traditional marriage, while not precluding partnerships, surely matters.

Barnes writes of venture capitalist Tim Draper's inelegantly conceived Proposition 38 (school "vouchers"), "just imagine if Prop. 38 won . . . California would matter again." But Prop. 38 is on auto-pilot to defeat. Oddly, Barnes acknowledges the potential for Prop. 38 among low-income blacks and Latinos and then fails to recognize their inevitable rejection of it at the polls.

Both Barnes and the Prop. 38 campaign are unable to focus on the (overwhelmingly white) risk-averse 70-plus percent of the electorate with no children in public schools. So this well-

intentioned rich guy, the politically challenged Tim Draper, will spend $25 million of his own money to preside over the largest state's decisive rejection of school choice. Sadly, one way or another, California matters.

Barnes remains skeptical of George W.'s prospects in California. Obviously, no one can predict November, but surely Bush has enormously greater prospects here than failed gubernatorial candidate Dan Lungren or school vouchers. While it is true in California, as elsewhere, that often the least incompetent campaign wins, we can count on Democrats to screw up only so often. Waging an effective race, as Lungren and would-be senator Michael Huffington learned, involves more than spending lots of money. Republicans must campaign. Bush seems committed to doing so. And personality and style do matter, sometimes more than issues.

Bush can win here. Even in trying, he may stop the hemorrhaging in congressional and legislative districts. Regardless, Gore must never take the state for granted. Even if Bush loses narrowly here, it would mean that he wins the country.

Arnold Steinberg
Calabasas, CA

Lock and Load

Nelson Lund's polemic on the Second Amendment revives the same tired refrains, the same out-of-context quotations, the same nonsense that Judge Cummings put on paper in his opinion in the *Emerson* case ("Taking the Second Amendment Seriously," July 24). Cummings's opinion so often repeats, nearly verbatim, the familiar historical errors and misquotations that appear with regularity in pro-gun writings that it becomes clear he did no research of his own, and simply adopted the briefs submitted by the pro-gunners in the case.

Lund engages in a textual analysis to support his interpretation which, he claims, is shared by "people who read English in the normal way." He fails to recognize that, in 1788, people did not speak English the way we do now. The grammar was often different, words had different significances and meanings, and we do not view things in the same context as those in post-Revolutionary times did.

Worse, Lund thinks the Framers carefully crafted every word and comma with an engineer's precision. As historian Jack Rakove has stated, that is most unlikely. While there is evidence that much thought went into revising the First Amendment, the record does not support such an approach to the Second Amendment, which was revised and approved with little discussion or debate.

Lund exactingly parses the Second Amendment without once noting that the amendment as originally proposed by James Madison (who never once said

he was recognizing some individual right to be armed) read quite differently: For one thing, it provided for an exemption from militia service for conscientious objectors. Does Lund believe that the Framers feared the government would force people to use arms to hunt? To ask the question is to answer it. When you talk about conscientious objectors, you're talking about military service, not some individual right to be armed with a gun.

Another item Lund avoids is the fact that not a single one of the Framers, either during the debates on the Constitution or on the Second Amendment, ever said a word about any "individual right" to be armed. Not one. Lund apparently believes that the Framers established an inalienable right to be armed without ever saying that's what they were doing.

Lund also fails to mention that the Constitution was written to create a strong federal government, not a weak one. And arms in the hands of citizens had not a little to do with that decision. Following the Revolution, a number of farmers took up arms against the state courts and governments in a series of agrarian revolutions, the most famous of which was Shays's Rebellion in western Massachusetts. Did James Madison, Sam Adams, and George Washington rally to the side of the rebels, renewing their belief in popular armed resistance to unjust taxation? Hardly. They cheered the state governments that suppressed the revolts. The Framers didn't want an unregulated, armed citizenry that operated in defiance of the government when it felt it had a grievance—they wanted a domestic military force that the federal government could use to keep order.

Lund's argument degenerates even further when he claims, "The purpose of the Second Amendment is to protect the fundamental right of self-defense." This is revisionism of the first order. None of the Framers claimed self-defense was a right addressed by either the Second Amendment or the Constitution. This is a modern invention by people like Lund who want to add a gloss to the amendment that will make it more attractive to those fearful of modern crime rates.

Lund betrays more of his agenda by repeating a number of canards. Using long-since discredited studies, he claims "two million" instances of armed resistance to crime per year. The "two million" number was debunked some time ago. Far more reliable studies, one involving face-to-face interviews with a far higher number of interviewees than were spoken to in the "two million" study, have shown the actual figure to be in the neighborhood of 80,000 to 100,000 per year.

Lund finally claims that states that have passed concealed carry laws have seen "significant" drops in violent crime rates. This is untrue. Some states saw small drops, some saw small increases. The drops are hardly surprising, since the crime rate generally has been going down. And Lund fails to note that many states passed other anti-crime measures, such as enhanced background checks, at the same time they liberalized concealed carry.

For some time, the historical community ignored the revisionism of pro-gun "scholars." Now, however, the voices of historians like Jack Rakove, Saul Cornell, and Michael Bellesiles are being heard. And they are not impressed with the pseudo-scholarship of Lund and his cohorts. It's a pity THE WEEKLY STANDARD was.

JEFFREY S. RYAN
Breckenridge, CO

NELSON LUND RESPONDS: Having received *no* briefs from "pro-gunners," Judge Cummings did *all* the research himself.

As to the remainder of Mr. Ryan's secondhand misrepresentations and specious arguments, the interested reader can find elaborate and well-documented refutations in the academic literature. Most directly on point are: John Lott and David Mustard, "Crime, Deterrence, and the Right-to-Carry Concealed Weapons," 26 *Journal of Legal Studies* 1 (1997); Gary Kleck, *Targeting Guns: Firearms and Their Control*, chapter 5 (Aldine de Gruyter, 1997); Nelson Lund, "The Second Amendment, Political Liberty, and the Right to Self Preservation," 39 *Alabama Law Review* 103 (1987); Nelson Lund, "The Past and Future of the Individual's Right to Arms," 31 *Georgia Law Review* 1 (1996); Nelson Lund, "The Ends of Second Amendment Jurisprudence," 4 *Texas Review of Law & Politics* 157 (1999).

Mr. Fink is right that the Second Amendment has been the victim of an extra-constitutional attack, but the Tenth Amendment has had something of a revival in the courts, and the Second could be rescued as well.

DRUGS, REPUBLICAN STYLE

JOHN J. DIIULIO JR. asks in the July 24 WEEKLY STANDARD, "Do we really need a federal subsidy for prescription drugs?" ("A Handout for Everyone") Usually, his unequivocal answer of "no" would resonate with those of us who believe in free markets. But DiIulio is off track this time.

The simple fact is that within a few months the federal government will be involved in some new kind of prescription drug program. If conservatives don't take the lead in this situation, liberals will, and both sides are inclined to go back to their roots for answers. Gore and Gephardt have told us they will install a Hillary-type bureaucracy. DiIulio wants the GOP to do nothing until the dust settles.

Republicans should pass a subsidy bill that gives elderly folks as much control over their own destinies as possible. Which is better, a subsidy for seniors, or price controls that strangle America's biotech industry? This is a significant choice. Republicans should put aside ideological purity and choose dynamism over stasis.

ROBERT A. FARQUHAR
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the weekly Standard

A Good Start for Bush

For our taste, there was rather too much up-with-people gush at last week's Republican National Convention—and too much pop-culture flash, and too much manipulative hypersentimentality. There were persons with disabilities. There was a Miss America. There was a professional wrestler. There was Florida congressman Joe Scarborough, bellowing the god-awfullest patriotic rock song ever written. There was even 1970s pin-up model Bo Derek, *habla*-ing *español*—as if to prove . . . well, we're not sure what.

A bit of this mood—of a party happily at home in the street bazaar that is modern American life, meaning to change it only a tad, the better to, you know, *help* and *share*—extended into the acceptance speech delivered by presidential nominee George W. Bush. Bush went quite far indeed to establish that he is a man of vision and vigor, and a nice fellow to boot. Bush did not go quite far enough, we think, to establish that he has thought through the oft-celebrated "purpose" of his campaign, and knows precisely what that purpose is.

But he has time left in the coming campaign to do that. For now it must be said that Bush's speech, on its own terms and on balance, was an ingenious blend of affect and political calculation. In other words, it *worked*. Like gangbusters. As did the entire convention, it appears. The Republican nominee enters his three-month stretch run nearly 20 points ahead of Al Gore in the national polls. It is hard to argue with success.

Nevertheless, Governor Bush's enemies—Democrats and newsmen, that is to say—argued hard with success the whole week long.

They decried as plainly fraudulent, for one thing, the remarkable show of liquid-smooth unity the Republicans made in Philadelphia. It was the most placid GOP convention in decades, an achievement all the more notable for the fact that it did not involve an incumbent president for the delegates to rally around and renominate. Where were the disaffected moderates in all this conviviality? Where were the defeated McCain insurgents? Had they not been muscled into grudging submission? And was this not, behind the scenes, the same old fractious crowd Americans had lately come to so dislike?

No, actually. Here the analysis was forced and stupid, for last week's unity was both less and more than met the eye.

General Colin Powell's speech Monday night, for example. At the San Diego Republican convention in 1996, you will recall, Powell gave a pinched and awkward talk devoted almost entirely, and explicitly, to issues on which he disagreed with the party's platform. Then, the general could hardly bring himself to mention the name of the party's nominee, Bob Dole. Powell was booed a few times.

This time out, all was different. To be sure, Powell again was hardly shy about his not-so-Republican views, making a great (and incoherent) effort, for instance, to defend federally administered racial preferences. But he was *applauded* for it by the delegates. Confused, the *New York Times*—journalism's Captain Ahab, where internecine Republican warfare is concerned—suggested that the general really could and should have tried harder to make trouble. Powell's appearance, the paper reported, was "perhaps most striking . . . for what he did not say."

Nope. Wrong. Backward, even. What Powell did not say, he did not say. What he did say was An Event. He was applauded by the conventioneers, during and despite his defense of affirmative action, because the most popular and respected public figure in the nation, a black man, was otherwise publicly embracing them. The embrace was so vigorous and apparently natural as to render the little discordancies in Powell's speech all but irrelevant in the grand scheme of things. His praise of the Republican presidential nominee was positively fulsome: Bush is a patriot. Bush is a born leader. Bush is a man of the highest character, integrity, and principle. "Fellow Republicans," let us elect him.

Yes, it is a curious and interesting thing that George W. Bush has this year managed, and so easily, to harmonize—even pacify—major and minor tendencies within his party that ordinarily regard one another with discomfort and mistrust, if not outright hostility. With Powell's speech last Monday, one such tendency was heard from. It sounded happy. With John McCain's speech last Tuesday, a very different, much larger, and politically more significant Republican tendency was heard from. It sounded even

happier. Notwithstanding the senator's bitter primary battle against Bush, McCain managed an almost fantastically eloquent and convincingly sincere paean to the victor.

All of which means—what? It speaks to Bush's personal charm, to the technical and strategic skill of his campaign, and to the just-short-of-universal Republican lust to exorcise the Clinton-Gore demon and retake the White House. "Fraudulence" has nothing to do with it.

There is also the fact that, for all its periodic and super-exaggerated family mini-squabbles over ideology, the GOP has never truly failed in recent years to maintain at least a working unity. Honestly, now: The "new," Bush-led Republicans are not *that* unusual in this respect. They are now, and have been for twenty years, a basically conservative party.

Conservatism, too, Bush's critics tried last week to fashion into a liability for him. The platform the convention approved for its nominee is a piece of embarrassing John Birchery, "harsh and often unfair," sayeth the *Times*. Dick Cheney, Bush's running mate, is all this and worse: He years ago spent his time in Congress casting votes that would have made George Wallace blanch—or so Al Gore's minions would have us believe. We will undoubtedly hear a great deal more of this argument throughout the fall.

But it is abject nonsense, and we wager it will draw little blood. Bush's platform, as will be clear to anyone who troubles to read it, is a better written and more intelligent version of the same conservatism the GOP has been offering the country—and winning elections with—since 1980: low taxes, support for traditional social arrangements, welfare reform, military strength, aggressive international leadership. These things still poll well, you know. And if Democrats insist on making Dick Cheney the public face of these Republican ideas . . . well, so much the better for Republicans. Cheney's acceptance speech last Wednesday was the best—and best delivered—of the week. He was every inch himself: smart, retiring but confident, level-headed, articulate. No normal person will ever be persuaded that Dick Cheney is a caveman.

So, then: It would seem Al Gore is in quite a pickle. If, at their own convention in Los Angeles next week, Democrats attempt to match the GOP for atmospherics, and run a presidential campaign based on image and personality, they will be taking an awful risk. Bush isn't Bob Dole. And Gore isn't Bill Clinton. Many people seem to like Bush—and like him better the more they get to see of him. Nobody seems to like Al Gore very much. Which makes perfect sense: Gore is a vain, brutish, patronizing clod. And he will only solidify that already widespread impression should he try to drag Bush down with screechy, hysterical warnings about an emerging right-wing Dark Ages.

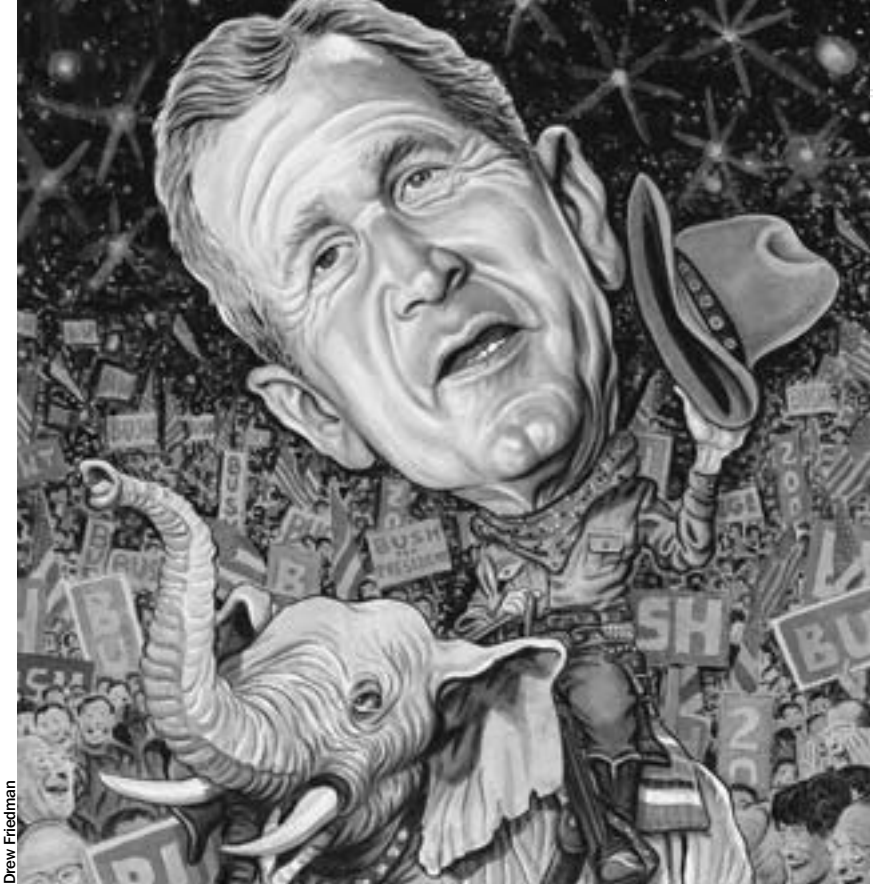
We can think of only one potentially fruitful option for Gore and his party. And we would like to see them take it. Democrats might yet design a campaign of unusually rigorous policy argument, seriously addressing the whole national agenda for the next four years. And Gore might then spend three months challenging George W. Bush to follow suit—to describe and defend, fully down in the weeds of governance, the administration the Republican hopes to lead.

This is the place in our politics Bush has so far appeared least eager to go. In his Thursday acceptance speech, the Texas governor unaccountably announced that he has "no stake in the bitter arguments of the last few years"—as if he were some Martian dropped suddenly from the sky into American life. He wants to lead our conversation, but he has few opinions about exactly the stuff we've been discussing all along? How can that be? And can he win if it proves true?

Maybe. The country has been narcotized by eight years of Clintonian empathy-politics, after all, ninety-nine and forty-four one-hundredths percent substance-free. But we would like to think it weren't entirely so. We would like to think that American voters retain a residual desire to hear solid stuff—ideas, details—in their presidential campaigns. And we would like to think they might still be inclined to reward the party and candidate who better deliver this stuff.

Perhaps Al Gore will take this chance. And perhaps the front-running George W. Bush, who has made an excellent start of things and whom we wish well, should therefore be on guard, ready to respond. Perhaps, come to think of it, Bush should even go first.

—David Tell, for the Editors



Drew Friedman

Poll Position

The election is Bush's to lose, if opinion surveys are any guide. **BY FRED BARNES**

THE BUSH CAMPAIGN can lowball with the best of them. George W. Bush has been leading Al Gore by roughly 6 percentage points (when public polls are averaged) for five months now. And by the time they had the confetti swept away in Philadelphia, his lead had grown to double digits. Yet the Bush campaign insists that within two weeks the race will be even, Gore having by then benefited from a 10 point bounce at the Democratic national convention in Los Angeles.

The Bush effort to avoid overconfidence isn't nonsense, but it is misleading. Bush's current lead is stable and real. Sure, Gore may soar after his convention. Even Walter Mondale pulled even with President Reagan in one poll after the Democratic convention in 1984. But bounces usually dissipate. Mondale's did, and so should Gore's, much of it anyway. By Labor Day, Bush should be back with at least a modest and perhaps a sizable lead. And the good news for Bush is the candidate who leads on Labor Day normally wins in November.

Lowballing aside, virtually all poll results make pleasant reading for Bush. In the tracking (1,000 likely voters each day) of the bipartisan Battleground 2000 poll, Bush gained 10 percentage points during the Republican convention—and that was before his almost universally well-received acceptance speech. Bush leads Gore 52 percent to 35 percent in the head-to-head matchup and 49 percent to 31 percent in a four-way race with Ralph Nader and Pat Buchanan added. An NBC News survey also showed Bush getting a boost from the convention, only not as much. Before, he led 44 percent to 38 percent. After his speech, the lead jumped to 11 points, Bush with 47 percent, Gore with 36 percent. Meanwhile, pollster Frank Luntz conducted focus groups of 36 swing voters during the convention, 35 of whom wound up more favorably inclined toward Bush and seven of whom changed their voting preference from Gore to Bush.

The most compelling polls, however, are those that serve as leading indicators. A Gallup Poll, for example, asked the old horse-race question in a fresh way: Will you vote for or *consider* voting for Bush or Gore? Sixty-two percent said they backed Bush or would consider it. Only 46 percent said the same of Gore.

Then there's favorability, which often precedes a widening lead. When public polls on this question are averaged, Bush's favorability is 62 percent, against 28 percent unfavorability. That's a 34 point bulge. For Gore, 51 percent see him favorably, 39 percent unfavorably, a 12 point gap. Based on this and all other "things being equal, looking ahead for the next week or two, you see the lead spreading more," says a Bush aide. If that indeed happens, many polls will probably catch up with the Battleground survey, giving Bush a lead in the high teens. Of course, some of that will vanish as the convention fades, but not all of it.

Bush campaign strategists have a particular subset of the electorate whose voting sentiments they follow obsessively: white men, mostly middle class, 25 to 45 years old, who live outside major metropolitan areas. Again, things look good for Bush among these guys. And his lead of 10 to 12 points is "driving" the polls in key states won by Clinton in 1996: Kentucky, West Virginia, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Missouri. Now, Bush is ahead or even with Gore in all of them.

The question is why. "They don't feel comfortable with Al Gore," a Bush strategist says. "It's the strength factor. They don't see him as a strong leader. They saw Clinton as a good old boy, even with all the sex scandals. They don't see Gore that way at all." This group of male voters constitutes 10 percent or so of the presidential

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electorate. And if Bush's lead begins to erode, the Bush campaign will be terrified.

For now, there's no reason for panic on this or any other poll question. On issue after issue, Bush is doing better than anyone in his orbit expected. Even on cutting taxes, one poll has finally turned up support for Bush's position: The *Wall Street Journal*/NBC survey found 42 percent want tax cuts, 32 percent favor paying down the national debt.

The latest national survey by John Zogby found amazing support (72 percent) for private investment accounts using Social Security funds, a Bush proposal. And this poll involved only independent voters. A slim majority (51 percent) wants a missile defense system regardless of whether it violates the ABM treaty—another Bush position.

Zogby says, "There appears to be more than affability working for Bush." On social issues, there's been "a slight tilt to the right"—thus in Bush's direction—among independent voters. On abortion, 12 percent say they now favor tighter restrictions, while 4 percent want fewer restrictions. On guns, 62 percent say they prefer a candidate who would let citizens obtain guns for protection, bar cities and counties from suing gun manufacturers, and promote more criminal prosecution of gun crimes. This describes not only Bush, but also the National Rifle Association.

But the most heartening thing for Bush is what Zogby calls the "one constant" in the presidential race. This is Gore's inability to rise above 43 percent in the polls. In his acceptance speech in Philadelphia last week, Zogby says, Bush merely had "to read his speech and keep standing. That's all." Why? Because voters like Bush at the moment, Zogby says. Gore won't have the luxury of merely surviving his acceptance speech next week at the Democratic convention in Los Angeles. The only good news for Gore, absent a huge bounce in the polls like Bill Clinton's record 16-point lead in 1992, is that at least he won't have to lowball. ♦

Romancing the Teamsters

Jimmy Hoffa could be an awfully important ally for Bush this fall. **BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL**

—Philadelphia

THOUGH BILLED as a fete for the working stiff, the Republican tribute to Teamsters president Jimmy Hoffa last Monday night turned out to be one of the most A-list gatherings of the Republican convention. The Marriott ballroom was mobbed with conservative dignitaries: senators Arlen Specter (Penn.), Ben Nighthorse Campbell (Colo.), Spencer Abraham (Mich.), Orrin Hatch (Utah), Rick Santorum (Penn.), and Ted Stevens (Alaska); governor Tom Ridge of Pennsylvania; and a raft of congressmen—Tom Davis (Va.), Henry Hyde (Ill.), Pete King and Jack Quinn (both of N.Y.), Chris Smith and Frank LoBiondo (N.J.), Pete Hoekstra (Mich.), and Georgia's Bob Barr, fresh from a Service Employees event, and so enthusiastic about the Teamsters initiative that he showed up late for his own party that began at the same time. A beaming RNC chairman Jim Nicholson expressed his "respect for this great labor organization" and said of Hoffa, "He's a reformer, too."

Republicans are wooing the Teamsters with a zeal they haven't shown in two decades. Several factors make this union, which has branched out from its corps of truckers and other transportation workers, electorally appetizing. With 1.5 million members, the Teamsters are the largest union outside of the AFL-CIO, and one of the most independent. They endorsed Democrats in 1968 and 1992, Republicans in 1972, 1980, 1984, and 1988, and stayed neutral in 1976 and 1996. What's more, they're concentrated in the very states that will be the bloodiest electoral battlegrounds this autumn: Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin, and to a lesser extent, Illinois and California.

Hoffa has announced that around Labor Day, the union will either endorse one of the tickets or declare its neutrality.

Hoffa will be a delegate to the Democratic convention in Los Angeles next week. On the issues, Democrats provide him with a better fit. His outspoken attacks on globalism and free trade have won him praise in the *Nation*. The Clinton administration has, at Hoffa's insistence, reneged on NAFTA agreements to keep Mexican trucks from entering the United States. Hoffa, like most other trade unionists, dislikes free-trading Republicans.

But his dislike of free-trading Democrats—since it's compounded by a sense of betrayal—is even more intense. And Hoffa has deeper reasons not to trust the Democrats, particularly those in the Clinton wing of the party. In 1996, Democrats backed the misnamed "reform" forces of ex-president Ron Carey, who defeated Hoffa in a close fought election. In 1997, Carey was ousted for having engaged in a $750,000 money-laundering scheme that involved Democratic party fund-raising. One Teamster at last week's event repeated a line that is now a refrain among Hoffa forces: "The Teamsters are no longer going to be an ATM for the Democratic party."

This means playing hardball. Hoffa is reassessing his party loyalties. He's met with both Ralph Nader and Pat Buchanan. The union has not released a penny to the 73 Democrats

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Jimmy Hoffa

Thomas Fluharty

who voted for permanent normal trade relations with China, a measure the Teamsters opposed. Since his election, Hoffa has reinvigorated the union's political might to the extent that they're a welcome voice in AFL-CIO meetings.

The gala was the brainchild of Scott Reed, campaign manager for Bob Dole's failed 1996 presidential run. Reed suggested the fete to Nicholson in May. Nicholson, knowing George W. Bush had had a successful meeting with Hoffa in April, okayed the plan. By June, the event was on the calendar, and Bush had followed up with a lengthy conference call to the union's executive board.

At the height of the Carey scandals, the two judiciary chairmen, Hyde in the House and Hatch in the Senate, really "stepped up to the plate," according to Hoffa. Michigan congressman Pete Hoekstra turned his office into a clearinghouse for all the information that investigators turned up. Hyde has since deepened the relationship by working to lower gasoline prices and to remove the antitrust exemption that puts Teamsters truckers at a disadvantage when negotiating with shipping companies. That's why Hyde is perhaps the most optimistic of Republicans about what could arise from the party's courtship of Hoffa. Asked at the tribute whether it would be a sufficient victory merely to keep the Teamsters neutral, Hyde replied with a sharp: "*No*: The best would be the endorsement."

Michigan governor John Engler, whose campaign estimates he won half the labor vote in his 1998 reelection effort, points out that two married UAW workers would qualify, by Al Gore's definition, as too "rich" for tax cuts or expanded IRAs. Hoffa certainly appears to be making peace. At the Republican gala, he dodged a hostile reporter's question regarding Dick Cheney's voting record. The *Wall Street Journal* reported last week that the Teamsters gave the Bush campaign a friendly tip-off about possible unfair labor practices by Overnite Transportation, on whose board Cheney sits.

But all these may pale beside the one big issue: the continued oversight of the Teamsters by an independent review board, under the jurisdiction of the Southern District of New York federal court, that has overseen the union's finances and activities since

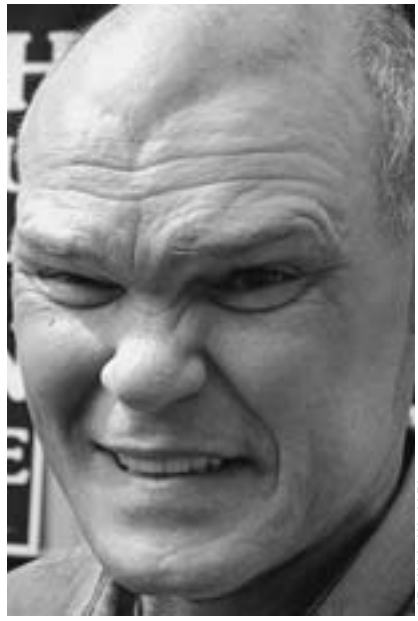
the corruption scandals of the 1980s. Hoffa must run for reelection in 2002 and keenly wants the review board out by then. Teamsters make the point that the program drains hundreds of thousands a year out of union funds; that since every member of the board gets a Teamsters pension, the oversight program amounts to a "golden parachute" for friends of the court. What's more, the review board did nothing to stop the DNC-Teamsters fund swap in the mid-1990s. To pave the way for oversight to be lifted, Hoffa has installed a former federal prosecutor—with a staff of former FBI agents—as inspector general of the union.

Republicans think Democrats, because of their role in the Carey scandals, cannot realistically call off the review board. The GOP, however, could, and would like to. One Bush adviser says, "Republicans would be more than flexible on this question." But here's where accounts diverge. Republicans, and official Teamsters sources, say Hoffa and the union have made a principled decision to "keep that question out of the process at this point." One Teamster, however, speaking off the record, says Bush told the executive board two things that stuck in everyone's mind. First, "I would like your support, but if I don't get it, I want you to know I'll be the president for all Americans." Second, that "government should not be in the business of regulating unions."

Republicans—whose *Soul Train* convention in Philadelphia showed that incursions into Democrats' black and female base will be at the heart of the campaign—seek to sever Gore from his labor base as well. Scott Reed thinks they're already doing it. "He wouldn't be here if he didn't think Gore was a questionable candidate," said Reed at the rally. "Gore looks like a loser." The Teamsters periodically survey their members on their political leanings; one such survey last spring found Bush more popular than Gore. If Gore still trails by double digits in the first week of September, a Teamsters endorsement of Bush could prove the better part of valor. ♦

The Democrats' Dilemma

Gore's instinct is to attack, but the convention hasn't provided many targets. **BY TUCKER CARLSON**



AP / Wide World Photos

James Carville

IF YOU'RE a Democratic strategist, there are two ways you can look at last week's Republican convention in Philadelphia: You can be irritated. Or you can be dismissive. Al Gore's campaign team in Nashville has chosen the latter.

More than a year ago, Gore's strategists decided to respond to talk of compassionate conservatism by ignoring it. George W. Bush, they argued, was a conventional southern conservative, his moderate language merely a clever cover for the usual right-wing agenda. Early on, Gore did his best to paint Bush as a puppet of the Christian Right. More recently, the Gore campaign has portrayed Bush as a tool of Big Business. The terms have changed, but the theme hasn't: Don't believe the lie. Bush only looks different. He's much more extreme than he seems.

This line of attack had become less plausible since the South Carolina primary. The convention destroyed it entirely. Bush may be, in secret, a right-wing extremist, but after the convention's multiculturalism on parade, he certainly doesn't look like one.

Yet, the Gore campaign has continued to air commercials implying that Bush and Cheney are too ideological to lead the country. The problem, says a Democratic consultant who has worked with Gore, is that the strategy worked before, against other opponents in other elections. Head Gore consultant Bob Shrum "is doing Newt bashing against Bush," the consultant says. "Cheney whetted their appetites for that sort of thing. There is no end of people taking some experience they had in politics and turning it into a solution for a current problem."

The "current problem" for Democrats, says the consultant, is how to counter the slippery but relentlessly upbeat message of the Republican convention. One option is to mock it. Many Democrats do. "It's the Sally Field convention," says one—"'You like me, you really like me.' It's awfully needy." Amusing as this is, it's not much of a counter theme.

James Carville thinks he has a better one. Philadelphia, he says, was "a convention about nothing" ("the *Seinfeld* convention," he and other Democratic cable television fixtures have called it). "If you're going to take out the incumbent party, it better be about something more substantial

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than, 'we're nice.' They didn't come to set an agenda. They're not leaving on the Tax Cut Express. To just be civil is not enough."

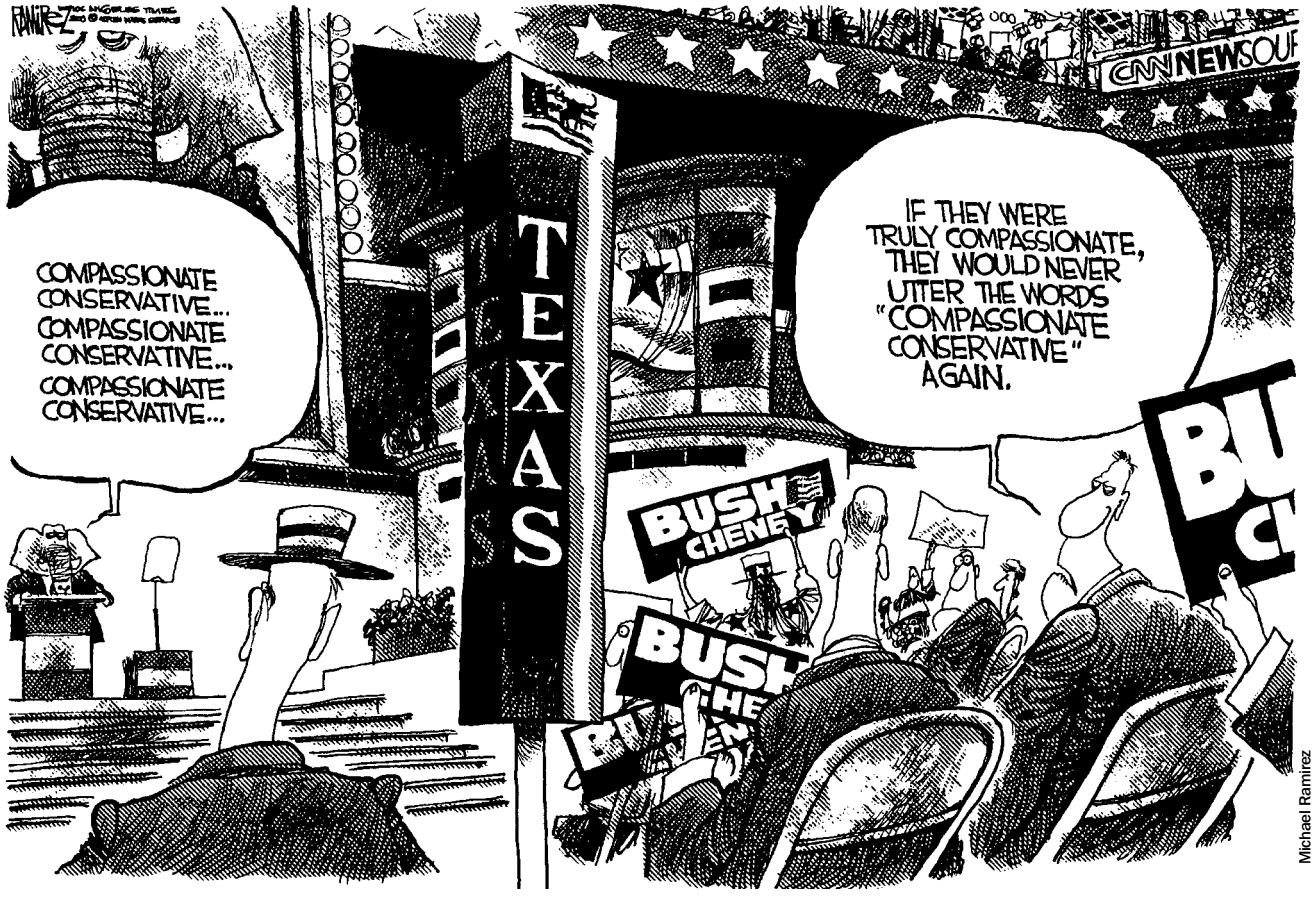
Carville sounds frustrated, and it's easy to see why. The convention didn't give the Gore campaign much rhetorical ammunition. (Blind mountain climbers and Down syndrome sufferers don't work well in attack ads.) But Carville swears there's more to it than that. "I'm not speaking as a Democrat," he says, "I'm speaking as someone who thinks that partisanship and spinning and political argument is good for the country."

And then, sounding wistful, Carville launches into a description of the sort of Republican convention he'd like to watch. "I want to see some small businessman get up there and rant about how the Clinton-Gore administration has got him tied down by taxes and regulation. I want to see some attacks on eight years of rule and what went wrong. I want to see a clash, a conflict, a fight. I don't mind if a little name-calling breaks out."

This is not a majority view. A political consultant complaining about non-ideological politics is like Henry Ford whining that you can't get a good buggy anymore. Even Carville seems to know this. "In the dial groups"—focus groups where participants turn a dial to register their likes and dislikes—he sighs, "the public says it wants people to be less political."

And how should Gore, an instinctive brawler, respond? Well, says Carville, at the Democratic convention in Los Angeles, they need to present Gore "B.C.—before Clinton." Polls, Carville says, show that "when people find out about Gore from 1970 to 1992"—his months in Vietnam, his years as a reporter and in Congress—"their opinion of him rises." The other thing the Democratic convention needs to showcase, Carville says, is "Tipper. More Tipper."

Carville describes all of this as "context" for Gore's life. It sounds a lot like the sort of soft-focus, issue-free politics he has just been criticizing. Is it? "Yeah," admits Carville, "a little bit." The Republicans may have put on a shallow convention, he says, but "they've done it beautifully." ♦



Michael Ramirez

Whatever Happened To . . . ?

Bush's erstwhile opponents have become invisible men. BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

—Philadelphia

AT LAURA BUSH'S speech last Monday, probably half of the made-to-look-spontaneously-painted posters bobbing in the crowd read: *Leave no child behind!* And, throughout the Republican convention, Mrs. Bush's husband continued to promise to be a "uniter, not a divider." There is a place for everyone in George W. Bush's new Republican dispensation.

Except, it seemed, for Bush's fellow Republican presidential candidates. *They* were left behind. The convention was remarkable for the low profile—the absence, even—of the Texas governor's primary rivals. Six months ago, when Bush stood on debate platforms with John McCain, Steve Forbes, Gary Bauer, Orrin Hatch, and Alan Keyes, it appeared this primary season would follow the recent Republican routine: One of these men would get the nomination, and the others would reappear at convention time.

This has traditionally had nothing to do with whether the also-rans got along with the anointed candidate. In Detroit in 1980, just four years after his pitched primary battle with Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan approached the ex-president about taking on the vice-presidential nomination. (Reagan eventually settled on George Bush, who had first hurled at Reagan the epithet "voodoo economics.") In New Orleans in 1988, Jack Kemp got to make the case for the economic policies Bush still distrusted. In Houston in 1992, after running a primary campaign explicitly designed to sabotage Bush, Pat Buchanan was rewarded with a scene-stealing prime-time spot next to Ronald Reagan's.

Not this year. At the convention, George W. Bush's rivals fell into three categories, by ascending degrees of invisibility:

¶ In the first tier were the celebrities without a cause, Elizabeth Dole and John McCain. Largely because of her pioneering town-meeting at San Diego in 1996, she's famous for being famous. She's the Andy Williams of the Republican inner circle. So she was perfectly suited to the made-for-TV spirit of Philadelphia 2000.

McCain still possesses a charisma and an elite following that Bush has a hard time matching. He has assembled a feckless shadow court, who resemble the White Russians of interwar Europe or the Orleanists in Balzac. They gather in small groups, like the several hundred "intimate friends" of McCain (most of them from major media outlets) who met at a "private dinner" on Sunday to bathe in the remembered glory of February and March.

But this social prominence hasn't translated into political clout. When McCain spoke on Tuesday night, it was as a veteran and a patriot, not as the bearer of an alternative vision for the party or the country. As for campaign finance reform, he did not bring it up—except at Arianna Huffington's Shadow Convention.

¶ There was a second tier of ex-candidates: those who arrived with delegates, if only a handful. Gary Bauer, who picked up 2 in the course of a long primary run, has for years been a staple of pre-convention platform meetings, weighing in especially on abortion. He skipped them this year, choosing instead to attend as the audio cor-

Steve Forbes

Illustration by Drew Friedman

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respondent of the website *Beliefnet.org*. Perhaps it's fair to say Bauer was less marginalized than privatized.

Alan Keyes, who endorsed Bush in late July, assembled a mighty 14 delegates. In Philadelphia, it seemed he had been transformed from curmudgeon into socialite. His packed convention schedule included a Judicial Watch luncheon on Sunday, a fiftieth-birthday celebration on Tuesday night, and a pro-life lunch on Wednesday.

The delegateless Utah senator Orrin Hatch can be added to this second tier. He participated enthusiastically as head of the Utah delegation, and was prominent at the Republicans' public embrace of labor leader Jimmy Hoffa on Monday. It's tough to tell how much of Hatch's activity at the convention was due to recent grumbling among Utah Republicans that he was drifting too far to the center.

¶ Finally, there were those for whom the primary season had been a road out of politics altogether. New Jerseyite Steve Forbes lives about as far from Philadelphia's First Union Center as the average Texan does from his corner store. But it wasn't until late in the week that he made even a cameo appearance. Steve Forbes endorsed Bush in late March, but was nowhere near the podium last week.

Former Tennessee governor Lamar Alexander has been dividing his time between the Volunteer State and San Francisco. He was on Gov. Bush's short list for vice president and spoke to the nominee the morning of the Cheney selection. But he gave up his Tennessee delegate's seat, making Philadelphia the first Republican convention he missed since 1964.

Which brings us to Dan Quayle. Quayle, too, was absent last week, but his name was probably mentioned more than all the other also-rans combined (McCain excepted)—particularly after the vice presidential selection, which liberal media greeted with headlines like: "Cheney: Another Quayle?" As long as there's a single Democrat left in the national news business, it seems that Quayle's name will be invoked whenever Republicans gather. ♦

Beijing's WTO Double-cross

Surprise! China is trying to keep Taiwan out of the World Trade Organization. **BY JOHN R. BOLTON**

THE World Trade Organization, inaugurated in 1995, has had a much rockier beginning than anything experienced by its less-structured predecessor, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. A bitter early leadership struggle between developed-country and less-developed-country members of the WTO resulted in an uneasy compromise that satisfied neither side. Then, in Seattle last year, protectionists, environmentalists, and left-wing crazies turned a WTO ministerial meeting into a circus reminiscent of the 1960s.

More seriously, environmental and labor groups are attempting to hijack the free trade mission of the WTO and turn it into another all-purpose international regulatory body, imposing rules and standards on member governments. Not only has this threat not receded, it is on the verge of

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becoming orthodoxy within the Democratic party, as part of the price Vice President Al Gore may have to pay to consolidate his political base in the fall presidential campaign.

As if all of this weren't bad enough for free trade generally and the WTO in particular, Beijing has turned the question of Taiwan's admission into an explosive political issue. Both China and Taiwan have applied for membership in the trade body. Beijing, though it has not directly challenged Taiwan's entry, is attempting to condition it on Taiwan's accepting what has long been the position of the People's Republic of China: that Taiwan is part of "China." Were Beijing to prevail, it could claim a significant victory in its campaign to assert sovereignty over Taiwan, and would gravely damage the already shaky WTO.

As a trade organization, the WTO is intended to be divorced from political questions. Thus, neither the WTO nor before it GATT required its members to be "states," but only "customs territories." Hong Kong, for example, is a WTO member, even though it is indisputably part of the People's Republic of China. Similarly, Taiwan is on track for admission as a "customs territory," avoiding the flammable issue of its international political status. This was agreed when the accession process for Taiwan and the People's Republic began in late 1992. Under that arrangement, the People's Republic of China was to enter the WTO slightly ahead of Taiwan, which would become a member under the name Chinese Taipei—a full member alongside the PRC and Hong Kong, all of them "customs territories," with the political issues to be fought out in other arenas.

Officials of the Clinton administration (which opposes Beijing's ploy out of concern for the Senate vote coming up in September on permanent normal trade relations status for China) profess to believe that "China is going to live up to its commitments" under the 1992 arrangement. Ominously, however, when deputy U.S. trade representative Rita Hayes made this assertion, China's vice minister of foreign trade, Long Yongtu, responded: "The one China policy is a matter of principle for us."

In fact, Beijing is trying to advance its overtly political agenda in a non-political forum. This is a familiar tactic in multilateral organizations. The Palestine Liberation Organization has for years attempted to enhance its international status by campaigning for membership in such bodies as the World Health Organization, whose members must be "states." By so doing, the PLO has hoped to create "facts on the ground" in its negotiations with Israel, and so enhance its bargaining position. Although the PLO has not succeeded (so far), its efforts have disrupted the U.N. system, from whose members the PLO extracted political or other concessions.

It is the PRC's approach that is illegitimate, not Taiwan's. It is China that is breaching the non-political nature of the World Trade Organization by inserting this entirely political question, and Taiwan that is defending the WTO's integrity by resisting.

Just as there is nothing so unedifying as the sight of health ministers attempting to resolve international political questions, the notion of trade officials negotiating the status of Taiwan is thoroughly unappetizing. Yet it's easy to see how it can happen. Questions of "nameplates" seem insignificant to trade negotiators, compared with serious matters like agricultural export subsidies (on which, unsurprisingly, the PRC is also now backsliding). Beijing will doubtless offer to "compromise" from its initial political demand, then insist that Taiwan's unwillingness to give way is the real source of the "problem." Trade officials will hail the PRC's "concession" and pressure Taiwan to accept what would otherwise be flatly unacceptable. This is Beijing's real strategy, and Deputy U.S. Trade Representative Hayes's enthusiastic embrace of the Chinese view shows that Beijing has carefully measured its marks in the Clinton administration.

But the fundamental point is that it is the PRC's approach that is illegitimate, not Taiwan's. It is China that is breaching the non-political nature of the World Trade Organization by inserting this entirely political question, and Taiwan that is defending the WTO's integrity by resisting. The people being intransigent and uncooperative here are from Beijing, not Taipei. If the United States and others succumb to the PRC's ploy, not only will Beijing likely succeed against Taipei, but it will also severely damage the WTO's ability to insulate itself from other extraneous, non-trade issues.

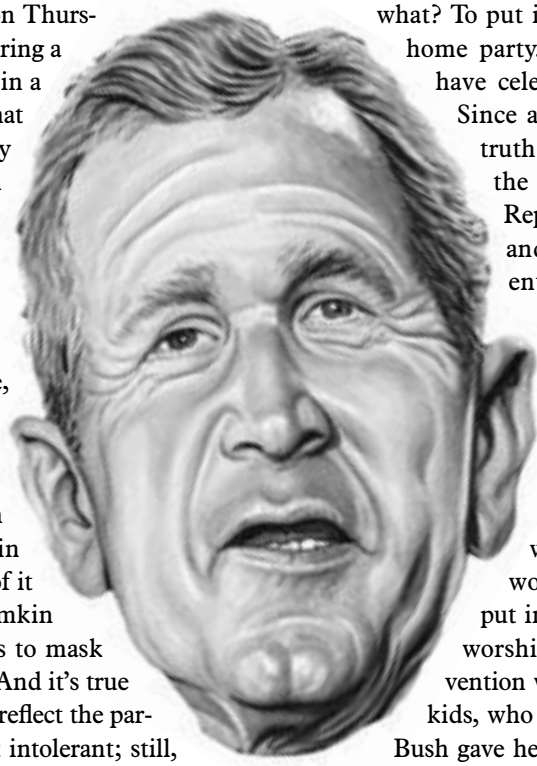
Defending the integrity of the WTO against Beijing's efforts to politicize it reflects a deep commitment both to the principle of free trade and to the long-term viability of the WTO as an institution. These are legitimate trade issues, on which both proponents and opponents of permanent normal trade relations status for China should be able to agree. When it reconvenes in September, Congress should make it unmistakably clear that China's efforts to score points off Taiwan are flatly unacceptable. Before voting on China's trade status, the Senate leadership should have President Clinton obtain from Beijing public, unequivocal statements that it endorses Taiwan's WTO membership, accepts the 1992 agreement on the accession process, and will abjure any effort whatever to impose political conditions. There should be no compromise on this point. ♦

Pabulum with a Purpose

Beneath the much-mocked superficiality of the Philadelphia convention is a serious effort to transform the GOP.

By David Brooks

It started on Monday with a Hispanic girl singing the national anthem, a black Baptist minister preaching by video from the pulpit of his church, an Asian-American woman celebrating the virtues of voluntarism, and a black retired general defending affirmative action. It concluded on Thursday with a California politician delivering a speech in Spanish, a Mexican dancer in a big sombrero crooning Latin tunes that were clichés back in the day of Ricky Ricardo, and the African-American singer Chaka Khan singing a final number as the delegates walked out into the night. This wasn't a normal political convention. This was reparative therapy for Caucasians. The people in the stands were mostly white, while the people performing were mostly minority, just like at a Utah Jazz basketball game.



The Philadelphia convention, in other words, was unlike any other in party history. The Democratic view of it is that the Republicans built a Potemkin image of multicultural inclusiveness to mask what is still a white, intolerant party. And it's true that the convention program did not reflect the party as it really exists. The GOP is not intolerant; still, normal party gatherings don't look and feel like this. But the more generous interpretation is that the televised show represented the party of George W. Bush's aspirations. In other words, he's trying to transform the party to make it fit the happy multi-hued image that we saw up on stage.

And if that's true, then this convention was not just a big puddle of pabulum. It was a substantive political act disguised as pabulum. It was an effort to reengineer the party as ambitious as Bill Clinton's earlier effort to transform the Democratic party.

From what is Bush transforming the party? And into what? To put it simply, from a work party to a home party. Traditionally, the Republicans have celebrated freedom and capitalism. Since at least Herbert Hoover—and in truth all the way back to Lincoln and the party's Whig progenitors—Republicans have celebrated work and business. Reagan held up the entrepreneurial ideal—the person who takes risks, works hard, and creates companies and opportunity, and so did Steve Forbes in his campaign. The Republicans have traditionally celebrated the heroic individualist.

But this convention didn't worship the entrepreneur or the worker. Those characters scarcely put in an appearance. This convention worshipped the child-rearer. This convention worshipped the people who adopt kids, who mentor youth, who teach. Laura Bush gave her convention speech in front of a bank of school desks, with immobile kids behind her, their hands all neatly folded across the desk top. This convention was about the children who are—maybe you've heard—our future. And it was about the wonderful people who nurture them.

The convention therefore went off in odd directions. In the first place, the nurturing theme made the convention pacifist. The emotional aura in the First Union Center

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resembled that of a kindergarten classroom. You should always be upbeat. You should always stress the positive. You should never fight in front of the kids. This convention was so relentlessly cheerful and peaceful it made a Quaker meeting seem like a Buchanan rally.

But this transformation amounts to more than atmospherics. There's been a shift in ways of thinking. Mario Cuomo gave a speech in 1984 in which he said America should be a family. Conservatives derided that. Families are sacred private things, built by intimate love, they said. Public figures can't take the place of parents. We are members of a nation, but we are not all members of one family, they said, and there is a difference between the two. It doesn't take a village to raise a child, it takes parents. But on Monday night Colin Powell sounded very much like Mario Cuomo when he said we are all responsible for each other's children. Similarly, Democrats used to talk about getting at the "root causes" of crime, and Republicans derided that. They said that was a fruitless approach to disorder and the correct response to crime was to enforce laws and punish criminals. Rudy Giuliani, a non-pacifist who would not have been at home at the Philadelphia convention, did not go after root causes. He tackled crime by going after criminals—with cops. But again, there was Colin Powell talking about root causes. He said that we should be "building children, not building jails." The answer to crime is child-rearing.

In Philadelphia, everything was child-rearing. This has policy consequences. George W. Bush still believes in limited government. But not so much when it comes to policies aimed at children. Laura Bush said Monday night that her husband would spend more money on Head Start. She continued, "That's why he's proposed a $5 billion Reading First initiative with a great American purpose . . . to make sure every child in every neighborhood learns to read at grade level by third grade." When Colin Powell followed her, he sketched out more Bush education policies, and he prefaced them by saying that of course we have to spend more on education.

In George Bush's Republican party, building healthy communities and healthy families becomes the core national mission. Bush put the challenge in generational terms. First he invoked his father's generation, "a generation of Americans who stormed beaches, liberated concentration camps, and delivered us from evil." That was a generation that faced epic challenges. Then he turned to his own generation. He pointed out that his generation was "given the gift of the best education in American history." It is a generation rich in talent, charm, and skill. But under Clinton/Gore all that has been squandered, and he vowed to redeem it.

The crucial part of the speech came when Bush defined the challenges facing his generation. His generation, he implied, will not be defined by war—not by Vietnam. It will be defined by its ability to rebuild families and communities; the "nation's greatness" will be preserved through "small, unnumbered acts of caring and courage and self-denial." The crucial word there is "small." Bush didn't evoke epic battles. He described small acts of caring that would be accomplished intimately, one by one. The people he singled out for praise were people like Mary Jo Copeland, whose ministry, "Sharing and Caring Hands," serves meals to the homeless. Small compassionate acts, one by one.

In other words, this is not a generation asked to fight for freedom, it is a generation called to compassion.

One of the things Bush did do in his speech was explain how this vision of small, local caring could be applied on a national level from the White House. He did so by invoking the cause of one-nation conservatism. Like Disraeli over a century ago, who used the phrase to broaden the appeal of Britain's Tory party and bring it back to power, Bush said that the affluent must bond with the needy and become again members of one nation. "We are their country, too," he said of the poor children of single parents. National unity should be as warm and caring as the intimacy of community. He also vowed to reduce the heat of partisanship in Washington, and so join together Democrats and Republicans. "I have no stake in the bitter arguments of the last few years," he declared, referring to the impeachment fight and other conflicts, "I want to change the tone in Washington to one of civility and respect." He went on in the speech to describe his talent for working with Democrats to get things done.

This tone was undercut somewhat by the repetitive attacks on the Clinton/Gore administration. Someone who preaches the values of nurturing and uniting the country can get away with two or three attacks on his political opponent, but Bush's speech had seven such passages. Dick Cheney was better on the attack, bolstering his insults with the gravity of his delivery. Bush veered away from his best self—which all his friends say is his good heart.

Chris Matthews once observed that the Democratic party is the mommy party and the Republican party is the daddy party. The Democrats are soft and nurturing, while the Republicans are stern and bracing. But George Bush's Republicans are a nurturing party. And who knows, in Los Angeles the Democrats may emerge as the daddy party, the party that lectures us about fiscal rectitude and the imprudence of large tax cuts. Whatever happens in L.A., George Bush has recast the Republican party. Beneath all the Up With People sap, something significant happened in Philadelphia. ♦

The Other, Stupider Convention

Spend enough time with Arianna, Granny D., and Al Franken, and you, too, will favor legalizing drugs.

By Matt Labash

Philadelphia

To survive the Shadow Convention, there is but one physical prerequisite—a strong back. I am barely through the door of the Annenberg Center before my accordion folder is bursting with handouts from every flared-nostril revolutionary and bleeding-ulcer moderate in possession of a Kinko's card and busfare to Philadelphia. Though the activists represent disparate causes—from campaign finance reform to stopping "crack kingpin" George W. Bush—they speak the same strange language. They all "mobilize" and "dialogue." They rail against anything bearing the prefix "trans" (as in transnational corporation) or the label "industrial" (as in prison-industrial complex). They have hair in unpredictable places.

They have assembled at the behest of "recovering Republican" Arianna Huffington, the media's favorite salon keeper. Huffington's charm does much to compensate for her political schizophrenia, so we journalists do our best to keep a straight face. It is Arianna's hope, as well as that of co-sponsors like Common Cause and financial backer George Soros (the pro-pot billionaire), that this event will be the antidote to the conventional conventions—that is, more engaging and less scripted. Arianna is not afraid to set the bar low.

The Shadow Convention is intended to address The Issues That Voters Really Care About—or would care about were they not so apathetic, a problem the Shadow Convention intends to address. Hence, we dialogue about moneyed influence-peddlers. We mobilize against the failed war on drugs. We try to snore discreetly as the disenfranchised have their day. The problem, of course, with making a big to-do about giving voice to the voiceless is that when they start talking, you're expected to listen.

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So it is small surprise when during the first day of the five-day confab, trouble brews outside the convention. There, several young women whose calves have never known a razor's burn are passing out fliers saying "Hey Cowboy John McCain, How Many Indians You Gonna Kill Today?" They are angry that McCain, who will be speaking shortly, sponsored the Navajo-Hopi Relocation Act. They are angry about "capitalism and indigenous repression." They are just plain angry.

Next to the press credentialing table, a gaggle of activists forms, emitting an olfactory smorgasbord of patchouli resin, unwashed cargo shorts, and the funky secretions that result from life on the barricades. As I interview one of them wearing a Ralph Nader pin, her friend sneaks up behind me, spies my notebook, and reports that I am only recording sartorial details. "Can I see your press pass?" she inquires, as if I would be interviewing her compatriot for fun.

The group is led by Andrew Rose, a San Francisco math teacher who has been arrested 11 times to date. His forearm bears a Bic-inscribed phone number: "Our jail-support line," he explains. As I butt into the group's strategy huddle, I am kindly asked to leave. "Why don't you just admit you're a cop?" says one protester. But Andrew brings me along into the auditorium with his protégés, "Sharkey" and "Rookie"—their hair a tangle of macramé knots, their noserings resembling small doorknockers.

Inside is a strong contingent of McCainiacs. They clutch his book. They wave "McCain for President" signs. And those are just the journalists. As McCain's family files into the orchestra pit, brother Joe gabs with reporters, sometimes taking all of two minutes before mentioning the Arizona senator's Hanoi Hilton stint. Joe is still sporting a "McCain 2000" pin, which he says he wears as if it were a yellow ribbon from "when John was in Vietnam." Joe seems unaware that it's been five months since his brother lost the primary, though he's hardly alone. John seems to have only recently received the news himself.

As Arianna takes to the stage to introduce the senator, she highlights the need to "drive our political leaders into dollar detox." Andrew Rose, who's sitting next to me, hisses: "She was married to a millionaire senator!" "We are part of building a movement," intones Huffington. "She's one of us," Rose says mockingly, elbowing Rookie and Sharkey, "there's room in our movement for Arianna."

When McCain takes the podium to deliver his campaign finance reform sermon and extol the virtues of his recent *bête noire*, Bush, Rose and company, who have dispersed throughout the auditorium, heckle him mercilessly. They repeatedly catcall "Hypocrite!" and "Indian killer!" and bang the pole of a phony delegate stanchion (there are lots of these at the shadow convention, bearing the names not of states, but of states of mind, like "Disillusioned" and "Downsized"). McCain becomes so rattled that he offers to quit his speechifying. The scene degenerates into *Showtime at the Apollo* for white people—except instead of getting hooted off the stage, McCain is expected to stay and swallow his medicine.

Beating a retreat immediately afterwards, McCain pauses for a clipped exchange with reporters outside the building. "It was fun," his lips say, while his torqued grimace indicates it was an ordeal. As Sharkey walks past the scrum, he admits the "action" wasn't his comrades' best work. None of the media has any idea what their chants meant. But the harassment is at least effective enough to get McCain to skip the advertised Q&A in favor of tending to important business ("He's getting a cheesesteak," says aide John Weaver).

Such dramatics do indeed call for sustenance, but there doesn't seem to be a concession at the convention (though Ben & Jerry's was supposed to provide ice cream). So I crash the green room with *National Review*'s Jonah Goldberg. There, scribbling notes, is author and professional scold Jonathan Kozol, sitting next to a plate of sickly melon wedges. After downing a Nantucket Nectar, Goldberg says we need to get back to see the comedy stylings of Al Franken, who introduced his Stuart Smalley character on *Saturday Night Live* many years ago, and who hasn't stopped inflicting it on us since. "I'm writing a piece about why Al Franken isn't funny," says Goldberg. Onstage, Franken says that Arianna is doing everything for this convention: "For instance, for the Shadow Cabaret, she's making the baklava." I ask Goldberg if he'd mind lending me his premise.

The Shadow Cabaret is the Shadow Convention's way of leavening the self-righteous histrionics of its daily harangues on campaign finance reform, the failed war on drugs, and childhood poverty—issues that the shadow conveners say the major conventions aren't addressing (though, in fairness, the major conventions aren't addressing any issues). After hours watching panel discussions in which leading lights of the media bemoan the media's chronic obsession with the conventions (which they're all covering) at the expense of covering Real Issues (which they would be covering if they weren't so busy discussing media failures at media panel discussions), conventioneers are treated at night to comedians, singers, and spoken-word artists like the barefoot Michael Franti: *I'm the trunk that holds the branches / The leaves that do the dances / My flowers / Romantic / My love / Gigantic*. His poetry / Bad.

The Shadow Convention, however, is not all substandard entertainment and "Free Mumia" chants. On the second day, the shadow people get down to the serious business of campaign finance reform. Very serious, in fact. So serious that nobody seems actually to want to show up, so the shadow conveners cordon off the back two-thirds of the auditorium's seating with duct tape, forcing people to sit up front so as not to spoil the photo-op. I run into Arianna in the hall and we exchange air-kisses, her customary media greeting. I invite her to join me and a large coterie of colleagues who will be crashing late-night open-bar parties subsidized by lobbyists. "Can you bring them here first?" she asks, looking at the half-empty auditorium.

Attendance is down because of McCain's absence, which is not to say the proceedings are devoid of celebrity. There is Granny D., the straw-hatted 90-year-old woman who spent 14 months walking across the country to emphasize the need for campaign finance reform. As Granny D. enters the auditorium in her fluorescent crossing-guard jacket (perhaps unaware that she's no longer in danger of getting mowed down by oncoming traffic), she suspiciously eyes the stairs that descend to the stage. An event staffer instructs her to grab my hand.

Though the woman walked 3,200 miles with a 25 lb pack on her back, she seems unable to get to her seat without assistance. Once I deposit her there, catastrophe strikes. She discovers that both the text of her speech and her hearing aid battery are missing from her bag. When a staffer determines that I have led her to the wrong seat, he tries to tell her to relocate, to no avail. She cannot hear him. "YOU NEED TO MOVE!" he shouts, alarming bystanders, who are about to request that a panel discussion on Senior Citizen Abuse be added to the docket.

Granny D. finally recovers her speech and gives a rousing performance in a Katharine-Hepburnish, New Hampshire accent (Granny's "future" is pronounced "fyoochah"). She basks in chants of "Go Granny Go!" It is unclear if the crowd is enthusiastic about cleaning up money in politics or simply relieved that Granny has successfully exited the stage without breaking her hip.

The next day sees a significant attendance spike, as its subject is everyone's favorite: ending the war on drugs. Though the program is ostensibly not supposed to be

Illustration by Earl Keleny

dedicated to advocating the legalization of drugs, but rather increasing awareness of "harm reduction"—whatever that is—scores of young people show up, many of them smelling as if they've just bathed in their own bong water.

We are treated to the fulminations of Republican governor Gary Johnson of New Mexico, who advocates legalizing drugs, and who will likely not be long for the political world, with his declarations that "the biggest issue in this country is drugs" and that "there's no positive drug message" directed at children. (Indeed, it's never too early to teach kids to shoot dope with clean needles.)

Likewise, Jesse Jackson ignites the crowd, though the Jackson aficionados among us are disappointed that he can't find a word to rhyme with "recidivism" (he manages however to decry druggies who go to "jail sicker and come out slicker and return quicker"). From there, he is off to the races with his boilerplate call-and-response closers, "Futures Over Funerals! . . . Schools Over Jails! . . . Down With Dope, Up With Hope!" Oops, wrong rally.

But the shadow performers who most readily inspire audience affection are the Children's Choir from Minnesota, billed as being "composed of children whose parents are incarcerated for drug-related offenses." Though I'm not susceptible to great displays of emotion, I am darn near moved to tears as the dozen or so little dears murder Curtis Mayfield's "People Get Ready," then read their homegrown poetry detailing the motherless existences inflicted on them by law enforcement.

I go backstage to hear their stories and catch up with five choir members, along with their adult tour director, Mattie Thomas, whose business card says she is CEO of the Sisters of the Million Woman March. The only problem is, of the five girls, only three say their parents are in jail at all—and none of them for drug offenses. One 12-year-old says she has an uncle on drugs (he's been in rehab twice, but never in prison). Another 12-year-old says she has a second cousin in jail—for murder. And a 14-year-old girl says her father is in jail—also for murder. A defender of the choir's bona fides, however, she adds he was probably on drugs when he became a killer (shooting a hole in the shadow conventioneers' patter about nonviolent drug offenders).

Mattie Thomas herself at least seems to be leading by example: She admits to having done a four-and-a-half year stint for drug distribution ("I was set up," she says) and is now on supervised release. Thomas seems almost disappointed when asked about the discrepancy between the choir's advertised, and its true, composition. "No, nobody's actually in jail," she says, "at this point."

Despite the Shadow Convention's inanity and devotion to propaganda at the cost of intellectual honesty, it has still been a modest success. A seed was planted, a dialogue started. Never mind if it's a dialogue many of us gave up on long ago—when we left our dorm rooms, bad weed, and jug wine behind. ♦

Picture Press / CORBIS

Eating Out

Memoirs of a Cheap and Finicky Glutton

By Joseph Epstein

Eating Out—I can recall when those words were filled with promise, and what was promised was swell food, an interesting scene, dressing up, a festive feeling, an occasion. The first serious restaurant I was taken to as a child was a Romanian-Jewish steak house on Roosevelt Road in Chicago called Joe Stein's. It was an upstairs joint, and had large parrots in cages along its walls. The *spécialité de la maison* was lengthy strips of skirt steak and wonderful fried potatoes, both brought to the table, family style, on platters; also bowls of pickles, pickled tomatoes, and ice-cream-scoop shaped balls of chopped liver that one spread on heavily textured dark bread. Flat-footed, world-weary, damp, slightly soiled towels over their arms, pencils behind their ears, the waiters had strong greenhorn accents and seemed to come out of classic Jewish waiter jokes: "Vich of you gentlemens vants the clean glass?" "Sorry, sir, dey heppen to be out of cream in de kitchen, vill you take it mit out milk?"

Joseph Epstein is a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard.

My first time at Joe Stein's, I remember, I asked our waiter if he had any soda pop. "Ve got pop," he said, deeply uninterested. "What kind do you have?" I asked. "Ve got red," he said, shifting smoothly from boredom into mild disdain, "and ve got brown."

I must have been five or six when this visit occurred. People did not then—in the mid-1940s—go often to restaurants with young children. People did not then go often to restaurants, period. Certainly not as casually and frequently as they do today, when they not only eat out all the time, but do so in odd places. A recent marketing survey in Washington state found that more people ate in their cars than any other place, including home. Drive-in restaurants, one of California's great gifts to western civilization, were chiefly for adolescents, but now that no one is required to depart adolescence until heavy dementia sets in, why not eat with one's own children in the old haunts of the formerly young?

Haute Cuisine
How the French Invented the Culinary Profession
by Amy Trubek
Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 200 pp., $24.95

Kitchen Confidential
Adventures in the Culinary Underbelly
by Anthony Bourdain
Bloomsbury, 320 pp., $24.95

My own youthful gastronomic range was greatly limited. My mother, the best of all mothers, was the least adventurous of cooks. Although not orthodox, nor even synagogue-going, she would not let certain—though not all—foods outlawed by Leviticus into her kitchen. No pork in any form was served, though shrimps were. Rare, even unto the lightest pink, beef was unknown; kosher chickens were, for reasons never made clear, thought to have more flavor than unkosher ones. Iceberg lettuce in those days held a monopoly greater than any dreamed of by Bill Gates. In our house, most vegetables and many desserts—peas, beans, corn, pears, fruit cocktail—came out of the can. Good at baking though my mother was (also at soups), Jell-O in exotic combinations was a fairly frequent dessert; so, too, bananas and sour cream.

When we went to restaurants, it chiefly meant one steak house or anoth-

er, for Chicago in those years was still the site of the stockyards, and beef, in all its forms, was the *spécialité de la ville*. The standard "deluxe" meal for middlewesterners in those years began with a shrimp cocktail, followed by a wedge of iceberg lettuce with thousand-island dressing, then either a steak or prime rib and a baked potato for a main course, with strawberry shortcake or pie à la mode for dessert. All this, of course, was long before awareness of cholesterol, the first of many snakes to have crept into the American gastronomic Garden of Eden. Diets were not up for discussion. People didn't seem much to mind being overweight—"a little heavyset" was a frequently hauled-out euphemism of the day. The carcinogenic, far from being a terrifying factor, was not even a known word.

We were once taken out, with an extensive cousinage, by a wealthy and high-rolling uncle of my father's, a bootlegger in prohibition days, to a steak house, where I, a boy of perhaps nine, ordered a T-bone steak. This turned out to be a vast wedge of beef, flopping over the sides of the plate and causing some attention because of its monstrosity. On the drive home, my mother, normally so gentle to her spoiled older son, upbraided me, saying that I had embarrassed her; in the future, when taken out by other people, I must never order the most expensive item on the menu. I hadn't noticed the price. Apparently, there was a slightly complicated etiquette—even an ethics—to dining out. One didn't always order exactly what one wanted.

My boyish dining out on my own chiefly involved hot dogs (with mustard, onions, piccalilli, never ketchup) and small bags of french fries, the two together costing a quarter. I first tasted pizza in my freshman year in high school, at a joint called Laurie's, and thought I had gone to heaven. Fried shrimp, at a stand called Davy Jones's Locker nicely located in the middle of a parking lot, was my next gastronomic thrill. I can even now recall the pungent smell of Polish sausage cooking out of doors on Maxwell Street—Polio sausage, a pal called it, lending it a nice touch of danger during those years when polio was still a danger. Not long after, I was taken to the basement of a great Chicago restaurant called the Berghoff, which is still in business in the Loop, where, for less than half-a-buck (a phrase, John O'Hara once said, never used by any woman who graduated from high school), I was served a handsomely unbalanced meal of pot roast, German potato salad, and noodles, with a large stein of root beer.

Thomas A. Kelley / CORBIS

Drivers' licenses were available at fifteen years old in the Chicago of my youth, and a driver's license meant freedom, access to a large city with many secrets, not a few of them gastronomic. In our father's cars, we tested the claims most of us had until then only heard about. The best ribs in those days were thought to be at a place called the Tropical Hut, with fairly hokey Polynesian decor, twenty miles away in Hyde Park; the best pizza was Pizzeria Uno, its sausage being especially splendid; the best shrimps were those at a take-out place on Grand Avenue called Al's Fishery.

Viewed from today, when I find I can eat only one substantial meal a day, I am much impressed by my youthful capacity. (A contemporary recently observed to me that, as he grew older, the only activity at which he wasn't worse was drinking.) My aim was always to eat as much as possible; satiety was not a notion I knew. After a light breakfast (two fried eggs, orange juice, toast), for lunch at a store nearby our high school called Harry's I would eat two bacon-lettuce-tomato sandwiches slathered in mayo, fries, and a chocolate square, washed down by a Pepsi-Cola. (Who, I wonder, invented the BLT? His or her identity ought to be known, for that person brought much more happiness into the world than any modern poet.) At home that evening I might eat four or five chicken breasts with a mound or two of mashed potatoes.

After a night out roving with the barbarian band that constituted my dearest friends, we generally stopped at an open-all-night delicatessen called Friedman's, where it was not uncommon to sup on a bowl of kreplach soup, a jaw-expanding corned-beef sandwich on a kaiser roll, and another Pepsi or the drink known as a chocolate phosphate, with coffee to follow. Then it was home for eight or ten chocolate chip cookies, perhaps two or three fingers of salami, a few soup-spoons of ice cream eaten out of the carton, and then eight or ten hours during which I slept as soundly as a monk.

When I was young, putting on weight wasn't a consideration. Despite my own locust-like appetite, I remained thin. A.J. Liebling, still my favorite writer about food, said he grew up during a period when a diplomat weighing fewer than two hundred and fifty pounds was not to be trusted. (Recall

the deviousness of the "lean and hungry Cassius.") I grew up at a time when stocky, burley, husky, portly, even stout were not insults; Moose was an approbative nickname; thick calves, heavy arms, the beginning of a paunch were signs of manhood.

I ate less well in college, for the University of Chicago, that least hedonistic of institutions, provided chiefly brain food. Food somehow seemed, for that brief time, of tertiary interest. The United States Army was even worse, lean pickings for the finicky glutton I then was. On my way into the mess hall at Fort Hood, I recall asking a fellow enlisted man coming out what was for dinner. "I dunno," he memorably replied, "some red sh—t."

Hulton-Deutsch / CORBIS

When I moved to New York in the early 1960s, my gastronomic range widened considerably. New Yorkers made demands of their restaurants that it would never occur to people elsewhere to make. In the simplest luncheonette on 15th Street, I heard a man order a sardine sandwich on rye toast, with a single leaf of lettuce, a very thin slice of onion atop it, and a light rinse of lemon over that—and then grumble because the counterman hadn't got it quite to his liking. In New York I learned about Northern Italian food; I went to my first French restaurants; I shared a Chateaubriand and roaring laughter with my friend Hilton Kramer at the Oak Room of the Plaza but couldn't bring myself to ask for a side-order of peas at $5 (in 1963). I discovered great secret restaurants behind grocery stores in Hell's Kitchen: Hell for the Italian immigrants who arrived there near the turn of the twentieth century to live in crowded tenements; heaven for me in the early 1960s.

Interest in food took a jump in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the rise of ethnicity. Suddenly everyone felt called upon to try the newest Thai, Afghan, Ethiopian, Symbionese restaurant. Food replaced movies as the interest of choice among the upper-middle and so-called educated classes. One would go to a party and be asked, not what one thought of the latest Robert Altman or Woody Allen film or (more important) what Pauline Kael thought of it, but if one had been to the recently opened bistro on Halsted Street or trattoria on Southport.

The age of competitive cooking had begun. During this time, I sat at dinner tables where a serious topic of discussion was lettuce. The phrase "just a touch of tarragon" seemed to come up with astonishing frequency. Ginger and dollops of sorbet were served between courses to refresh what were said to be "tired palates."

I enjoy pretentious talk about food; I recently met an acquaintance in Chicago for lunch, and he suggested a place that served, as he said, "a fairly reliable risotto." (Yeah, baby.) I don't, however, like to theorize about the deeper significance of food and the rituals surrounding its preparation and consumption. The secondary pleasures in life—food, sex, sport—are, in my view, better enjoyed for not being talked to death; besides, I've never met an anthropologist with a really good appetite.

"The French," one learns from Amy Trubek's recent volume *Haute Cuisine*, "invented the cuisine of culinary professionals." Miss Trubek, who is today an instructor at the New England Culinary Institute, was set on her gastronomic path at the age of twenty by a meal at the only really serious French restaurant I have ever eaten in: Le Français, a restaurant not in France but in—of all places—Wheeling, Illinois, perhaps half an hour from where I live. Jean Banchet, its chef and owner, is everywhere acclaimed whenever anyone makes up a list of the ten best restaurants in the solar system, and, near as I can tell, rightly so. The food was expensive but—here is the bad news—worth it.

French cookery generally, in my view, has set a poor precedent, especially among the status-nervous upper-middle classes. French restaurants charging fixed prices of $200 and beyond feel wrong; and more than wrong when they charge more yet to seat you in the kitchen (as a place in Chicago called Charlie Trotter's does). I took a pass on the nouvelle cuisine stage of French cookery; I am currently taking a pass on those French-inspired restaurants that bring food to the table in a vertical presentation; Viagra meals, the man who runs Morton's in New York calls them. I was in a Chicago restaurant called Avanzare, where a lunch companion was served such a meal and had to call upon the waiter to help him deconstruct it. Japanese is the most beautiful of all cuisines, but seems to me generally more elegant than good; and I feel about sushi, as the joke has it, that it is food fit only for castaways. But then between the raw and the cooked, I'll take the cooked every time: Even sex tartare seems to me a bad idea.

In California, in Santa Rosa, I felt the French influence in what used to be

a very sound restaurant when neither I nor any of the five other people at the table could identify more than two of the six main course dishes. One of the dishes was called "Alphonsino." "What might Alphonsino be?" I asked the waiter. "Oh," he said, "it's a kind of red snapper." A kind of snapper, eh? I suggested that perhaps Alphonsino was the fish's first name. In New York, at the excellent Coco Pazzo Teatro, they threw the names of at least three pastas at me that I had never heard before.

I'm not keen, either, at having waiters break down the so-called "specials" to the cellular level. I've had enough of specials generally, and I have never met anyone who, when presented with more than four specials by a waiter, can recall the first two. I also dislike the new democratic chumminess of waiters: "Hi, my name's Zack." (Waiters telling you their first names has its dishonorable roots in the odious Playboy Clubs of unsainted memory, where the poor waitresses were instructed to begin by saying, "Hi, I'm your Bunny Karen.") I'm not keen either on Zack telling me what his favorite dishes are, that he has already tasted this evening's specials, or that he thinks I've ordered very intelligently. Take the order, bring the food, and bugger off, Zack.

At a Chicago restaurant called Ambria, the waiters not only bring out all the main courses at once, but lift the salvers from each with neatly timed simultaneity, a great *voilà*-ish flourish. At this same restaurant, when one of our table went off to the bathroom, a waiter appeared and took her dish out to the kitchen to keep it warmed until her return. Can one get too much service in a restaurant? Perhaps not. Still, things begin to seem a bit fussy in restaurants where the male waiters are so much more carefully coiffed than their customers, male or female.

Part of the pleasure of eating out, it seems to me, is to put a certain distance between oneself and everything to do with the preparation of the food one is served. Especially, if one is wise, does one want to avoid too much knowledge of what goes on in the kitchen. George Orwell, in *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933), made nauseatingly plain the point that the more successful the restaurant the more chaotic—and probably the dirtier—the kitchen.

Courtesy Joseph Epstein

Pierre Boulez and Joseph Epstein with chef Ben Moy and an unnamed whitefish.

Anthony Bourdain's *Kitchen Confidential*, another recent volume and the best book I have ever read about the nuts-and-bolts mechanics of running serious restaurant kitchens, doesn't speak to dirtiness but is brilliant on the tumult of running a kitchen that might turn out anywhere from two hundred to four hundred or so serious meals a night. His is also a book with much useful instruction to diners: You want to avoid brunches and buffets, which are outlets for previous days' uneaten food; because of delivery schedules, Tuesdays and Thursdays are the best nights to order fish in New York; much restaurant bread is probably recycled from someone else's table. Calling himself "a wrangler of psychopaths," Bourdain is particularly fine on the sociology of the wild, goofy, lost, occasionally admirable people who wind up working in the hellholes of restaurant kitchens, from head chefs to night porters. Bourdain has worked at the Rainbow Room and been executive chef at Coco Pazzo Teatro, and is currently head chef at Brasserie Les Halles, but, in his talk of food, is almost the reverse of pretentious. He's a wild old boy and a bit of a lost soul himself, and, being strongly anti-malarkey, utterly believable.

It didn't take me long to understand that serious fancy gastronomy was not for me. My own palate was a good bit less than refined. I don't think I am gastronomically disabled, but though I enjoy food immensely, I seem to taste things merely blatantly. Even though all the world's famous chefs seem to have been men—Brillat-Savarin, Dubois, Escoffier, and other famous culinary frogs—my sense is that women seem to taste food with greater sensory refinement than do men. (Perhaps women don't have the first-sergeant, kick-ass personality that is required to run a large kitchen staff.) "Men don't like complicated food," says one woman character to another in a Barbara Pym novel, and I believe there is something to it.

My wife can often tell, with real precision, what herbs and spices have gone into the preparation of a dish we have just eaten; I can only tell you whether or not I like it. And I like a lot, not least a lot of fairly coarse food. A Chicago specialty that gives me heightened pleasure, for example, is a sandwich called an Italian-beef-sausage combo, with peppers, a wet and dripping thing, the mechanics of the devouring of which would have stripped the dignity from General de Gaulle. It is a sandwich that takes three hands to manipulate, generally requires anywhere between fifteen

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and twenty-five small paper napkins, and costs $3.95, not including dry-cleaning bills.

A man of selective cheapness, I don't like to spend too much money on restaurant food. I think of Flicoteaux, the restaurant mentioned in Balzac's *Lost Illusions*, favorite dining place of students and struggling writers during the first twelve years of the Restoration, which offered a three-course meal for eighteen *sous*, a bottle of wine included, and "bread at your discretion." Today a meal that, apart from bar bill and gratuity, costs more than, say, forty dollars per person seems to me, somehow, morally excessive. Expense accounts long ago ratcheted up restaurant prices, but I, gluttonous and thrifty at once, still search for great meals at reasonable prices. In *Between Meals*, his account of his youthful dining in Paris, A.J. Liebling reports that the best bargains in food were those restaurants at which priests and prostitutes ate when they paid for their own meals. When I was a kid, the legend used to be that the best restaurants on the road were those at which truck drivers ate; perfectly untrue, of course.

I have all my days been searching for the excellent, reasonably priced Italian restaurant. While French cuisine may be architectonic, as Trubek argues in her book, my own preference is for Italian and Chinese food. An inexpensive Italian restaurant would perforce have to be a southern, or red-sauce, one. For years I tried the Italian restaurants around 26th Street, an old Italian Chicago neighborhood run by an alderman with the delicious name of Vito Marzullo, but with no great success. On Taylor Street the best Italian restaurants tended to be northern Italian. What I wanted was plain fare, properly cooked homemade pastas, fresh sauce, fiery sausages, bread that suggested spiritual nourishment—all for from six to ten dollars a serving. I despaired of ever finding such a place, until one day ten or so years ago in South Bend, Indiana, I walked into a place with the solidly cliché name of Sunny Italy. A sign at the cashier's counter read, "No credit cards." Behind the cash register sat a short dark man in his late seventies, complaining about the hopelessness of his grandchildren. El Dorado discovered at last. And so it turned out, solid grub, straight, large portions, no artifice, the complaining owner's wife in charge in the kitchen. The only problem is that South Bend is 110 miles from where I live. I needed a Sunny Italy in the neighborhood.

Marcel Proust, the most complicated and impractical man in the Paris of his day, had the Ritz Hotel in his neighborhood, and used it to give lobster and champagne dinners for friends; and became such good friends with the *maître d'hôtel* that he had a key to the kitchen, and on occasion sent his servant and dear friend Célèste Alberet down, after the restaurant closed, for a very late night beer. I have in my neighborhood, all within a hundred yards of my apartment, a not-good-enough Italian red-sauce restaurant, a more ambitious restaurant that serves too many Viagra meals, a Nepalese restaurant, a Greek restaurant of the kind known among the cognoscenti as a Grecian spoon, and (a winner at last) a fine Spanish restaurant called Barcelona Tapas, where I have lunch at least once a week. A mile or so away is Kendall College, which has a culinary school at which I have eaten four or five times, but never with real satisfaction.

What's missing in the neighborhood—sorely, sorely missing—is a Chinese restaurant. Jews need Chinese restaurants. An old joke has it that Jewish civilization began nearly six thousand years ago, Chinese civilization nearly four thousand years ago, and so for nearly two thousand years the Jews went hungry. Jackie Mason, meanwhile, reports that though Chinese restaurants are filled with Jews, you never see any Chinese in Jewish restaurants. Quite so. This Jew finds he could, without any difficulty, eat Chinese food no fewer than three times a week, and to go more than two weeks without it makes him a touch cranky.

Not only is there no good Chinese restaurant within ten miles of where I live, but the great restaurant of my life, which once was in my neighborhood, has long ago closed down. It was called "The Bird," in part because one of the chef-owner's signature dishes was a great delicacy that he called "Crispy-skinned Chicken," and in part because, phoenix-like, the restaurant had had many rebirths in different locations. I first heard of it from an English friend, then a visiting professor at Northwestern University. "It's rather pricey," he reported, "and not all that good." I didn't go there for a year. I shall always hold a grudge against this man, as would you of anyone who had deprived you of perhaps sixty or seventy grand meals.

Because the food from The Bird is no longer available to me, describing it, rather like recalling an old love, is painful, though I shall try. Ben Moy, the owner, is Chinese, but his cookery was

so distinctive that I came to think of it as Moyan. He served courses one at a time, unlike the normal convention of American Chinese restaurants, where one's plate becomes a mélange. All his dishes were beautiful, without ever lapsing into the merely arty. The crispy-skinned chicken, a deboned chicken served on romaine lettuce with a dressing of subtle pungency, had a brown, burnished look, resembling nothing so much as the color of an old and precious violin. Mr. Moy could cut a wall-eyed pike into the most delectable morsels. A butcher in his earlier career, he always cooked his beef dishes to a perfect pinkness, and they sang with flavor. He taught me how to stop worrying and love squid—at least as he prepared it, in the most various ways, none of them rubbery or tasteless. He introduced me to green mussels. Every so often a hunter friend would bring him pheasants, the taste of which, with Mr. Moy's perfect touch added, made plain why Wallace Stevens once described great poetry as "a pheasant disappearing into the brush." None of it seemed expensive.

Food at The Bird was—how to say this in a single word?—honest. Mr. Moy served nothing goofy, went in for no exhibitionistic exoticism: no cheeks of veal, no head of pork, no *schwantz de boeuf*. His light sauces, piquant dressings, vegetable accompaniments, everything he did had only one end: to bring out the highest possible flavor in all he served. A great chef, he was a genius of a shopper. If he served a melon, it was, inevitably, the Platonic ideal of a melon. I was impressed upon learning, after we had become friends, that, with the exception of Chinese vegetables, he found most of his produce at the same supermarkets where I bought mine. Almost all other food, after Ben Moy's cooking, felt a little gross.

A year or so after I discovered The Bird, the restaurant did another of its phoenix turns, moving nearly twenty-five miles away to Melrose Park, a suburb west of Chicago, once the home of many of the city's mafia middle-managers. Twenty-five miles was not at all too far to go for Ben Moy's cooking, and I continued to dine there at least once a week for the next eight or nine years, with his annual Chinese New Year's banquets thrown in gratis. I would probably be dining there still, but an elderly gent, in a moment of mental lapse, put his heavy foot on the accelerator when he intended the brake and drove his Cadillac into The Bird's kitchen. The damage, Mr. Moy decided, was beyond repairing, and he packed his two enormous, magical woks and closed up shop.

The phoenix fluttered briefly one last time in a smaller location in Oak Park, where Ben Moy, who had all along given cooking classes, opened a cookery school, serving meals without a restaurant license to old friends, so to say, out of the back door. Another of these friends was Dale Clevenger, the first French horn for the Chicago Symphony. One night when I was there, Clevenger brought Pierre Boulez and a small party to dine. In the kitchen, Ben Moy, before carving a vast Lake Superior whitefish, announced that he wished to dedicate this fish to "two artists, Pierre Boulez and Joseph Epstein." I have photographs marking the event. Having a whitefish dedicated to one is not, I realize, the Nobel Prize, but it continues to please me hugely—and besides, unlike the Nobel Prize, I didn't have to share the whitefish with Sully Prudhomme, Saul Bellow, and Toni Morrison.

Not long after Ben Moy closed up for good, and, like the Jews in the joke, I have been hungry ever since. Still, I shall always be grateful for the gift of more than a decade of superlative feeding.

I not long ago read the theory that when one is young sex is one's main preoccupation, when one turns to middle-age that preoccupation changes to food, and in old age it is good sleep one most craves. To let you know exactly where I am on this spectrum, I find it a great pleasure to get a good night's sleep in which I have dreamt of eating course after course of Ben Moy's food. After a long career of eating out, I begin, I fear, to eat in. ♦

The Rhapsody of Narcissism

A Hollywood screenwriter looks at Clinton and sees himself. **BY THOMAS S. HIBBS**

There was Joe Eszterhas, famous Hollywood screenwriter, suffering from stomach cramps and hurrying back to the penthouse at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel, which had recently been vacated by Warren Beatty. Rushing up to the suite, Eszterhas ran into the bathroom—only to be confronted with the "godawful" image of himself from six different angles.

American Rhapsody
by Joe Eszterhas
Knopf, 432 pp., $25.95

Not just in the bathroom but throughout the suite (where Beatty had resided for more than a decade), there were "mirrors everywhere—everywhere—on the walls, the ceiling."

Recovering from his malady, Eszterhas wondered, "What sort of man wants to look at himself all the time, twenty-four hours a day, every day? . . . Was this how [Beatty] kept in touch with ordinary Americans? Was this the daily self-abnegation that fueled his bleeding liberal heart?"

Eszterhas professes to find such self-

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absorption distasteful, but *American Rhapsody* is a study in precisely such narcissism, whose poster boy is William Jefferson Clinton: the president of the United States who will end his reign besmirched by impeachment and public chortling over his sexual escapades in the Oval Office. As if we hadn't already had enough salacious detail, Eszterhas introduces us to "Willard" (the pet name Clinton bestowed upon the organ that nearly crippled his presidency). Eszterhas grants Willard the final fictional soliloquy of the book: an opportunity for Willard to plead his cause, to ask the president to recall how much they've meant to one another, and to beg for the understanding of the American people.

This is not the way things were supposed to have turned out. In Clinton, Eszterhas's generation had finally claimed the White House from the evil generation of Johnsons and Nixons, Reagans and Bushes. *Rolling Stone* prophesied a "new age in American politics." But, after promising the most ethical presidency in history, Clinton found himself reduced to parsing the meaning of "is." As Eszterhas puts it: "He was supposed to rock the world . . . but not like this. . . . He was supposed to tell the truth—finally—after all the White House liars we'd grown up and grown older and grown more cynical with."

But Eszterhas should have seen trouble ahead for the first rock 'n' roll president. With the wisdom of hindsight, he now sees clearly that "behind the idealism and the social commitment and the herbal experiments related to self-awareness, the sixties were about sex"—sex, not love.

The degree to which the president was enamored of the rock 'n' roll life is evident in the story Eszterhas relates about Clinton avidly pursuing Connie Hamzy, the groupie immortalized in Grand Funk Railroad's "We're an American Band." Clinton was not so much attracted to her physical appearance as to her legendary association with a slew of rockers. Eszterhas describes the famous four-way phone sex event—where, while Clinton chatted with Dick Morris on the phone each was being serviced by a woman—as a "telephonic orgy," a "four-way disembodiment of intimacy."

It was the Lewinsky affair that drew Eszterhas into Bill Clinton's private world. Each chapter of *American Rhapsody* opens with dialogue from Monica and Linda Tripp (whom Eszterhas dubs "The Ratwoman"). But the key for Eszterhas is actually Gennifer Flowers's book about Clinton—a book read by Monica as a self-help manual

AP / Wide World Photos

for seducing the commander in chief (not that this required much training). Eszterhas allows Flowers the harshest and most succinct description of Clinton as "a flat, two-dimensional piece of hardened paper, empty of all feelings."

For Eszterhas, Clinton's hollowness is intimately linked to his ability to use anyone that suits him and to destroy what blocks his path. It is equally in keeping with his character to assassinate the character of women who make allegations against him as it is to drop bombs on pharmaceutical plants to distract the nation from Monicagate. Clinton's public narcissism peaked with the marshaling of the psychiatric industry to exonerate him from guilt. Clinton was "allegedly a victim of incest, pedophilia, child abuse, erotomania, sexual addiction, gambling addiction, alcohol addiction, rage addiction, wife beating, husband beating, grandfather beating, low self-esteem, jealousy, and poverty." He was a wounded healer for the self-mesmerized, self-monitoring, therapeutic generation.

Perhaps the most chilling suggestion of Clinton's violent indifference to others came after the impeachment hearings, when Juanita Broaddrick claimed that Clinton had raped her in an Arkansas hotel room years before. Eszterhas does not flinch from the details of this case, entitling his chapter "The Ugliest Story Ever Told." The file on "Jane Doe #5" may have motivated some waffling House members to vote for impeachment. But, Eszterhas notes, the country was so tired of the Clinton-Lewinsky debacle that it lacked the patience for yet another accusation.

The most surprising entrant into this national drama—and one to whom Eszterhas devotes considerable attention—is the pornographer Larry Flynt, whose ad in the *Washington Post* promising cash for stories about the sexual infidelities of Republicans, Eszterhas suggests, helped persuade some Republicans to back censure over removal. Eszterhas speculates that Flynt's invitation to join John F. Kennedy Jr. at the White House Correspondents Dinner was a quiet acknowledgment of the important role played by the official pornographer of the Democratic party.

Eszterhas's book, however, is less the morality play he imagines than a therapeutic exercise for its author. He speaks of the period of reflection out of which *American Rhapsody* grew as a time when he finally found marital fidelity and discovered the importance of children. He began to reflect about "values and success," about what the 1960s really meant, and about the "ambition, success, political duplicity, and the Hollywood charm" that "made Bill Clinton tick." Clinton, in other words, is someone Eszterhas used to be (except for the part about being successful in politics). Addicted to C-SPAN, "indulging gluttonously in the

national bacchanal of information and bulimia of rumor," Eszterhas became lost in the "mirrored sea of his own creation, in snorkeling pursuit of myself and Clinton."

There are those mirrors again, this time reflecting the psyche of author and object, Eszterhas and Clinton, a microcosm of the narcissistic generation. A former writer for *Rolling Stone* and the screenwriter of such films as *Jagged Edge*, *Basic Instinct*, and *Showgirls*, Eszterhas can't resist calling attention to his own importance. The book is really all about Eszterhas. Sharon Stone makes a surprisingly large number of appearances in the book (given that Eszterhas rejects rumors about her liaisons with the president). Sharon wasn't interested in Clinton—though she was, Eszterhas tells us, hot for Eszterhas. Wherever he looks, Eszterhas sees himself. He even insinuates himself into the other great media spectacle of the 1990s, suggesting that O.J. Simpson patterned his crime after the murder scene in *Jagged Edge*.

Eszterhas claims he learned a lot during this period of Clintonian self-examination. This is where he marks his own superiority to Clinton. (Or hadn't he already done that by telling us how he bagged Sharon Stone and Clinton didn't?) But Eszterhas is beyond all that, now; he has overcome his addictions, especially the one whose symptom is being the puppet of one's sex organ, and has come to the realization that it's all about the kids.

Repeatedly, Eszterhas says that what has made so many of his generation finally change their ways (other than near-death experiences and nightmarish flashbacks and fear of sexual-harassment charges) is concern for the next generation. He goes so far as to suggest that his generation wants the next generation to behave, not like their own generation, but like their grandparents'—as though they all wish their daughters to be Donna Reed. Of course, they know this isn't realistic. So they will attempt to counsel their children to stick to safe sex and safe drugs.

Is this all that's left of the 1960s? Of course, Eszterhas still mouths the orthodox views on social policy, especially when it comes to matters of race and anything the Christian Coalition opposes. His most revealing words come when he echoes Toni Morrison's claim that Clinton is our first black president: In addition to promoting social programs favorable to blacks, Clinton showed his affinity by being able to "get down . . . in all kinds of ways. With the sax. With the ribs. With his shades. With the b—tches."

In the end, it's clear Eszterhas hasn't really changed at all. He's just tired, and what he hopes to pass on is merely lip service to the self-proclaimed "ideals" of the 1960s. Having spent his passion on sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll, he is now incapable of imagining a life of sacrifice and service. It was, in fact, long before Clinton became president that Eszterhas lost his edge. He speaks in inexplicably enthusiastic terms about how excited he was to see Fleetwood Mac perform at the first Clinton inauguration. Fleetwood Mac? This was not even the geriatric rock of Mick, Keith, and the rest of the Stones. This was geriatric *pop*. Eszterhas would have done well to remember another 1960s slogan: Trust no one over thirty. ♦

New York vs. Ohio

A Broadway revival presents the original American culture war. **By John Podhoretz**

There was a culture war long before the last few decades—only the combatants weren't liberal elites versus conservative regular Joes. This was a war between New York City and the rest of the United States. New York viewed itself as the only American locale of consequence, the singular place to which anyone who had the misfortune to be born elsewhere in America had to relocate if he wanted to make his mark. Just as Balzac's Rastignac journeyed from the provinces to Paris, so the American Rastignacs had to make their way to Manhattan if they did not wish to be stifled by the small-mindedness of Sinclair Lewis's Babbitt or by the rage of William Faulkner's Snopes.

Of course, the fight was fixed. New York was the home of every major cultural industry (with the exception of motion pictures), so who was left to stick up for the rest of the country? Even those who attained a cultural eminence outside New York, like Baltimore's H.L. Mencken, aided the city's dismissal of middle America with dismissive talk of the "booboisie"—the sort of people who didn't cram themselves into Manhattan apartments in pursuit of greatness.

There could hardly have been two more provincial New Yorkers than George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart. Kaufman was himself an escapee from middle America. Born in Pittsburgh, he got himself to Manhattan as soon as he could and wrote drama criticism before becoming a famous American wit. Hart was born a poor kid in the Bronx and by his teenage years was already a go-getter on the Great White Way.

They began collaborating in 1930 with *Once in a Lifetime*, the first and still one of the best Hollywood spoofs. Nine years later, they had the idea of bringing the culture war between New York and the United States to the stage in the barely disguised person of Alexander Woollcott, the now almost entirely (and justifiably) forgotten drama critic and radio personality who

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Roundabout Theatre Company

Harriet Harris as Maggie Cutler and Nathan Lane as Sheridan Whiteside in the Roundabout Theatre's revival of The Man Who Came to Dinner.

was famed for his unsparingly acid tongue and his friendships with the rich and powerful.

Kaufman and Hart wondered: What if Woollcott, the king of the Algonquin Round Table, found himself in a small Ohio town, delivering a lecture for vast sums of money to the culturally anxious ladies of the garden club—and then broke his leg and was forced to stay for weeks as the unwilling guest of the town's foremost Babbitt? That is the inspired premise of *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, one of the most delightful comedies of the twentieth century. It has just been revived on Broadway by the Roundabout Theatre in a splendid production full of pizzazz and high 1930s style, with the effortlessly funny Nathan Lane in the role of Sheridan Whiteside.

Whiteside makes one of the great entrances in the American theater: After raging offstage for a while, he is brought in a wheelchair into the living room of the house on whose front step he took a tumble. He looks around and pronounces: "I may vomit."

His host, industrialist Ernest Stanley, offers his best wishes: "I hope you are better." "Thank you," Whiteside replies. "I am suing you for one hundred and fifty thousand dollars." He hurls invective at friend and foe alike, with particular vitriol directed at his nurse, Miss Preen, whom he accuses of having "the touch of a sex-starved cobra." By act three, he has driven Miss Preen from the nursing profession: "I became a nurse because all my life, ever since I was a little girl, I was filled with the idea of serving a suffering humanity," she tells him. "After one month with you, Mr. Whiteside, I am going to work in a munitions factory. From now on anything that I can do to help exterminate the human race will fill me with the greatest of pleasure."

He orders the Stanley family to banish itself from the house's first floor, and the madness that comes with being one of the world's most celebrated people begins. He runs up a $784 phone bill (something akin to $10,000 today). Convicted murderers and twenty-two Chinese students come by for lunch. The naturalist William Beebe sends him an octopus and some penguins. The khedive of Egypt sends him a mummy case. The world's foremost expert on insect life brings him a terrarium of ten thousand cockroaches: "You can watch them, Sherry, while they live out their whole lives! Look, here is their maternity hospital!"

Beverly Carlton, a character based on Noel Coward, stops by for a visit, as does a character based on Harpo Marx (whom Kaufman and Hart call Banjo, brother to Wacko and Sloppo). Still, Whiteside does manage to find a few local people worthy of consideration, among them a clever newspaperman named Bert Jefferson who can beat him at cribbage and has written a really good play.

But then Whiteside's devoted secretary Maggie, who is well into her thirties, falls in love with the newspaperman and announces she is going to stay. "I've had ten years of the great figures of our time," she tells Whiteside. "They've been wonderful years, Sherry, gay and stimulating—I don't think anyone has ever had the fun we've had. But a girl can't laugh all the time, Sherry. There comes a time when she wants Bert Jefferson."

Whiteside flies into a rage at the inconvenience her departure will cause. "Don't look at me with those cow eyes, you sex-ridden hag," he shouts. "I have not been able to reach you, not knowing what haylofts you frequent." He insists he is going to end her "Joan Crawford fantasy," and so he imports the glamorous actress Lorraine Sheldon from New York to seduce Jefferson away. But when he comes to his senses, Whiteside realizes he has put into motion a plan to destroy the happiness of someone he loves—and he must act very fast to derail his own scheme.

The Man Who Came to Dinner is a marvel of theatrical construction, so durable that even its most dated aspects—glamorous names are constantly dropped that no one has heard in forty years—are charming rather than distracting. If you can't make it to New York to see director Jerry Zaks's terrific staging, you can rent the faithful 1942 movie version with Bette Davis as Maggie and Monty Woolley's legendary performance as Whiteside. Both on stage and screen, *The Man Who Came to Dinner* offers a hilarious depiction of the collision between the monstrous but captivating world of New York and the dull but decent world of middle America—and somehow manages to give both their due. ♦

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From the Desk of Dan Rather

August 4, 2000

Folks,

As we transition from the Republican Convention to the Democratic one, I thought it might be worth stepping back to evaluate our coverage, in other words to sniff the hind end of the steer, as we say in Texas.

First, on the Republican Convention. We did a brilliant job. We gave our viewers some fantastic insights. We really dug to get the true story. For example:

*We made the point that while the show on stage might look reasonable, if you look at the actual platform you find it is quite scary. I don't know who thought to look at the platform, but whoever did: Kudos!

*We discovered that money played an important role at this convention. We exhaustively researched the many parties, concerts and dinners that were thrown by major corporations. This was a theme I didn't see anywhere else. A scoop!

*We observed that the GOP had an unusual number of African Americans on stage. We pointed out that the party is appealing to a group of Americans who have traditionally voted Democratic. And yet we didn't stop there. Some of our more seasoned reporters noticed that this may actually have been a carom shot designed to win over white independents. Again, a point no one else made!

*I think we were also the only network to notice that, despite claims that the party is not racist, it still is the party that opposes affirmative action. A bit of a contradiction there! And wasn't Colin Powell gutsy to mention that?

*Finally, we cut through the baloney and pointed out that this convention was actually scripted. It was an elaborate show designed to appeal to television viewers, sometimes using cheap emotional ploys. By the way, we've got to get that blind mountain climber on the evening news. He was fantastic.

Now, turning to the Democratic Convention, there are a few things we need to keep in mind. In the first place, despite the efforts of the Clinton-haters, the president remains enormously popular. We'll need to highlight that and yet still note that Al Gore must also step out and show he is his own man. This is going to take some sophisticated coverage. Second, I think we really need to get below the atmospherics and into the substance. For example, maybe we could get Barbra Streisand on the air to make the point that the Democrats support gun control and a woman's right to choose, even including late term contraception (at CBS we don't call it "partial-birth abortion"). We also need to get "beyond the Beltway" with our sources. While we're in L.A. we might try to get some fresher faces, like the Baldwin brothers, for a new perspective. But this is something I know we can do. Go team!

Courage!

Dan