MYSTERIOUS BALTHUS
DAVID GELERNTER

the weekly Standard

MAY 7, 2001 $3.95

The Use and Abuse of Heroes

What least becomes a national legend? The overwrought love of his fans.
by Noemie Emery

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the weekly Standard

THE WEEKLY STANDARD (ISSN 1083-3013) is published weekly (except the last week in April, the second week in July, the first week in September, and the second week in January) by News America Incorporated, 1211 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96127, Washington, DC 20077-7767. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96153, Washington, DC 20090-6153; changes of address to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96127, Washington, DC 20077-7767. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Yearly subscriptions, $78.00. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-850-682-7653 for subscription inquiries. Visa/MasterCard payment accepted. Cover price, $3.95. Back issues, $3.95 (includes postage and handling). Send manuscripts and letters to the editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. THE WEEKLY STANDARD Advertising Sales Office in Washington, DC, is 1-202-293-4900. Advertising Production: Call Ian Slatter 1-202-496-3354.

BPA INTERNATIONAL

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Clinton Revisionism

The Clinton Presidential Center's website is up and running, and while the foundation's virtual library tends to the lofty business of conflict resolution and racial reconciliation, it's also good for a couple of yucks. Take the presidential timeline. We checked out the entries for "1998." Alert readers may remember that period as 365 days of Clinton lying to reporters, a grand jury, and his cabinet, while becoming the only president in the modern era to face impeachment. The site, however, suffers from its subject's selective memory. Here, 1998 is fondly recalled as the year in which Clinton launched his class-size reduction initiative.

Our favorite section, however, is the one encouraging visitors to send in a "photograph that captures an interaction you had with President Clinton." Before one eagerly logs on, anticipating, say, the snapshot of stewardess Debra Schiff sitting in the jump seat of Clinton's campaign plane, "Longhorn One," with his meaty paw lodged between her knees, one should consult the "submission guidelines," first reported by MSNBC. The guidelines state, "We will not accept materials of a prurient quality." Perhaps because of these restrictions, only one photograph is featured. It runs under an "America Remembers" link. Americans, apparently, are trying to forget.

In other Clinton news, a tip of the cap to the *Reason* editors who spotted this gem from New York's junior senator. "No one should have to leave their hometown, their families, and their roots to find a good job in America," Hillary Clinton—former resident of Illinois, Connecticut, and Arkansas—announced on the Senate floor on March 1. ♦

Our Kind of Czar

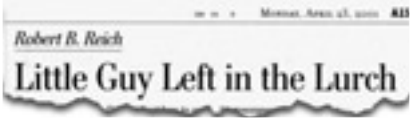
A story in last Thursday's *New York Times* reported that President Bush intends to nominate John P. Walters to the directorship of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. By past experience and present dedication to the issue in question, Walters—a WEEKLY STANDARD contributor whom several staffers at this magazine are privileged to call a friend—is matchlessly qualified for the job. He happens also to be uncommonly decent and honest. If this piece of news proves true, the president will have chosen his "drug czar" well.

Unfortunately, however, too much else in the *Times* story about Walters is malicious. Reporter Christopher Marquis leaves unsuspecting readers with the impression that Walters is a remorseless zealot, a "law-and-order conservative" whose advocacy of "severe prison sentences for violent felons" and other such apparently bizarre ideas has "raised the concerns of some that he will not focus enough on treatment and prevention."

The concerns of some . . . *Who*, you ask? In nearly 1,000 overheated words, Marquis manages to cite only a single worried man. And that man is: retired Gen. Barry McCaffrey, the Clinton administration appointee whom John Walters would replace in the drug czar's office—and whose feckless service in that post Walters has several times subjected to gentlemanly but devastatingly accurate criticism.

It is most unusual for an outgoing, cabinet-rank federal official to campaign against his successor like this. McCaffrey should be ashamed of himself. And the *Times* should be ashamed for abetting him. ♦

Small-mindedness


Robert B. Reich

Little Guy Left in the Lurch

The final-paragraph kicker in Robert B. Reich's *Washington Post* op-ed piece last Monday urged Democrats to "stand up—loudly and clearly—for the little guy" during forthcoming congressional debates about health care policy. Which phrase, appearing in Reich's own words, was no doubt the *Post*'s ostensible justification for the headline it gave his essay. Still, running that headline directly under the famously short former Labor secretary's byline seems rather nasty, doesn't it? Maybe just a wee bit? ♦

Oh, Canada

There's hockey and beer. And there's snow. And driving with your lights on in broad daylight. And that guy who painted those beautiful pictures of beavers and moose. So who says our neighbors up north in Canada have no national identity worth preserving?

Not the hockey fans in cosmopolitan Vancouver and Edmonton, whose exercise in self-esteem it was last week to roundly boo *The Star-Spangled Banner* before NHL playoff games involving (ultimately victorious) teams from visiting American cities. And not that group of igloo patriots up in arms about another, even graver Yankee threat to

Scrapbook

Canadian independence. Seems we've polluted their national semen supply.

In 1999, a Canadian fertility-clinic client brought home her purchase of 100 percent, unadulterated Maple Leaf sperm. And promptly caught a venereal disease. Whereupon Health Canada imposed screening regulations so stringent that most clinics have since been forced to stop collecting local donations. To keep their storerooms stocked, instead, they now rely on a single, wholesale supplier. That would be an outfit called the Zytex Corporation.

Trouble is, the Zytex Corporation is located in Georgia. And Canadians have recently discovered that Georgia is in the United States.

"This sounds like a secret American plan to finally take over Canada," Canadian member of parliament Jason Kenney told the *Calgary Sun* on April 20. He seems to have been joking, but other people quoted in the same story were deadly serious. Should an infertile Canadienne make use of semen from . . . ugh, America? "It's one of the things that decides whether you're going to be patriotic or not," says Dr. Roger Pierson, past president of his country's Fertility and Andrology Society. "We're dependent on the Americans for so many things, why be dependent on them for sperm as well?"

Some Canadian health experts, like Jean Haase of the Hamilton (Ontario) Life Sciences Centre, are also concerned that exclusive reliance on Zytex-provided American semen might increase the incidence of accidental inbreeding.

Which is already a major problem in Canada, judging from their hockey fans. ♦

A-Paaling?

Press reports both here and in Taiwan indicate that Doug Paal, former NSC official in Bush I and Asian policy wonk, might be tapped to be the next head of the American Institute in Taiwan, the de facto U.S. ambassador to Taiwan.

This ought to please Beijing. Paal, one of the architects of the post-Tiananmen Square "let's put this behind us" policy, has consistently counseled giving Taiwan only the most minimal defense assistance, lest we offend Chinese nationalist sensibilities. But, then, maybe it would be good for Paal to be head of AIT. Nothing like sitting in Taipei, facing several hundred Chinese ballistic missiles aimed your way, to straighten out one's views of what's really provocative and what's not. ♦

Book Notes

The Scrapbook is pleased to report the publication of a fine new book by Weekly Standard contributor and weapons-technology expert Henry Sokolski. *Best of Intentions* is a significant work of scholarship: the first comprehensive history of American efforts to stop the global spread of strategic weapons capabilities since World War II. Any self-respecting grown-up will want to buy a copy immediately. ♦

Casual

My Left Ear

My ears are unreliable. Oh, they receive sound and transmit the appropriate signals to my brain just fine, but they're undiscriminating: They don't filter out unworthy sounds. Unlike my eyes, which at least can close when something ugly appears, my ears let in just about anything. They pick up the bang and rattle of traffic when I'm walking down the street, overhear my colleagues' phone calls when I'm in the office, listen to the Muzak when I'm shopping. If I'm there, they're hearing stuff.

It's frustrating. Highbrow aspirations beckon me to be the kind of person who knows a Bach when he hears one, but my ears won't go along. Constantly they thwart me. While I was driving in the car the other day, a song came on the radio that seemed not half bad. Imagine my embarrassment when the singer turned out to be none other than Jennifer Lopez, J. Lo, former sidekick to the acquitted Puff Daddy. And as for the music that sticks around for reruns, playing over in my head or being hummed for the express purpose of annoying the people I'm close to, only the worst will do. I can spend Sunday afternoon listening to Mozart, but come Monday morning, my audio track will be a playground for fragments of a soda pop jingle I heard for ten seconds following the traffic report.

Plainly, my ears have a mind of their own. And lately, they've thought very highly of music written or performed by lefties. I'm not talking here about people who voted Clinton/Gore. I'm talking verifiable tree huggers, socialists, and Woody Guthrie worshippers. I first noticed the trend after listening to a compact disc of protest music my sister had come up with to tweak me about our longstanding political differences. At first, the album, *Don't Feed the Corporations* by Jonny Hahn, had seemed merely funny because it was so bad. Mr. Hahn, I'd imagined, was some un-shampooed vegan who hadn't gotten around to refilling his Zoloft prescription. Only, he had the last laugh. A week later, I was still humming his anti-lumber panic attack: "Of all the species / to be displaced / one just might be / the human race!"

Come to think of it, it isn't only lately that my ears have been politically unreliable. Long ago, when I was a teenager, I saw the English socialist folksinger Billy Bragg live at the Beacon Theater. Bragg had been touring to promote his album *Workers Playtime*, which featured songs like "Tender Comrade" and "Waiting for the Great Leap Forwards." AIDS awareness being all the rage then, he threw condoms into the audience. (This was way before I'd even heard of progressive types offering them in candy dishes and fish bowls.) At the concert, I bought a cool T-shirt with the *Workers Playtime* album cover on the front. A few months later, someone broke into my school locker and stole it.

Bragg's music isn't all commie agitprop. Much of it is your basic nonrevolutionary, pro-labor, protest music. Which, when it doesn't sound corny, sounds didactic and tedious. Not even the *Village Voice*'s rock critic defends Bragg's pro-union hymns on musical grounds: "There's not enough popular music for lefties as it is; why scare anyone away?"

Needless to say, my ears keep perfect audio files of Bragg classics like "There Is Power In A Union" and "Ideology." His best songs, however, are sappy-sweet love poems about the working class, of which Bragg, who was once a goatherd, is certainly a member. "Greetings to the New Brunette," a favorite of mine, contains at least one unimprovable blue-collar couplet: "I celebrate my love for you / with a pint of beer and a new tattoo." To their credit, my ears keep good copies of this heartfelt ode. It's a piece that is apt to spring to mind almost full-blown when I'm sitting on a train and have nothing to read.

Quite a bit of commercial and critical success has come Bragg's way in the last few years. He and an American band called Wilco together were given access to a trove of unpublished Woody Guthrie lyrics. Almost all of the music for these songs died with the Okie singer-songwriter and Communist party activist. But from the collaboration of one English socialist, one American rock band, and one dead folksinger came two very fine, and very fun, albums called *Mermaid Avenue* and *Mermaid Avenue Vol. II*, named after the street in Brooklyn where Guthrie lived for many years after the war. Needless to say, the songs are aural catnip to my leftish ears.

I just wish I could stop singing the campaign song Guthrie wrote for Stetson Kennedy, a 1950 independent write-in candidate for senator from Florida.

David Skinner

Correspondence

Torie's Story

Fred Barnes apparently can't get over the fact his buddy Tom DeFrank didn't get an appointment he wanted at the Pentagon, nor that nearly half the senior staff at the White House daily meetings are women nor, for that matter, does he know the meaning of the word "gender" ("The Bush Quotas," April 16/April 23).

All that seems to entitle him to smear the person who got the job his pal coveted, who just happens to be one of the most competent and experienced women in Washington, Victoria Clarke. (If Barnes knew anything about her, he'd call her—as everyone does who knows her—"Torie." I guess he'll next write a baseball column comparing Henry Louis Gehrig with George Herman Ruth.)

Hard to believe Barnes would take up all that space demeaning a similarly appointed *man* with Barnes's enumerated drawbacks—like O'Neill, Evans, and Ashbrook; i.e., no experience in the field, Bush seeking only diversity, other white males treated shabbily, same guidelines as those of the hated Clinton. Torie Clarke's record includes press spokesperson for former President Bush at the White House and the '92 campaign, the same job for Sen. John McCain and for the Carla Hills-led U.S. Trade Representative's Office, as well as successful stints at the National Cable Television Association and (I must add) as my boss as general manager of Hill & Knowlton in Washington.

Yet she comes across to Barnes as in the job at the Department of Defense only through "quotas" and "set-asides" for women, and *maybe* qualified to be spokeswoman "for many federal agencies," but not the voice of all that machismo at the Pentagon? Come on, guys—get a life!

Frank Mankiewicz
Vice Chairman, Hill & Knowlton
Washington, DC

Unfunny Lady

Does Barbra Streisand realize that some of us voted for George W. Bush ("The Streisand Democrats," Mike Murphy, April 16/April 23)? Can she come to grips with the fact that we don't all live vicariously through Hollywood or follow her thought patterns—believing that by chance, Bush fell into the chair of the president? Can she not acknowledge that Bush won more electoral votes than Gore?

I am not insulted by her comments. Quite the contrary, Barbra confirmed the reasons why I have run from the left. I am now strengthened in my resolve, headed in the right direction, and I thank Streisand for reminding me and others that there are still some lost souls out there, scared and confused.

Patricia Kavanagh
Marysville, WA

Straussians & Sopranos

Your readers may get the impression that we Straussians are a humorless bunch, quick to take offense at anyone who treats our eponymous master with less reverence than we do, from two letters to the editor published in your April 9 issue.

In her review of *The Sopranos* ("Mob Mentality," March 26), Melinda Ledden Sidak attributed to Tony Soprano's being "a secret disciple of Leo Strauss" the fact that he tells his son to keep his teenage atheism to himself. Since this is something fathers have been telling their sons since time immemorial, I didn't find Sidak's attempt at humor especially successful; but it was hardly offensive. (If America didn't discover the virtue of the white lie until Leo Strauss showed the way, then truly he was a great benefactor.)

My chief reaction to Sidak's review was that she accomplished something novel: She quoted an academic writer in order to show how abstract and removed from common sense his language is, but inadvertently made him sound intriguing: I find compelling Paul Rahe's suggestion that *The Godfather* reveals a conflict between "contract and friendship" as the basis of political life; Sidak's mockery of it falls even flatter than her joke about Strauss.

I suggest that Sidak watch *The Godfather* again and that some of my fellow Straussians lighten up.

Peter J. Hansen
Chicago, IL

the weekly Standard

Against Human Cloning

Last week, the Brownback-Weldon bill to prohibit human cloning was introduced on Capitol Hill. And the arguments against it are . . . well, as it turns out, there really aren't many arguments against a ban on manufacturing human beings like gingerbread men from a cookie cutter.

It's true, of course, that some propositions resembling arguments for cloning have been advanced in recent years. But under scrutiny, these ostensible arguments quickly dissolve into a fog of vague, unfocused *feelings* about science, sex, and the human condition.

Take, for example, the claim that to prohibit cloning would be to prevent a grief-stricken mother and father from replacing their dead daughter with a new, genetically identical daughter who will somehow erase the loss of their first daughter. You don't have to delve very far into philosophical questions of identity and existence to realize that the notion is so confused and self-contradictory, it won't even bear the weight of its own expression. But the point of invoking those grieving parents is not to present an argument. The point is to express a feeling: Death ought not to sting, the grave should not have the victory, the ones we love must come back to life. And so cloning enthusiasts look to science—as to a god—to wipe away our tears, to assuage the eternal pity, and to console human grief.

Or take, for another example, the claim that a ban on human cloning would be a blow against *Roe* v. *Wade*. Some antiabortion activists do make this argument. They say everything bad begins with a disrespect for human life: The unfettered right to abortion grants us a Promethean power of life and death over our unborn offspring that naturally leads to practices like cloning. Thus, the argument goes, we can succeed in banning cloning only by winning—today—the battle over abortion. Many supporters of cloning actually make the same argument, although they run it in reverse to frighten off liberal Democrats: A ban on cloning, they warn, would mean the loss of "a woman's right to choose"; America can thus guarantee the full abortion license only by allowing cloning to proceed unhindered.

The only way to stop human reproductive cloning is to ban all human cloning. There is no middle ground here, not merely because the principles involved do not admit it, but because the actual practice grants no room for compromise.

Our fellow pro-lifers may well be right that there is an underlying logic linking these issues. But the truth is—and this is the vital political point—we can ban cloning without touching *Roe* v. *Wade*. Indeed, the debate over cloning shouldn't be forced back into the well-worn grooves of the abortion debate. The issue of cloning offers the possibility of some interesting realignments in American politics. This is an issue, after all, on which radical environmentalists and religious evangelicals find themselves in agreement—which would be impossible if the right-to-choose equals right-to-clone argument were definitive. But, then, this was never meant to be a genuine argument. It is meant instead to express a feeling—a feeling that radical individualism, sexual liberation, and modern science have all somehow combined to bring us to this point, and to reject any piece of it now, even the reproduction of human beings by cloning, is to return to the Dark Ages.

And take, for a final example, the claim that a law against cloning human beings will make us forfeit poten-

tial advances in medicine. Who could be opposed to experiments that might lead to a cure for cancer, a fully compatible liver for transplanting, a genetically engineered solution to diabetes? But examined more closely, the hoped-for medical advances turn out to be merely examples of things that researchers promise they will try to find, if only we leave them alone to play with human cloning as much as they like.

The manipulation of stem cells obtained from cloned embryos is asserted to be necessary for the desired medical breakthroughs. And the use of these putative therapeutic miracles in pro-cloning arguments seems to have survived unscathed the recent evidence that it is possible to obtain the required stem cells not from embryos but from adults' blood, bone marrow, brain tissue, and even fat cells. It has survived unscathed, for that matter, the disastrous initial results of stem-cell treatment (in which the cells, derived from embryos, went wild and began producing not merely brain tissue but other tissue as well when introduced into the brains of some of their new hosts).

But, then, the promise of unlimited medical advance was never really an argument for keeping cloning legal. It is a feeling, a sentiment, masquerading as an argument—and perhaps the most insidious of them all. A vague belief in the capacity of human beings to obtain any end through beneficent science has oddly joined a vague belief in the *in*capacity of human beings to halt the march of science or decide what those ends should be. Once we add in the thousands of university laboratories anxious for the acclaim of scientific breakthroughs and the dozens of large pharmaceutical companies hungry for new technologies, the use of cloning simply feels like the future: unavoidable, inexorable, and predetermined. As well oppose the rising of tomorrow's sun, we are counseled, as try to halt the arrival of human cloning.

Yet halt it we can, and should—for reasons compellingly presented by such thinkers as Leon Kass and Gilbert Meilaender. Those reasons range from the extraordinarily high incidence of deformity among cloned animals, to the familial confusion that will be engendered by reproducing oneself as one's own child, to the likely psychological damage to the person created by cloning, and, most fundamentally, to the fact that moving from the begetting of our children to the manufacture of our descendants is a radical and perhaps irreparable dehumanization.

American politics being what it is, there will be an attempt to find a "compromise" on this issue, as there was when Congress last considered it in 1998. The favored form of compromise prohibits "reproductive" cloning while allowing "therapeutic" cloning to continue unabated. But a ban solely on reproductive uses only *looks* like a compromise. It's actually a victory for the pro-cloning forces—and everyone opposed to the onslaught of human cloning must reject it out of hand. For what this "compromise" would mean is a license to practice all the cloning a scientist may desire, while vainly attempting to prevent the end toward which that practice clearly aims: the live birth of cloned human beings.

Part of the problem is the question of intention. Since all embryonic clones are made in the same way, we cannot know the reason for which an embryo was created until it is either destroyed in research or implanted in a womb. Of course, once it has been implanted, a law against reproductive cloning would clearly have been violated. But there is at that point no possible redress, short of forced abortions or a federal pregnancy police determining how each pregnancy in America came about.

Then, too, there is the problem of the status of the embryos created by cloning. For those who are pro-life, of course, the embryo and the fetus are already members of the human race, and it is wrong simply to destroy them. But even the federal directives for biological research, which do not admit the personhood of embryos, nonetheless demand that they be treated with "profound respect." And a law banning only reproductive cloning would produce, for the first time in federal statutes, a class of embryos it is a crime *not* to destroy, a class of embryos that must *not* be treated with profound respect.

Recent events in England are instructive. On April 19, health secretary Alan Milburn announced, to great fanfare in the British press, that Britain would shortly become the first country in the world to ban human cloning. But all he really meant was that Britain would prohibit reproduction by cloning, while continuing to promote the actual practice of cloning by encouraging laboratories to perfect their techniques. It was as polished an example of studied disingenuousness and blatant obfuscation as one will ever see. Four days later, the head of Britain's embryology authority quietly announced that scientists who had gone abroad to do embryo research illegal in Britain could return to "continuing acclaim."

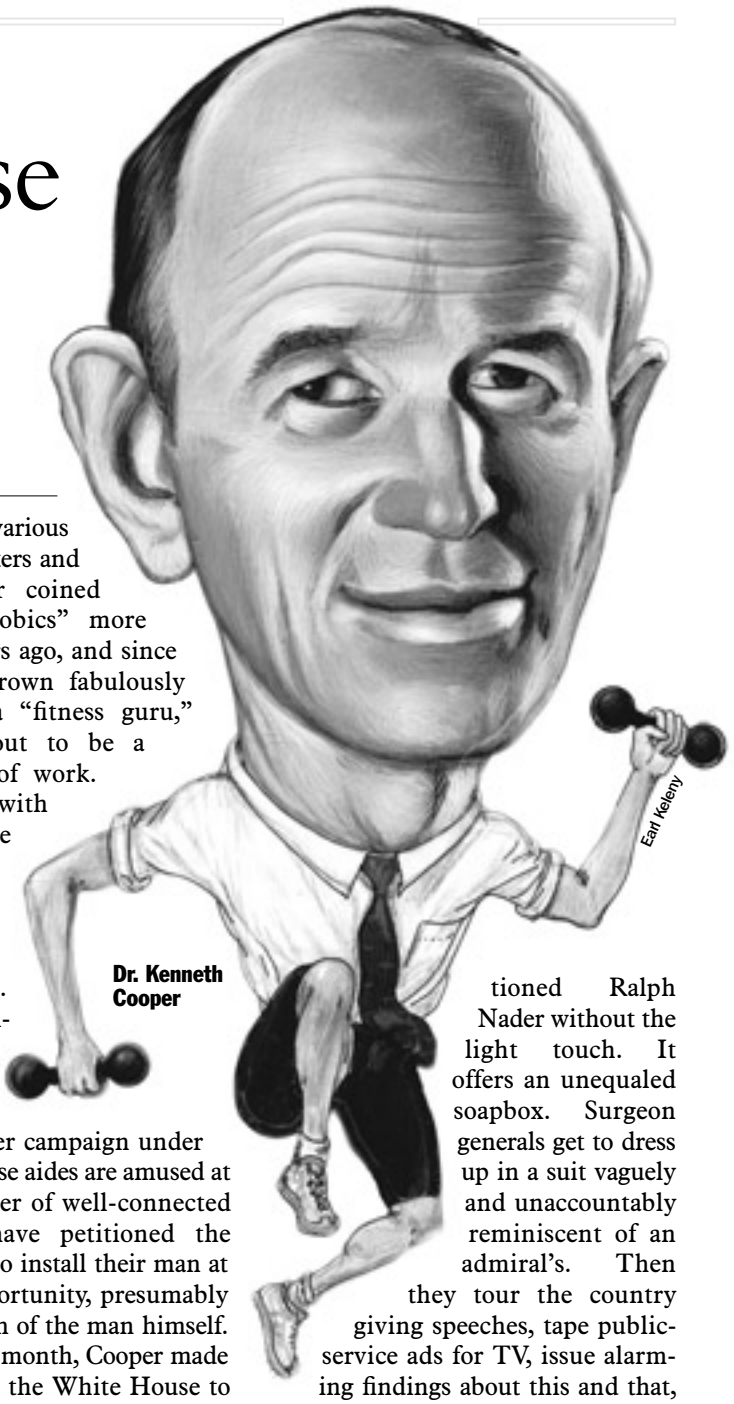
For America, the lesson is clear: The only way to stop human reproductive cloning is to ban all human cloning, and to ban it now. There is no middle ground here, not merely because the principles involved do not admit it, but because the actual practice grants no room for compromise. To allow human cloning for medical and biological research is necessarily to allow—in the very near future—cloning for the reproduction of human beings.

—J. Bottum, for the Editors

Bush's Exercise Guru

Will our next surgeon general make us all fit as fiddles?

BY ANDREW FERGUSON



Dr. Kenneth Cooper

DAVID SATCHER, the United States surgeon general, has another ten months to serve in his term, and President Bush has said he'll let this particular Clinton appointee—by all accounts a competent and inoffensive public servant—run out the clock. Even so, all of Washington has been buzzing lately with names of his possible successor.

Maybe that's overstating things. "Buzzing" is too strong a word. And it's not all of Washington, just a tiny bit of it. And in fact there's only one name: Kenneth H. Cooper, M.D., of North Dallas, Texas, founder and head of the Cooper Aerobics Center, the Cooper Institute, the Cooper Fitness Center, Cooper Ventures, Inc., the Cooper Wellness Program, the Cooper Clinic, and Cooper Concepts, Inc., and developer and chief salesman of the Cooper Complete Joint Maintenance Formula and Cooper Complete Multivitamins, as well as author of *Dr. Kenneth H. Cooper's Antioxidant Revolution* and more than fifteen other books, some of which do not have his name in the title.

Even if other possible candidates surface before next year, when a formal nomination of Satcher's replacement will have to be made, Dr. Cooper must be judged the man to beat by the many medical professionals who would claw and hump and cat-scratch their way into the nation's most prestigious public-health office. For more than a decade Dr. Cooper has served as personal physician to George W. Bush, who has been a regular visitor to the doctor's various eponymous centers and clinics. Cooper coined the term "aerobics" more than thirty years ago, and since then he has grown fabulously successful as a "fitness guru," which turns out to be a lucrative line of work. He moves with ease among the wealthy and powerful in Texas, and he really, really wants the job. Even now, almost a year before a possible vacancy, there is a Cooper campaign under way. White House aides are amused at the large number of well-connected Texans who have petitioned the administration to install their man at the earliest opportunity, presumably at the instigation of the man himself. And earlier this month, Cooper made his own visit to the White House to make his case.

Kenneth Cooper as surgeon general is an idea plump with possibilities—horrifying and fascinating all at once. The position was originally conceived, not long after the Civil War, as a real job, with administrative responsibilities for the Marine Hospital System and later the Public Health Service. The office retains some of those duties, but since the release in 1964 of the famous report on the dangers of smoking, its occupants have more often acted as Nag to the Nation, Society's Scold, a government-sanctioned Ralph Nader without the light touch. It offers an unequaled soapbox. Surgeon generals get to dress up in a suit vaguely and unaccountably reminiscent of an admiral's. Then they tour the country giving speeches, tape public-service ads for TV, issue alarming findings about this and that, and generally ride their hobby horses until the poor things foam at the mouth and buckle from exhaustion. The effects can be for good or ill. Luther Terry's 1964 report on smoking probably kept many people from getting sick, for example, but Joycelyn Elders's unfortunate obsession with sex education gave her a reputation as an advocate of onanism. Like onanism needed an advocate.

Dr. Cooper already has an entire stable of hobby horses and is already a scold—one whose influence has been enormous. His first book, *Aerobics*,

Andrew Ferguson is a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

came out in 1968 and settled at the top of the bestseller list for many months, just as health enthusiasts, anti-smoking activists, teetotalers, nutritionists, therapists, and other baby-boom reformers were placing Americans on their forced march to human perfection. Before the book, exercise-for-exercise's-sake was commonly considered an eccentricity. And now—well, the eccentrics are the people who decline to don tank tops, short-shorts, and $250 sneakers and hyperventilate in front of strangers. The shower of flop sweat that hit you as you passed a wheezing jogger at lunch hour is directly traceable to the "fitness revolution" that Dr. Cooper spawned.

There's no evidence that he's a charlatan. Over thirty years he's amassed a vast storehouse of data through his clinics, and as a serious researcher he trims and alters his message as the findings change. He once counseled against weight training, and is now one of its greatest advocates. Originally a booster of unlimited exercise, he now worries that some training regimes can lead to cancer and other unpleasantness. Once indifferent to vitamins, he now does everything short of stuffing them into his patients. (And of course he sells them now, too.)

He's not a charlatan but he is a fanatic, with a peculiar ability to instill his fanaticism in others. Though the details change, his message is unvarying: No matter how much you're doing to become reasonably healthy, it's not enough. Having got everybody exercising, he's still not satisfied. His favored medium of communication is fear. If you aren't worried about your health now, you will be after reading one of his books. "Revealing the Dark Side of Oxygen," reads a typical subhead in *Antioxidant Revolution*. Oxygen has a dark side? His theme here is "THE ENEMY WITHIN: You can't see them. You can't feel them. . . . But make no mistake: Your heart, your lungs, your blood vessels—all your organs and tissues—are under constant attack by wide-ranging teams of biological renegades. Even as you hold this book in your hands, no part of your body is sheltered from the destructive assaults of these molecular outlaws."

The way to wage war (the military metaphor recurs) against all these assaults from all these chemical SWAT teams is not only through almost constant exercise but also through the ceaseless monitoring of every physiological process that scientific instruments can trace. Resting heart rates, active heart rates, "good" cholesterol counts, "bad" cholesterol counts, blood pressure levels, waist-to-hip ratios, anti-oxidant and free-radical levels, basal metabolic rates, body mass indices—once you've measured them all in sequence, it's time to start measuring them all over again. A typical Cooper Clinic exam takes several hours and sometimes extends for days.

In the pre-Cooper era, before exercise and robust good health became marks of personal virtue, this sort of thing would have suggested a rather too-great attention to oneself, an unseemly obsession bordering on narcissism, and likewise an unwillingness to recognize that no matter how precise one's scientific instruments and how innovative and relentless one's exercise, one is, after all, going to die anyway. I'm not sure it would be terribly pleasant to live in a country with an overabundance of such persons. It's disconcerting enough to consider that our president may be one of them.

Of course, we're halfway there already. Do-it-yourself blood pressure machines have become so ubiquitous you can't duck into a drugstore to buy a pack of smokes without tripping over one. Dr. Cooper, a man of considerable charm and force of personality, is poised to take us the rest of the way there, and probably will, if given the surgeon general's soapbox—and the sailor suit too. The harangues will be fierce, the guilt-tripping ferocious. Will there be anyone left, any dissident non-healthist, who will have the nerve to raise a shaky hand and ask, "Can we bring back the masturbation lady, please?" ♦

Israel's Friend in the White House

Surprise, it's George W. Bush.

BY FRED BARNES

On April 19, President Bush traveled to the Capitol to deliver what was supposed to be a routine speech. The occasion was the Days of Remembrance, an annual observance to recall the Holocaust and its victims. Bush's speech lasted only a few minutes, but it had two noteworthy sentences in which he linked Jewish "defiance and oppression" from the Exodus and the Holocaust to the defense of Israel today. "That [Jewish] story continued in the founding of the state of Israel," he said. "That story continues in the defense of the state of Israel."

This was the first time a president had made the connection between the survival of Israel and the Holocaust. Yet practically no one in the media took notice. Nor did Bush's speechwriters realize they'd put historic words in the president's mouth. Bush didn't appear to know himself. True, the sentiment that Israel's existence and defense are related to the peril of Jews in the 1930s and 1940s may be common among Israelis and supporters of Israel. But this was a Republican president named Bush. His expression of that sentiment was taken as perfectly natural, and that's the point. A pro-Israel comment, or action, by Bush is now unremarkable.

Is Bush really pro-Israel? Karl Rove, Bush's chief political strategist, says he is. Mike Gerson, the president's top speechwriter, thinks he is. Certainly Bush tilts in Israel's favor far more than his father or Bill Clinton when they were president. Bush senior disliked and distrusted Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Shamir and treated Israel as the chief impediment to peace in the Middle East. Bush junior and the current prime minister, Ariel Sharon, get along well. Clinton pressured Israel to make sweeping concessions to the Palestinians and seldom criticized their leader, Yasser Arafat. Bush has zinged Arafat both privately and publicly for spurning a peace settlement with Israel and for promoting violence. He has been reluctant to lean on Israel and has said he won't attempt to "force a peace settlement in the Middle East."

Bush has taken one important step and several smaller ones to aid Israel. He quickly repudiated the proposals, mostly concessions by Israel, that Clinton had advanced in peace talks. He accepted the policy of Sharon that violence against Israel must cease before talks resume. To punctuate that, Bush declared at a March 29 press conference that Arafat should "stop the violence." He said this was "a signal" that Arafat should hear "loud and clear." At the U.N., the United States vetoed an anti-Israel resolution in the Security Council for the first time in five years and voted against another before the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva. When Israel retaliated against Syrian military sites in Lebanon, the White House blamed Hezbollah, not Israel, for the incident. The lone criticism of Israel came from Secretary of State Colin Powell after Israel sent troops into Gaza to attack Palestinian mortars.

Bush's relationship with Sharon is warm. The president has pointedly not invited Arafat to the White House, but Sharon was the first visitor from the Middle East, ahead of both President Mubarak of Egypt and King Abdullah II of Jordan. Bush has talked to Sharon by phone at least three times. And while he and Sharon aren't close friends, Bush has been "impressed" by him, according to a White House official. Sharon was one of the few foreign leaders Bush knew when he became president. Sharon took him on a helicopter ride over Israel when Bush and a group of Republicans toured the country in December 1998. The State Department advised Bush not to fly with Sharon over the West Bank, but he went anyway.

That trip played a large role in creating Bush's friendly attitude toward Israel. "It was really an extraordinary experience," says an aide whom Bush briefed later. Bush found Israel to be a "deeply religious" country. He also "came back understanding with absolute clarity Israel's precarious security situation, strategically, geographically, militarily, and politically," the aide said. Bush still talks vividly about Israel's security problems.

Bush has frequently recounted episodes from the trip, including to aides since he became president. When he went to the Western Wall in Jerusalem, a small crowd yelled "Bush, Bush, Bush" as he departed. "It wasn't about me," Bush later told an aide. "It was about America. I represented America to them." In any case, Bush was touched. At a dinner on the final day of his trip, a member of Bush's group recited a psalm from memory. It ended with a reference to "Jew and Gentile, hand in hand."

What all this adds up to, for the moment at least, is the most pro-Israel president since Ronald Reagan. It's too early to know exactly how this will play out over Bush's term. But one of the encouraging signs, from Israel's viewpoint, was the visit to the White House by Mubarak. The Egyptian president was told he hadn't done enough to restrain Arafat and contain Palestinian violence against Israel. He was urged to join with other Arab leaders and pressure Arafat. Mubarak didn't react kindly to the advice. But he may have to get used to it. ♦

Fred Barnes is executive editor of The Weekly Standard.

Too Taxing for Reporters?

The press is dropping the ball on the tax story.

BY RICHARD W. RAHN

On *Fox News Sunday* a few weeks ago, Senate minority leader Tom Daschle was twice asked a simple question that he refused to answer: "What do you think the maximum income tax rate should be for any American?" This question is at the core of the debate about the structure of the tax cut, yet very few reporters have asked members of Congress to answer it.

George W. Bush has often said that no American should have to pay more than a third of his income in taxes. Public opinion polls have consistently shown that most Americans believe that no one should have to pay more than approximately 25 percent of his income to the government.

The Kennedy tax cuts in the early 1960s are correctly considered a great success, and are given credit for much of the economic boom of that decade. The press, Democrats, and even Republicans seem to have forgotten that the Kennedy tax cuts were put in place at a time when the government was running a deficit and the debt was a larger share of GDP than it is now. The Kennedy tax cuts were, relative to the size of the economy, about three times larger than the cuts that Bush proposes. Most interesting, in today's parlance, they benefited the rich much more. In the Kennedy plan, the top rate was cut by 23 percent, versus only 17 percent in the Bush plan. The Kennedy cuts were proportional, while the Bush plan cuts the bottom rate by 33 percent, giving a greater benefit to low income workers, and actually increasing the progressivity of the income tax.

In light of the history of the Kennedy rate cuts, why is the press not asking those who say the tax cut is too big to give supporting evidence? And what about the Democrats who say the Bush proposal is too beneficial to the rich: Didn't most Democrats support the Kennedy plan, which was much more beneficial to the rich? Could we be seeing political bias, or is it just ignorance of economic history?

Many of those who argue that we cannot afford tax cuts often confuse tax rates and tax revenues. If tax rates are lower, individuals and businesses have more incentive to produce and invest, which means that more people obtain jobs and pay taxes. Taxes from the additional job holders offset some of the decrease in revenue caused by the rate reduction. Some who have argued for a smaller tax cut have made the conceptual error of assuming that economic and employment growth would be as strong with higher tax rates as they would be with lower tax rates. Economic models that include the incentive effects of the rate changes in the tax plan show revenue feedbacks of hundreds of billions of dollars (which means the actual revenue loss would be much smaller), but few in the press have bothered either to report or explain this important fact.

Those who say that we cannot afford the tax cut should be required to show that the government programs they want to use the money for are more cost effective and add more to the social welfare than leaving the money in the private sector for the taxpayer to spend or save. Again, it is rare to see a member of the media press these points.

Almost daily, reporters say or write that big deficits cause inflation. The statement is both theoretically and empirically untrue. Inflation is caused by the money supply growing faster than the supply of goods and services. The Federal Reserve controls the growth rate of the money supply. The growth in the supply of

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goods and services is greatly influenced by tax and regulatory impediments on productive activity. That is why, following the Reagan tax cuts, we were able to have record drops in the rate of inflation and interest rates, a very large increase in real incomes for most Americans, and a major decline in the unemployment rate, despite increasing deficits. Most recently we have been experiencing a sharp drop in economic growth, increasing unemployment, and a bump in inflation, despite record budget surpluses. These facts are rarely reported.

It can be dangerous for a government to have an excessively large debt, and there are also problems when a country like the United States has no debt. The non-business mainstream press has almost uniformly treated debt and deficits as bad, and surpluses and debt reduction as unambiguously good. Such uncritical reporting and advocacy can lead to very bad and potentially disastrous policies.

Reporters do not have to be trained economists to ask the right questions and get their stories right. Reporters do face the problem of knowing which economists are sound, but fortunately any who care to can easily check the track records of most public policy economists by researching their articles through the years. The objective evidence shows that most of the supply-siders got it pretty much right, and most of the Keynesians were pretty much wrong over the past two decades. All too often, laziness and a left-leaning ideology in much of the mainstream press have led to sloppy economic reporting, which has led to sloppy economic policy, which has led to lower economic growth.

I, for one, would really like to know what each member of Congress thinks is the maximum "fair" tax rate, and the ideal size of government (as a percent of GDP) and why. If a member of Congress cannot answer, how can he or she responsibly vote for any tax or spending bill? This is pretty basic, yet few journalists even try to get us the answers. ♦

Let's Not Go Dutch

Same-sex marriage is the latest export from the Low Countries. **BY DAVID ORGON COOLIDGE**

IT WAS A HISTORIC MOMENT, to be sure, and carefully stage-managed for public consumption. Sunday, April 1, was the day that same-sex marriages were to become legal in the Netherlands. The occasion had to be done up right. Henk Krol, editor of *Gay Krant*, Amsterdam's gay newspaper, and the gay rights group COC placed an ad in the paper seeking couples to be the first to marry, with the whole world watching.

Sure enough, four model couples were found: six gay men and two lesbians, including a nurse and a publisher, a social worker and a notary with a baby. According to the *Washington Post*, each of the couples agreed to "a pre-marriage news conference with city officials and a party afterward at an Amsterdam gay disco."

As midnight, March 31, neared, Amsterdam's town hall was ready to roll. The city council chamber was packed with family, friends, international correspondents, onlookers, activists, and public officials. The chamber was bedecked with red and pink roses. In the foyer, pink champagne and a shocking pink cake decorated with six grooms and two brides awaited the newlyweds. A few protesters stood outside.

Job Cohen, mayor of Amsterdam, is a man with a knack for being where the action is. Less than two years ago, he was the Dutch minister of justice who drafted the "opening-up of marriage" law. In his new role as mayor, he would be the first to implement it.

As the clock struck midnight, the ceremony began. Agence France Presse reported that the six men were "sporting either jackets or leather vests," while the two women were "dressed in traditional wedding gowns." The four couples held hands and exchanged vows. The mayor, officiating, offered a few words: "There are two reasons to rejoice. You are celebrating your marriage, and you are also celebrating your right to be married." He added, "A page in the history books has been written. You love one another, and you can now get married. What is more normal than that?"

Then the mayor banged his gavel and declared, "I pronounce you united in the bonds of marriage," and the couples kissed and embraced, to warm applause. They exchanged rings and headed for the pink champagne, the interviews, and the disco club.

Henk Krol was ecstatic. "This is something unique that we have in the Netherlands," he told Agence France Presse. "It's nice to see it's becoming a good export product."

Gay marriages, writes Gordon Cramb at the London *Financial Times*, are "another notch for the Netherlands—the country of decriminalized cannabis, brothels and euthanasia—in its record as a society of personal freedom." But this way of putting it gives the impression that the Dutch are a bunch of wild individualists. In fact, they are remarkably conformist.

This paradoxical quality of Dutch society has long been noted. The Netherlands is the most densely populated country in Europe, and it has always been under pressure, some-

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times from invaders, often from the sea. In such circumstances, every neighbor is a member of the team, regardless of his beliefs. What he does on his own time is his own business, so long as he also does his social duty: works hard and is a decent neighbor and citizen.

Because of its location and history, the Netherlands has often been a place of refuge for religious dissenters, including the Pilgrims before they set sail for America and the philosopher Baruch Spinoza. But this is not because the Dutch are "tolerant" in the washed-out sense we think of today. Dutch politics, which has strong Calvinist roots, has always had a moralistic quality. It's just that pluralism is part of what the Dutch are moralistic about.

Prior to the 1960s, Dutch society was deeply divided and passionately pluralistic. The Calvinists, Catholics, Liberals, and Socialists were ideological opponents, and ran their own schools, media, youth leagues, and so on. Yet their politics always presupposed coexistence, both as a matter of fact and as a matter of principle.

Not surprisingly, then, the Calvinist-Catholic coalition that governed the Netherlands for most of the twentieth century—known since 1980 as the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA)—was reluctant to regulate homosexual behavior. Although the official policy was one of disapproval, in practice the government treated homosexual behavior as better left to private and social judgment than to legal regulation. Each community could decide for itself how to respond. While this looked to the outsider like laxity, it was in some cases morally severe.

The 1960s changed all this, as they changed so much in many countries. The cultural wave glorifying personal autonomy broke down many of the traditional ideological divides and began to create a Dutch politics in which differences of belief were increasingly muted. Although the CDA continued to govern Holland until 1994, it suffered many political fractures, and its leaders adopted many positions typical of European social democracy.

One of these was support for Registered Partnerships, a new legal status for couples, regardless of sex, that would include many of the benefits of marriage. CDA intellectuals used the slogan "1 + 1 = *Samen*" (1 + 1 = Relationship) to affirm that relationships, which everybody needs, are good and should be encouraged by the law, while sexuality should be regarded as private. Most of the CDA also supported the 1992 Equal Treatment Law, which added "sexual orientation" to the list of categories to be monitored by a national Equal Treatment Commission.

Not surprisingly, some Dutch legal scholars have suggested that "family law" should be rechristened "relationship law."

By 1994, the CDA was politically exhausted, and encountered the first of several stinging defeats at the polls. A new government of Socialists and Liberals took power, and same-sex "marriage" was part of its electoral program. In short order, the majority in Parliament was calling on the government to introduce a bill. A commission was created which recommended the legalization of same-sex "marriage." In 1998, Parliament passed a Registered Partnership law with overwhelming support, but the proponents of same-sex "marriage" still weren't satisfied.

When new elections were held, the share of seats won by the CDA and the smaller Christian parties dwindled further. On July 8, 1999, Minister of Justice Cohen introduced two bills, to legalize same-sex marriage and allow the adoption of children by same-sex couples. At hearings in the fall, protests by members of Parliament, the Dutch Catholic Bishops, and others went unheeded, and the bills were sent forward.

In September 2000, the lower chamber of Parliament held three days of debate. Most CDA members protested that they had supported Registered Partnerships, but this was going too far. Several openly gay CDA members, however, spoke eloquently of their struggles and announced their support for the marriage bill. Other members from the smaller Christian parties declared that they had voted against Registered Partnerships precisely to forestall this end.

On September 12, the lower chamber passed the marriage bill by the huge margin of 107-33, and on December 19, after several days of debate, the upper chamber passed it 49-26. As the press noted, only "religious parties" opposed it.

So what does the word "marriage" mean in the Netherlands now? It would appear to be the most highly regulated of several forms of intimate partnership available under Dutch law. The two others, which carry fewer benefits and regulations, are Registered Partnerships and Cohabitation Contracts. In addition, of course, one can always carry on a relationship without any legal sanction. So the Dutch have created a kind of sliding scale for relationships, in which the distinction between marital and non-marital unions—fundamental to the law of every other country—has been blurred. Not surprisingly, some Dutch legal scholars have suggested that "family law" should be re-christened "relationship law."

Another way of putting it is that the official position of the Netherlands is now that sex differences are legally irrelevant when it comes to marriage and children. And no institution in Dutch society except houses of worship (narrowly understood) can act on the belief that sex differences *are* relevant to marriage and children. For to act on such beliefs would be to engage in a discriminatory practice. In this way, what began as a policy of "tolerance" and "inclusion" ends up marginalizing dissenters.

But, so what? Who cares if the Dutch legalize same-sex marriage, decriminalize pot, legalize and unionize prostitution, or legalize euthanasia? In their typically moral-extremist way, the Dutch feel they are setting a great example for the world. Why not leave them to their illusions and future disappointments?

Well, because marriage is different. It's *portable*. Only one of two same-sex spouses has to be a Dutch citizen or resident national in order for the couple to marry in Holland. Indeed, one of the men married on April 1 is a German. A recent article from the *Australian* reports that two men are on their way to Holland to marry. One is Australian, the other has dual citizenship. They will return home to Australia and demand recognition for their marriage.

There are undoubtedly American same-sex couples who will get married in the Netherlands. For that matter, challenges to Canada's federal marriage statute are moving forward, and if the Supreme Court of Canada strikes down that law, Americans will be able to avoid a transatlantic flight and just drive over the border to get married.

When they return, they will seek recognition of their marriages. Somebody will have to decide whether to give it to them. Will it be their employer? A sympathetic town clerk? A city council that endorses same-sex marriage? An attorney general who decides not to contest the decision of such a clerk or council? Recognition could happen almost imperceptibly, without ever becoming a public issue. Or it might become a very hot public issue, accompanied by political turmoil.

It's true that 34 states and the U.S. Congress have passed Defense of Marriage acts or constitutional amendments designed to bar same-sex marriage. Presumably in these states, struggles for recognition of same-sex marriages will end up in litigation; groups like the Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders, the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, and the ACLU Lesbian and Gay Rights projects will see to that. Sooner or later, one of these cases will reach the U.S. Supreme Court, where five justices could take it upon themselves to legally redefine marriage for America.

Whatever one thinks of same-sex marriage, at least the Dutch have chosen it for themselves, through their normal democratic process. It would be doubly unfortunate if that same policy were forced on unwilling Americans by their courts. ♦

Michael Ramirez

The Use and Abuse of Heroes

What least becomes a national legend? The overwrought love of his fans.

By Noemie Emery

> It is our goal at the Reagan Legacy Project to preserve his legacy by encouraging governors, state legislators and the general public to become involved in the process of naming at least one significant landmark or institution after Reagan in all 50 states and 3,067 counties as well as in former communist countries. Currently there are 45 dedications; 42 in the United States and three internationally. We have most recently completed a campaign to have governors and state legislatures honor Reagan on his birthday. The campaign ended with 12 governors and 28 state legislatures honoring the former president. Nationally, we have also begun work on placing Ronald Reagan's portrait on the ten-dollar bill. In the states we have a variety of projects such as in South Carolina where Reagan's portrait will be hung in the State House chamber and in South Dakota where the highway that leads to Mt. Rushmore will soon bear the name of the Gipper.
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> *—Testimony before the House Resources Committee of Grover G. Norquist, Chairman, Ronald Reagan Legacy Project, on HR 452, the Ronald Reagan Memorial Act, March 8, 2001*

How do you not honor a national hero? Take an unassuming man with no passion for preening and make him and yourselves a little ridiculous by trying to plaster his name and his image all over the map. A handful of Reaganauts in Congress are now hyperventilating over the failure of the Washington Metro system to change its station signs to read *Reagan* National Airport. But they are not the only ideological camp followers making fools of themselves these days. To honor the memory of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the designers of his Washington memorial have taken a war leader and turned him into a victim. Then there was the fit thrown earlier this year by the Camelot faithful over the use of the voice and the words of John F. Kennedy in an ad promoting the Republican tax cut. Kennedy's brother called it "indecent"; Kennedy camp-followers called it a sacrilege; some called it robbing his grave.

These are all misguided efforts to build shrines to large people that in the end make them look smaller and cast a dim light on their followers. It is these, of course, who cause most of the trouble, seeing the past through the lens of the present, and using their heroes to fill their own needs. Too much adoration, of all the wrong kind, can wreak havoc with truth, and with history. What least becomes a national legend? The overwrought love of fans.

Consider the appalling sculptures at the Roosevelt memorial (FDR-PC to its critics), which show what can happen when a great man from an earlier era is strained through a Clintonesque filter. Gone is the president's cigarette holder, signature symbol of his buoyant vitality. Gone is wife Eleanor's little fur tippet, that female fashion rage of the 1940s which featured fox skins complete with their little fox paws and fox eyes. Gone, too, is the Commander in Chief; gone the atomic bomb that he helped to develop; gone the triumphant war machine he unleashed. There are no boys of Pointe du Hoc here, examples of courage and fortitude. In their place is a long queue of Depression victims, looking hopeless and hapless, waiting no doubt for a federal subsidy. With the nation he led reduced to a cluster of victims, only one thing remained to round out the picture—to make of its leader a victim himself, by unveiling the wheelchair he always kept carefully hidden. The chair is less bad, though, than the FDR who sits in it, looking vacant and boneless and small and diminished, the very image of the common man that he was not.

Neither was John Kennedy the liberal that the more ardent keepers of his flame would have us believe. "If President Kennedy were alive today, he would vigorously oppose President Bush's irresponsible tax cut," his brother and daughter asserted. Maybe so, but the real John Kennedy ran for office in 1946 as a "fighting conservative," had kind words to say about Joe McCarthy, worried (with Ronald Reagan) about Communist infiltration of

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Darren Gygi

American unions, and ran in 1960 on the argument that Dwight Eisenhower had not built up the military forces enough. He also befriended Richard Nixon and rejoiced in his 1950 Senate win against Helen "Pink Lady" Douglas (giving Nixon a fat donation from his and Ted's father), and told friends he was prepared to vote for Nixon against a field of Democrats in the 1960 election, if he could not get his party's nomination for himself. "He *hated* the liberals," his friend Benjamin Bradlee told Christopher Matthews. As president and before, he dismissed them as "honkers," which his biographer Richard Reeves described as "his private term for the most liberal Democrats, particularly those from New York City and Cambridge, Mass."

A fiscal conservative, Kennedy enraged the liberals of his day, among them the first Albert Gore. "What do you think I should do about a tax cut?" Reeves quoted Kennedy asking. "'Forget it!' said the man from Tennessee." Kennedy did not forget it but went on to cut taxes. Where would he stand now: With the tax cutters or with his brother, a honker in extremely good standing, if not the finest flower of the breed? Democrats have taken to shrinking their heroes, tenderizing them like so many veal cutlets, pounding away with their mallets till all the sinew is gone. They cling to them because they were, and are, popular, hoping to use that popularity to promote their current agenda. But if their heroes had run on that agenda, they would not have been so popular. And their names would not be worth much today.

The Kennedys have always been proprietary about JFK's record, as if his public life were their private possession. Jacqueline Kennedy used to try to suppress, discourage, or censor books written by friends of her husband that showed him being funny, profane, and irreverent, apparently not realizing that it was because he was funny, profane, and irreverent that he was so loved by the country. The flip side of this Kennedy reverence project is the far-reaching Ronald Reagan Legacy Project. Both seem intent on conjuring up a sense of awestricken worship of men who were very tough politicians, who knew how to laugh at themselves and their rivals, and who loved nothing more than a fight. It is right that the Reaganites should want some big things named after their hero—the aircraft carrier christened earlier this year in honor of the president who built a 600-ship navy is more than fitting. But what in the name of all that is holy led them to think that he, or anyone, should bounce Alexander Hamilton from the ten-dollar bill? Or to think that a fearful wrong will have been done to him and to history if his name is not put onto something in every county in every one of the United States? Reagan himself would doubtless have nixed this, being all too aware of the potential for ridicule. But true believers are frequently lacking in senses of irony, or even of proportion. When representative Bob Barr recently threatened to cut off funds for the Washington Metro system if its signs weren't changed quickly, he picked a fight with the equally anti-Reagan local Democratic politicians that only made all of them look ridiculous. Were he able to, Reagan, who did not see himself as an object of worship, would no doubt join in the ridicule.

There is an unnatural hunger for reverence in keepers of the Reagan and Kennedy flames. Both men appear "special," and both fill particular needs. John Kennedy was the last in a string of larger than life Democrats; the last Democrat to serve in the

White House without public embarrassment; the last Democrat to serve as president before things began to go very wrong for his party. Reagan was not only the first true conservative to serve in the White House, he was the only one ever to score as a national hero, to take on and neutralize the national media, and appeal to the public over its heads. Before Kennedy came Democrats such as Woodrow Wilson, FDR, and Harry Truman, who were noted world statesmen, if not wholly successful. After him came a string of people too small for the office, or compromised figures, like Lyndon Johnson and the Clintons, and his brother Ted. Before Reagan, there was Barry Goldwater, wiped out in a national landslide, and Richard Nixon, run out of office in disgrace. After Reagan, the right endured a long string of failed expectations, national figures who failed to inspire, congressional leaders outfoxed by Bill Clinton, Republican speakers shot down. Kennedy looms like a giant over all subsequent Democrats. Reagan towers over conservatives, both past and present; the only one gifted with media magic.

The past ten years have been perplexing for partisans, filled with defeats and false dawns: There was the Democratic sweep of 1992-93, which failed to turn out as expected; the conservative takeover of 1994-95, which quickly disappointed; the forced accommodation between Clinton and Congress; the absolute tie of the 2000 election. In times of confusion, people look back to their moments of triumph and clarity, and to the people who put them there. John Kennedy is the Democrats' last link to a past that is both triumphant and usable; Ronald Reagan is the conservatives' lone model of popular leadership. Democrats fear if this last link should be broken—if conservatives try to wrest Kennedy from them—then they will have nothing. Conservatives fear that unless they quickly establish their hero as a Great Man in the most concrete and tangible manner—Kilroy was here!—liberals will somehow wipe out his memory.

Invested so much in its own private terrors, neither side can see things as they are. Thus FDR-PC gives most of its space and all of its heart to the father of the national safety net, suggests he was an environmentalist and a friend of "diversity," and reduces his foreign policy to a single statement, "I hate war." Well, he may have hated it, but he certainly waged it with gusto, and war is the core of his claim upon history. Making FDR into a sensitized tree-hugging pacifist creates a sense of destructive dissonance, as does the recasting of John Kennedy as a Ted Kennedy liberal. Democrats can't see the past as it is because they refuse to acknowledge how very unlike their heroes they are. To do so would be to admit that some of their failures are their own fault, that there are reasons why they lose elections—why they have now lost the Congress for three cycles in a row, and the presidency six times out of the last nine.

Conservatives, meanwhile, cannot see how far they have come, refusing often to take "yes" for an answer. They cannot believe that Reagan is winning, that his stature is all but insured. Somehow, they have internalized the view of their critics: In their minds, it is forever 1981, and silver-haired, silver-tongued Clark Clifford is holding forth in the Georgetown salon of the Harrimans, telling an audience of establishment hotshots that the conservatives' hero is an "amiable dunce." Memo to Reaganauts: Clifford is dead. Dead and gone. Dead and (almost) forgotten. Dead and discredited, dead and disgraced, dead and exposed as self-seeking and corrupt, as well as a poor judge of political horseflesh. And while he was sinking, Reagan was rising, into the top tier of political leaders, one of the few (with FDR, his great hero) to have single-handedly altered the trajectory of this nation's political discourse. Even the liberals have been coming around. Historian Fred Greenstein now finds Reagan a "towering political presence" who "presided over a fundamental reorientation of public policy in the realm of taxes and spending" and "played a significant part in the peaceful termination of a global conflict that threatened the survival of mankind." Doris Kearns Goodwin, a liberal with a fondness for large-hearted patriots, says of Reagan: "Boy, this guy was *president*!" These things count for more than the signs in the Metro. If only his friends could see.

"The name of Ronald Reagan and his legacy are under attack and need to be defended," claims the director of the Legacy Project, explaining the need to put Reagan's name everywhere. But this "incontinent lust of a Washington-based coterie to celebrate him," in George Will's phrase, ignores the fact that Reagan's legacy grows more secure with each passing year. Op-ed page skirmishing over Reagan's tax and foreign policies is hardly an "attack." Nor is it "indecent" to use the words, or even the voice, of John F. Kennedy to back causes and programs his younger brother dislikes. These things are not sacrilege; nor are they assaults on the ill and the dead. They are, in a word, politics—a trade based on argument, which both these men entered into freely, even joyfully, and in which they thrived. They would be neither shocked nor offended that people take issue with some of their judgments, or interpret their words in ways that are politically useful. They would likely expect this, having done the same things themselves. They would not expect worship, or wholesale agreement, but would have faith enough in their overall records to trust in the judgment of history. They deserve our respect, but not our worship, which ought not to go to political figures.

Washington is becoming a capital with too many memorials and much too much reverence; with too many things named for too many people. FDR had it right in the first place when he said that the only memorial he wanted in Washington is the plain marble block with his name and dates on it that sits across the street from the Navy Memorial, proof again that the people who most deserve memorials are those who don't care if they have them. It is the Bill Clintons of the world who fret over legacies, not those who have accomplished great things. Ronald Reagan also had it right when he signed a bill (that his fans are now trying to overturn in his honor) prohibiting the erecting of monuments on the Mall to anyone not already dead for a quarter century. This wise measure was designed to let partisan fevers run their course, to prevent spectacles like the Metro sign war, in which embittered diehard liberals and Reagan's more overwrought friends both look silly and spiteful.

No one comes out looking terribly noble in these furious legacy wars. Roosevelt looks like the victim he wasn't; Kennedy like the honker he wasn't; and Reagan, who never cared much who got credit for anything, comes out looking like someone terribly hungry for attention. The propagandists themselves are caricatures of their respective parties' worst flaws. Democrats win with candidates who seem steely, and perhaps a little bit macho, yet they have made their heroes seem softer and sissified. Conservatives win when they are sunny and funny, yet they seem obsessive and paranoid in their effort to honor Reagan. A better understanding of their heroes would help both parties. If the Ted Kennedy Democrats could really see how far they have slipped out of John Kennedy's mainstream, they might win more fights and elections. Conservatives, on the other hand, need to cultivate the traits most lacking in the Reagan Legacy Project—a sense of proportion and humor, and the ability to sense when they don't wear well with others and why.

The way to honor one's political heroes is by trying to become more like them. But these people have gone in a different direction, scaling their heroes down to their size. In politics, the slaps of your foes may annoy and distract you, but this is expected, and natural. Nothing can do you quite as much damage as the embarrassing passions of friends. ♦

What to Do About Sudan

Steps the Bush administration can take against one of the world's most brutal regimes.

By Elliott Abrams

What is to be done about Sudan? For 18 years, a devastating war has taken a horrifying human toll in Africa's largest country. Best estimates are two million dead, four million uprooted, out of a population of some 35 million. The government in Khartoum regularly bombs clinics, schools, and food stations in the southern part of the country and in the Nuba Mountains. Its forces (and irregulars tied to them) still engage in slave raids. Famine and disease are its allies in efforts to bring the south, which is largely African racially and Christian or animist in religion, under the full control of the Arab and Muslim north. As a local bishop put it to me during a visit to Sudan last year, "They are trying to blow out the candle" of Christianity in Sudan. Today the U.N.'s World Food Program says three million people in Sudan face hunger or starvation. It is a calamity.

The new element inside Sudan is oil production, with significant revenues ($500 million in 2000) beginning to flow to Khartoum and fueling its war. Oil, moreover, is an incentive for the government to dominate the south, where it is clearing out large inhabited areas for exploration and production. The sober *Economist* magazine of London in April called these methods "brutal"; the British charity Christian Aid has spoken of "a systematic scorched earth policy."

The new element inside the United States is the attention being given to Sudan. Secretary of State Colin Powell has said "there is no greater tragedy on the face of the Earth than the one unfolding in Sudan," and he has been asked about Sudan every time he has appeared before Congress. Nongovernmental organizations, from Freedom House and the Anti-Slavery Group to the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and the Family Research Council, are lobbying Congress, and a delegation of Catholic bishops newly returned from Sudan has called on the United States to take "a central role" in ending the war. The NAACP has spoken out, as have the Carter Center and President Carter personally. Chuck Colson of Prison Fellowship and Franklin Graham of Samaritan's Purse (which operates medical clinics there) have discussed Sudan with President Bush. None other than the Reverend Al Sharpton visited Sudan in April and has announced that Michael Jackson will accompany him on a return trip.

In reaction to all this, the president has mentioned the tragedy of southern Sudan several times during his short tenure, and Secretary Powell has held long meetings at the State Department to explore what might be done. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom has dedicated more time to that country than to any other. And the issue is the subject of an immense web of Internet contacts that supply up-to-date information about events there.

So the question remains, What can be done? The United States already has in place comprehensive trade sanctions against Sudan, imposed because of the regime's support for terrorism. While we maintain diplomatic relations, we do not staff our embassy there. How can we further isolate Khartoum? Or should the policy of isolation be abandoned, the embassy reopened, and negotiations begun?

An effective U.S. policy toward Sudan—one capable of changing the situation in the south and affecting the lives of its people—will require top-level attention and a great deal of energy. It should have three elements: aid, diplomacy, and financial disclosure. The recommendations of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, in its March 21, 2001, report on Sudan, form the basis for my analysis, and are available in full at the commission's website, *www.uscirf.gov*.

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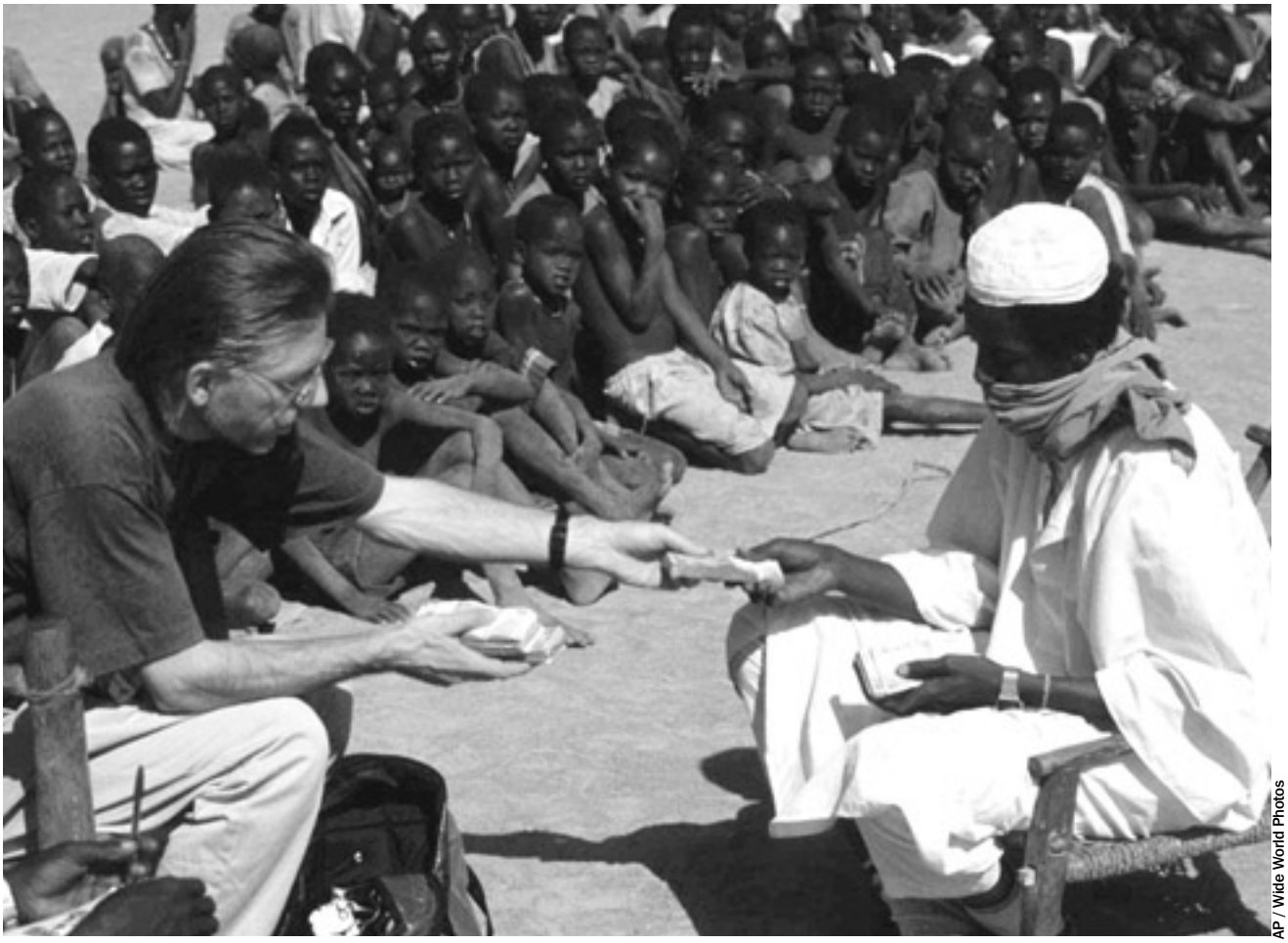

AP / Wide World Photos

A Christian charity buys the freedom of 132 slaves for the equivalent of $13,200.

• **Aid**: Addressing the desperate humanitarian situation should be the starting point for any new Sudan initiative. The problem of food aid is complicated not only by difficult logistics, but by Khartoum's brazen use of food as a weapon, even to starve out its opponents. The regime has veto power over food deliveries in Sudanese territory by the U.N.'s Operation Lifeline Sudan. An immediate goal of U.S. policy should be the delivery of food and medicine where they are needed, not where Khartoum desires. This means that the U.N. program, while invaluable, cannot be the only conduit for food. Roughly one-third of all U.S. aid (which totals about $100 million per year) now flows outside Operation Lifeline Sudan, and that percentage should continue to rise. The United States should help strengthen nongovernmental humanitarian agencies working in Sudan so that they can handle an increased flow of aid.

Moreover, Washington's new STAR (Sudan Transitional Assistance for Rehabilitation) program, aimed at helping build administrative capacity and "civil society" in the south, should be nurtured. The idea is to help local communities improve their food production and security, but the $3 million available last year was far too little. Finally, Congress has authorized direct non-military aid (medicine, trucks, radios) to groups in the National Democratic Alliance, a coalition of opposition groups from all parts of Sudan, the strongest of which is the Sudan People's Liberation Army. This help should be provided. It is aimed at building up the opposition groups' capacity to participate in a reinvigorated peace process and protect the people of the south from military attack. If we can enable a rebel group, for example, to radio ahead to warn others about bombers overhead or marauders and slavers in the area, we should do so.

• **Diplomacy**: The United States, in the Commission's words, should "launch a major diplomatic initiative aimed at enlisting international pressure to stop the Sudanese government's bombing of civilian and humanitarian targets," slave raids, and other depredations.

Given the enormity of the humanitarian crisis, business-as-usual diplomacy is not enough. Many NGOs, the Catholic bishops, and the Commission as well, have called for the appointment of a "special envoy" for Sudan. The theory is that other officials are too busy to give this crisis the time it deserves. What is more, a high-level envoy with access to the president and secretary of state will get more done in the administration and with Congress, and can better convey to foreign governments how seriously the

Bush administration takes this desperate situation. The model here is the role former Senate majority leader George Mitchell played for Northern Ireland, or that former secretary of state James Baker had in the Western Sahara dispute.

The key point, however, is not the mechanism, but the goal: putting far more American diplomatic energy into Sudan. For example, we should call a special U.N. Security Council meeting every time Sudan bombs a clinic or school in the south (copying a tactic Arab governments have used, or misused, for decades against Israel). This would engage the diplomatic world, show that the United States will not allow this war to slip into obscurity again, and possibly pressure Khartoum into slowing or stopping such attacks. The president might send his envoy throughout Europe, and perhaps to Japan and other allied states, to enlist help. Ronald Reagan did this regarding Soviet Jewry, sending Walter Stoessel, who had been ambassador to Germany and Russia, throughout Europe to let those governments know that the improvements they sought in U.S.-Soviet relations were impossible unless they persuaded the Russians to treat Soviet Jews better.

AP / Wide World Photos

Sudan's first oil well, May 31, 1999

With Canadian and Swedish oil companies operating in Sudan, there is good reason to press those governments far harder, and to use every available forum—the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, the U.N. Human Rights Commission, summits with Hemispheric or European or Asian leaders—to discuss the human rights disaster in Sudan. If the president of the United States says that attacks on civilians, starvation, and denial of religious freedom in Sudan are important international issues, they become so.

Then, diplomatic efforts to achieve some sort of settlement become far more practical. These might be conducted through a revived Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), an organization of six East African nations, Sudan, Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Eritrea. The IGAD "Partners' Forum" includes the United States, Norway, the United Kingdom, and Italy. Although IGAD itself has achieved nothing recently, its Declaration of Principles for a solution in Sudan, adopted in 1994, remains a very good framework for diplomacy, with its call for an immediate cease-fire and its commitment to a Sudan that is "multi-racial, -ethnic, -religious and multi-cultural," with "a secular and democratic state" respecting "freedom of belief and worship and religious practice." The declaration also announces "the right of self-determination of the people of South Sudan to determine their future status through a referendum."

One grave weakness of IGAD is that Egypt stands outside it. Cairo is absolutely opposed to a referendum that might split Sudan and leave the Upper Nile in new hands, and has recruited Libya in a new "peace initiative" of its own. CSIS, in its February 2001 task force report on Sudan, gave up on IGAD and proposed instead a new collaborative effort including, "for example, the UK, Norway, and Sudan's neighbors" and led more or less by the United States. "Without a dedicated U.S. commitment to a determined international push for peace in Sudan," the report said, no new coalition will succeed. It should operate from the IGAD Declaration of Principles, and should aim at an interim agreement that would "preserve a single Sudan with two viable systems, north and south."

This would be an extremely complex diplomatic effort, reminiscent of Chester Crocker's extraordinary southern Africa balancing act during the Reagan administration. The indispensable ingredient would be the United States's commitment to stopping the war, stopping slavery, and seeking a just peace.

• **Oil**: Peace in Sudan seems further away today than it was a few years ago because of the discovery of commercial quantities of oil. Sudan's oil reserves are estimated at 1.2 billion barrels and are expected to rise to 2 or 3 billion with more exploration, making the country a middle-ranking producer like Ecuador or Malaysia. These reserves provide a glimmer of hope for the nation's future: Were oil revenues turned toward economic development, toward building schools and hospitals instead of bombing them, the people of Sudan might escape desperate poverty. But today, oil is truly the fuel of Sudan's wars, increasing Khartoum's ability and desire to crush the south. So the immediate goal must be to stop or slow, not assist, oil development. A Nuer tribal chief put it this way: "Before oil, our region was peaceful. People were cultivating their cattle. When the pumping began, the war began. Antonovs and helicopter gunships began attacking the villages—sometimes four times every day. All the farms have been destroyed. Everything around the oil fields has been destroyed. Oil has brought death."

Oil is both the carrot and the stick we can use in dealing with Khartoum. We can offer to end some of our sanctions and permit American oil companies to participate in Sudan's oil industry if the regime ends the war. If it doesn't, we should not only maintain our sanctions but enact new ones aimed at the oil industry. Right now, U.S. economic sanctions prohibit American companies from working or investing in Sudan. But they allow foreign companies active in Sudan—like Talisman of Canada, TotalFina/ELF of France, Lundin Oil of Sweden, or the China National Petroleum Company—to raise capital in the United States, as all have done.

The Commission has recommended closing this loophole in our sanctions and forcing non-U.S. companies to choose: Be in Sudan, or be in our capital markets. The Bush administration initially rejected this proposal, but a weaker variation may prosper, a law requiring foreign oil companies to disclose fully their activities in Sudan.

Today, foreign companies can hide the nature and extent of their involvement in vague phrasing. Stiffer legislation could expose how their activities are related to human rights violations—the removal of civilian populations from oil producing areas, policing by government troops, provision of company resources to the local police or military, and so on. Such information would have many uses. It would aid the Treasury Department in enforcing sanctions, and it would allow members of the public to avoid investing in Sudan's humanitarian disaster. Talisman's role in Sudan has become a scandal in Canada, as Lundin's should in Sweden. Institutional investors who wish to avoid controversy—denunciations by clergy, marches at headquarters, protests at annual meetings—might be persuaded to skip these stocks and bonds. No one needs to buy into oppression in Sudan.

It is now popular in Washington to say that unilateral sanctions don't work (though the governments of Sudan and Cuba certainly act as if our sanctions worked—they campaign against them full-time). Even if this were true, it should only encourage us to push for multilateral sanctions against Sudan. Sweden and Canada, in particular, are not lost causes. As part of an overall plan for peace in Sudan, these countries might agree to certain concessions. Already a host of Canadian church and human rights groups have denounced Canadian industry's role in Sudan and are pressuring Ottawa to act. If this works in Canada, it might in Europe as well. At least let us try, again, and harder.

The economic sanctions now in place were imposed because of Sudan's support for terrorism. That support continues, and while it does, no change in bilateral relations is possible. But Sudan's crimes are inextricably linked. The Islamist regime that bombs churches in the south also gives comfort to Islamic terrorists. The oil that fuels the internal war also funds terrorist groups. The same carrots, and the same sticks, are useful in addressing Khartoum's internal war and its support for terrorism.

But are those incentives and disincentives enough to move Khartoum? Do Sudan's leaders want a possible bundle of carrots—trade with and investment from the United States, full access to the World Bank and IMF, and debt relief—enough to stop the war and allow some degree of autonomy for the south? Do they fear losing their grip on power and seek a settlement for selfish reasons? Do they fear a growing "Sudan movement" in America capable of moving the Bush administration, even someday to the point of extending aid to Sudanese rebels? For this is the logical progression: If the proposed measures fail to produce progress and the carnage continues, there will be only two options. One is to turn away. The other is to strengthen the opposition in its war for survival, with the goal of changing the regime in Khartoum or dividing the country.

There is today no demonstrable answer to all these questions about U.S. policy or the potential reactions in Khartoum. The immense complexity of the situation is a caution, but suggests the urgency of new and greater efforts, rather than the abandonment of the cause. For Sudan is a test. Under the first President Bush, just as the Cold War was ending, the United States acted swiftly and successfully to protect the international order against a very clear case of aggression by Iraq. Admittedly, that was not an exclusively humanitarian cause, involving as it did Persian Gulf oil supplies and a blatant violation of international borders. Sudan is a test not of our willingness to defend our interests, but of our willingness to use our immense influence to stop the slaughter of innocents, slave raids, and a scorched earth policy.

The new administration and the new president are being asked, *What is American power for?* In the nineteenth century, Great Britain was the nation most closely associated with human rights principles, and it was widely admired for that reason. Indeed, its greatness lay not only in its naval guns, but in its willingness to use its power to advance its principles. Great Britain almost single-handedly eliminated the slave trade in mid-century, expending large sums (and dedicating about a tenth of its naval power) in the effort. Today, we are the nation most closely associated with human rights and human dignity, and we are the world's most powerful country. Just as the British could not eliminate slavery by snapping their fingers, but instead had to undertake a long campaign, so we cannot "solve" Sudan's problems all at once. But two million Sudanese have died already, and southern Sudan is littered with the ruins of schools and clinics and churches. A serious American effort can diminish the evil. What kind of America would refuse to try? ♦

Oxford University Press. All other pictures: Princeton University Press.

The Modernist as Confederate

The poetry and prose of Allen Tate

By Thomas M. Disch

Few poets in this century have been at once so highly respected and so little read as Allen Tate. Born in 1899, he belonged to the second growth of modernists—Hart Crane chief among them—who were the epigones of the great expatriates T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Gertrude Stein. Less gifted themselves, they nevertheless possessed the confidence of those who are assured of their apostolic succession. That did not spare them the anxiety of influence, of course. But it did let them reign over a wide territory while the founders remained abroad like kings absent on a crusade.

As a poet Tate published early and matured late, but once he'd got past his boy-wonder years, no American poet in his time could match him for hard-core gravitas. He inhabited his coign of history with an altogether un-American sense of the centuries behind him, as he would be the first to tell us in such a poem as "Aeneas in Washington" (1932), which begins:

I saw myself furious with blood
Neoptolemus, at his side the black Atridae,
Hecuba and the hundred daughters, Priam
Cut down, his filth drenching the holy fires.
In that extremity I bore me well,
A true gentleman, valorous in arms,
Disinterested and honourable. Then fled:
That was a time when civilization
Run by the few fell to the many.

In his literary essays, as well—the best of which are available in *Essays of Four Decades*—Tate produced work that bears remembering, especially for his early and feisty advocacy of new, "difficult" writers like Hart Crane and William Faulkner. Within the rather narrow range of his taste (he seemed as humorless as anyone of woman born could be), Tate was a shrewd judge, with a way of driving home his aperçus with a quick, single stroke of the pen that goes far to compensate for the sometimes dust-dry decorum of his prose.

Tate outlasted or outmaneuvered most of the other heirs apparent, until by the late 1950s he was the leading emeritus modernist, a regular participant in ceremonial occasions though no longer a creative force to be reckoned with. He occupied the chair of poetry at the Library of Congress, won prizes from the Bollingen Foundation and the Academy of American Poets, was president of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the National Institute of Arts and Letters, as well. Few poets have ever had so many laurels to sit on. And that is just about all he did for many years while he procrastinated work on the memoir he'd contracted to write for Scribner's in 1966. Not for Tate the auroras of autumn. He died in 1979, "angry, bitter at many old friends, and obsessed with money."

Or such, at least, was the judgment of David Laskin in *Partisans*, a group biography in which Tate and his wife, Caroline Gordon, figure as supporting players. It is not an accident that there has

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not been a full-scale biography of Tate until now, with the publication of Thomas A. Underwood's *Allen Tate: Orphan of the South*. Tate did his best to erect a wall of silence, both by funking the task of the contracted memoir, and then by squelching the work of a would-be biographer, Louis Rubin. After Rubin admitted defeat, Robert Buffington tried his hand, only to decide—when his "authorized" biography bit the dust—that "If he left out all the names he had been pressed to leave, there would not be much left to write." A third aspirant biographer, Ned O'Gorman, has been candid about the difficulties posed by the dragons guarding Tate's literary estate:

> I have discovered that lies, deceptions, half-truths, fake truths, family loyalties, friendships, literary feuds get in the way and render even a birth date suspect. . . . The difficulty, after all the literary feuds are ironed out, is how we will deal with Allen's erotic life. It was not a phase, a period, a flash of libidinous fever. It was a quality of life that assumed in his marriages a fragmenting power and dealt to his creative life a sundering loss of energy. . . . Many of the ladies with whom Allen slept are alive. Many of them are distinguished, and some of them are "celebrities." . . . I must find a way to deal with this erotic "element" and to do it with charity—but unless it is dealt with there is no biography.

Tate's widow has promised to take O'Gorman to court if he writes the book he so beguilingly advertises.

Underwood has got round the problem by limiting the first of his promised two volumes to those years before 1938 when the poet's behavior, as reported, can pass muster with the dragons at the gate. Though not as zesty as the tale O'Gorman suggested (indeed, rather flavorless in those regards), it is a life full of improving or cautionary lessons, with vistas of a vanished literary world less glamorous by far than the jazz-age legends, but with an occasional springtime whiff of genuine barnyard innocence.

Tate was born in Kentucky (though he grew up thinking he was from Tennessee, and sometimes claimed Virginia, as a German might adopt the ennobling *von*) and died in Tennessee. Though he spent some years as an expatriate in New York, France, and Minnesota, he was a professional southerner, whose constant theme, in his poetry, prose fiction, and essays, was Dixie. His signature poem, "Ode to the Confederate Dead" (begun in 1926 and fiddled with for the next decade), is a lament for the primal Eden of the antebellum South, when Faith and Chivalry were in flower. His one novel, *The Fathers* (1938), is a tragedy set in the same lost Eden, as Virginia is swept, all innocently, into the Civil War, her prelapsarian virtues corrupted by Northern guns and money. This myth became doctrine in the political tracts that Tate wrote as an advocate for the political clique known first as the Fugitives and later as the Agrarians.

Tate in 1934

Allen Tate
Orphan of the South
by Thomas A. Underwood
Princeton University Press, 440 pp., $35

Essays of Four Decades
by Allen Tate
ISI Press, 663 pp., $29.95

Under neither name did Tate and his associates (among them such notables as John Crowe Ransom, Cleanth Brooks, and Robert Penn Warren) engage in any actual political activities other than to write tracts and speak at small conferences, but in the context of that time, the 1930s, this allowed them to steer safely between the Scylla of Fascism and the Charybdis of communism, and to emerge at the end of World War II relatively uncompromised.

Even so, by today's litmus tests many of the Agrarians would seem to be as far off in the fever swamps as Seward Collins, the publisher of their principal journal, the *American Review*. Collins's aim was to create the American equivalent of the Action Française or the British Distributionists, led by Hilaire Belloc and G.K. Chesterton. He was, in effect, an upscale Father Coughlin, with the same populist alternatives to New Deal socialism, the same tropism toward Mussolini and Hitler. For Collins, the Jews and Communists were a single enemy, and Tate's take on this was pragmatic: "With the fierce, literal, Yankee logic of his, Collins has worked himself into a great froth over the Jews. Let us not discourage him." Tate would later eschew overt anti-Semitism, but it was surely no accident that he was one of the chief engineers behind Ezra Pound's receiving of the Bollingen Prize in poetry and eventual release from St. Elizabeths, the insane asylum that was his sanctuary from charges of treason.

As one might expect of someone so smitten with Dixie, Tate's views on "the Negro problem" are even more of a problem and even more revealing. There is no other American intellectual of distinction whose views come as close to unqualified redneck racism (unless it was his colleague Robert Penn Warren). He was contemptuous of Northern "reformers who are anxious to have Negroes sit by them on street cars." Such do-gooders couldn't understand "that there has never been equality anywhere, there never will be, nor ought there to be." The best way "to

destroy the lynching-tension between the races" was to give blacks and whites their own subsistence farms so they would not rub shoulders in soul-destroying cities. And in 1934, in Collins's *American Review* he declared: "I belong to the white race, therefore I tend to support white rule. Lynching is a symptom of weak, inefficient rule; but you can't destroy lynching by *fiat* or social agitation; lynching will disappear when the white race is satisfied that its supremacy will not be questioned in social crises."

Little wonder that in his emeritus years, when he was presiding over various learned conclaves, Tate edited such potentially scandalous materials from his life and bibliography, even choosing not to republish the two most successful non-fiction works of his youth, biographies of Stonewall Jackson and Jefferson Davis, both of them rich in embarrassments. Yet for all of this ethnic cleansing, the odor lingers everywhere—and most damagingly, in the novel he set so much stock by, *The Fathers*. Tate was a fervent elitist in all things. He believed there were Dantean hierarchies in Heaven (if Heaven existed, which he wasn't quite sure of), and similar rankings in anything else that mattered, including the arts. In the art of the novel, he revered Faulkner and championed his work at an early date, but he was full of contempt for the more successful Southern novelists of his day, such as Thomas Wolfe and Erskine Caldwell.

A portrait of Allen Tate, Caroline Gordon, and their daughter Nancy in 1929, by Stella Bowen.

Of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*, he carped, "I could not get past page sixty, and I walked out of the movie." If that is true, then he would not have known how uncannily similar it is to *The Fathers*, nor how far superior it is in plausibility, dramatic intensity, and basic carpentry. Tate's women are cardboard next to Mitchell's, his men plywood. His larger scenes are a jumble of stage directions, with every cough and rustle annotated to no purpose. The dialogue never develops its own momentum or emits a distinctive aroma. The first two-thirds of its three hundred pages are lumbering as a wheelbarrow, while the finale is a hysterical pile-up of corpses, at the center of which stands the same primal scene that figures so prominently in *Gone With the Wind* and, even more, in D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*: A black man who has threatened the heroine, an innocent Southern belle, is killed for his effrontery by a chivalrous Southern gentleman. The spin that Tate puts on this old chestnut adds no moral illumination, nor any unique historical slant. Indeed, the basic staple of the historical novel, those details that are tellingly redolent of a bygone era, are in very short supply. By his own high standards, Tate must be reckoned an inferior novelist.

He must have known. The work on *The Fathers* went slowly, with frequent blockages, unlike the ease with which he wrote his biography of Stonewall Jackson, a book that excels in just those respects in which the novel fails: narrative momentum and vivid detail. Other projects had given Tate equal difficulty during the 1930s—a biography of Robert E. Lee that he abandoned before it was well begun, and a "history" of his own family, which became a quagmire of half-truth and wishful thinking. These defects were his true inheritance as the offspring of two inveterate romancers, a feckless father, Orley, who went bankrupt when Allen was a boy and a mother, Nellie, who might have been a model for Blanche DuBois in her more genteel moments. It was the son's ambition to turn his mother's airy self-delusions into history, a project doomed, like his father's businesses, to failure. The abandoned family history gradually evolved into *The Fathers*.

What became of Tate after the publication of his novel we know only from the glimpses available in the biographies of his many famous friends, for Thomas Underwood concludes this first volume of his biography as Tate finishes *The Fathers* and before he would become an academic legend for his philandering, and the mentor and drinking buddy of the young Robert Lowell.

The interest of Underwood's volume resides, therefore, in its portrait of the poet as a young modernist. For it is the poetry that has, despite its thorniness, stood the test of time: interesting both in its own right and as a uniquely "pure" specimen of American modernism. Tate's poems, like those of his friend Hart Crane, seem Athena-like, springing from the zeitgeist fully armed and showing little evidence of its evolution. Even his juvenile work reads like imitations of Eliot. Tate wrote some teenage doggerel that imitates Poe's "The Bells," but his visible influences thereafter exclude most poetry written before the twentieth century (excepting the French symbolists).

The truth is that he had probably read little except modern poetry, for he was not a precocious student of anything but the violin. As a teenager Tate studied with Eugène Ysaÿe at the Conservatory of Music in Cincinnati. Ysaÿe's judgment of Tate's graduation recital at age eighteen was that his left hand was good "but it is all very uninteresting." Tate abandoned the violin, and yet, in an odd way, it may have been his musical discipline that was the secret of his precocious success as a poet. A violinist must possess absolute concentration, a sense of nuance but not without zest, flair, élan, and a sure attack. All these qualities exist in Tate's earliest poems—and rarely in the work of other apprentice poets. Modernism has nothing to do with it.

The benefit the young Tate derived from being a poet without a tradition is similar to that which young painters like Basquiat enjoy in having no painterly role-models but Matisse, Rauschenberg, and Warhol: If they have the knack to do quick knock-offs of the trend-setters, they needn't regret the lack of more time-honored competencies. At twenty-one Tate could do a jazz-age riff like this bit from his poem "Euthanasia":

The graceless madness of her lips,
Who was the powder-puff of life,
Cannot rouge those cheeks nor warm
His cold corpuscles back to strife.

If its stylistic and rhetorical tics now seem a little dated, the effect they had on the editors of the *Double Dealer*, a

Tate on his sixth birthday

Modernist magazine that published Hart Crane and Babette Deutsch, was electric. They hailed him as one of "the white hopes of the South" and assured him, "Absolutely anything that you do will be met very hospitably here."

Strictly speaking, Tate was no surrealist, but the thrill of such quatrains to his contemporaries would have been similar: the disjunction between the neon imagery and the prim diction, the in-your-face and slippery non sequiturs—mad lips that can't rouge cheeks, life as a powder-puff. It doesn't parse but there is a ghostly shimmer of naughtiness, as though one were looking at the X-ray of a poem by Swinburne. This is what modernism looked like to a bright Tennessee teenager in 1923. And if anyone asks what it *means*, you are licensed to sneer.

Those who have written about Tate at any length tend, expectably, to be unqualified in their admiration of his poetry, but John Stewart, the author of the most persuasive study of the Fugitives and Agrarians, *The Burden of Time* (1965), has reservations about Tate's early poems. He also offers a droll account of the Nashville of the 1920s that contextualizes Tate and the other Fugitives in a way that the more reverential Underwood does not.

The central figure in Stewart's account is the poet and bodybuilder Sidney Hirsch (he posed in the buff for Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney), who would become the guru and den leader of the Fugitives when they were mostly undergraduates at Vanderbilt University. Prior to that, he wrote *The Fire Regained*, a civic pageant in verse meant to commemorate the replica of the Parthenon that had been built in Nashville's Centennial Park. Nashville was promoting itself as "the Athens of the South" and needed a Parthenon and some classic theater to go with it. It was a huge success, for it offered, to quote the advertisement, "The Flight of a Thousand Doves, the Revel of the Wood Nymphs, the Thrilling Chariot Race, the Raising of the Shepherd from the Dead, and the Orgy of the Flaming Torches." What would one not give to travel back to 1898 to hear such lines as these, delivered by a chorus of Greek maidens:

O Hestia! Virgin votaries we,
Attend our tremulation.
Come Astraea from cerulean seas,
To fend our tribulation.
O guard they doves within the cote
That is thine own afflatus,
Defence devise that shall defeat
Storm shades would devastate us!

Stewart's account of Hirsch and Nashville's civic pageants explains more about the young Tate and his poetry than Underwood manages in his

new biography, for all his careful documentation. Hirsch was a proper Oedipal father, king of the Nashville frogpond of the arts, the monster from whom the young poet must escape, only to discover, years later, that he has become just such a monster himself, idolatrously reverent of the Great Classics, in love with his own high pomp, and delighting in fustian that wows the groundlings.

But the fact is that the young poet did become the mature poet—allusive, gnomic, and germane; as full of riddles as in his salad days, but riddles that merit tending to. Tate was fond of quoting Yeats's dictum: "Out of the quarrel with others we make rhetoric; out of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry."

Neither in his fiction nor his essays could Tate resolve his internal conflicts as an apologist for antebellum (and medieval) values and a twentieth-century American intellectual. But in his poetry his quarrel is with himself, a man who would have liked to sing at vespers along with T.S. Eliot, but who instead stood immobilized at the cemetery gate contemplating the twin skulls of death and history:

Row after row with strict impunity
The headstones yield their names to the element,
The wind whirrs without recollection;
In the riven troughs the splayed leaves
Pile up, of nature the casual sacrament
In the seasonal eternity of death;
Then driven by fierce scrutiny
Of heaven to their election in the vast breath,
They sough the rumour of mortality.

Those disposed to might still sniff at these opening lines of "Ode to the Confederate Dead," might think them clotted or ponderous. But they are the genuine article, and so is the rest of the poem, which would provide, some forty years later, the impetus and impulse for Robert Lowell's own signature poem and riposte, "For the Union Dead." Another poet who has testified to his regard for Tate, and emulated his example, is Geoffrey Hill. Judged by the quality of his acolytes, Tate has racked up a high score.

Unfortunately, Tate's poems are no longer available outside anthologies. There is a fourteen page selection of ten poems in the Library of America's second volume of twentieth-century American poetry, but anyone who is duly impressed by that selection will have to search used bookstores for one or another winnowing that the author made in his later, less productive years.

His output was small, which may seem a charity in an author so difficult, but it is full of surprises, such as his translation of the late Latin *Pervigilium Veneris*. In my own youth, when everything else by Tate simply baffled me, I doted on that poem's over-determined sonorities, as on a new poem by Poe. It opens:

Tomorrow let loveless, let lover tomorrow make love:
O spring, singing spring, spring of the world renew!
In spring lovers consent and the birds marry
When the grove receives in her hair the nuptial dew.
Tomorrow may loveless, may lover tomorrow make love.

There are twenty-one more strophes, all sealed with the same refrain, one that seems—in its lyric teetering between loss and expectation—a suitable epitaph for this poet whose own life was so similar in its antitheses: a poet in the springtime of the modern era who yet was consumed with bitterness for the salt desert Carthage of the South; a man whose own springtime offered meager rewards (though his muse was generous); a gentleman who became in his late years something of a satyr (though we will have to wait for Underwood's second volume to learn those details)—but only after his art had ceased to flower. ♦

Free Elections

Political reform vs. political speech.

BY DANIEL J. SILVER

Chances are Congress will pass some kind of campaign-finance reform this year. Yet it is not clear what the congressional debate is fundamentally about, much less what all the implications of any legislative provision might be. It all seems very much like, well, politics. And yet, when regulations that impinge on our freedom of political expression are the subject of political horse-trading, isn't there something disquieting about the process?

Unfree Speech
The Folly of Campaign Finance Reform
by Bradley A. Smith
Princeton Univ. Press, 286 pp., $26.95

Bradley Smith certainly thinks so, and to read *Unfree Speech* is to be forced to consider some basic questions about how this scheme of regulation arose in the first place and whether existing law and proposed reforms really serve the public interest. Smith is a think-tank veteran, law professor, and, beginning last May, a member of the Federal Election Commission—his nomination to that post having been secured by Senate Republicans in a deal with the Clinton White House over unrelated judicial nominations. Smith's presence on the FEC drives advocates of campaign-finance reform to distraction, and *Unfree Speech* makes quite clear why: It

Daniel J. Silver was an attorney with the Federal Trade Commission and a contributor to The Weekly Standard. *A native of New York, he had a Ph.D. in English literature from Yale and a law degree from the University of Washington, and he wrote on a wide range of topics for such publications as* Commentary, *the* Wall Street Journal, *and the* New Criterion. *Suffering a heart attack while playing basketball, he died on April 14 in Washington, D.C., at the age of forty-eight.*

is a comprehensive, well-reasoned book demonstrating that everything they believe about their pet subject is wrong.

The premise of reform is that unlimited campaign contributions and unlimited campaign spending combine to force elected representatives into Faustian bargains: They end up voting on legislation not according to their judgment of its merits, but according to how their votes will affect the flow of money necessary to finance the next campaign. The assumption is widely held that our politics works this way. What congressman would vote with big tobacco, after all (or big oil, or big drug companies, for that matter), unless he was more or less paid to do so? Similar deep-pocket bogeymen exist on the other side of the ideological ledger: unions, trial lawyers, abortion advocates. And, yes, some of them are pretty nasty.

But all such donor groups derive their support from the interests they represent, and those interests are voting citizens—employees, suppliers, distributors, and investors, for example—to whom elected officials are supposed to be responsive in the first place. What's more, as Smith points out, extensive academic research has failed to provide evidence that their responsiveness is "corrupt." Members of Congress seem not to support or oppose particular pieces of legislation simply because their political contributors want them to. They generally vote, odd as it may sound, according to their consistently stated convictions.

Nevertheless, a bewildering array of regulatory "reforms" have been imposed on our politics, as if honest public service were ancient history. The results have been peculiar. Contribution limits are supposed to minimize the risk of quid pro quo legislative bargains: There isn't enough quid for a quo in a $1,000 or $5,000 contribution. But there aren't enough $1,000 and $5,000 contributions to fund a modern, expensive campaign, either. So to get the funds they need in a regime of small-dollar donations, candidates must sell themselves up front to large groups of people. Which leads to lowest-common-denominator politics: politics by focus groups and polls, à la Bill Clinton and Dick Morris.

Most of us would hardly call this desirable. And there is worse. To evade existing, increasingly burdensome restrictions, politicians have learned to "bundle" individual contributions through political action committees, and their party organizations have learned to solicit unregulated "soft-money" donations that can then be "laundered" into help for specific candidates. None of these options would necessarily seem less corrupting than old-style, fat-cat payoffs to campaigns.

Surely it would be a perverse result if reform, intended to increase the influence of ordinary folks at the expense of "special interests," ended up limiting participation in elections. But that is exactly what Smith argues is the natural—and actual—effect of limits on contributions and spending. Rates of incumbent reelection reached unprecedented peaks in the 1980s, inspiring the term-limits movement.

For Smith, it is vital to keep in mind what is at stake, which is freedom of speech itself. The constitutional issues cannot be swept aside.

That was no accident, Smith observes, for it followed enactment of the first reforms limiting contributions. Incumbents spend lots of money, of course, but it has diminishing utility for them. Challengers, on the other hand, can never get enough money, since Americans are, by and large, terribly uninformed about candidates who don't already have their names in the paper on a daily basis, can't arrange free photo-ops, and don't enjoy franking privileges for saturation-bombing runs on voters' mailboxes. Contribution limits reinforce these advantages—doubly so, since the early flow of money in campaigns goes mainly to incumbents.

For Smith, it is vital to keep in mind what is at stake, which is freedom of speech itself. The constitutional issues cannot be swept aside. The leading case is the Supreme Court's 1976 decision in *Buckley* v. *Valeo*, which upheld the Federal Election Campaign Act's (FECA) disclosure requirements, contribution limits, and voluntary public-funding scheme, but struck down overall spending limits and bans on issue advocacy. In reaching this result, the Court held that campaign contributions are indeed speech protected by the First Amendment from overly intrusive government action.

The Court also concluded, however, that there existed a compelling governmental interest in preventing even the appearance of corruption, an interest sufficient to justify limits on individual donations. Smith offers a compelling if sadly moot argument that the Court too easily accepted the corruption rationale and failed to apply the necessary "strict scrutiny" to those burdens FECA placed on speech rights.

If contributing to campaigns is at least in part a protected activity, its regulation should be narrowly tailored to achieve permissible objectives without intruding on the fundamental right of free expression. All reform proposals should be judged in this light. Particularly disturbing, then, is the emphasis placed by many reformers on closing the "loophole" that allows unregulated spending for broadcast advertising of policy-advocacy messages. The Court in *Buckley* was presented with this question of "issue advocacy" and ruled that FECA's language limiting expenditures on ads that refer to "a clearly identified candidate" would have had an unacceptable chilling effect on free speech about public issues. As Smith notes, the

Court was fully aware that issue ads—even without explicit mention of a candidate, as in "vote for Jones"—will often imply support for a particular politician. And, indeed, that is typically the ad-maker's intention. Nonetheless, the *Buckley* court concluded that regulation of such advocacy was too great an intrusion on the most constitutionally protected form of speech: political expression.

We can only hope that when the sausage-making is over in Congress, similar respect is preserved for core American values and fundamental American rights. ♦

The Doping of the American Mind

Robert Cohen's satirical tale of how we drug ourselves silly. **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

Since the publication in 1993 of Peter Kramer's *Listening to Prozac*, innumerable books have attempted to take the measure of a national psyche increasingly awash in mood-elevating pharmaceuticals. America seems to have embraced with unbridled enthusiasm the family of drugs that interrupt the journey of a neurological chemical called serotonin through the brain—so much so that cultural critics worry the nation is rapidly morphing into the dystopia of Aldous Huxley's frenzied imagining.

Inspired Sleep
by Robert Cohen
Scribner, 400 pp., $25

The citizens of Huxley's *Brave New World*, you recall, would swallow a gram of the fictional drug "soma" at the first stirrings of anxiety. "Eyes shone, cheeks were flushed, the inner light of universal benevolence broke out on every face in happy, friendly smiles," Huxley writes of a populace so doped-up it is incapable of independent thought.

Huxley may have thought that a drug offering instant and indiscriminate contentment was a horror beyond imagining. But when such a drug is no longer merely a literary trope but a practical possibility, it's not quite so easy to dismiss. The reality of the SSRI drugs is that they lift psychic boulders from the crippled backs of the clinically depressed, and it's impossible to argue that such pain should be endured simply because human beings had no choice but to endure it in the millennia before these substances were discovered.

But to those not afflicted with crippling depression—to those suffering minor aches and sadnesses—Prozac and its progeny offer the fantasy that ordinary depression might be treated with an analgesic. We no longer tolerate headaches, throat aches, stomach aches. Why should we tolerate soul aches?

That question is at the heart of Robert Cohen's novel *Inspired Sleep*. This witty, wise, intellectually engaging, and altogether extraordinary book is set in the not-so-brave real world of serotonin inhibitors, Internet chat rooms devoted to anxiety, and doctors and patients who test the new drugs that promise relief from spiritual agony even as they raise fundamental questions about human nature.

"Who says what's okay and what's pathology? Because there are an awful lot of us in the middle, you know, who don't know what to call what we've got. What are you going to do, go around treating everybody for everything?" The woman who speaks those words to her psychopharmacologist is Bonnie Saks, a thirty-nine-year-old pregnant divorcée with a quick wit, sharp tongue, maxed-out credit cards, two young sons—and a really lousy case of insomnia. The exhausted Bonnie drags herself through the day, rousing and feeding and fighting with her kids, teaching English literature to sullen and uncomprehending undergraduates, avoiding work on a Ph.D. thesis about Thoreau (whom she has come to despise), and trying to make do in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on $19,000 a year.

Every night, at 3:29 A.M., she wakes up and cannot get back to sleep: "Her neighbors' windows were dark. The vacant streets were silent. She could feel the city bobbing along on slow, invisible tides, sailing wistfully through the millennium. What purpose was served, she wondered, in keeping her apart?"

All around her, people are finding refuge in psychopharmaceuticals. Her older son, enraged by his father's disappearing act, washes down 25 milligrams of Prozac a day with Dr. Pepper. Bonnie joins an Internet "community" whose participants trade gossip and fears about brain drugs. "I got turned on to this great new psychopharmacologist downtown who wants to put me on Effexor," writes one participant. "Which is supposed to be great stuff. Though I hear it causes lower bowel problems."

Another: "I have a history of depression and had tremendous results from Nortriptyline and Prozac for 4 yrs. I felt

Contributing editor John Podhoretz last wrote for THE WEEKLY STANDARD *about Mel Brooks's* The Producers.

so good I didn't mind giving up my sex drive."

Still another: "Hi! I've been on Wellbutrin and Cytomel for about 2 months! How long does it take before it really starts to work??? I don't feel so good sometimes but other times I really am starting to think it's working!"

Elsewhere in Cambridge, pharmaceutical researchers are developing a medication called Dodabulax, which seems the answer to Bonnie's prayers. The chief researcher tells his students, "In ten years—five—we'll be living in a world . . . where the biology of sleep and wakefulness is regularly manipulated through chemical means, with effects as revolutionary in the spheres of work and leisure as was the introduction of electrical light."

But Bonnie resists medicating herself: "The whole millennial banquet of mood lighteners, breast swellers, hair growers, fat removers . . . —all the fast chemical solutions you could buy in a jar and swallow your way toward perfectibility—made her feel reticent and grudging, like a fat girl on a diet. Was there to be a remedy for everything, then? For life itself?"

She tells the father of her younger son's preschool classmate, "I don't approve of shortcuts. Not anymore. Every time I take one I wind up getting lost." The father has become a participant in the clinical trial of Dodabulax. "Gives you fantastic dreams. Fantastic dreams that never end," he says. "Do you know what it's like to have nothing but deep sleep and fantastic dreams?"

Bonnie cannot resist the lure. "Forget the planet," she thinks. "It's you that needs saving." She joins the clinical trial for Dodabulax as well. The drug is administered to her by a brilliant young psychopharmacologist named Ian Ogelvie, who is gifted with a capacity for stillness that Bonnie lacks utterly. He can sit for hours and observe as a spider, doped with Dodabulax, weaves perfect, symmetrical webs, and two Siamese fighting fish dosed with the drug no longer feel the compulsion to fight. But while Ian's life is as Spartan as Bonnie's is chaotic, it is equally unsatisfying: "There were times he did not so much inhabit his life as observe it under glass, finding his every movement obvious and reactive, significant not of itself but of some larger, unknowable force that lay beyond the frame of his will."

Dodabulax works its magic on Bonnie immediately. She is finally rested, full of new energy, more patient with her kids. But for someone so burdened, sleep itself quickly becomes an addiction. Her four-year-old sees it happening: "Lately she didn't care so much about what they ate, or how often they took baths, or what the teachers had said about what they'd done in school that day, or any of the usual things she worried about. All she seemed to think about was lying down. She did that a lot. Even when she was standing up she sort of looked like she was lying down."

The high-powered lawyer who introduced her to Dodabulax loses his ambition and his sex drive. Ian's spider stops spinning webs altogether. The dreams of a convict who receives triple doses begin slopping over into his waking life, leaving him "yellow, his bones scooped from his face as if by claws." And what effect will the drug have on Bonnie's pregnancy?

Inspired Sleep may sound depressing, but it is vivid and alive in a way few contemporary novels are. Cohen has a rare sensibility that is equal parts comic and compassionate. He has a ruthless satiric understanding of the woes of the overly educated, but also an imaginative sympathy for the anxieties arising from those woes. Cohen renders the political dynamics of Ian's research team, and Ian's blindness to them, with uncanny precision and detail. And Bonnie is one of the great characters in recent fiction: smart, obnoxious, self-pitying, and yet resilient.

Like so many who indulge in the fantasy of a chemical release from our ordinary troubles, Bonnie wishes to be delivered from the clutter of her life. Cohen's point is that clutter is life. Better to be Bonnie than Ian Ogelvie, who longs for human connection but cannot quite manage it. He can only watch, mystified, as the world swirls around him. Bonnie lives in the whirlwind. It's often overwhelming, but it's also far more interesting. ♦

BGA

Mysterious Balthus

The painter as individualist.

BY DAVID GELERNTER

Well into his forties he was largely unknown, but by the time he died—this year, on February 18, at age ninety-two—Balthasar Klossowski was the most celebrated artist in the world. He called himself "Balthus," a frenchified version of a childhood nickname. His parents were Poles (his mother a Jew), and he died in Switzerland. But he was born and spent much of his career in Paris, and he is known as a French painter—the last survivor of the great age of French painting.

Whatever the art world was for, Balthus was against. He was that rarest of commodities in artistic circles, a non-conformist. His perversity was so thoroughgoing that in the end it looked like integrity, except when it was disgusting. He liked cats and little girls. He was against cubism, abstraction, surrealism, all forms of politicized art, and the twentieth century in general. Until late in life, he was against the idea of celebrity. He disliked having his photograph taken and, although his finest works are portraits, he rarely

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made self-portraits. According to his most famous pronouncement, which he used on several occasions, "Balthus is an artist about whom nothing is known."

He was in favor of Piero della Francesca and Gustave Courbet, of portraits and nudes, still-lifes, landscapes, and, above all, himself. He believed in art and greatness. From childhood on he seems to have regarded himself as a great man. He flirted with disaster like a reckless test pilot all his life, and got into frequent artistic crack-ups. "Disturbing" was his favorite way to paint—and disturbing is a word with two senses: A surreal landscape by Giorgio de Chirico can be disturbing, but a freak show is also disturbing; a beautiful model half-undressed can be disturbingly beautiful, but a sexualized little girl half-undressed is disturbingly vile. Like the Japanese recipe for blowfish, "disturbing" is arguably delicious up to a point, but beyond that point it becomes fatal. Balthus lacked a firm enough, wise enough hand to prepare this doubtful dish. Too many of his paintings are merely toxic.

So why should we concern ourselves with his work? His draftsmanship is cramped and timid, an inadequate foundation for his big ambitions. He has no color sense, and his work tends to be overbearing and profoundly humorless. The best you can say for most of his paintings is that they are no good.

The answer lies in his gift for painterly architecture; many of his pictures are imposing and impressively composed—graceless yet with a formidable, brooding presence, like a Mussorgsky opera or a grimy nineteenth-century British jail. His best portraits are as good as twentieth-century portraits can be. And occasionally he stops grinding his teeth, quits struggling to produce masterpieces, and lets go a picture (as you might release a captured songbird) that is as pale and lovely as the first hesitant daffodil after a dirty winter.

All paintings: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Thérèse Dreaming *(1938)*

His *Therese Dreaming* (1938) is all too characteristic. The painting is part of the small "Balthus Remembered" exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum in New York through May 27. A girl of maybe eleven sleeps on a bench with one leg drawn up (her skirt and slip have fallen crumpled to her waist), hands joined on her head, a cat lapping milk at her feet. The composition is arresting: stillness coiled tight; a snake about to strike. The girl is asleep, yet each leg and arm is sharply bent; she seems menacing, and her dreams must be menacing too. The cat crouches low, pent-up and ominous.

Perhaps this makes the painting sound like a haunted house, a dark masterpiece. It isn't. There is something wrong. The girl's bare legs and crumpled skirt and exposed panties aren't narrative details. They are the whole point, the painting's unequivocal focus; the jutting knee is dead-center. Balthus has painted this little girl in the spirit of Degas approaching a middle-aged whore. Before we even have time to be morally offended, we are aesthetically revolted. ("We're fed up with Balthus and his little girls," the artist Alberto Giacometti is supposed to have said.)

And Balthus can easily produce revulsion without resorting to half-naked children. Some people have a taste for the grotesque—for oriental theater masks and German folk tales, for medical curiosities in bottles, or TV shows about techniques of execution or bizarre diseases. In his own distinctive way, Balthus was a master of this language.

Take *The Mountain* (1937), usually described as one of his masterworks. What is it about this large picture that makes it so exceptionally awful? It centers on a young lady in gray, hips cocked and hands pressed together overhead with the palms upward, as if she were fending off a blimp. (The legendary connoisseur James Lord—the last of the great Americans-in-Paris—reports that the lady is Antoinette de Watteville, whom Balthus courted, married, and left for a younger woman.) There is a sleeping girl at Antoinette's

feet, a crouching mountaineer to her left and smaller figures in the background. The setting is Alpine and rocky.

Often Balthus's figures are deliberately distorted: the heads too large, the hands and feet too small. Such distortions are not bad in themselves. (In Attic black-figure painting they have a fleet, story-book charm.) But here, as in many other Balthus paintings, the effect is grotesque—as it is supposed to be. The faces are swollen in a way that seems to crowd out thought. The crouching mountain-man is sullen and nasty. Five of six figures have canes, to emphasize their wooden stiffness. The colors (grays, browns, and sky blue, with emphatic oranges and yellow-greens) suggest the customer-waiting lounge in a down-market tattoo parlor: One feels that they could not possibly have been chosen on purpose.

Yet this same snarling grotesqueness can produce powerful results when it is kept under control. Balthus's portraits tend to be good likenesses, and they represent a new genre in portraiture: the interrogation portrait, which turns the subject into a suspect and makes the viewer feel like a policeman wielding a spotlight. They are painterly versions of the FBI's Most Wanted posters.

His portraits of the painters André Derain (1936) and Joan Miró (1938, with his daughter) are brutally unpleasant and monumentally effective. Derain stares balefully, with a pint-sized hand pressed histrionically to his chest and a half-undressed model with downcast eyes seated behind. Miró's face poses some sort of gigantic, desperately urgent question. Both men are trapped in the cross hairs; both pairs of eyes bore straight ahead, both faces glisten as if soaked with sweat (although no sweat is visible). Both paintings are done in sickly yellowish tones. They make your skin crawl, and they are brilliant.

And not all of Balthus's successes are sickly. The figure in *Girl in a White Dress* (1955) is in her twenties—Frederique Tison, Balthus's live-in model at the time. She has pulled her blouse off over her head without unbuttoning it, and sits quietly with the blouse softly binding her forearms, her breasts and shoulders bare. The effect is overwhelming. This is a beautiful painting, possibly the artist's most beautiful.

Girl in a White Dress *(1955)*

But in the end his art rests on draftsmanship, and his draftsmanship is weak. His best drawings have poise and quasi-feminine grace, but ordinarily—as in the 1953 *Study for the Dream I*—they are tentative and halting, full of awkward passages at exactly the predictable places (hands, foreshortened limbs, facial features) and utterly lacking in the boldness or fluency that might have redeemed them.

Balthus in 1956

Balthus's life makes good reading. His mother was an artist and a friend of the poet Rainer Maria Rilke, and Rilke took the boy on, encouraged his painting, and introduced him to important artists. Balthus the adult was openly contemptuous of the fashionable art scene. But Picasso liked his work. (Picasso had a taste for the grotesque, but rarely let it overwhelm his art.) He was friends with Giacometti; the powerful New York dealer Pierre Matisse—son of the painter—took him on and stuck with him. He was hardly isolated.

In the end he seems like a man who never grew up but (unfortunately) had been none too charming as a boy. "When I was young," he said, "I always felt like a little prince." He had the virtues and shortcomings of a spoiled brat all his life.

Too many of his paintings show an artist's big bold imagination, a precocious child's technique, and a little boy's dirty mind. He was infatuated with aristocracy in a way that suggests a child in his Knights-of-the-Round-Table phase. He wanted to live in a château; "I have a greater need for a château," he said, "than a laborer for a

The Mountain *(1937)*

loaf of bread." He wasn't kidding. (He was never kidding.) And he did acquire a beat-up jalopy château, second-hand. In middle age he decided that he had actually been a Polish nobleman all along, and gradually came to insist on being addressed by his phony title. He called himself the "Count de Rola." Eventually he became famous and rich enough to live and be treated exactly as he liked.

The "Count de Rola" fantasy might have been harmless play-acting: Every artist makes up heroic stories about himself. But there could be more to it, and it may offer a clue to his art. "Balthus felt ashamed of his mother," writes James Lord, who knew Balthus (and everyone else). (Lord's essay on Balthus is in his *Some Remarkable Men* from 1996; John Russell wrote another essential Balthus piece, which appears in his 1999 *Matisse: Father & Son*.) Balthus evidently felt (just as his admirer and friend Dora Maar did) that a Jewish parent was no great asset in the world of twentieth-century French art.

In this light, the aristocrat fantasy seems less like whimsical silliness and more like a defensive jab to protect a vulnerable sore point. And then, naturally, one thinks of the systematic distortions that make his figures grotesque. Did he put in those distortions as a maneuver to hide his technical weakness? Was he insisting: "My figures look strange because I *want* them to"? (And how could I be a Jew? I'm a Polish nobleman!)

In any case, instead of confronting his technical limitations head-on and turning them into great art, as Cézanne and Matisse did, as Cornell and Pollock did, he ran away. He snuck out the back door. In the end he gave us many terrible paintings and a few fine ones. He was no great artist.

But perhaps he was a notable minor one. An artist's peculiar vision is his only source of power. But as he sets off for distant shores, he expects to be blown around by the prevailing artistic winds. Few artists have ever been blown around less than Balthus. He sailed straight. He worked among some of the most powerful and winning artistic personalities of all time, but they had virtually no effect on his painting. From start to finish his art embodied his own vision and no one else's. And his vision barely changed over a lifetime: Many viewers have been struck by how much the paintings he made in his eighties resemble paintings he made in his twenties. His artistic personality was a clenched fist, shut tight.

It's easy to believe that he would have been a better painter had he had been a more open-hearted one. Yet his absolute refusal to be swayed by fashion or anything else is a strange and admirable thing. The amazingly straight course he cut through the gross tumult of the twentieth century was a remarkable achievement, a work of art in itself: his greatest, by far. ♦

ASBURY PARK PRESS

Parody

Haunted by Dark Moments from His Past, Torricelli Recounts Tragic Episode

By Marc Johnson
Special To The Press

In a desperate effort to quash a growing fund-raising scandal, New Jersey Senator Robert Torricelli has given the *New York Times Magazine* a dramatic account of his early fund-raising efforts.

In an emotional interview at his home, Torricelli recalled one of the early episodes that led to the current investigation: "It was years ago," he began. "It was a dark and moonless night. Me and my group of aides were up river—the Hudson River. We'd penetrated into a six bedroom condo on Riverside Drive, and we were cutting our way through some prominent donors. Suddenly from the parlor we started receiving incoming gifts: Rolexes, envelopes of cash, keys to Mercedes C-Class automobiles. I thought I saw some Korean businessmen, but I couldn't be sure. It was dark. There were caterers blocking my view. We did what the Democratic National Committee manual instructed us to do. We responded with a massive display of access…."

At this point, Torricelli broke down weeping. "Does it help to know that I was following the orders I had been given? Does it help to know that the Mercedes wasn't actually in my color and I returned it? No. I'll think about that night every day of my life. I'll live with the shame until I die." At this point Torricelli began hyperventilating and passed out.

When he was revived, after a long dream involving Bianca Jagger, he continued with his account. "I don't know if you can ever understand it if you haven't been a fund-raiser, haven't ever been in the maelstrom. The soft money, the hard money. The emotions. The federal caps. You find yourself confronting the abyss. You find yourself going to prominent leaders in the New Jersey parking lot industry and listening to their legitimate concerns, especially about the way the Federal Bureau of Investigation prosecutes upstanding families who have never done anything wrong. Read Conrad. You come back a different man." Torricelli's voice trailed off, before he passed into a coma.

"We have to be careful about judging a man such as this," said fellow fund-raiser Chris Dodd. "Unless you've walked around the block in his Pradas, you can't understand

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