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Outside Contributors

Divider Title: _____

CONTRIBUTORS

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Al From [memorandum to come].

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Sylvia Ann Hewlett is an economist and founder of the National Parenting Association, and the author of *When the Bough Breaks*. **Cornel West** is professor of Afro-American Studies at Harvard University, and author of *Race Matters*. Their new book, *The War Against Parents*, was published earlier this year.

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Ronald Takaki is Professor of Ethnic Studies at the University of California at Berkeley. His book, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 1987. His most recent work, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*, was published in 1993.

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~~Confidential~~ Memorandum to President Clinton:DETERMINED TO BE AN
ADMINISTRATIVE MARKING
INITIALS: WLB DATE: 11/04/15From Benjamin Barber
November 6, 1998Re: A PROGRAM TO DEFINE, ENERGIZE AND DRAMATIZE THE LAST
TWO YEARS OF YOUR PRESIDENCY.

With one half of the term remaining, and a full quarter of the eight years, there is ample opportunity to put a mark on your Presidency that will both gainsay those who think nothing is possible in the remaining time and that will dramatize your philosophy of governance in the form of a vital legacy. With the impetus of the elections, we now have a springboard for a leap into substantive action.

Because our challenges are both domestic and global, I suggest a program with a powerful global component and a significant domestic component -- at least one major innovation in each domain that embodies commitment to new forms of government activity that share power and responsibility with citizens and the private sector.

I will suggest an idea for each of these two areas, but whether these specific proposals are convincing, they are examples of THE KIND OF DRAMATIC, EASILY UNDERSTOOD INITIATIVES that will draw enthusiastic support from the American people. We should seek similar initiatives in related areas, ideally ones that can be inaugurated via executive action (bypassing Congress if necessary), or ones that are so popular that Congress will feel constrained to cooperate.

Here are two examples -- a domestic initiative around education, and a foreign initiative around strengthening global civil society -- that might be made the core of the 1999 State of the Union and become the heart of the final two years:

1. "EMPOWER": EMPOWERING PARENTS FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

(A public school voucher plan in the form of
a dedicated tax reduction)

Democrats have long sought to find a way to strengthen shared responsibility and parent empowerment in a way that also strengthens public schooling rather than, as happens with private voucher plans, weakening it. They have also sought ways to use federal incentives without increasing federal spending and federal bureaucracy. A public school voucher plan in the form of a dedicated tax deduction for parents with children in public school can achieve both of these objectives in a dramatic fashion:

Every American with children in K-12 public schools would be offered a tax incentive of between \$250 and \$500 per child. The incentive would take the form of a reduction in tax liability by that amount, to be returned to the

taxpayer after taxes are paid in the form of an education voucher.

The voucher would be useable in any public school participating in the program (schools would have discretion to participate or not, but would obviously have powerful incentives to participate), but only in public schools. The money represented by the voucher (to be presented to the government for payment) would have to be spent on specific programs according to the wishes of parents.

Thus, a parent might say, "I want my \$500 to be spent on art education in my child's school." Or, "I want my \$500 to go directly to a bonus for my child's homeroom teacher." Or (with two children), "I want my \$1000 to go the their high-school science laboratory."

Schools would be responsible for accounting for funds spent and would report to parents directly, thus making schools and parents (rather than the government) the primary responsible parties. The government through oversight could assure proper accounting procedures without a large bureaucracy.

If desired, the program could be means-tested, say at around \$50,000 to include the great majority of American. Or it could be open to all citizens willing to send their children to public schools, thus becoming an incentive for wealthier Americans to support public schooling.

Because the vouchers would come in the form of a designated "tax reduction" rather than an educational "spending bill" it would be part of a tax cut package and be far easier to sell politically both to Congress and to America.

Because vouchers would be limited to public schools, the program would strengthen them without becoming part of a privatization voucher plan and would be less likely to be opposed by the education unions. Indeed, it would be an incentive for parents to patronize their public schools and strengthen public schooling overall.

Because it would empower parents to be the judges of how their vouchers are spent, it would create greater school-parent communication, and mobilize parents in the way private voucher schemes are supposed to -- without undercutting the economics of public education.

Because schools would have the accounting responsibility (with government oversight) and parents would be the watchdogs, the program would not require a vastly enlarged federal education bureaucracy.

The impact on individual schools of such a plan is immediately obvious: a school with 500 children would potentially have additional instructional funds of \$125,000 (with a \$250 per child voucher) to \$250,000 (with a \$500 voucher) per annum. A classroom of 20 children would have up to \$10,000 in supplementary funding for classroom use, if parents got together and pooled their vouchers in that way.

Schools would have significant additional funding and feel more responsible to parents; parents would feel empowered to influence their children's schools and receive significant but educationally-dedicated tax relief; the federal government would increase its role in funding education, but -- by doing it indirectly and through parent public school vouchers -- not in the traditional "big government" way, but by strengthening civic partnerships and empowering parents and their local schools; finally, the idea of government/civil society partnership in which government becomes an ally of local responsibility rather than a surrogate for it would be given a powerful incarnation.

2. "ICF": AN INTERNATIONAL CIVIC FUND

(A civic fund aimed at providing support for citizens, civic organizations and the global civic infrastructure, on the model of the IMF.)

International institutions often seem to be concerned primarily with free trade (the WTO), currency speculators and bankers (the IMF) and business loans (THE WORLD BANK). There is no equivalent set of institutions devoted to founding and strengthening international civil society and the civic fabric of societies under economic duress. Microfinance banks are helping women and families in local neighborhoods, but there is no civic infrastructural support to accompany microlending projects. Consequently, WTO policies and IMF bailouts tend to do little for ordinary citizens and create the impression of an international order devoted exclusively to the interests of the economically privileged.

I propose that the United States Government work with the G-7 and other economically dominant nations to establish and fund an ICF "International Civic Fund" whose mission it would be to underwrite and reenforce the civic infrastructure within and between nations. It would be funded at the level of the IMF, but directed at the challenges faced by citizens and their civic associations.

An ICF would serve three interrelated purposes: first, it would symbolize a focus by the concert of nations on people and their problems, and thus counteract the impression that the global order is exclusively economic and fiscal, and concerned only to protect the privileged; second, it would provide meaningful funding to deal substantively with real human problems within stressed societies -- problems sometimes resulting precisely from the action of the IMF and other global economic organizations; it might also coordinate and strengthen microfinancial institutions; and, third, it would create the potential framework for an international civic organization that might in time become a global forum for civic and democratic concerns.

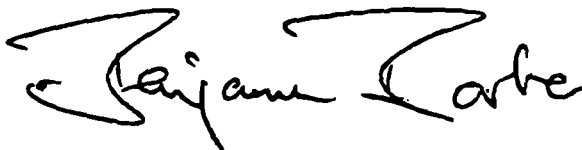
Funding for such an organization might come from:
a) some version of the "Tobin Tax," a tithe on all global currency transactions or on capital transfers -- on, in other words, international transactions on the paper side of the economy; b) contributions by governments pro-rated around a nation's volume of trade or GNP or some other economic indicator; c) a tax on countries related to environmental compliance criteria (adjusted to GNP so that developing countries would not be taxed) in which nations that failed to meet standards would pay compensation to the ICF.

On a symbolic level, the mere existence of an ICF next to the IMF would signify American support for a global civic order and for the real interests of citizens, and would serve to restore some balance to an international order that is widely perceived as a tool of the privileged. Seen another way, an ICF would be a kind of global Marshall fund in which U.S. leadership would signify a return to the prudent generosity (which is also enlightened self-interest!) of the post-war years -- without great cost to the U.S. Treasury.

Presidential leadership on two programs such as these -- programs with widespread impact and a relevance for ordinary citizens that at the same time can capture the public imagination in a dramatic fashion -- will help create more general executive and legislative momentum in the last two years, and make them the most productive of your Presidency.

I admire the cumulative effect of local and incrementalist programs, and I believe a great part of your legacy lies in how you have PREVENTED what could have been a dangerous shift to the right in America by addressing 'conservative' concerns of ordinary Americans in moderate and incremental ways. But such efforts need to be dramatized and given symbolic importance. Much as the Americorps program -- modest as it was -- was much larger in impact and symbolism than in scale and funding, and stood for your commitment to civic responsibility, government-private sector partnerships and the linkage between education and good citizenship, so in these last two years, a PARENT EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE and an INTERNATIONAL CIVIC FUND can stand for your commitment to new ways to empower citizens around education and all that education means for our future, as well as to new ways to civilize the international order.

Announced in the 1999 State of the Union as programs to take us into the new millennium, these measures would energize the Presidency and the country and promise a lasting legacy for America and the world.



*Diane D. Blair
1011 Tanglebriar
Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701*

December 20, 1998

To: Michael Waldman
From: Diane Blair

I have not forgotten your phone call, but shortly after we spoke I had an opportunity to visit with the President, and made my suggestions re State of the Union speech to him then. For the record, recent events have done nothing to weaken, indeed have strengthened my belief that:

The "State" of the Union (especially the economy, the budget, but also crime, etc.) is in fact fabulous; which should be briefly outlined and credit taken for measures which have produced this excellent state of affairs.

The task now is to seize upon these good times as an unparalleled opportunity for making decisions which will insure an equally strong future. We have a rendezvous with responsibility. We have taken first steps; now must go further to "lock down" the future.

Be bold in vision, outlining the challenges and broad "solutions" (but no legislative laundry lists) in three, and only three areas. The obvious three are: saving Social Security and Medicare; making an abiding commitment to a truly superior public school system; securing a safe and free world.

This is a fabulous opportunity for demonstrating real statesmanship.

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The Queen's College
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27 November 1998

TO: The President

FROM: Alan Brinkley

I write from an institution where you are warmly remembered, and where I am spending a year as a visiting professor.

It is, again, a privilege to have an opportunity to offer some thoughts in connection with your upcoming State of the Union Address, which in light of the recent election and the apparent current situation in Congress, will provide an opportunity to offer a fresh start to what remains of your second term after the massive distractions of the past year.

I know that State of the Union Addresses must do many things and satisfy many constituencies. But at their best, they also help to define presidencies by stating their central themes and goals clearly and boldly. That, I think, is what this address should try to do: First, it should remind the public of the impressive record of this administration over the last six years, a record that perhaps needs new attention in light of the media's preoccupation with other matters in 1998; and at the same time, remind them of the core concerns that drove the agenda of the administration from the beginning. Second, suggest how the administration might build on that record and those concerns in the time remaining to it.

One way to begin is, of course, to note again the impressive successes America has enjoyed since 1993 – the remarkably healthy economy, the victory over a deficit that until very recently seemed utterly intractable, the declining rates of violent crime, and the many other social indicators that have made the 1990s one of the most successful decades of this century.

Equally important, however, is to make clear how this administration has sought to share the rewards of these great successes more equitably and how it has tried from the beginning to give special attention to the great mass of middle-class and working-class people whose lives have not improved as much as might have been expected given the economic progress of the last decade. It is not necessary for me to remind you of the many policy initiatives of your administration that, together, form a pattern of support for working people that – while not as extensive as you had wished – is nevertheless a major contribution to the modern history of public policy. But it is certainly necessary for you to remind the public of those initiatives: among them, parental leave, the minimum wage increase, health care portability, educational initiatives, the Earned Income Tax Credit (which now has surprising support along a broad ideological range), job-training initiatives, and even some aspects of welfare reform that emphasize training and re-education. In a speech you delivered at Chapel Hill near the beginning of your administration, you made a powerful argument for the obligation of government to help working people move more successfully through an economy

that confronts them with greater challenges and more substantial change than the one their parents experienced. You laid out then a group of initiatives in education, training, health care, and others that would, in effect, empower individuals to manage their own passage through a lifetime of rapidly changing work situations. Not all of the proposals you outlined then have succeeded; not all of them are likely to succeed anytime soon; but the theme of that speech, and of your initiatives then and since, remains an important one – that government still has a role to play, not in micromanaging the economy or interfering in private decisionmaking, but in providing vehicles through which individuals can empower themselves and work toward a better future.

One of the great achievement of this administration, after the setbacks of its first two years, has been to learn to make progress incrementally, to look for opportunities in a very unpromising political environment to move toward its goals in small and sometimes unnoticed steps. The State of the Union Address is a time to bring these many incremental steps into the light and to impose a pattern on them that will help the public to understand what your domestic legacy is and why it is an important one.

I do not believe that a State of the Union Address two years before the expiration of a President's second term is the time to propose enormous new initiatives. But neither, of course, is it a time just for summing up. I think that this speech would be most effective if it combined an effective review of the goals and achievements of the past with an achievable agenda for the next two years that will build on that past. It is not for me, of course, to suggest what that agenda should be – although I believe the results of the 1998 election suggest that both in Congress and in the public there will now be a greater readiness than there was even in 1996 for some bold and creative thinking.

Needless to say, there should be attention as well to the increasingly important international activities of the administration and to some of its striking successes – and, in my opinion, a strong appeal for a repudiation of the narrow isolationism that has so often dominated the opposition's view of America's global role. But I believe that the most important goal of this speech is to define and advance the administration's domestic record and to lay out goals that could serve as a basis for future progress – some of it, one hopes, during the remaining life of this administration, and some of it beyond.

This will, of course, also be the last State of the Union Address before the year 2000, and while it would be a mistake to belabor the significance of the millennium, it would also be a mistake to ignore the growing preoccupation the millennium has created both with what our past has been like and what our future will be. There is a great deal of very interesting and, in my opinion, inspiring writing about the future from the last turn-of-the-century that might help you make effective rhetorical use of this unusual moment. If I can be of any help in guiding you into some of that work, I would be honored to do so.

I look forward to reading and, I hope (if British television cooperates), viewing your address. Again, I hope you will let me know if I can be of any further assistance – on this or anything else.

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HENRY G. CISNEROS
PRESIDENT

Memorandum

To: President Clinton
From: Henry Cisneros
Subject: Casting the State of the Union as a Review of The
High Points of American Achievement in the
20th Century



Sample Opening:

"This is the start of the last session of Congress before Americans greet the new millennium. It is the last session with the prefix numbers of this century - 19. Next year when we gather we will be on the other side of the millennial divide and we will look forward from the vantage point of the New Century.

So this is the right moment to pause and scan across the breadth of this century and to reflect upon the great moments of American achievement and more importantly on the great American achievers who made this century so transforming in the annals of mankind."

[Note: Here the President would present uplifting vignettes describing the greatest moments of the last century and introduce in the gallery outstanding Americans who have personal links to each moment.]

Moment
The Dawn of
New Century
(1900)

Significance
A moment of expansion,
hopefulness, and new
awareness of national
power, characterized
by Teddy Roosevelt's
vigorous ambitions for
the nation.

Examples of persons
to be introduced in the
gallery

* Descendant of
Teddy Roosevelt

First Flight
Wright Brothers
(1905 - 1910)

One of the most significant
inventions of the 20th Century
ushered in an era of engineering
creativity and scientific breakthroughs.

*Descendant of the
Wright Brothers
*Senator John Glenn

World War I
(1914 - 1920)

America's first call to be a
power on the world scene would
reshape the nation's leadership
abroad and change its view of
itself at home.

*A World War I
combat veteran

Age of Industrialization (1920s)	New inventions spawned whole new industries, mass production, the growth of cities, workers organizations and reform movements.	*Henry Ford III *John Sweeney of the AFL-CIO
The Depression (1930s)	From the hardships of the Depression came Social Security and the mechanisms to stabilize and calibrate the national economy, such as improvements Federal Reserve System.	*A WPA worker who later created a business and raised a family. *Alan Greenspan *A member of the New Deal brain trust
World War II (1941 – 1945)	The mobilization against totalitarianism produced the most decisive moments of the 20 th Century.	*A veteran who landed on Normandy on D-Day *Bob Hope
A Period of Recovery, Discovery and, Acceptance of World Leadership (1950s)	Americans put the confidence, skills, and determination learned in the War to work on domestic front; medical pioneering supersonic flight, modern homes.	*Descendant of Dr. Jones Salk or a colleague who aided in the discovery of polio vaccine.
A Prayer for Racial Justice (1960s)	The doors opened by the Civil Rights Movement have enabled progress for African-Americans, but also for women, Latinos, the disabled, gays, lesbians, and many other Americans.	*Mrs. Correta Scott King *Mrs. Rosa Parks *Mrs. Jackie Robinson *Mohammed Ali
A Call to Reconciliation and Healing (1970s)	After the tumultuous protests and violence of the 60s, national reconciliation was our hope.	*President Gerald Ford *President Jimmy Carter
The End of the Cold War (1980s)	The threat of all-out nuclear war diminished and a global consensus emerged on the virtues of democracy and free enterprise.	*Mrs. Nancy Reagan *President George Bush
Americans in a Time of Peace (1990s)	In peace and prosperity, more American families can enjoy the quest for personal improvement and leisure activities.	*Michael Jordan *Joe Montana *Sammy Sosa *Mark McGwire

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December 5, 1998

President William Jefferson Clinton
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer some thoughts on your State of the Union Message. As a historian, I think first of the fact that your address will be the last Message of the twentieth century. At so auspicious a moment, might it not be appropriate to offer a state paper like John Quincy Adams's First Message of December 11, 1825? Adams announced a bold vision urging ideas and actions that would knit the nation together and advance its physical and spiritual well-being.

The specific concerns of our day, of course, are vastly different from those addressed by Adams. But the spirit and thrust of his First Message seems like an appropriate starting point for the last Annual Message of this century.

In 1900, President William McKinley found the start of a new century a compelling reason to look back over the gains of the last hundred years. In his Fourth Message of December 3, 1900, he noted the growth of the country's population from 5.3 million in November 1800 to 76.3 million in December 1900. The number of states had increased in the 19th century from sixteen to forty five and the nation's territory had grown from 900,000 square miles to over 3.8 million square miles.

The nation's progress in the 20th century has not been so much in population growth or

states added or additional territory. Ours has been a century of remarkable technological advance--radio, television, jet planes, space travel, nuclear power and the internet--and medical gains extending life expectancy from approximately 50 years in 1900 to more than 76 years now.

The rise of America from one of several great powers in 1900 to the world's superpower has been as impressive. More important, America's transformation has served the cause of international freedom and democracy. The 116,000 Americans who sacrificed their lives in World War I, the 405,000 in World War II, the 33,000 in Korea, the 58,000 in Vietnam, and the many others who paid freedom's price in every part of the world should be remembered not simply on Memorial Day or Veterans' Day or at the end of our century but every day that people everywhere enjoy the blessings of freedom.

The central question for the next century is: How will we use the abundance and strength the gains of the 20th century made possible? As Harry Truman said in his last Message of January 7, 1953, "The nation's business is never finished Circumstances change and current questions take on different forms, new complications, year by year. But underneath the great issues remain the same--prosperity, welfare, human rights, effective democracy, and, above all, peace."

At home, we confront ongoing issues of how to educate current and future generations to meet the challenges of a new electronic age and the globalization of national economies. In their wisdom, the American people have identified education as their current number one concern. Despite substantial total spending on schooling in America, our expenditures are no more than average as a percentage of gross domestic product compared with that of other industrialized nations. Mr. President, I have no special expertise to offer solutions to the problems that trouble our schools, but I believe they demand bold initiatives that should be articulated in your upcoming

address. At a minimum, might it not make sense to invite the most distinguished educators in the country to give you their judgments on these questions?

Likewise, Mr. President, I hope you will speak boldly on issues of race, Social Security, and universal medical insurance. Your theme of "One America" deserves reiteration and can be tied to a focus on improving the country's public schools. A recent survey of Public Agenda found eight out of ten Americans saying it is "absolutely essential" for schools to teach students that regardless of race or ethnicity they are all part of one nation. Parents across the country, especially recent immigrants, want their children to learn English as a way to enter the mainstream of the country's life. These parents also put a high premium on teaching shared American values or assuring that high school graduates should "understand the common history and ideas that tie all Americans together." The great majority of respondents in the survey identified six "absolutely essential" ideals: freedom of religion; equal opportunity without regard for race, religion, or sex; police departments that act strictly by the rule of the law; rewards for hard work; free and equal access to education; and self-reliance rather than dependence on government.

The affinity for limited government intrusion into people's lives does not necessarily extend to the benefits provided by Social Security and access to medical care, which most Americans see as essential to a humane society. I think the great majority of the country still holds with Franklin Roosevelt's 1936 assertion: Better a government that lives in a spirit of charity than one frozen in the ice of its own indifference. Anything you can say, Mr. President, that assures the future of Social Security and promotes the expansion of health insurance to the 43 million Americans without it and a patient's bill of rights will be, I am confident, welcomed by the great mass of Americans. For almost a hundred years now, starting with Theodore Roosevelt and

running through the administrations of FDR, Truman, JFK, LBJ, and Nixon presidents have struggled to assure all Americans the blessings of quality medical care. Now, at the end of the century, it seems essential once more to address this question. After all, of what consequence are the great advances in medical care to those who cannot have access to them?

Mr. President, I think Franklin Roosevelt's stirring Message of January 11, 1944, in which he called for an economic bill of rights, is worth citing. "True individual freedom," he said, "cannot exist without economic security and independence." He then listed eight fundamental rights, including rights to "a useful and remunerative job," to "a decent home," to "adequate health care," to "adequate protection from the economic fears of old age," and to "a good education." Can we enter the twenty-first century without recalling that these goals still remain to be met?

In foreign affairs, America faces new challenges. The end of the Cold War has not diminished but heightened our need for vigilance and willingness to serve the cause of international peace. Might not the occasion of your Annual Message be a good time to enunciate a Clinton Doctrine that reminds our people at home and friends and foes abroad that we will not shrink from our international responsibilities? As recent events have demonstrated, America stands ready to address economic dislocations in Asia and Latin America and to inhibit and, if need be, punish potential aggressors in the Middle East.

Mr. President, a formula for action might bolster public commitments of this sort. A Clinton doctrine could promise that while presidential initiatives in foreign affairs sometimes require rapid action for greatest effectiveness, you propose that commitments likely to cost us blood and treasure should rest on the widest possible consultations at home and abroad. In short,

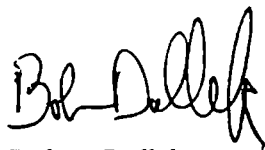
major overseas' initiatives will rest on discussions with Congress and the public through speeches and press conferences as well as with Allies and, whenever possible, other members of the United Nations.

Ever since Vietnam the country has had grave doubts about foreign initiatives that might land us in another quagmire. The best way to assure against national doubts about foreign actions is through as full a public debate as possible--a debate which hopefully can build a national consensus on what the country is willing to do overseas about a major challenge. The wisest of our foreign policy makers have understood that an effective commitment abroad has always rested on a stable consensus at home.

Mr. President, I cannot close without remarking on the importance of defending the institution of the presidency. Vietnam, Watergate, Iran-contra, the end of the Cold War, and the creation of the Office of Special Prosecutor have created an atmosphere of attack on the powers of the office. A weakened presidency ill serves the national well-being. We would do well to remind the country of how well strong presidents have served it. An initiative to include Lincoln and FDR, two of our greatest Chiefs, in President's Day and to make that Day the occasion for an annual presidents' history week in the schools would be one fine means to advance this goal.

I hope my above suggestions are of some small use in the preparation of your Message and in your efforts to meet the challenges of the next two years.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob Dallek", with a stylized, flowing script.

Robert Dallek
Professor

December 23, 1998

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: JAMES FALLOWS

SUBJECT STATE OF THE UNION

Paul Glastris of your speechwriting office asked me to offer some thoughts on the parallels between this current moment in our nation's history and past eras. I am pleased to do so.

There is no one obvious historical parallel for the period we are just entering. The prevailing view of two years ago was that economic and other turmoil made the 1990s the true heir of 1890s, and that a new Progressive era might be dawning. That theory has not been heard as often recently, because the complications of the situation are becoming more evident. (It is not obvious that tension is building up in just the same way; it's not obvious that a new progressivism will be the response some time soon.) But in three less obvious ways the post-Cold-War era does resemble the post-World-War-II era.

The first parallel is that a kind of bourgeois contentment defines both eras. The things that 60s-era hotheads sneered at about the 1950s, and whose loss they came to lament in the 70s and early 80s, are true of much of America today. Crime is down; public schools are getting better. There is a budget surplus -- inconceivable only five years ago. While some economic tensions remain, most people have a sense of optimism and security about their economic situation that is more like the 1950s than like the 1980s, 1920s, or 1890s.

The second parallel to the post-World-War-II era is in the nature of investments made. The Interstate Highway System -- trivial sounding but profound. A wave of public school construction. Fluoridation of water. We are still living off the changes that the GI bill made. The great investments of this era include technological research and development and the profound changes that an accumulation of specific policies have meant for educational opportunity.

The third parallel has to do with the benefits that technology is bringing. There are many moments in U.S. history when technology has changed the fundamentals, but the closest comparison is probably the post-war 1940s. Then it was the wartime rush of science that suddenly made so much available: mass use of antibiotics, followed quickly by the polio vaccine; air travel becoming a normal rather than exotic event; the automobile and the telephone becoming for the first time mass products; the Rural Electrification Administration finishing its work. And of course TV. It is almost dumbfounding to go back and read accounts of normal-American life in 1940, and to see how many things that now seem like eternal features of our landscape suddenly became practical with a short span of years.

Today, everyone recognizes, to the point of cliché, that information technologies-- especially the Internet -- are changing the world, largely for the better. The fresher point to make is that a bio-medical revolution has begun. Even allowing for a kind of anti-scientism that draws people to alternative medicine and makes them think that cell phones are giving them cancer, it has probably sunk in on most people that they're living a lot longer than they used to-- and have a much longer enjoyable life span too. Suddenly medical science in its various forms is really affecting people's lives--and we're just barely at the beginning. Moreover: The Clinton Administration can genuinely claim to have fostered a golden age in this field, with the way the scientific establishment is running now. It's true, and it's under-publicized.

I look forward to watching you deliver a great State of the Union message. Good luck.

E.L.DOCTOROW
170 Broadview Avenue
New Rochelle, NY 10804
December 26, 1998

PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

My dear Mr President,

Your staff has asked me for a few thoughts that might be relevant as you prepare your State of the Union address. I'm happy to comply.

I have heard you speak to the effect that whatever satisfaction you take in the accomplishments of your Administration, you feel that there is still much work to be done as the country moves into the next century.

Of the work to be done I can think of nothing more crucial than the need to change the present laws governing the funding of political campaigns and the practices of lobbying.

In thinking about this I confess that I am reluctant to use usual terms of political diction. As a writer I find the phrase *campaign finance reform* so dull and unresounding as to be almost responsible in itself for the lack of mass vocal support for the idea: Because it doesn't begin to alert people to the vast, deep and dangerous character of the present system, you would think it is almost guaranteed to subvert any legislative intention to put it into effect.

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The tradition of amateurism in politics is no longer part of our culture. The men and women who represent us choose politics as a profession and are thereby made vulnerable. Because they need money to win office, and with each campaign more and more money, they are apt to be put in the position of having to represent not their districts or states, or their convictions about what is right and ethical and best for the nation --- they end up representing the money that has put them there. The money becomes their constituency. On certain crucial issues that have marked them as if the money proffered to them has been marked, they have no choice.

I am not questioning individual integrity, here. Clearly there are legislators in Washington who are principled and either stand entirely outside this system or draw the line when their loyalty to their financial supporters conflicts with their better judgement. But from my man-in-the-street view, it is no accident, it is in fact almost a sacrament of life in the nation's capital, that socially desirable legislation in the public interest, whether on behalf of the environment, or public health, or any other of measure of clear benefit to the entire society, is regularly defeated by some entrenched private interest that has used its political contributions to buy the votes it wants.

Powerful economic entities that pit themselves against the manifest needs of the American people, take turns according to the issues that arise, of acting as enemies of the people.

I am aware that the practice seems to be no different in kind from the practice of previous generations. Still I want to suggest that we are not talking about old style pork barrel politics anymore, but a culture of corruption so endemic that something in the nature of a societal mutation may now be taking place. Just how to project the final form of this mutation I am not sure. But the sources of the money -- the conglomerates and ideological lobbies of great wealth -- as they become more and more instrumental in policy making, even to the point of drafting laws for elected legislators, may come to constitute a superseding ad hoc branch of government, a governing oligarchy that decides what legislation is in its own interest and what is not and influences or presses legislators to vote accordingly. So that we may be in danger of re structuring ourselves as a nation into something other than a democracy.

Rep. George Miller of California, who has been in congress for eighteen years, tells me he has never seen it as bad, as rampant, as it is now -- this passing of money into congressional hands. Oddly, as an established incumbent he is relatively immune to the

hazards of quid pro quo fund raising, but he says the newer members trying to establish themselves, have no such immunity.

Even as some of our politicians and businessmen are invidiously comparing our morality to their own, they are energetically participating in the commercialization of national political life in a way that suggests we are not a federal republic but a confederacy of murderous gluttons.

Some would say that it is in effect an exercise in free speech, part of the healthy give-and-take of democratic politics, as the various elements of the society put their money where their mouth is and work, robustly, to further themselves and prosper. They would oppose reforming the system on First Amendment grounds. But I'm not sure that holds up under examination: To privilege the free speech of corporations with vast treasuries on First Amendment grounds is undeniably to squelch the speech of others who don't have the same resources. (One idea afloat in the legal community is that a constitutionally justifiable distinction can be made between First Amendment speech and commercial speech.) In fact this huge application of money that so mitigates against the power of the individual voter may be a *de facto* poll tax. The system of legislative management by the powerful elements of our society has created populous and overlapping realms of

I hope, sir, you will forgive the length of this letter and its presumption. But it seems to me that a reassertive and courageous presidential championing of what is inadequately called *campaign finance reform*, but is really the engine for a greater American democracy in the next century, may be the way to reconfigure the national debate and put the nation's mind back where it wants to be. The state of the union very much depends on the state of mind of the union. Given your articulated vision of an inclusive American society, given your concept of a national pluralistic community in the great democratic tradition, I think you will find the American public enormously responsive and ready to get behind you for this work of the nation still to be done.

With best holiday regards to you and your family and sincere wishes for your health and happiness in the New Year --

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Edgar Doctor", followed by a horizontal flourish line.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT**FROM: BILL GALSTON****SUBJECT: 1999 STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS****DATE: DECEMBER 11, 1998****Introduction**

It is an honor to be asked once again to contribute my thoughts as you prepare for a State of the Union address. Perhaps because this is the seventh time I have had this opportunity, this year's request has stimulated me to reflect on the enormous changes that have occurred during the past decade and on the significance of these changes for your address next month.

I vividly remember our earliest conversations in 1990 and 1991, not long after Elaine Kamarck and I had published Politics of Evasion and not long before your historic speech in Cleveland to the DLC. You argued (and I heartily agreed) that the Democratic party's ability to promote its agenda in areas such as education, job training, and health care was impeded by public doubts that the party could be trusted to spend public funds with wisdom and restraint, craft approaches to crime and welfare consistent with basic values, or serve as an effective steward of America's interests abroad.

The policies you have pursued as president have largely set these doubts to rest. As a result, the issues terrain of our politics has been transformed. For a generation, Democrats were forced to play catch-up on Republicans' turf. Today, because our party is far less vulnerable to charges of fiscal imprudence, moral experimentalism, and international weakness, we can lead once again in areas where we enjoy the public's trust. In the recent congressional elections, the people sent a clear signal that they want the political system to shift its attention to these issues.

The historic significance of your presidency goes well beyond any change in public attitudes towards the political parties. During the past six years, there has been a profound and (I believe) irreversible shift in the fundamental premises of public discourse. Today, more and more Americans are coming to understand that knowledge and skill is the key to opportunity, that technological innovation is the precondition of economic progress, that competition and choice have a legitimate role in the reform of government and public policy as well as in the marketplace, and that our national fate—whether in the economy, environment, or security—is linked to that of countries around the world. They are also coming to understand that individuals are not islands, that we are affected by the misfortunes of our fellow-citizens, that personal success must be balanced by a measure of community and social solidarity. These are the public principles you have espoused consistently; they are increasingly the country's principles as well.

I do not want to sound pollyannish. There are some conservatives whose passion for unbounded individualism excludes any meaningful public expression of solidarity; there are still some in our own party who believe that we can use government to eliminate risk and to wall ourselves off from the world. But the vital center of our politics is with you, and that center is a potential majority waiting to be mobilized.

This new situation presents you with an unparalleled opportunity to reform Social Security, improve the quality of public education, improve medical care, and promote an ethic of service and community. But the window of opportunity is narrow. By the fall of 1999 at the latest, serious legislation will become increasingly difficult to enact. To lead effectively in these circumstances, you should be prepared to shape proposals that can gain support across party lines--and to put your ideas on the table as early as possible.

The American people are hungry for just such an approach to governance. Evidence abounds that they would welcome a deescalation of partisanship and a renewed spirit of partnership to address public problems. Yes, they know that real differences of principle divide the parties. But they expect their leaders to work hard to find--and build upon--areas of potential cooperation. I am convinced that if you advance bold, specific proposals in this spirit, you will be in the best possible position to move your agenda in 1999.

In the rest of this memorandum, I offer some thoughts on issues that I hope you will choose to highlight in your State of the Union address.

Social Security

During the past year, you have led the process of public education you announced in the 1998 State of the Union farther down the road toward consensus than many believed possible. The question now is how to keep the momentum going. In my judgment, there are four key Social Security objectives to be pursued in this year's address: first, continuing to build public understanding of the problem; second, communicating your commitment to maintaining a vigorous public leadership role on this issue; third, setting forth your understanding of the areas of common ground that have emerged thus far; and finally, doing what you can to assure (understandably) wary Republicans that good-faith discussions of reform options will not be turned against them in the next election.

I can understand why you might hesitate to put even the outline of your own Social Security plan on the table as early as the State of the Union. If you choose not to do so, then I believe you should offer (a) a clear statement of the principles guiding your leadership on this issue; and (b) a specific procedure for seeking agreement across party lines on a blueprint for legislation to be drafted and introduced as early as possible this spring. (In the interests of full disclosure, I should say that I served on the bipartisan Social Security commission co-chaired by Sen. Breaux and endorsed the broad outlines of its eventual recommendations. But it is not my intention in this memorandum to advocate those specific recommendations.)

With regard to principles, I recommend something along the following lines:

1. Social Security rests on the premise that we are all in this together and that by working together we can offer one another more decency and security in retirement than we could reasonably hope to achieve on our own. Any reasonable reform of the system will reflect a continuing commitment to social solidarity.

2. Social Security has been largely responsible for the two-thirds reduction in poverty among the elderly during the past generation. Whatever we do to reform the system must maintain this progress and build on it toward the objective of a decent retirement for all working Americans--including low-income workers.

3. Social Security provides effective insurance against the risks of disability and loss of a working spouse. Any reform of the system must maintain these guarantees.

4. Americans in or near retirement have made their plans based on the current system. We must keep faith with them; they should not be touched by the reforms we enact. All Americans affected by reform must have enough time to adjust their retirement strategies.

5. Payroll tax increases are not the best way of bolstering the system. Today, average Americans pay far more in payroll taxes than they do in income taxes; an across-the-board rate increase would just make this worse. Increasing the amount of earnings subject to taxation would generate huge tax increases for millions of Americans while reducing the returns on their contributions to unacceptably low levels and weakening their sense of being fairly treated by the system.

6. The best alternative to tax increases or large benefit cuts is changing the mix of Social Security investments to include stocks, whose long-term return far exceeds that available from government bonds. We must explore ways of doing this consistent with our commitments to one another and with acceptable levels of risk to individuals.

7. Individuals differ in many ways, including the balance they wish to strike between risk and security. Consistent with the long-term financial stability of the Social Security system and with our commitments to one another, we should explore ways of expanding the choices available to individuals within the system.

8. One of the most worrisome trends in our country is the decline in our savings rate. In the long run, if we don't save more, the rate of business investment and economic growth is likely to decline, leaving all Americans worse off. We should therefore explore ways of reforming Social Security to increase national savings.

9. Americans are living longer than ever before, and far longer than the architects of Social Security ever imagined. Reforms enacted fifteen years ago began to respond to this new reality; we cannot rule out new ways of continuing to respond.

10. Many more women are working outside the home than was the case when Social Security was designed, or even a generation ago. Not surprisingly, key features of the current system are running behind this important change in our society. As we reform the system, we must ensure fair treatment for every worker.

So much for principles you might announce. With regard to process, I would suggest some statement along the following lines:

"The reform of Social Security is a complicated business, and we must proceed carefully. I have instructed my staff to cooperate with the Congress in establishing the facts and weighing the benefits and costs of different reform options. On or before March 1 of this year, I will invite congressional leaders of both parties to a meeting at Camp David to see whether we can reach agreement across party lines on a blueprint for legislation that the Congress could consider this spring.

The Social Security cannot be reformed by Democrats alone, or by Republicans alone. Our efforts cannot succeed unless we work together as Americans to secure this national treasure for future generations. I pledge to every member of Congress, and to the American people, that I will work to reform Social Security, not for partisan advantage, but in the national interest. And I would hope that every member of Congress would do the same. The people expect--and deserve--no less."

Mr. President, you have the opportunity to achieve something truly remarkable--to lead a serious public discussion free of demagoguery toward the historic reform of perhaps our single most important public program. My fear is that if this moment of political and economic opportunity is lost, the forces you contained last year with your demand to "Save Social Security First" will become uncontrollable and the budget surplus will be frittered away in ill-advised tax cuts and spending programs. So I urge you to do whatever you can, in the State of the Union and beyond, to maintain the momentum toward agreement--even if this makes some groups on both the right and the left of the political spectrum unhappy.

Taxes

While the people clearly give Social Security priority over tax cuts, recent surveys show that the level of satisfaction with the current tax code is not very high. For that reason, and because there are legitimate substantive objections to the current code, I believe it would be a mistake to say nothing about tax reform in the State of the Union. (The administration paid a price for not getting out in front of the curve on IRS reform.) While you may not wish to endorse any specific reform proposal, it would be advisable to associate your administration

with reasonable objections to the current code and to lay out the principles that should govern changes to it. Rep. Gephardt has laid out a plan that would simplify the code, eliminate loopholes, and free the majority of Americans from having to file annual returns at all. No doubt there are many problems with it. Still, you could point to that proposal and others as examples of the kinds of reform we should be considering once Social Security has been addressed.

Education

Post-election surveys showed that education now ranks at the top of the public's concerns. Studies conducted by the Public Agenda Foundation in recent years indicate that when it comes to education, parents agree on what they want for their children across lines of race, ethnicity, and class. You have the opportunity to present a comprehensive education agenda that brings people together around these pressing concerns--an agenda that links increased investment to real reform.

There is a deferred agenda--school construction, class size, and other initiatives--left over from last year. I hope you will not stop there. As you know, the biggest federal education program--the Elementary and Secondary Education Act--is up for reauthorization this year. My suggestion is that you use the State of the Union to preview the reforms you intend to push in your reauthorization proposals, focused on issues of choice, quality, and accountability.

Here are some specific ideas consistent with these themes:

1. You should spotlight the growth of the charter school movement and do even more to promote its development. One possibility: reengineer Title One so that dollars automatically follow individual students to any accredited public school, including charters.

2. Recent research has underscored the importance of teacher quality for student performance. You should put the federal government squarely on the side of raising teacher quality as fast as possible.

* The Department of Education has issued reports indicating that shockingly high percentages of teachers have little or no academic preparation in the subjects they teach. (Regrettably, official "certification" programs are no guarantee of solid academic preparation.) It's axiomatic that teachers can't teach what they haven't learned. To address this situation, all schools receiving federal funds should be required to report regularly on the percentage of academically unprepared teachers on their rolls. A system of financial incentives should be created to reward schools that reduce that percentage and penalize those that do not.

* For schools receiving federal funds, all teachers should be required to demonstrate basic academic competence as a condition of employment. At the very least, teachers should be able to pass the exit exams required of graduating high school seniors in their jurisdictions.

* In too many school districts (especially in urban areas), experienced teachers use seniority rules to avoid exposure to students they regard as "hard to teach." The consequence: the students who could benefit the most from the best teachers are the most likely to be assigned the least experienced instead. I don't want to suggest that experience is infallibly correlated with quality, but there certainly is a connection. In the name of educational equity (one of the principal purposes of the ESEA), funds should be linked to district teacher assignment practices that give the most disadvantaged students a fair chance to learn from the best teachers.

* In the long run, it isn't enough to fairly distribute an inadequate number of good teachers; we must also increase the supply of good teachers. I have long believed that an aggressive use of loan forgiveness could create the teachers' equivalent of the Public Health Service or of the military's educational incentives for officer recruitment. Here's a sketch: offer students in the top 20 percent of their high school graduating classes full college scholarships, subject to four conditions--(1) that they take a major or minor in the academic subjects they intend to teach; (2) that they take and pass academic qualifying exams in core subjects; (3) that they accept assignment to school districts that need them the most; and (4) that they teach full-time for at least the number of years (typically four) that they receive full scholarships. The number of participants in this program would of course be capped to reflect funding limits. You could offer a ringing historical justification for this program, as follows:

"A generation ago, at the height of the Cold War, we created the National Defense Education Act to spur teaching and learning related to the security of our country against external threats. Today, the principal threat to our long-term security is internal--the growth of a large group of poorly educated young Americans who are shut out from the American dream. We must mobilize to meet this threat, and a National Teachers Corps that draws more of our top students into teaching in areas of greatest need is a good place to start."

3. The ESEA should link funding levels to improved academic performance in schools or districts receiving federal funds. My preferred strategy would be to use some version of the NAEP and to employ a "value-added" strategy in which schools were called upon to show steady improvement from an initial baseline (typically quite low) of academic attainment. The advantage of this value-added strategy is two-fold: first, it responds to the objection that fixed achievement levels are unfair (at least in the short-term) to schools with high percentages of disadvantaged students; and second, because these students will typically start off at low performance levels, decent teaching can produce high percentage gains off this low base.

In support of this strategy, you should emphasize your support for the kinds of programs that local communities can use to bolster student performance. For example, districts that get serious about ending social promotion should be able to use federal funds for academic mentoring and summer programs. Districts that want to create "community schools" with regular pre-school and after-school programs should know that the federal government is on their side. And so forth.

I conclude this section with some broader reflections. I've been talking with a lot of Democratic elected public officials (especially senators) in recent months, and there's surprising support for two propositions. First, you have an opportunity to seize the moment and press for a "grand bargain" in which Republicans acknowledge an important federal role in education while Democrats accept that federal funds should not support the status quo but rather catalyze real reform. Second, if Democrats do not meet the challenge of real reform, Republican proposals for block grants and vouchers will continue to gain ground and may in the end prove irresistible. I know that important forces will resist real reform and will push congressional Democrats to see things their way. In my view, you can use the State of the Union to create a counterweight to these forces--to mobilize public opinion and move your administration in the direction of a new Elementary and Secondary Education Act that more effectively promotes public school choice, teacher quality, and student performance.

Health Care

After a period of relative calm, there are signs that health care is once again heading toward stormy weather. Indications are that we are facing the return of double-digit cost inflation; many Americans over 50 been shocked in recent months by huge increase in monthly premiums; market-based Medicare reforms have come under intense pressure; and overall health insurance coverage continues to decline. Meanwhile, Medicare is still heading toward insolvency early in the next century, and a bipartisan commission co-chaired by Sen. Breaux may well recommend radical changes in the program. If these trends continue, health care could become a defining issue in the next presidential election.

It is my understanding that Breaux's commission may well coalesce behind an approach to Medicare reform (proposed by Robert Reischauer and Henry Aaron a few years ago) modelled on the Federal Employee Health Benefits Plan. In turn, this could serve as the basis for a broader reform of the health insurance market.

It will be tempting to focus on HMO reform and incremental expansion of eligibility for federal programs while deferring discussion of these broader issues. I would hope, however, that you will use this year's State of the Union to begin educating the American people about the broader health care challenge and preparing them for the difficult choices that lie ahead. Here, as in the case of Social Security and other issues, the people are looking for solutions across lines of politics and party.

National Service

Some of my proudest moments came during the presidential transition and the early months of your administration when you gave me the chance to help turn your national service campaign pledge into legislative reality. Although you have done your best to spotlight AmeriCorps during the past five years, I fear that most Americans are still unaware of its many successes.

This is a signature program of your presidency, and one of your most unsung accomplishments. I believe you should use the 1999 State of the Union to tell the story of AmeriCorps, to place that story in the larger context of service and citizenship, and to push for a major expansion of the program. The plan drafted in late 1992 called for a five-year ramp up to an annual level of 100,000 participants. At current outlays per participant, that would represent an annual expenditure of about \$1.5 billion. Given current fiscal constraints, that may not be a feasible goal over the next five years. But I hope your budget will be able to move strongly in that direction, so that the program can achieve critical mass.

The stakes are high. While the idealism of young people in our generation frequently expressed itself in politics, today that idealism is increasingly manifested in service outside the official political system. Indeed, there is evidence that young people see community service as an alternative to a politics from which they feel disengaged. A large, vigorous, and effective national program can help reforge the links between service and citizenship.

Conclusion: Themes and Strategy

I close with brief remarks on themes and strategy for the State of the Union.

Themes. During your 1996 reelection campaign, you spoke often of building a bridge to the 21st century. As I suggested at the beginning of this memorandum, the American people are beginning to understand the nature of that new century and the changes it will bring. During this year's State of the Union, you have a chance to develop and underscore this new awareness of a world in which knowledge and skill are central, in which innovation and competition are unavoidable, in which solidarity and community are essential, and in which (like it or not) our fate is intertwined with that of our fellow citizens and of peoples and nations around the world.

Strategy. There is always a temptation to make the State of the Union a lengthy laundry-list of popular proposals in every conceivable area. Given the narrow window of legislative opportunity that I mentioned at the outset, I believe you should adopt a different strategy this year: focus your speech on the key legislation you wish to enact by the fall and make it clear that this well-defined agenda will be the focus of the administration's efforts over the next nine months. The sense of disciplined choice conveyed by this strategy will contribute significantly to the success of your agenda in this crucial year for your presidency.

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November 23, 1998

President William Jefferson Clinton
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Thank you for your kind invitation to offer my thoughts about your State of the Union Address. And thank you for the generosity that you and Mrs. Clinton showed me and my family during the celebration of this year's National Humanities Medals. My father – 85 years old – now is starting to believe that I might be a success one day! So many thanks to you and Hillary for your affection and friendship.

I think that you should make “The American Century” your central theme, in part because this will be your final State of the Union Address before the new Millennium. The trick will be that the speech would be about how the American Century will be the 21st Century, and not just the 20th century – as great as this century has been – and that the best is yet to come, that our Nation's greatness lies ahead, building necessarily on the greatness – and continuity – of the past.

Second, I believe that within the speech you should co-opt the rhetoric of the right – especially Bill Bennett's use of terms like “values,” “virtues,” etc. – as well as the concept of privacy and the rights of the individual. Why should the right have a monopoly on these issues? There is absolutely no reason for you to avoid them. Rather, there is every reason for you to use them, because the people who voted for you embrace these values, too. Maximizing the good for the American people is the greatest virtue that a public official can celebrate and to which he or she can aspire. A public official must adopt policies that enable government programs to be tributaries to society, as Bart Giamatti once put it, not sanctuaries from it. We must embrace, and extend, the hallowed concept of the common good. That, after all, was the promise of America, and that promise is even more urgent as we stand at the dawn of the 21st century.

I hope this helps. Please give my love to Hillary and Chelsea.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Gates, Jr.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

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Vartan Gregorian
President

December 16, 1998

The Honorable William J. Clinton
President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

My dear Mr. President:

I have been asked to provide several ideas for your consideration as you prepare your State of the Union speech.

On the domestic front, I am sure you already have received many constructive recommendations concerning Social Security, Medicare, and education. Let me make a few suggestions about other matters.

HIGHER EDUCATION

American higher education leads the world in the number, variety, funding, and availability of its colleges and universities. The upper quarter of our country's institutions of higher learning, considered from the viewpoint of quality, constitutes the largest and finest system of its kind in the world. According to some authorities, as many as three-quarters of the best universities in the world are located in the United States. What sector of our economy or society can make a similar claim? The fact that almost half a million foreign students are studying in the United States—one third of all the world's students who choose to study abroad—is a tribute to the preeminence of our higher education.

Let me cite some salient and brief statistics:

- There are today roughly 3,500 colleges and universities in our country, including some 1,400 public and private two-year colleges.
- U.S. colleges and universities enroll about 16 million students and grant annually some 2 million degrees (1 million bachelor's, 500,000 associate's, 300,000 master's, 40,000 Ph.D.'s, and 75,000 professional degrees, including law and medicine).

- U.S. higher education employs 2.5 million individuals, including 800,000 faculty members—more people than the automobile, steel, and textile industries combined.
- At present, U.S. higher education is a \$250-billion enterprise, accounting for about 3 percent of our nation's gross national product.

In addition to broadening access and pursuing excellence, the diversity of our institutions of higher learning, both public and private, is another major strength. Our system of higher education is strong because it is *not* centrally controlled and uniform. It is *strong* because individual institutions, in emphasizing different functions and meeting different local, regional, and national needs, have complemented each other. They have provided educational opportunities to a diverse population, expanded scientific and technical knowledge, and provided opportunities for continuing education. Our universities are entrusted with the following tasks:

- fostering the nation's social mobility;
- guarding our past, our tradition, and our memory;
- harnessing science and technology for the service of our economy, our health, and national agendas;
- creating, inventing, and discovering solutions to the problems of today and answers to the challenges of tomorrow;
- advancing knowledge through scholarship, spreading knowledge through teaching and publication;
- promoting equality alongside quality, accessibility alongside excellence, and liberality of thought alongside rigor;
- providing a venue for American values through a liberal education that would enable students to acquire, understand, and develop responsible attitudes and behavior pertaining to individual and social ethics, values, and democratic responsibility.

In discussing U.S. higher education, I respectfully suggest that you highlight the importance of a liberal education and the fact that liberal education does not advocate the debunking of all myths and moving beyond all values; nor does it aim to destroy everything and conserve nothing. As C.S. Lewis, whose centenary we celebrate, put it in his *Abolition of Man*:

“You cannot go explaining away forever, or you will find that you have ‘explained away’ explanation itself. You cannot go on ‘seeing through things

forever...if you see through everything, then everything is transparent. A wholly transparent world is an invisible world, to see through all things is the same as not to see."

I personally believe that a healthy skepticism among our citizens is indispensable if we are to distinguish the correct from the false, the lie from the truth. But an exaggeration of the skeptical attitude can but must not lead to cynicism and the disavowal of all values. We must build and affirm, rather than merely deny and debunk. We must attempt to lead an examined life and not a life of spiritual negation. We need a proper balance between the preparation of careers and the cultivation of values.

PRECOLLEGE EDUCATION

It goes without saying that the U.S. higher education system, even though it is the best in the world, cannot continue to serve our country's 21st century needs without a viable, robust, and healthy education system from kindergarten through high school, both public and private, non-sectarian and parochial. Facing, as it does, a knowledge explosion and other complex challenges, the American university cannot afford the luxury of transforming its first two years of instruction to meet the woeful inadequacies of our public school system. We still need to do a great deal to reform our country's primary and secondary schools. Our colleges and universities are in a position to provide intellectual, educational, and administrative leadership to the reformation of thousands of elementary and secondary schools. They must reform and strengthen the quality of teacher education. We must strive very hard to give our nation the best educated teacher corps in order to guarantee equal opportunity and equal access to our splendid higher education. We must give to teaching, once again, the dignity and importance it deserves.

PEACE/INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

Nineteen ninety-nine marks the centennial of The First Hague Peace Conference, held in May 1889. The Conference was convened in response to an invitation by Czar Nicholas II of Russia to discuss ways of halting the growing arms race in Europe. Although no agreements on disarmament were made, the discussion produced a Convention for the Pacific Settlement of Disputes, resulting in the creation of the Permanent Court of Arbitration, a Convention on Laws and Customs of War on Land, now known as "The Hague Convention," and a third convention on maritime warfare. In addition, it adopted "Declarations," to the effect that the use of projectiles from aircraft, asphyxiating gases, and dum dum bullets should be forbidden because of their inherently inhuman and indiscriminate nature. Mr. President, you may want to use this centennial as a backdrop in your discussion of the state of peace today, the United States's efforts in general and your leadership in promoting peace worldwide, in particular in Ireland, Haiti, the Middle East, Korea, Kosovo, Bosnia, Cyprus, and Kashmir. You may want to discuss the fact that you have also sought to ensure international peace by fighting against international terrorism, by promoting free markets and international trade, the free flow

of ideas, and human rights, and by contributing to and assisting new democracies as they struggle to form open societies in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

One century after Czar Nicholas's appeal and two international conferences later (1899 and 1907), we are still confronted with the challenges of disarmament. You may decide to use this anniversary and discuss the issues of nuclear nonproliferation, biological and chemical warfare, international terrorism, and drug trafficking, which pose major threats to world peace. You may also decide to use this anniversary to focus on the status of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I), which was signed in Moscow (March 1991), and the fact that this American initiative created the conditions for consolidation of all nuclear arms in the former Soviet Union under the control of Russia, followed by pledges from all other republics (signed in Lisbon in May 1992) and the conclusion of a START II treaty in August, 1992. These were the last significant security treaties of the current era. What should be the next steps in the process of arms control and the reduction of armaments?

HUMAN RIGHTS/ETHNIC CONFLICT

This year also marks the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 50th Anniversary of the Genocide Convention. This provides a unique opportunity for you to focus on human rights and America's and your efforts to promote and strengthen civil societies and democracies in Eastern Europe, in Latin America, and in Africa during your Presidency. The anniversary of the Genocide Convention gives you a chance to discuss the Holocaust, the genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, and Burundi, and mankind's determination that the practice of "ethnic cleansing" and genocide as political instruments must remain banned and their perpetrators prosecuted. If you decide to discuss the Holocaust and other genocides of the twentieth century, may I suggest that you highlight the role and significance of individuals who make, or have made, a difference. I am referring specifically to the role of Raphael Lemkin, a Polish Jew, who coined the term genocide and dedicated his entire life to promoting a convention that would outlaw the practice of genocide. He finally succeeded in his efforts in 1948.

In discussing ethnic conflict and the foundations of an international order that is based on law and justice, you may focus on two historical rights that are often at odds. I am referring to issues of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the right to self-determination. In 1917, when Woodrow Wilson promulgated his Fourteen Points in order "to make the world safe for democracy," and the same year when Lenin proclaimed his version of the principle of people's self-determination as a fundamental right, neither of them included economic and demographic factors in the equation. As a result, even in the aftermath of two world wars, the issue of self-determination is on a collision course with international law that upholds the sovereignty and territorial integrity of individual states. Today we see this conflict played out in the case of the former Yugoslavia, the Kurds in Turkey, Albanians in Kosovo, Palestinians, Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, and Kashmiris in India, not to mention many ethnic tribal conflicts in Africa.

THE EUROPEAN UNION

In view of these endemic conflicts between competing rights, we must ask ourselves what new forms of economic, political, and cultural configurations can be devised to minimize these conflicts for the sake of regional and global peace and stability? Should there be regional NAFTAs, Marshall Plans, confederations, international mediation mechanisms, cultural autonomies? This may give you an opportunity to discuss one major international and historical success. I am referring to NATO, the Common Market, and the European Union. This is the 50th Anniversary of the advent of NATO. Its historic role cannot be exaggerated. It served to contain the Soviet Union. Along with the Marshall Plan, it also served as the foundation for the emergence of a strong European Union and an Atlantic partnership.

In 1946, in his Zurich address Winston Churchill proposed the formation of a United States of Europe. Some fifty years later, while we do not have such a union, we do have an unprecedented, major, successful economic and monetary cooperation and integration within Western Europe. The 50th anniversary of NATO and the advent of a modern Europe and its current and future roles in the political stability of Europe and the international economy give you an opportunity to salute and welcome Europe's success and its continual special partnership with the United States. Finally, while paying tribute to the sacrifices of the generation that fought in World War II and the architects of the Marshall Plan and NATO, you can announce a new NATO doctrine if you so desire. Everyone, in Western and Eastern Europe, not to mention Russia, is eager to know about the future role of the NATO alliance.

Last but not least, not too often have Presidents of the United States made major policy statements about Latin America. I do not mean Cuba and drug trafficking. To the best of my knowledge, the last comprehensive economic and policy statement that was made about Latin America was by John F. Kennedy. I refer to the Alliance for Progress. I think the time has come to salute the triumph of democracies in Latin America, to hail the progress of human rights, and to praise the presence of Hispanics and Latinos in America and their increasingly important role in our country's culture and economy. You may decide this is the occasion once again to raise the issue of the extension of NAFTA throughout the hemisphere.

The State of the Union also is a wonderful opportunity to discuss Africa, its challenges, its hopes, and its opportunities. You can focus on your visit to the continent. This would also give you an opportunity to restate your desire to promote ongoing racial dialogue and understanding in our country. You may pay homage to the enormous contributions of African-Americans to the United States and urge our country one more time to build a healthier democracy based on freedom, dignity, justice, tolerance, and understanding, "in order to form a more perfect union."

Finally, you may end your speech by invoking Thomas Wolfe:

"I think the true discovery of America is before us. I think the true fulfillment of our spirit, of our mighty and immortal lamp is yet to come. I think the true discovery of our own democracy is still before us and I think that all these things are certain, as certain as the morning and as inevitable as the noon."

I wish you, Hillary, and Chelsea a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Quinn". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**SYLVIA ANN HEWLETT
CORNEL WEST**



MEMORANDUM

To: President Clinton

From: Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Cornel West

Date: December 14, 1998

Re: Thoughts to be considered for inclusion in the State of the Union Address, January 1999

What We Can Do for America's Beleaguered Moms and Dads

We come together to affirm the importance of the parental role and to demonstrate how our nation can give new support to mothers and fathers so that they can come through for their children.

As parents ourselves we are hungry for this healing. For two decades we have been on the front lines, wrestling with the enormous challenge of trying to be a good mother and a good father in this parent-hurting society of ours. Much of our struggle has been unnecessarily lonely, for the fact is our "blackness" and our "femaleness" pale in the light of an even more fundamental identity: that of being a parent. After all, we share the bedrock stuff: We are crazy about our kids. This might not be obvious every hour of every day, because our teenagers are capable of being as exasperating and challenging as any others, but when push comes to shove, we know we would give our lives for them. There is not a whole lot in life that can compete with this commitment. When God asked Abraham for the ultimate sacrifice as a test of his faith, he did not ask Abraham to lay down his own life; rather, he asked him to take the life of his son, Isaac. For at least two millennia this story has provoked anguished reflection in men and women around the world because it transgresses our most elemental emotion: the love of a parent for a child.

We also share a load of frustration and guilt with other parents. We know first hand the painful problems faced by mothers and fathers in America today. How do you bond with an infant if you need to be back at work ten days after birth? Or, how do you help with homework when you need to work evenings to pay the rent?

In 1996 there were six million American families where two adults held four jobs in order to keep the show on the road. Stagnant wages and heightened insecurity are forcing more and more parents to work longer hours. Like hamsters on a wheel they are running harder and harder to stay even. One result of this is a sharp decline in the amount of time parents spend with their children. Economist Edward Wolff has shown that over the last three decades parental time has declined 13 percent. This is extremely bad news for families since time is at the heart of the child-raising enterprise.

Being a good parent requires providing a child with the gifts of love, attention, energy, and resources, generously and unstintingly over a long period of time. It involves nourishing a small body, but it also involves growing a child's soul—sharing the stories and rituals that awaken a child's spirit, and nurturing the spiritual bonds that create meaning and morality in that child's life. None of these tasks are easily undertaken by overburdened contemporary parents.

Parents Make a Difference

Thirty years ago Chicago sociologist James S. Coleman showed that parental involvement mattered far more in determining school success than any attribute of the formal education system. Across a wide range of subject areas, in literature, science and reading, Coleman estimated that the parent was twice as powerful as the school in determining achievement at age fourteen. In a 1996 study of 20,000 teenagers, psychologist Laurence Steinberg confirms the importance of parents. Steinberg shows that one out of three parents is "seriously disengaged" from his or her adolescent's education, and this is the primary reason why so many American students perform below their potential—and below students in other rich countries.

A weight of evidence now demonstrates ominous links between absentee parents and a wide range of behavioral and emotional problems in children. A recent survey of 90,000 teenagers found that youngsters are less likely to get pregnant, use drugs or become involved in crime if they are closely connected to their parents. This study found that the mere physical presence of a parent in the home after school, at dinner and at bedtime significantly reduces the incidence

of risky behavior among teenagers.

What To Do?

How do we turn this thing around and give new support to parents?

In 1995, the National Parenting Association (NPA) tackled this great challenge by creating a *Task Force on Parent Empowerment*. For more than four years this task force deliberated, sifting evidence, weighing policy options, commissioning surveys and listening to the voices of mothers and fathers on the front lines. In the winter of 1998 the task force completed its work and presented us with the raw materials of a *Parents' Bill of Rights*—see attached excerpts. Some of the ideas presented in this Bill target government, others target the workplace and the wider community. All are imbued with healing and hope for beleaguered mothers and fathers everywhere. Whether you are black, brown, male or female, whether your family income is \$23,000 or \$85,000 a year, these measures can help you solve the parental time crunch and come through for your children.

A Parents' Bill of Rights

Parenting Leave

As the President clearly understands, parenting leave is of enormous significance to moms and dads. Childbirth is surely a joyous and miraculous event, but it is also life-bending and backbreaking. For most parents it is a time of profound vulnerability. In Europe, childbirth triggers a generous benefits package that includes prenatal care, obstetrical care, generous hospital stays, five months' leave at full pay, home visits, baby equipment subsidies, and so on. Other rich nations seem to understand that the stakes are enormously high. If a family can successfully negotiate the magical first months of life, all kinds of good things will happen: a newborn will bond with his or her parents, a family will cohere, and a child will get off to a good start in life. Out of 152 nations worldwide, the United States is one of only six that fail to provide paid maternity leave by law.

The time has come to expand the provisions of Clinton's pathbreaking 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act which created job-protected unpaid parenting leave for workers in medium-sized and large firms. The problems with this bill are: those companies with fewer than 50

employees were excluded, leaving approximately 41 percent of working women outside the provisions of this bill; among employees who need but do not take FMLA leave, 63.9 percent say they cannot afford the wage loss.

We therefore recommend government-mandated, *paid, job-protected parenting leave for twenty-four weeks*—thought by many experts to be the minimally adequate period of time for a parent to bond with a new child. This would significantly expand the scope of the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993. Paid parenting leave would be offered to all working parents for the purpose of looking after a newborn baby, a newly adopted child or a seriously ill child. Workers unable to obtain income replacement through company benefits policy or disability insurance would be entitled to the minimum wage for this six-month period. The Social Security Trust Fund should cover the wage replacements costs, thus ensuring that employers would not suffer financial hardship or be tempted to discriminate against young parents. In the case of small firms (fewer than fifty employees), government would also pick up the expenses involved in carrying health insurance and other employee benefits while a worker is out on parenting leave.

Paid parenting leave is of great symbolic as well as practical importance. It sends a message to moms and dads that the nation at large values this new child and intends to give its parents time to nurture and nourish it. It sends a signal that a child is not just another private possession but a social blessing of enormous import. These messages and signals give honor and dignity to parents, and in so doing help individual moms and dads steel themselves for a lifetime of nonmarket work.

Family-Friendly Workplaces

Government should encourage the private sector to address the parental time famine. Public policy plays a critical role here, because of the potential divergence of interest between what is good for the employer and what is good for children. Both want more of a parent's time. Government should therefore weigh in and create incentives for firms to provide time-enhancing policies as part of a family-friendly benefits package. These policies have proven highly effective. Companies as different as Hewlett Packard, Price Waterhouse, and Tom's of Maine have shown that it is possible to create a fluid, less rigid workplace that gives workers with family responsibilities significant discretion over how they structure their careers, how many

hours they work each week, and when and where work is performed. In some states, companies that offer on-site child care already qualify for tax concessions. Why not expand these provisions?

We recommend *carefully tailored tax incentives for companies* that offer flexible hours, compressed work weeks, part-time work with benefits, job sharing, career sequencing, extended parenting leave, and home-based employment opportunities. We also recommend *the four-thirds solution*, an idea developed by child psychologist Stanley Greenspan. Under this plan, each parent works two-thirds time to pursue career goals, and together they provide four thirds of a single income. Thus one third of each parent's time is left for direct baby and child care. The provision of pro rata benefits and the creation of part-time career tracks would help make this a realistic option for large numbers of two-parent families.

An Extended School Day and Year

Lengthening the school day and the school year would have important benefits for families, and the majority of parents in our national survey were enthusiastic in their support of these measures. In the first place, longer hours would go some distance to creating the framework for a more rigorous education for American youngsters. In Japan and Germany, for example, schools are in session 30 to 40 percent longer than in the United States, which is one reason why students in these countries routinely outperform American students. Second, an expanded school day and school year greatly ease the problems of latchkey children. If nine-year-old Tyrone gets home at five o'clock instead of three o'clock, he has much less of that unsupervised time that is so dangerous to children. Recent evidence shows that children who are home alone are in harm's way. Not only does a large proportion of juvenile crime take place in the late afternoon, but most teenage experimentation with sex and drugs occurs in the parental home in those same hours.

A recent survey by the Mott Foundation found that more than 80 percent of parents want their child to attend an afterschool program, yet only 30 percent of public elementary and middle schools offer such programs.

We recommend that the regular *school day run from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and that schools offer an enriched program of extra-curricula activities until 6:30 p.m.* We also recommend that the *summer vacation be pegged at five weeks* rather than its current length of nine weeks. This

groups. The Clinton administration's recent support for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, which provides start-up funds to establish or expand before- and after-school, weekend and summer programs for school-age children, is an important step in this direction.

Child Care

Government and businesses should *significantly increase the quality and affordability of child care for working parents.*

We would like to stress that support for out-of-home care should go hand in hand with policies (such as the family allowance) that enable more parents to look after their own children, especially in the early years. We clearly do not wish to "punish parents who want to spend more time with their children" or establish the norm that parents "are supposed to farm out care of their children elsewhere." Indeed, we would like to reinforce the value of mothers and fathers' taking care of their own children, while making sure that parents have access to high-quality child care if they need it.

Our first recommendation is *tougher regulation* of the child-care industry, including background checks on workers, enforcement of licensing requirements, and so on.

Second, government should provide *subsidies that underwrite training and much higher salaries for child-care workers.* Currently the median wage for a child-care worker is a mere \$6.17 an hour, which explains why there is a 50 percent rate of turnover in this industry. In his recent child-care proposal, President Clinton promised \$250 million for training new workers. This is a small step in the right direction. Improving training will accomplish little if it does not go along with higher salaries, and this will require a much bigger commitment from government. Providing decent pay would encourage child-care workers to stay on the job, which is the only way to provide continuity for children—itsself a key ingredient of high-quality care.

The dependent care tax credit helps offset some of the cost of child care for middle- and higher-income tax payers. But *increased federal funding is needed to help lower income families.* Child-care block grants to the states—which fund child care for poor families—lost almost a third of their value between 1975 and 1996.

Balancing these measures should be provisions to ease the economic burden for those parents who choose to take time out of the labor force. We feel strongly that government should reach out to help parents at home as well as parents at work.

Fourth, *paid parenting leave should become a central component of child-care policy.*

Fifth, a special set of *tax credits and subsidies should target full-time moms and dads.* The state of Minnesota is a model in this regard. In the spring of 1994, Minnesota passed the At-Home Child Care Credit Bill, which provided a credit of \$720 per child (for up to two children) for married couples who take care of their baby at home. This credit helps a mother or father "afford" to stay home for the first year of life. In January 1998 Minnesota added the At-Home Infant Child Care Bill. This allows a parent who provides full-time care for an infant child to receive a subsidy in lieu of day-care assistance. Specifically, a parent is eligible for 75 percent of the established rate for infant day care.

Finally, we should *integrate child care into our schools.* This is not only cost-effective, because it uses existing overhead, but it helps both parents and children make good early connections to the educational system. One such program is the School of the 21st Century, pioneered by the Yale psychologist Edward Zigler and already in operation in some five hundred schools in sixteen states across the country. The program comprises school-based, year-round, all-day care for children aged three to five; before- and after-school and vacation care for school-age children; family support and guidance through a home visitation program for new and expectant parents; and support and training to family day-care providers in the school's neighborhood.

A Living Wage

Government and the private sector should underwrite a series of *subsidies that bring wages up to at least \$7 an hour*, a level which would enable every full-time worker to keep a family of three above the poverty line. Specifically, we recommend a series of subsidies for low-wage workers as proposed by Columbia University economist Edmund Phelps. In the Phelps plan, subsidies are limited to full-time jobs for low-wage employees, and they are graduated—the lower the wage, the higher the subsidy. Phelps proposes that the wage subsidies be paid for by a tax on companies in the sector receiving them. Since these subsidies would replace the earned income tax credit (EITC), the money currently used to finance the EITC would help defray their cost. Despite these savings, this would undoubtedly be an expensive program. Phelps estimates that initially it would cost \$100 billion a year, but he is convinced that since these subsidies would create healthier families and communities, the direct and indirect savings would quickly

offset the expenditure. In his view, family breakdown, social decay, welfare dependence and crime "can be traced to economic forces that have deprived a great many less advantaged workers of much of the power of their labor." A major strength of Phelps's plan is that it comes from inside the economic establishment and is therefore being taken seriously by political leaders and the mainstream press.

Such a large-scale program of wage subsidies would force the private sector to address the issue of managerial greed. In order to meet their new tax liabilities as well as remain competitive, corporations would have to cut into executive compensation and thus reduce the income gap between managers and everyone else.

* Sylvia Ann Hewlett, economist and founder of the National Parenting Association, lives in New York City with her husband and four children—ages twenty to twenty months. Cornel West, professor of Afro-American Studies at Harvard University, lives in Boston with his wife Ellen. His son, aged twenty, now attends college in Florida. A new book by Hewlett and West entitled *The War Against Parents* was published by Houghton Mifflin in April 1998.



THE AARON DIAMOND AIDS RESEARCH CENTER

AFFILIATE OF THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

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10 December 1998

President William J. Clinton
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President:

It was truly an honor to meet you in June. At the request of Mr. Lowell Weiss, I am writing now to reiterate certain points I made during the MIT commencement.

I feel extremely privileged to work on AIDS. As a young physician in 1981, I was fortunate enough to witness the beginning of the visible part of the AIDS epidemic. Over the course of a year, young men, one after another, presented to the hospital with a multitude of infections, leading to death within days to weeks. It was evident that their immune system was damaged. But, by what? Their medical histories strongly suggested the possibility of a sexually transmitted agent that caused immunodeficiency. And yet, any description of a similar syndrome was nowhere to be found in the medical literature. The disease was obviously new! In this manner, AIDS appeared insidiously and mystified doctors and scientists alike. No one could have predicted that 17 years later, we would face a global epidemic of HIV infection that is arguably the plague of the millennium. Today, HIV continues to spread at an alarming rate of 16,000 new cases per day, and more than 50 million infections are expected by the year 2000. For a biomedical scientist, what could represent a greater opportunity than to conduct research on a lethal microbe that threatens the health of the entire world?

Despite breakneck speed of scientific discoveries in the field, AIDS patients already faced a decade and a half of horror and disappointment. But, because of science, there is now hope. In the past three years, with new knowledge and new therapies, it has become possible to control HIV so effectively that the virus is no longer detectable in the infected person. For the first time in this dreadful

epidemic, the tide has begun to turn against the virus. Although a cure is still not in hand, as stated in Time Magazine, the worst fear—the one that seeded a decade with despair, the foreboding sense that the AIDS virus might be invincible—has finally been subdued. After years of cursing the darkness of AIDS, a candle of hope has been lit by science.

AIDS, however, is not over. Worldwide, most infected persons cannot access the promising new therapies, and much remains to be done in controlling the spread of this epidemic. It is my deepest hope that the recent scientific advances will inspire government, academia, and the private sector to remain vigilant and to re-double our efforts to bring an end to this tragedy. Prevention is the ultimate key to controlling the epidemic, and vaccine science must now take center stage, as you had declared last year.

In our experiments attempting to eradicate HIV from an infected person, I have learned that success in research, as is the case in most endeavors, requires bold decision making and a willingness to take informed risks. As so eloquently stated by Harold Shapiro of Princeton, "an excessive zeal to avoid all risks is, in the end, an acceptance of mediocrity and an abdication of leadership." One must take on the toughest challenge but view it as the greatest opportunity, for every noble work is at first seemingly impossible. Teddy Roosevelt said at the turn of the century, "Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs even though checkered by failure, than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much because they live in the gray twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat."

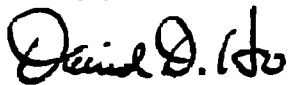
I have also reflected on the role of science in our society. I am disturbed by the public's increasing indifference to what we do as scientists and engineers. As children, we all began with a real zest for science. We were intellectually curious, and provocative and insightful questions blurted out constantly. However, by early adulthood, this proclivity to science and the joy of discovery have somehow dissipated in most, only to be replaced by science phobia. Consequently, it is not surprising that our society has often stereotyped, unflatteringly, those scientists and engineers who carry out incomprehensible lines of work. Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell, and the Wright Brothers would be today's nerds, even though the products of their ingenuity have made our world better. I am particularly saddened by the fact that many of my personal heroes in science are virtual unknowns to a typical citizen, while certain dubious characters are universally recognized and often glorified by our society. Our value system must properly recognize individuals whose contributions help to move our society forward.

I am equally troubled by the society's lack of commitment to research in basic science. A former president said in a campaign speech in 1980, "why should we

subsidize intellectual curiosity?" This simple but naïve question speaks volumes of the lack of appreciation of the richness that uninhibited fundamental research has brought us. Carl Sagan said it best when he wrote, "Maxwell wasn't thinking of radio, radar, and television when he first scratched out the fundamental equations of electromagnetism; Newton wasn't dreaming of space flight or communications satellites when he first understood the motion of the Moon; Roentgen wasn't contemplating medical diagnosis when he investigated a penetrating radiation so mysterious he called it "X-rays"; Curie wasn't thinking of cancer therapy when she painstakingly extracted minute amounts of radium from tons of pitchblende; Fleming wasn't planning on saving the lives of millions with antibiotics when he noticed a circle free of bacteria around a growth of mold; Watson and Crick weren't imagining the cure of genetic diseases when they puzzled over the X-ray diffractometry of DNA." These discoveries and a multitude of others that grace and characterize our time were made ultimately by scientists given the opportunity to explore what in their opinion were basic questions in nature. Cutting off fundamental, curiosity-driven science is like eating the seed corn. I know you share the wisdom of George Washington who said in 1790, "there is nothing which can better deserve our patronage than the promotion of science. Knowledge is in every country the surest basis of public happiness."

I hope these remarks are helpful as you put your troubles behind and renew your effort to lead our proud nation into the next millenium.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David D. Ho". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" and last name "Ho" being the most prominent parts.

David D. Ho, M.D.

December 23, 1998

MEMORANDUM TO THE PRESIDENT

FROM: NICHOLAS LEMANN

RE: STATE OF THE UNION

I was honored to be asked to share my thoughts on this current moment in our nation's history and what should be done to seize the moment. Let me begin by observing that there is a huge disjunction between the definition of "the moment" historically and the definition politically.

Historically, as has been widely noted, this is a good time for the country. The economy is better than it has been in decades, there is no major foreign policy threat, we are moving to heal the world's most persistent conflicts that do not involve us, the racial/ethnic/urban/underclass congeries of problems seem to be getting better, and so on. But politically we are in a conflagration.

The best I can do at making sense of the politics-reality disjunction is this: The Republican Party has spent three decades running against the sixties. On the whole this has worked well for them, but now the strategy is starting to run out of steam. The sixties were a long time ago. The Democrats have expertly rid themselves of most of the vulnerabilities the Republicans had exploited. So, at the level of political maneuvering, what happens now? I think what we are seeing is that when you lose your argument, you make it personal.

It would be great, Mr. President, if you could find a way to declare an end to the rhetorical wars over the sixties. Then we would have a politics that is not any longer about fear of marauding minorities, libertine values, etc., and the Democrats would not have constantly to reassure voters that they are not up to those nefarious things. "Government" -- as a rhetorical flourish, not the thing itself -- is code for the return of all that sixties stuff. Therefore you cannot talk about it, and therefore you cannot talk about the organization you head, the federal government, in the context of national needs.

Our first task in domestic policy should be to get better opportunity to the people who do not get to college and do not live in the suburbs. But before we can talk about that substantively, we have to get over the rhetorical hurdle of government, and even collective purpose, being verboten. It is therefore essential that the State of the Union speech help develop a rhetoric of nationhood, of "us," of optimism, and of the future, which becomes the dominant strain in the political discourse.

How to do this specifically? What's the language? Well, the tone should be positive and inclusive -- that is easy. And I will suggest a particular case to use: public school. The advantages of talking about the public schools are:

a) Everybody has already signed on to the idea that we should all have to pay to educate the country's children; the principle of common purpose is established.

b) Public school is enormous. Fully one fifth of the American population consists of students in K-12 public schools. Private school is surprisingly tiny -- about 1% of the school population goes to non-parochial private schools.

c) Public school is about providing opportunity, not redistribution of resources. So if you can talk about the centrality of public school, and the importance (here's the new element) of our ensuring, as a nation, that every child is equipped with basic skills in public schools, he will have established the principle of national purpose using an example that is unarguable and untarnishable with the sixties brush.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these thoughts, and best of luck on the State of the Union.

MEMORANDUM

TO: President Clinton
FROM: Eric Liu *EL*
DATE: December 18, 1998
SUBJ: State of the Union

Introduction

I have been sitting at my desk the last few days trying to articulate a "big" idea that I might offer for your speech. But as I write this memo, Iraq is under attack and the House debate is underway. Watching all this unfold, I wonder whether a standard State of the Union, stuffed with rhetoric and perfunctory policy nods, will seem at all appropriate. I know -- it's still a very long time between now and late January; maybe politics will have returned to "normal" by then. But whatever the situation in January, I believe this speech must be something different. Something personal and from the heart.

I urge you, Mr. President, to speak of *politics*. Not elections, not polls or procedure, but the deeper meaning and the original purposes of politics. I want to know, in your own words, why you chose to enter public life. I'd like you to tell me about your earliest days in the public square, the people you met, the people who helped you, the people you helped. I want to hear you tell Americans -- especially young Americans -- why politics still matters; why, even today, you still believe in its possibilities.

This would be a speech about you, yes. But it would really be about all of us. It would be about the things that we have taken for granted about our common life. It would remind us of the good that can be done through politics -- that can be done, indeed, *only* through politics -- whether it is giving the voiceless a voice, the unskilled a skill, the hopeless hope. And indirectly, perhaps, it would send the message that amidst the madness of our day you have held fast to first principles.

Why Talk About Politics

Let me say right off: I am not proposing a sorrowful valedictory, or a self-serving plea for redemption. Far from it. I am proposing a speech of character, of strength, one that will make its mark whether the situation a month hence is good or bad. For the reality is that even if in January all that is unhappy for you now has turned happy, the causes of popular disaffection and disgust toward the political process will not have abated.

The catalog of those causes is long and familiar: The cost and the triviality of campaigns have made elections seem an irrelevance. The language of political debate has become utterly predictable, a lifeless array of code words and stiff verbal postures. Meanwhile, the economy has our minds mainly on markets. The importance of government feels diminished. The 24-hour media has made news mere background noise. The Internet has truncated attention spans. And the dominance of the entertainment ethos has reduced what remains of political life to just another segment on just another talk show.

Ever since I left Washington four years ago, I have been watching this devolution with an eerie sense of detachment. Now I have begun to feel real fear: fear that an entire generation is learning that it can do without politics; fear that the habits and customs of a meaningful democratic existence are atrophying; fear that "public life" now means only celebrity and exposure; and, perhaps worst of all, fear that I am in the minority for feeling such fear at all. That is why I wish to hear you speak of politics.

How to Talk About Politics

Tell us stories – vivid, particular stories. Tell us, say, about an elderly woman you met in your first run for office. Or a young man you met when you first ran for President. Tell us how you saw the world when you'd become a father, what you thought a person could do for the next generation if he could bring together enough of his countrymen. Tell of the impulse you had to be part of something greater than just yourself. Tell of a time when public service, when the very idea of the public sphere, meant something – and meant something positive. Take us back to why you got involved at all.

Then remind the country of the ways in which we still need politics, and use as your leitmotif *The Great Gaps*. The still-widening gap between the richest citizens and the poorest. The gap in educational opportunities that perpetuates itself in a gap of life chances. The gap in empathy that boxes us up by ideology, or race, or religion. The gap in experience that makes one generation tune out another.

In times of national privation, we feel these gaps acutely. In times like these, of relative comfort and security, we have to be careful not to forget them. What will close these gaps? Mere trust in the market? Mere chat on the gossip line? Mere absorption with the immediate needs of self? No – what will close these gaps is only politics: talking, arguing, nudging, inspiring. Politics: stepping into another's shoes and asking why they see things as they do. Politics: gathering people to reach a greater sense of their potential and commonality than they'd had before.

Politics is sometimes nasty and brutish. *I know this well*, you can say. Politics can appear absurd, annoying, or fiercely beside the point. *And it often is*, you might add. But perhaps more powerfully than anyone, you can make the case that we mustn't abandon politics. For politics, properly defined, is not the "who's up-who's down" of the Beltway circus. It is the work of making our freedom add up to something; of showing that a citizen is more than a consumer, and a republic more than a call-in show. It is directing our own destinies – as individuals, as families, as a community.

In making this case, I would avoid lofty, Kennedyesque tones. Borrow a few lines, perhaps, from Havel or Mandela (or Wei Jingsheng) on the obligations of liberty. But speak quietly, plainly. Speak as if you were sitting down for a conversation with just one American, one cynical American who has given up on the very idea of a public, of shared purpose and endeavor. Melt his shell of apathy, locate him in a bigger storyline, convince him to *believe* again. Go back, in short, to the beginning.

What This Will Do

I think a State of the Union speech that incorporates such reflections can achieve several things for you tactically. It will reveal the trumped-up theater of impeachment for what it is: trumped-up theater. It will underscore the fact that your opponents know only "small-p" politics, the pettiness and the angling for momentary advantage. It will reinforce one of the mandates of the election, which was for Washington to get back to work.

It will accomplish something else, I hope. For the millions of people watching you, it will offer a moment's pause. By the time you deliver this speech, the American people will have been bombarded with oratory about the Constitution and the "duties" of politicians. We will have heard overwrought lessons about the form and formalities of democracy. But I suspect we will not have had the lesson we really need, which is about the *spirit* and *soul* of democracy. This is the side of civic life I hope you will address.

A Final Word

One of my first memories of working for you was your reaction one day as you were being briefed on the contents of an upcoming policy speech. "Words, words, words," you said, with a wave of the hand. "What do we really mean? What are we trying to say?" Good questions, never more relevant than now. A speech on the "American Century," or "the six ways to build the three pillars of opportunity," will be forgotten as it is delivered. A speech on *why the public should even care anymore*, on why, despite it all, we must still engage each other with civility, will be better, and better remembered.

I write as someone who was once idealistic about what politics meant, and who wants to be idealistic again. I want to be reminded, as I believe you are uniquely able to remind us, of the weave of obligation and understanding that connects us all. Tell us the proper name for the weaving of that net: *politics*. And show us that politics still has a future.

December 23, 1998

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: RICHARD RODRIGUEZ

Dear Mr. President,

I am sitting here, on a bright winter morning in San Francisco, trying to think how I might be helpful to you, as you prepare for the "State of the Union" address. My fear--given the partisan chaos of this last year, destined to extend into January--is that journalists, in coming weeks, will exploit the moment and frame your speech as political drama: an impeached president faces his jury!

I urge you, first of all, to speak to America--the nation of listeners--and not just to the Congress.

I work as a journalist, in print and on television. I know something of Grub Street, even now that it has become (a tedious metaphor) the electronic superhighway. But I survive spiritually as a writer of essays, am finishing my third collection. For some part of my day, each day, I view America and listen to it from a solitary distance, where my best companions are Thoreau and Emerson and Baldwin.

As an essayist, I tell you, there is a widespread sense of disconnection in the United States right now. I suppose we Americans, as people who have taken the first-person singular pronoun farther than any other people have dared, are bound always to end up fighting each other for a parking space in the mall. But in decades past, our protection against the brilliance of our individualism were institutions that reminded us of our civic connection. The schoolroom, for example. The classroom traditionally taught us that we belonged to a common language, an implicating history, a conscience that was larger than our individual selves or our separate neighborhoods.

Most Americans, I think, no longer assume that the schoolmarm is teaching young people that they are Americans, within their experience of individualism. From the classroom to the Congress -- institutional America seems to most Americans to be torn by sectarianism and partisanship. And so Americans are left alone, their individualism feeling more and more like loneliness.

Mr. President, I remember listening to you, some years ago, while I was driving along a California freeway. You were two or three years, then, away from the White House. You were being interviewed on NPR. I remember being dazzled by your performance, and thinking to myself, what a shame it was that people of your gifts can never get elected to the presidency. Mr. President, I will tell frankly: I have not heard you give an interview or a speech in the years since, with the same depth and range.

I urge you to risk a speech quite unlike any you have given while President, give voice to your soul. Speak to mine.

Everywhere in this country, I hear people voice dissatisfaction with politics and politicians. Everywhere people speak of the Congress and the White House as irrelevant to their lives. (I think the election of Jesse Ventura, especially the support he received from young voters, was an important measure of the mood.) The yearning for a political outsider is not new in America, but in this post-modern moment it is also urgent.

Fairly or unfairly, your summers in the Hamptons and your friendships in Hollywood have been seen by many Americans as proof of your membership within an elite. But what has most interested me about you, your story, has always been your early years, the working-class beginnings. You know a thing or two about the dark side of the American dream. While I do not think you should hide the brilliant technocrat that you have become, I have long wondered why you do not, in your speeches, refer to the dreams and fears you had as a boy, a poor white child, when you were on the outside.

Among my various employers, I work for Pacific News Service here in San Francisco -- an unruly and highly original organization. One of the newspapers we publish is called THE BEAT WITHIN. It is a newspaper published for and by children behind bars.

Several things I have learned from editing this newspaper and working with kids behind bars. One is that there is a talent and depth to most of these kids -- most of whom have endured childhoods of cruelty and abandonment. But who cares? We middle-class Americans build gated communities to protect ourselves from the future. And we expect prisons to be warehouses for losers.

Many nights I come away from Juvenile Detention Centers wondering what if--what if we were willing to turn our prisons into schools: What if we were to teach young criminals to think, to write, to read?

Franz Schurmann, the Berkeley sociologist, remarks that America is everywhere in the world in the ascendancy (look at Shanghai or Tijuana!). But Schurmann thinks that the United States is in decline. He speaks of a leadership class in America that grows self-preoccupied and disconnected from the bottom of the society, except by way of noblesse oblige.

My own sense is that the energy--the only hope--I feel right now in America is coming from immigrants, and from the bottom. (The only institutions that seem aware of this energy are the evangelical Protestant churches and the Muslim mosques.)

In a televised conversation on race this last summer, on which I met you, you said something about the globalization of the American identity that I wish you would speak more about. Become Whitman. Sing of the America that is forming--of the Mexicans plucking chickens in Arkansas, of the Ethiopians driving cabs in Washington, of the Filipinas sitting with the dying in Los Angeles.

I know I risk sentimentality. But I urge you to risk it, too. What is needed is for those at the top in our society to recognize their need for those at the bottom. It's more than a rhetorical point--it's the truth of America. American institutions thrive when they are awake to the dreams of the people who need those institutions.

I can envision a generation of prisoners becoming educated--I see the future every Wednesday night at a San Jose jail! I can envision an America of migrant workers redeeming the lives of the middle class, living behind gates.

I think of the kid you were. I ask you to give voice to him now. Wonder about how his hopes stay alive in America--and all that he has to offer this country's "leaders" who are now so clearly out of touch with the children who stare out of windows and think they are all alone.

Yours truly,

Richard Rodriguez

To: President Clinton
From: Cass R. Sunstein
Date: November 23, 1998

"[B]e the evils what they may, the experiment is not yet played out. The United States are not yet made; they are not a finished fact to be categorically assessed."

John Dewey, *The Public and its Problems* (1927)

"Better the occasional faults of a government that lives in a spirit of charity than the consistent omissions of a government frozen in the ice of its own indifference."

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

The United States has had three great periods of self-definition: the founding; the Civil War and its aftermath; and the New Deal. The current era may well be the fourth.

What should define this era is a substantial strengthening of the (now endangered) aspirations of its three predecessors - and, at the same time, an insistence on new, more flexible tools for bringing about those aspirations. The key tools are **information** and **incentives**; both of these are highly relevant to current and future policy proposals, in such areas as education, welfare reform, and environmental protection.

I. Three Periods, Three Goals

America's three great periods has reaffirmed and deepened three simple aspirations; but each of the aspirations is under enormous pressure today.

First: **A nation that is both prosperous and unified.** The original Constitution was founded, perhaps above all, on the goal of creating a

prosperous and unified economy, one that was free from the balkanization that existed under the Articles of Confederation. The Civil War greatly deepened this commitment; the New Deal went still further, asserting a central role for the national government in ensuring unity and economic prosperity (including, for all our citizens, freedom from desperate conditions).

Second: **A system of self-government that is both democratic and deliberative.** Perhaps the greatest achievement of James Madison's rethinking of traditional republican thought was to create a system in which public officials are accountable to the public, but also in which policies are formed on the basis of reasons, not power or narrow self-interest. See *The Federalist*, No. 10. The founders' great innovation lay in the effort to combine accountability with reason-giving and reflection. The Civil War era reflected a belief that the system of slavery was incompatible with the basic aspiration to deliberative democracy; Roosevelt's attack on economic privilege in the New Deal was centrally concerned with ensuring more in the way of both democracy and deliberation in government.

Third: **Fair equality of opportunity for all, and a rejection of second class citizenship for any group.** An ideal of basic human equality has of course been at the heart of American constitutionalism since before the beginning, with the Declaration of Independence. Thus Madison wrote that it is "essential to [republican] government that it be derived from the great body of society, nor from an inconsiderable proportion, or a favored class of it" *The Federalist* No. 39. The Civil War extended this commitment to all our citizens, with perhaps the greatest single sentence in our (or any) Constitution: **"All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside."** (This is also a striking affirmation of American unity.) As Justice Harlan wrote in his great dissenting opinion in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, "there is no caste here." The New Deal took this commitment much further, with its effort to ensure that everyone has decent life prospects - a fair chance.

II. The Future, I: Strengthening the Three Ideals

It is very important, in the State of the Union address and elsewhere,

to reaffirm these ideals in the strongest possible terms -- especially because each of them is under considerable pressure.

n The ideal of national unity is under intense attack from both the left and the right. Many conservatives have entirely given up on the idea, by, among other things, failing to include the poorest among us at all. Some on the left urge a form of "multiculturalism," and balkanization, that would be absolutely fatal to the Constitution's project.

n Many people have given up on the idea of a democracy that is also deliberative. The system of running campaigns, and the woeful performance of the mass media, are increasingly inconsistent with the goal of ensuring deliberation and reason-giving. (Free air time for candidates might provide some help here.) Many people suggest that power and self-interest will necessarily play a large role in politics -- and that it is impossible to do better.

n Many people would deny the government any power to help bring the ideal of fair equal opportunity into reality. Bizarrely, they act as if we already have equal opportunity - even though a child born on Kenwood Avenue and 57th Street in Chicago (where I live) will have completely different educational and life prospects than a child born forty blocks south.

A real danger of the current period is that the public, the media, and the government will do too **complacent**. (Complacency is unAmerican!) A prime imperative for the future is to assert the great importance of these ideals and the fact that despite all our achievements, we continue to fall very short of them in practice.

Many of the Administration's particular proposals fit well within the framework of reinvigorating these basic ideals. The emphasis on education, for example, is central to each of them (and note that education was central to the founders as well). Electoral reform -- including free air time for candidates -- is part of the notion of deliberative democracy. A well-functioning system of social security is part of a unified and prosperous national economy, and also a way of ensuring that no one, and no group, suffers from second-class citizenship; the rethinking of welfare should be in the same vein.

III. The Future, II: Information and Incentives

The greatest challenge for America's future is to reinvigorate these old ideals, and to give them new life with better instruments. Old-line liberal thinking involved rigid, command-and-control regulation, characteristic (sad to say) of many of President Roosevelt's own initiatives, and also characteristic of regulatory and welfare state reforms under Presidents Johnson and Nixon. Many current liberals continue to think that it is their job to defend these outmoded reforms -- even though experience suggests that often they don't work.

The attack from the right - associated with Reagan, Thatcher, and Gingrich - insists on a prosperous national economy, but downplays the other two ideals, and suggests that a "free market" will, by some kind of magic, promote every goal that Americans care about. This is utterly implausible, and in any case, as Roosevelt said: "Better the occasional faults of a government that lives in a spirit of charity than the consistent omissions of a government frozen in the ice of its own indifference." **What is emerging - and what holds the best promise for the future -- is a system that holds these ideals firmly in view, but that seeks more flexible strategies, based on two primary instruments: information and incentives.**

A. Information

Under Presidents Roosevelt and Johnson, government relied very little on information as a regulatory tool. But often a problem can be much reduced simply by disclosure. Many of the most successful government programs have depended on mere disclosure of information; thus the Toxic Release Inventory, which requires polluters simply to list toxic releases, has been an astonishing success story, since it has produced low-cost, voluntary reductions. Indeed, this is probably the most successful regulatory program of the last generation.

It would be very easy to build a great deal on such experiments, and to do so without costing much money at all. To take just one modest but potentially important example: How about requiring broadcasters to disclose the level of public service and public interest activity they provide each quarter, including educational programming for children and free air time for candidates for public office? At a minimum, every broadcaster

should be required, by the FCC, to disclose this information, in the hope that we can create a kind of competition, among broadcasters, to do more to serve the public interest. The basic idea can be taken much further, as, for example, by requiring employers to make public their health and safety record.

B. Incentives

Under Presidents Roosevelt and Johnson, government rarely paid any attention at all to the incentives created by government programs. Sometimes it would actually create bad incentives. Sometimes it would fail to see that a desirable incentive - financial or otherwise - can accomplish much more good than a rigid government command.

Thus many recent success stories have involved reliance on creating better incentives, rather than mandating particular outcomes. Consider, for example:

- n the workers' compensation program, which reduces injuries and deaths by about 30% each year, merely by virtue of creating an economic incentives for safety;

- n the emissions trading program for acid deposition under the Clean Air Act, which has saved millions of dollars;

- n the "Star" program now operated by OSHA, which relieves companies of inspections when their safety record is good;

- n the earned income tax credit;

- n efforts to decrease cigarette smoking not through bans but through increased prices;

Dozens of other programs try to make the public interest more rather than less profitable. Some of these programs involve using market forces, whereas others involve dampening market forces. The "school uniforms" idea has been valuable partly because it has enabled parents and children to stop competing over something that really isn't central to education: clothes. The emissions trading program has been valuable partly because it has made it more profitable to have high-tech pollution control strategies, thus creating a kind of dynamic incentive for technological innovation in this domain. The tools of information and incentives could be adapted to good

effect in the areas now receiving intense consideration: smoking, education, welfare reform, environmental protection, and social security. (I omit details.)

IV. Conclusion

On the eve of the millenium, the great challenge for the United States is twofold. First: To reinvigorate, in the face of current attacks, the basic ideals that have been reaffirmed at every important turning-point in our history. Second: To reinvigorate those ideals with far more creative, flexible tools, above all based on information and incentives.

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December 14, 1998

To: President Bill Clinton
The White House Office of Speech Writing
Fax: 202 456-5709

From: Professor Ronald Takaki
Fax: 510 527-3561

Re: Suggestions for Your State of the Union Address

I found John Hope Franklin's race panel report tepid, especially in comparison to the vibrancy in your speech, "One America."

The time is opportune for you to give the nation a new boost.

In your speech, you used the phrase "no majority race." That expression is negative and also stirs some alarm among whites. I would suggest a more poetic and more affirming phrase -- one like Roosevelt's "we have nothing to fear but fear itself" that people will remember. My suggestion is this: A half century from now, whites too will become a minority group. "We will all be minorities."

In this immense ethnic diversity, we will all become more and more dependent on one another. By the year 2000, one third of all new workers entering the labor force will be minorities. They will need to be educated and trained in order for our nation to reduce inequalities and also to be competitive in the globalizing economy.

In your speech, you pointed out what we must do to prepare minority workers for the 21st century. Warning that we must not "resegregate" higher education, you declared unequivocal support for affirmative action. In your state of the union address, you can reaffirm your support and explain briefly what affirmative action is and why we need it.

Here I would like to offer an explanation of what it is and why we need it by sharing a concrete idea I have for the California ballot for the 2000 election.

Actually, support for affirmative action is substantial. A poll by the New York Times (December 14, 1997) has shown that a majority of Americans want to retain or mend affirmative action, not abolish it.

California's Prop 209 did not present the issue clearly or explicitly. Purposely avoiding the term "affirmative action," this initiative described the policy as "preferential treatment."

Its supporters also misled the voters when they promoted it as the California "Civil Rights" Initiative.

The people of California are entitled to have another opportunity to vote on the issue of affirmative action. My draft of the "California Equality Initiative" (CEI) reads:

In order to act affirmatively in promoting equality of opportunity, it shall be lawful for the state to consider race, gender, or socio-economic class disadvantage as one of the criteria in the selection of qualified individuals for education, employment, and contracting. This law does not permit the use of quotas, but does allow the use of considerations based on the above three categories.

There are good reasons why pursuing this proposition is necessary and timely.

The sixty percent drop in Black and Latino admissions at Berkeley is neither morally acceptable in a nation "dedicated" (to use Lincoln's language) to equality, nor politically acceptable to Blacks and Latinos who together comprise nearly 40 percent of the state's population.

CEI would compel a critical examination of the existing admissions system and expose policies that produce inequality. The playing field for admissions is not level. The heavy reliance on the SAT constitutes de facto discrimination. These test scores correlate with family incomes: they rise together. Financially privileged students can artificially raise their scores by taking the SAT repeatedly, and also by enrolling in exam prep courses that often charge as much as a dollar a minute.

CEI would allow the University of California to practice the affirmative action admissions established in the elite universities like Harvard, Yale, Stanford, and Princeton. Consider the recent study by William G. Bowen of Princeton and Derek Bok of Harvard. Their empirical study of 45,000 students at twenty-eight of the most selective universities over a 20 year period offers a significant finding. It shows that black students entered elite schools with lower test scores and grades and graduated at a lower rate than white students. But after graduation, these black students earned advanced degrees at rates identical to those of their white classmates, and they were even slightly more likely than whites to obtain degrees in law, business, and medicine.

Finally, CEI would attract the support of minorities, women, labor unions, white working-class families, businesses owned by minorities and women, corporations needing an educated diverse workforce, and also concerned citizens. CEI would reaffirm Langston Hughes' dream to "let America be America," where equality will be "in the air we breathe."

MEMORANDUM TO THE PRESIDENT ON THE STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

December 21, 1998

Sean Wilentz, Princeton University

The upcoming State of the Union address needs to claim the great political middle ground for the Administration, in a way that ever so deftly marginalizes the extremists who have pushed through impeachment.

The model for this address ought to be Thomas Jefferson's first inaugural address, which repays re-reading. Jefferson's model -- and his words - were highly relevant back when it seemed that the impeachment drive would fail. They are even more relevant now. Jefferson brilliantly (and with great subtlety and no rancour) de-legitimized the arch-conservatives among his Federalist foes, while calling for national reconciliation based on his own political program. This is exactly what you need to do. You have already started to do so with the wonderful speech you gave after the House impeachment vote. Now you need to expand on that - for your own sake and, more important, for the country's.

Step 1: De-legitimize the Right. Quietly note the recent tumults. Note that those unfamiliar with American politics might be shocked, not knowing that American freedom of expression allows for such tumults. But at the same time, note that things have gone much too far, that it is time for the politics of search-and-destroy to end. The public has made it absolutely clear, in the last election and repeatedly thereafter, that it wants an end to the relentless, mean-spirited politics of personal destruction. Let us pledge ourselves to do so. And let us never forget how strong a people we are, in all our variety of thought and creed. Let us never succumb to the temptation of believing that only our own group can save the country, by whatever means necessary. **Let us reject the idea that to find the real America, one need look no farther than one's reflection in the mirror.** [Note how the last line quietly rejects Bob Barr and his horrible line about "the real America."]

Step 2: Create the center. On the real issues, there is common ground for moving the country forward. Quoting Jefferson: **"Every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle."** Or, paraphrasing him, on the basics, **"we are all Republicans, we are all Democrats."** And what are those principles? [Here are some suggestions; you can supply your own]. Toleration of different creeds and opinions. Keeping the doors of opportunity and prosperity open for all. Keeping the nation's military strong and effective, to protect the national security in an uncertain world -- supporting our troops unequivocally whenever they are called upon to serve. Etc. Etc. They sound as strong as you can make them. But subtly, they will also be those principles that the extremists have undermined. Of course, you will not say that directly. The country will get it anyway. You - and the country - win.

Memo to the President
December 21, 1998
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Step 3: Seize the center. In the name of the country - the broad agreement of Republicans and Democrats - run through what you want to do in the coming year, your concrete proposals. These ought not sound in the least wonkish - you're here to repair the country, not convince the policy elites - but should be just detailed enough to sound determined, realistic, strong. Social Security. Medicare. Education. The whole list, not unlike last year's excellent State of the Union. And make clear, implicitly, that you are doing this not in the name of your Administration but, again, in the name of the country, the vast center, of which you are now, as never before, the great leader and spokesman.

Step 4: Stirring conclusion. Summing up quickly, perhaps quoting Jefferson's first inaugural directly: about this "rising nation spread over a wise and fruitful land," "advancing rapidly to destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye." Politically, the White House IS the nation now; you recapitulate here your intention to lead it.

Last words of advice: To pull off what Jefferson did is a little tricky, but if anyone can do it, you can. It's what you - and again, more importantly, the nation - need more than anything else. Your tone should not be in any way defensive or dismissive or angry or retributive. It is, rather, above the fray, the tone of a great leader, subtle when necessary, conciliatory yet commanding throughout.

November 9, 1998

The Honorable William Jefferson Clinton
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President:

I would like to share with you some of my thoughts as you develop your forthcoming State of the Union Message.

In your six years in office, the American political landscape has changed dramatically. Unlike many of your predecessors in the Democratic Party, you have not automatically held out expanded government programs as the solution for every social ill facing the United States. This has enabled you to concentrate your fire on the preservation of programs about which Americans care deeply - social security being the obvious example. As we look back on those years, it becomes clear that, for all the talk of a revolutionary "contract with America," what the American people really wanted was not the elimination, but the redirection, of government. They wanted government to become their partner rather than their enemy.

In your remaining two years in office, I hope you will be to solidify and give voice to a similar desire which Americans express whenever they get a chance: to bring an end to the divisive and destructive "culture war" which some proclaim to be taking place in America.

You recall Mr. Buchanan's 1992 speech at the Republican National Convention in Houston when he announced that America faced a culture war over such issues as abortion, feminism, and gay rights. You also remember the expression "wedge issues," the effort to rally popular opposition to affirmative action or immigration in ways that would lead to a resurgence of conservatism in the United States. But it was not just conservatives who proclaimed that Americans were deeply divided over issues such as these. Defenders of gay rights or affirmative action all too often relied on the courts for protection and in that sense never allowed their ideas to be tested in the realm of public opinion.

I think we now know that fears of a culture war in America were greatly exaggerated. To be sure, Americans can and do disagree about these "hot button" issues; in a democracy, that is not only to be expected, but to be welcomed. But we also know that most Americans have great respect for other Americans no matter how deep their disagreements. We know that there is far more tolerance out there in the country that theorists of the culture war were prepared to admit. And above all else we know that Americans want their leaders to address real issues, ones that involve their future and the security of their country, not those which are essentially "symbolic." Part of their disgust with politics is their disgust with those who would use politics to advance a specific moral or religious agenda.

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All of us should worry about the moral health of our country. We cannot devote our lives to self-interest and claim that our lives have been good. Society requires acts of altruism and selflessness, the capacity to take the point of view of others, and the sense of charity associated so strongly with our religious traditions. An immoral society is a society not worth preserving.

But morality is also too important to be left to the moralists. It is simply not true that rates of crime, divorce, cheating, or abortion are indicators of a moral decline so serious that Americans can no longer be considered a moral people. For one thing, we have in recent years seen significant progress in reversing some of the destructive trends of the past. But even more importantly, Americans, as they have done with government, are not seeking the elimination of morality so much as they are changing morality to make it work for them. The people of this country want very much to lead lives devoted to doing good by each other, but they also want some say in determining what the good is. Moral authority, in their view, does not come into being simply because some people try to proclaim it into being. Morality must be tested by experience, filtered through the actual practice of raising a family, living together with others, and seeking fulfillment both for oneself and for one's community. Americans, in short, increasingly apply the same inventive spirit that works for them in the economy to the sphere of morality and religion. As much as Americans believe in morality, they also believe in freedom. They want to have some say in the moral rules by which they will be governed because they believe in themselves and their capacity to do good.

That is why Americans have reacted so sharply against those who insist that the United States, having lost its way morally, is on the road to perdition. Such talk, they are persuaded, sells the country too short. It assumes that people cannot be trusted to do what is right but have to be led, like the blind, to their proper destination. It betrays a pessimism about America that stands in sharp contrast to the love that people have for their country - which inevitably means, in a democracy, the love they have for those with whom they share their country.

I believe that Americans need a different kind of moral leadership that what is offered to them by activists in the culture war. They are tired of the ideology and the partisanship. They do not want their politicians to be preachers, for they have their own preachers whom they usually admire. What they want is for someone to speak to what they find missing in American public life: a sense of dignity, purpose, and common effort. They long for leaders who challenge them to bring out the best in themselves.

When you came into office, Mr. President, the country desperately needed to move beyond left and right. It has now done so. An era which began with the New Deal has come to an end. For we have all come to recognize that as much as we need government at the margins of what we do, we cannot have government substitute for the essentials of what we do.

If left and right are no longer viable positions on economic issues, they have also become irrelevant to moral issues. There is neither a conservative nor a liberal way to be moral. There are neither Republican nor Democratic principles by which people can answer the questions that speak to their obligations as citizens and human beings: Who should be allowed to come here? Who should be allowed to enter our most prestigious universities and work for our best

corporations? In what God should we believe? Who should determine the kinds of lives we ought to lead? These are the kinds of questions which demand respect, modesty, and humility not passion and partisanship.

I do not think that you should use the State of the Union Address to take positions on the moral issues which are so commonly held to define America's culture war. I am instead asking you to make the culture war itself an issue. We need to be reminded of what holds us together, not what can drive us apart. We need to remember the value of democratic disagreement, not proclaim disagreement equivalent to treason. We cannot be a good society if we are all bad people. We cannot go to war over culture when our culture is what makes us one.

Too many voices in America use the high road of morality to take the low road of invective and blame. It is not your job, Mr. President, to lead the American people to the true high road of respect and tolerance. They have gotten there on their own, even though so many pundits, and politicians, sold them short. What they need is to have their convictions reaffirmed and solidified. That you can do. I hope you will.

Sincerely,

Alan Wolfe

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Foreign Policy Contributors

Divider Title: _____

FOREIGN POLICY

Leslie H. Gelb is President of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Richard Solomon is President of the United States Institute of Peace.

The NSC has solicited and are expecting memoranda from a number of other people, including:

Roger Altman, former Deputy Treasury Secretary, is currently a principal with EverCore Partners.

John Lewis Gaddis is professor of history and political science at Yale University. He is the author of a seminal work on the Cold War, Strategies of Containment.

Lee Hamilton is a United States Congressman.

Sam Nunn, former United States Senator, is currently a partner at King & Spalding.

Joe Nye, former Assistant Secretary of Defense, is professor of Government at Harvard University.

Daniel Yergin is President of Cambridge Energy Research Associates and author of the Pulitzer Prize winning book, *The Prize* and, most recently, *The Commanding Heights*.

Les Gelb

State of the Union
Foreign Policy Ideas

Many of you worked here in these chambers during the closing years of the Cold War, and many of you have been here with me these last six years. The passing of the old order has been swift, breath-taking, puzzling, challenging. We have experienced the death of the old Cold War order without the establishment of a new world order. We have lived through a death without even a transition to something else.

Like the overwhelming number of Americans, I do not mourn the passing of the Cold War with all the tension between the United States and the Soviet Union, with the dangers of nuclear war, a world that seemed so filled with simplicities and clarities. That world kept hope frozen. Prospects of peace were frozen as in the Middle East and South Africa. Single nations were kept divided, as with Germany. Many nations were forced to live under one yoke, as in the Soviet Union. Most of our energies were focussed on the struggle with Moscow and less so on economic development and human potential. In the Cold War, our predecessors managed to avoid nuclear war, but little was possible beyond that.

Now, new possibilities and opportunities lie within our grasp, as well as new dangers. It has been my hope and my policy to seize the opportunities and prepare ourselves to meet new and often uncertain dangers.

It has been my policy and my hope to press ancient rivals to make peace. That is what we have done between Israel and its Arab neighbors, between blacks and whites in South Africa, among Haitians, between catholics and protestants in northern Ireland, among long-time ethnic warriors in Bosnia. Where peace has eluded us as in the heart of Africa, Kosovo, Korea and other tragic places, we press ahead for peace nonetheless. We do so because despite the horrible bloodshed, peace is now possible. No superpower conflicts stand in the way. It will remain an overriding goal of the United States to be a peacemaker because peace provides the necessary condition for values and interests so central to American foreign policy -- the ideals of the free market which create hope for reduction of poverty and human achievement, and the ideals of democracy which give us the possibility of freedom. We promote peace wherever we can because it is in our interests and because it is right.

I promise you that I will remain vigilant as well toward opportunities for realistic accords between the United States and Cuba and in the Persian Gulf. Given the fluid nature of the post Cold War world, it would be irresponsible for the United States to be unwatchful and closed to chances for the resolution of differences.

To make peace it is also wise and necessary for the United States to promote prosperity and, where it can, to reduce poverty. The United States flourishes, Americans flourish, where the world economy is open and free, and I

shall continue to promote a freer world economy as the best state of affairs for all nations to thrive.

Just as the opportunities for peace and prosperity have never been greater than now, the dangers are great as well. American debates and national security policy no longer vibrate to the dangers of a Soviet-American nuclear holocaust, nor to the ominous side-wars that always seemed to threaten global confrontation.

But in many ways, the new threats are more tangible and more immediate. The spread of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons may well be greater today than in the Cold War. Accordingly, I have redoubled our efforts to prevent and curtail that dreadful prospect. The wealth and military power of the United States are dedicated to shielding us from these threats. So, too, am I redoubling efforts to combat terrorism. This ancient scourge now has many concealed faces. Their defeat requires a major new national effort in the fields of intelligence and detection and law enforcement or punishment. I have set the necessary programs in motion, including new nationwide efforts for public safety in the event of terrorist attacks against Americans and within our own borders.

At the same time, my Administration will remain committed to keeping American military might well above all other nations. Defense spending now totals \$275 billion, as much as during the early 1980's. It is a powerful expression of our intention to defend our interests wherever necessary. It is also prudent. In this new world, we cannot be confident

that we know the origin of the next threat, and we must be ready to act with a variety of means in many different places.

There is no blueprint for this post Cold War world. It emerges still and we are helping to shape it in the best ways known to the United States. It is in our marrow and in our interests to remain vigilant and strong militarily, to promote prosperity and open societies, and to be a peacemaker. By pressing ahead on all these fronts, we help create the possibilities of stamping down the historical tyrannies of poverty, dictatorships and war.

UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE

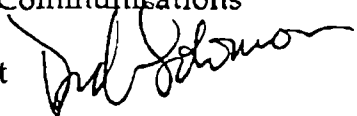
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MEMORANDUM

Tuesday, December 22, 1998

TO: Antony Blinken, Special Assistant to the President and
Senior Director for Strategic Planning
Matthew Gobush, Director of Communications

FROM: Richard H. Solomon, President 

SUBJECT: Ideas for the State of the Union Address: "A Time for
Building Peace"

I. Looking Back on 1998

Theme: Unprecedented opportunities for building peace, as well as the need to deal with new challenges and dangers that grow out of a still unfolding post-Cold War environment. Building peace requires sustained effort. It is not an end-state, but a process that must be constantly worked at, nurtured, and nourished. The habits of peace do not take hold overnight; they require patience and commitment over the long haul. American leadership remains a critical ingredient to global peace and security.

Peacemaking in 1998:

- Northern Ireland: Presidential efforts gave life to the peace process in Northern Ireland and paid enormous dividends, but now requires hard work to sustain.
- Middle East: Presidential efforts to forge an agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians at Wye succeeded, but now require sustained effort to keep the parties from returning to old, hardened positions.
- Bosnia: U.S. and European presence on the ground, in collaboration with the enormous work of non-governmental players, have kept Bosnia at peace, but sustained work remains to be done in creating democratization and a sustainable peace.

New Challenges (Proliferation, Terrorism and Economic Turmoil):

- Proliferation, particularly in Iraq, N. Korea, and S. Asia, deserves the highest priority, as it threatens global peace and security with weapons of mass destruction.
- Terrorism, as seen in this year's embassy bombings in Africa, must be a high priority; there are no quick fixes.
- Conflict emanating from failed states can only be resolved through continued engagement and American leadership.
- In Russia, the U.S. must continue to support reform and encourage a peaceful transition from the old to the new.
- Globalization of the economy: 1998 saw some recovery and progress (N. Korea and Thailand) and some further decline (Indonesia); U.S. leadership is needed to promote economic reform so that global standards of good economic management take hold.

II. Lessons Learned

- Cold War ways of looking at the world simply don't work, and the U.S. must constantly adapt its policies and institutions to fit a new era.
- At the same time, we cannot be effective without the support and cooperation of friends and allies such as we had recently on the Iraq operation.
- Prevention of conflict must be given first priority in "the new foreign policy" if we hope to save lives and resources. The new century will demand that we strengthen our national capabilities for preventing, managing, and resolving international conflict by political means. At the same time, the U.S. must be prepared to use force, and act alone, where necessary.
- The information revolution has vastly changed the business of international affairs, and we must examine closely how we can use new technologies in the service of peacemaking.

III. The Year Ahead

Themes: Peace, Democratization, Proliferation, and Engagement.

Peace:

As we move into the next century, America must continue to lead the way in peacemaking and peacekeeping; to consolidate the gains we have made in Bosnia (and prevent an outbreak of violence in Kosovo and other parts of Europe), to keep the Middle East peace process on track so that Israelis and Palestinians can live without the threat of a return to violent conflict, to address the problem of ethnic conflict in Africa and other parts of the globe, and to deal with the complex humanitarian emergencies that

emerge out of such conflicts. At the same time, we must be prepared to stay the course in peacemaking over time if we want our efforts to take hold.

Democratization:

- In this new year and new century, we must work to solidify the gains we have seen in democratization in Europe, Africa, Russia, and Latin America. A peaceful, undivided Europe is fundamentally in America's interest.
- We must continue to press for the rule of law and freedom of the press.
- We must promote economic reform, a key pillar of stable societies.

Proliferation:

The spread of weapons of mass destruction remains a critical issue of national and international importance. America must work with others to strengthen the global systems for preventing the proliferation of biological, chemical, and nuclear materials and weapons.

Engagement:

Americans must come to better understand how the world affects them, and how they affect the world. We cannot withdraw from global engagement and leadership. We need an involved, informed, engaged citizenry, ready both to promote peace and prosper from it.

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Selected Speeches And Articles

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SELECTED SPEECHES & ARTICLES

Speeches

President Thomas Jefferson -- First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1801

Dumas Malone -- historical analysis from *Jefferson and His Time*, 1970

Prime Minister Tony Blair -- Remarks to the French National Assembly, March 24, 1998

President Vaclav Havel -- Remarks at the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, March 16, 1998

President Bill Clinton -- Remarks at DLC Dinner, December 2, 1998

Articles

Alan Brinkley, "Imagining The Twentieth Century: Perspectives from Two Fins-de-Siecle", *University Lecture*, April 13, 1998.

Nicholas Lemann, "Government of, by and For the Comfortable", *The New York Times Magazine*, November 1, 1998.

Gregg Easterbrook, "America the O.K.", *The New Republic*, January 4 & 11, 1998.

Barbara Ehrenreich, "Nickel-and-Dimed," *Harper's Magazine*, January 1999.

Michael Ignatieff, "Return of the L-Word?", *The New York Times*, November 8, 1998.

Mary Frances Berry, "Color Codes", *Emerge*, December/January 1999.

Christopher Caldwell, "The Southern Captivity of the GOP", *The Atlantic Monthly*, June 1998.

Garry Wills, "The War Between the States...and Washington", *The New York Times Magazine*, July 5, 1998.

President Thomas Jefferson -- First Inaugural Address

an earnest endeavor to investigate every just cause and remove every colorable pretense of complaint; if an intention to pursue by amicable negotiation a reparation for the injuries that have been committed on the commerce of our fellow-citizens by whatever nation, and if success can not be obtained, to lay the facts before the Legislature, that they may consider what further measures the honor and interest of the Government and its constituents demand; if a resolution to do justice as far as may depend upon me, at all times and to all nations, and maintain peace, friendship, and benevolence with all the world; if an unshaken confidence in the honor, spirit, and resources of the American people, on which I have so often hazarded my all and never been deceived; if elevated ideas of the high destinies of this country and of my own duties toward it, founded on a knowledge of the moral principles and intellectual improvements of the people deeply engraven on my mind in early life, and not obscured but exalted by experience and age; and, with humble reverence, I feel it to be my duty to add, if a veneration for the religion of a people who profess and call themselves Christians, and a fixed resolution to consider a decent respect for Christianity among the best recommendations for the public service, can enable me in any degree to comply with your wishes, it shall be my strenuous endeavor that this sagacious injunction of the two Houses shall not be without effect.

With this great example before me, with the sense and spirit, the faith and honor, the duty and interest, of the same American people pledged to support the Constitution of the United States, I entertain no doubt of its continuance in all its energy, and my mind is prepared without hesitation to lay myself under the most solemn obligations to support it to the utmost of my power.

And may that Being who is supreme over all, the Patron of Order, the Fountain of Justice, and the Protector in all ages of the world of virtuous liberty, continue His blessing upon this nation and its Government and give it all possible success and duration consistent with the ends of His providence.



Thomas Jefferson

FIRST INAUGURAL ADDRESS IN THE WASHINGTON, D.C.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 1801

Chief Justice John Marshall administered the first executive oath of office ever taken in the new federal city in the new Senate Chamber (now the Old Supreme Court Chamber) of the partially built Capitol building. The outcome of the election of 1800 had been in doubt until late February because Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr, the two leading candidates, each had received 73 electoral votes. Consequently, the House of Representatives met in a special session to resolve the impasse, pursuant to the terms spelled out in the Constitution. After 30 hours of debate and balloting, Mr. Jefferson emerged as the President and Mr. Burr the Vice President. President John Adams, who had run unsuccessfully for a second term, left Washington on the day of the inauguration without attending the ceremony.

Friends and Fellow-Citizens:

Called upon to undertake the duties of the first executive office of our country, I avail myself of the presence of that portion of my fellow-citizens which is here assembled to express my grateful

thanks for the favor with which they have been pleased to look toward me, to declare a sincere consciousness that the task is above my talents, and that I approach it with those anxious and awful presentiments which the greatness of the charge and the weakness of my powers so justly inspire. A rising nation, spread over a wide and fruitful land, traversing all the seas with the rich productions of their industry, engaged in commerce with nations who feel power and forget right, advancing rapidly to destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye—when I contemplate these transcendent objects, and see the honor, the happiness, and the hopes of this beloved country committed to the issue, and the auspices of this day, I shrink from the contemplation, and humble myself before the magnitude of the undertaking. Utterly, indeed, should I despair did not the presence of many whom I here see remind me that in the other high authorities provided by our Constitution I shall find resources of wisdom, of virtue, and of zeal on which to rely under all difficulties. To you, then, gentlemen, who are charged with the sovereign functions of legislation, and to those associated with you, I look with encouragement for that guidance and support which may enable us to steer with safety the vessel in which we are all embarked amidst the conflicting elements of a troubled world.

During the contest of opinion through which we have passed the animation of discussions and of exertions has sometimes worn an aspect which might impose on strangers unused to think freely and to speak and to write what they think; but this being now decided by the voice of the nation, announced according to the rules of the Constitution, all will, of course, arrange themselves under the will of the law, and unite in common efforts for the common good. All, too, will bear in mind this sacred principle, that though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will to be rightful must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal law must protect, and to violate would be oppression. Let us, then, fellow-citizens, unite with one heart and one mind. Let us restore to social intercourse that harmony and affection without which liberty and even life itself are but dreary things. And let us reflect that, having banished from our land that religious intolerance under which mankind so long bled and suffered, we have yet gained little if we countenance a political intolerance as despotic, as wicked, and capable of as bitter and bloody persecutions. During the throes and convulsions of the ancient world, during the agonizing spasms of infuriated man, seeking through blood and slaughter his long-lost liberty, it was not wonderful that the agitation of the billows should reach even this dis-

tant and peaceful shore; that this should be more felt and feared by some and less by others, and should divide opinions as to measures of safety. But every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle. We have called by different names brethren of the same principle. We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists. If there be any among us who would wish to dissolve this Union or to change its republican form, let them stand undisturbed as monuments of the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it. I know, indeed, that some honest men fear that a republican government can not be strong, that this Government is not strong enough; but would the honest patriot, in the full tide of successful experiment, abandon a government which has so far kept us free and firm on the theoretic and visionary fear that this Government, the world's best hope, may by possibility want energy to preserve itself? I trust not. I believe this, on the contrary, the strongest Government on earth. I believe it the only one where every man, at the call of the law, would fly to the standard of the law, and would meet invasions of the public order as his own personal concern. Sometimes it is said that man can not be trusted with the government of himself. Can he, then, be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels in the forms of kings to govern him? Let history answer this question.

Let us, then, with courage and confidence pursue our own Federal and Republican principles, our attachment to union and representative government. Kindly separated by nature and a wide ocean from the exterminating havoc of one quarter of the globe; too high-minded to endure the degradations of the others; possessing a chosen country, with room enough for our descendants to the thousandth and thousandth generation; entertaining a due sense of our equal right to the use of our own faculties, to the acquisitions of our own industry, to honor and confidence from our fellow-citizens, resulting not from birth, but from our actions and their sense of them; enlightened by a benign religion, professed, indeed, and practiced in various forms, yet all of them inculcating honesty, truth, temperance, gratitude, and the love of man; acknowledging and adoring an overruling Providence, which by all its dispensations proves that it delights in the happiness of man here and his greater happiness hereafter—with all these blessings, what more is necessary to make us a happy and a prosperous people? Still one thing more, fellow-citizens—a wise and frugal Government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has

earned. This is the sum of good government, and this is necessary to close the circle of our felicities.

About to enter, fellow-citizens, on the exercise of duties which comprehend everything dear and valuable to you, it is proper you should understand what I deem the essential principles of our Government, and consequently those which ought to shape its Administration. I will compress them within the narrowest compass they will bear, stating the general principle, but not all its limitations. Equal and exact justice to all men, of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political; peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none; the support of the State governments in all their rights, as the most competent administrations for our domestic concerns and the surest bulwarks against antirepublican tendencies; the preservation of the General Government in its whole constitutional vigor, as the sheet anchor of our peace at home and safety abroad; a jealous care of the right of election by the people—a mild and safe corrective of abuses which are lopped by the sword of revolution where peaceable remedies are unprovided; absolute acquiescence in the decisions of the majority, the vital principle of republics, from which is no appeal but to force, the vital principle and immediate parent of despotism; a well disciplined militia, our best reliance in peace and for the first moments of war, till regulars may relieve them; the supremacy of the civil over the military authority; economy in the public expense, that labor may be lightly burthened; the honest payment of our debts and sacred preservation of the public faith; encouragement of agriculture, and of commerce as its handmaid; the diffusion of information and arraignment of all abuses at the bar of the public reason; freedom of religion; freedom of the press, and freedom of person under the protection of the habeas corpus, and trial by juries impartially selected. These principles form the bright constellation which has gone before us and guided our steps through an age of revolution and reformation. The wisdom of our sages and blood of our heroes have been devoted to their attainment. They should be the creed of our political faith, the text of civic instruction, the touchstone by which to try the services of those we trust; and should we wander from them in moments of error or of alarm, let us hasten to retrace our steps and to regain the road which alone leads to peace, liberty, and safety.

I repair, then, fellow-citizens, to the post you have assigned me. With experience enough in subordinate offices to have seen the difficulties of this the greatest of all, I have learnt to expect that it will rarely fall to the lot of imperfect man to retire from this sta-

tion with the reputation and the favor which bring him into it. Without pretensions to that high confidence you reposed in our first and greatest revolutionary character, whose preeminent services had entitled him to the first place in his country's love and destined for him the fairest page in the volume of faithful history, I ask so much confidence only as may give firmness and effect to the legal administration of your affairs. I shall often go wrong through defect of judgment. When right, I shall often be thought wrong by those whose positions will not command a view of the whole ground. I ask your indulgence for my own errors, which will never be intentional, and your support against the errors of others, who may condemn what they would not if seen in all its parts. The approbation implied by your suffrage is a great consolation to me for the past, and my future solicitude will be to retain the good opinion of those who have bestowed it in advance, to conciliate that of others by doing them all the good in my power, and to be instrumental to the happiness and freedom of all.

Relying, then, on the patronage of your good will, I advance with obedience to the work, ready to retire from it whenever you become sensible how much better choice it is in your power to make. And may that Infinite Power which rules the destinies of the universe lead our councils to what is best, and give them a favorable issue for your peace and prosperity.

THOMAS JEFFERSON'S FIRST INAUGURAL ADDRESS

Historians and others have suggested you take some guidance from a speech delivered at a similar moment of bitter partisanship -- President Thomas Jefferson's First Inaugural Address.

As Dumas Malone wrote, "The central political fact of the first weeks of the new [19th] century was that the Federalists would not accept the outcome of the election." The late 1790s had been a period of intense controversy, as two political parties formed and fought over foreign policy and domestic dissent. In the election of 1800, Jefferson won a popular majority and the most electoral votes. But the election was to be decided by the lame duck House of Representatives, in which Federalist maneuvering sought to deny Jefferson the office (perhaps, mischievously, installing Aaron Burr as President instead). In the end, just two weeks before the Inauguration, Jefferson was designated President.

He took the oath when these wounds were still fresh. At a time of tumult, Jefferson expressed a tone of civility: "every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle." And he famously pronounced a new national consensus. "We are all Federalists; we are all Republicans." He then outlined that consensus in a way that marginalized the extremes of both parties (both the agrarians among the Republicans and the pro-British elitists among the Federalists).



A Troubled Transition

SHORTLY before noon on the first Wednesday in March, 1801, a tall and plainly dressed gentleman repaired to the north or Senate wing of the United States Capitol in the new federal city of Washington. Thomas Jefferson, who was nearing fifty-eight, had walked — perhaps he may be said to have strolled — from his nearby lodgings at Conrad and McMunn's to the only part of the projected Capitol that was yet erected; and there, in the chamber where he had recently presided over the Senate as Vice President, he was inaugurated as the third President of the Republic. The Republic itself was nearly twenty-five years old, and for a dozen years it had been conducted under the Constitution which was framed in Philadelphia during the troubled period that followed the winning of American independence. That instrument was destined to endure, this straggling settlement beside the Potomac was fated to grow into a majestic city, and a succession of chief magistrates were to be inducted here as quadrennium followed quadrennium. It was his distinction to be the first of the line in this place, in this first year of a new century.

At ten o'clock that day the company of Washington artillery and the company of Alexandria riflemen paraded in front of Conrad and McMunn's, just off Capitol Hill; and there was a discharge of artillery when he entered the north wing, accompanied by the heads of department, the marshal of the District, and his officers. The President-elect was attended by friends on his walk from his lodgings, but there was no cavalcade on Pennsylvania Avenue.¹ When he arose to speak he faced hundreds of persons in a crowded room, but certain notables were conspicuously absent. Both his predecessor and the bitterly hostile Speaker of the House, Theodore Sedgwick of Massachusetts, had left town by daybreak. John Adams, in fact, vacated the President's House

¹ Most of these details are from the *National Intelligencer*, Mar. 6, 1801. Other accounts are referred to in the next chapter.

at four o'clock. Jefferson's old friend and recent rival was not as lacking in good will as his abrupt and ungracious actions implied: later letters and comments showed that. But to a man of his vanity, still desolate because of the untimely death of a son, the scene in the Senate chamber would have been virtually intolerable, and no doubt his successor was glad he was spared it. The presence of John Marshall, the new Chief Justice who administered the oath to his distant kinsman, was ironical, though mutual distrust had not yet turned into implacable mutual hostility; and, in the light of recent circumstances, very probably Jefferson would have preferred another Vice President to Aaron Burr. But, while averse to ceremony and indifferent to protocol, he was as a rule scrupulously mindful of civilities. And at this time, minimizing both political and personal animosities, he deliberately and wisely sought to be conciliatory and reassuring.

It is easier to see why he did so if we consider not merely his temperament but also the events of the preceding weeks and the spirit which still prevailed among those who had most bitterly opposed him. He had maintained extraordinary serenity in the midst of bedlam, but he was well aware of what one of his contemporaries described as "the uncommonly extravagant ravings" of the times.² In the young Republic, thus far, the nineteenth century had been notable for unreconciled political animosities. On this inauguration day any citizen in Boston could have read in the leading Federalist newspaper the following epitaph within a black border:

YESTERDAY EXPIRED
 Deeply regretted by MILLIONS of grateful Americans,
 And by *all* GOOD MEN,
 The FEDERAL ADMINISTRATION
 of the
 GOVERNMENT of the *United States*:
 Animated by
 A WASHINGTON, an ADAMS: — a HAMILTON, KNOX,
 PICKERING, WOLCOTT, M'HENRY, MARSHALL,
 STODDERT AND DEXTER
Aet. 12 years.³

Several weeks earlier this same party organ, after listing Massachusetts Federal and Antifederal names in contrasting columns, had con-

² Expression of Christopher Gadsden, in a letter of Mar. 11, 1801, to John Adams (Adams, *Works*, IX, 579).

³ Boston *Columbian Centinel*, Mar. 4, 1801.

cluded that the former were clearly superior in "talents, virtues, probity, property, and public services."⁴ The generalization may have been nearer the truth in New England than in other regions, but wherever such arrogance was rife the accession of the opposing party to power was viewed with consternation. What the alarmists feared, they said, was "the general ascendancy of the worthless, the dishonest, the rapacious, the vile, the merciless and the ungodly."⁵ Since the success of the Republican standard bearers was attributed to the support of such men as these, the defeat of the Federalists was held to mean far more than a change of men: the triumphant party represented a "brutal menace" to public order and the just administration of the Constitution.

Extravagance of language was specially pronounced in the partisan press, but these sentiments can be matched in the private letters of party leaders. Even John Adams, who had broken with the extremists, went so far as to say: "A group of foreign liars, encouraged by a few ambitious native gentlemen, have discomfited the education, the talents, the virtues and the property of the country."⁶ He believed, however, that the Federalists were as unpatriotic as the "antis" and blamed his party for deplorable lack of common sense. He himself cannot be fairly charged with lack of patriotism, and his robust skepticism commands respect in any age, but he shared the distrust of popular sovereignty which lay at the root of his party's failure in an allegedly self-governing society. The central political fact of the first weeks of the new century was that the Federalists would not accept the outcome of the election. Thus it came about that for two months after their unmistakable defeat the political future of the country was shrouded in uncertainty.

The occasion of this obstructionism was the accidental tie between the two Republican candidates, owing to a grave flaw in the original electoral system.⁷ To Jefferson, the major personal victim of the mishap, the sins of his foes were painfully apparent. It was not merely that, in the years 1798-1800, the dominant group had sought to destroy political opposition, designating this as subversive. It was not merely that he himself had been attacked with a virulence which surpassed that of

⁴ Jan. 14, 1801.

⁵ Communication, "To the Public," reprinted in *Columbian Centinel*, Jan. 21, 1801, from *Gazette of the U.S.*, Jan. 10, 1801.

⁶ Adams to Benjamin Stoddert, Mar. 31, 1801 (*Works*, IX, 582).

⁷ Under this each elector voted for two men without indicating which was his choice for President and which for Vice President. For the events see *Jefferson and the Ordeal of Liberty*, pp. 491-505.

the Republican journalists against John Adams. (In fact, this was rarely to be matched in the entire history of American presidential campaigns.) After the popular preference for the party of opposition had been clearly shown in the election, the group in power had sought to defeat the obvious will of that party by electing Burr instead of the universally acknowledged Republican leader. Even worse than that, Jefferson himself had no doubt that, if they had been able to do so, some of the Federalists in Congress would have prevented the election of either, hoping to slip one of their own crowd in. At any rate, the country did not know until two weeks before the expiration of Adams's term which of two men would succeed him or whether, in fact, there would be a legally elected President to inaugurate. There was grave uncertainty and at least a threat of chaos. There was even talk of civil war.

Soon after he became aware of the unanticipated tie with Burr, Jefferson remarked that his fate lay in the hands of his enemies.⁸ This was not strictly true, for he had strong and determined friends in Congress, but we may ask what would have happened if these enemies had prevented his election there. No answer to such a question can rise above the level of speculation, and our concern is with what actually occurred rather than with what might have been. Nevertheless, in view of the charges of disunionism which were hurled back and forth at the time, the plans of the responsible Republican leaders and their frame of mind are worth inquiring into. Were they prepared to use force if need be and thus risk the disruption of the Union? Did they contemplate any other form of resistance? How far was Jefferson personally involved in Republican plans and maneuvers?

We have sufficient testimony from key men and crucial areas to venture some tentative answers to these questions. The place where the decisive conflict occurred was the chamber of the House of Representatives. There, according to the Constitution, a choice must be made. In that body Albert Gallatin was unquestionably the Republican leader, and he appears as the key figure on that side in this crisis. He drew a full plan of procedure, with a view to various contingencies. This was communicated to Jefferson and his friend Wilson Cary Nicholas, senator from Virginia, and, according to its author, it was fully approved by Jefferson and by the party.⁹ According to the Federalists, the cen-

⁸ TJ to Monroe, Dec. 20, 1800 (LC, 18511).

⁹ This important document, presumably drafted before Feb. 9, 1801, is in Gallatin's *Writings* (1960), I, 18-23. He himself commented on it and on the struggle in a letter of May 8, 1848, to Henry A. Muhlenberg (Henry Adams, *Life of Albert Gallatin* [1943], pp. 248-251).

ters of "disaffection" outside Washington were in Jefferson's own Virginia, where his devoted friend James Monroe was governor, and Pennsylvania, which had a resolute Republican executive in Thomas McKean. It was from these two states that excited Federalist editors said troops would march. Important letters from the two governors, showing their attitude in the crisis, have been preserved. Also, we have some private comments from Jefferson himself in letters and memoranda.¹⁰

One conclusion which emerges from these and other contemporary records is that the most responsible Republican leaders did not contemplate resistance in the event the House of Representatives should elect Burr instead of Jefferson, much as they would have deplored that outcome. Governor McKean stated explicitly that his state would have acquiesced; and the Republicans properly insisted from the first that the House must perform its constitutional function and choose between the two men who had received an electoral majority. In view of the complexion of the House, where the Republicans controlled more state delegations than the Federalists though the latter had a numerical majority, Gallatin himself did not doubt that they could prevent Burr's election if they stood firm; and, in any case, neither they nor Jefferson saw any choice but to follow the procedure prescribed in the Constitution.¹¹ Their chief fear was that the Federalists would circumvent this somehow; and they won the first round in the fight when the House, on February 9, 1801, adopted the rule not to adjourn until after it had made an election.¹² Obstructive tactics might have prevented a decision by this body before March 3, but on the face of the record the House was now formally committed to constitutional procedure.

A second inescapable conclusion from what the Republican leaders said at the time is that the designation, by congressional act, of anybody *except* Jefferson or Burr as President would have been viewed as usurpation and resisted. Gallatin, for one, regarded as impracticable and improbable any attempt to make a President by law; he doubted that the necessary bill could be passed or that Adams would sign it. Governor Monroe, indignant though he was at rumors of Federalist purposes, thought it unwise for the legislature of Virginia to take any step founded on the expectation of usurpation, but he stood ready to reconvene that body without delay and went to the utmost pains to keep himself informed of developments. Since he found no need to act we

¹⁰ Most of the more important sources are cited hereafter. See also TJ to John Breckinridge, Dec. 18, 1800 (Ford, VII, 469); Monroe to TJ, Jan. 6, 18, 27, 1801 (S.M.H., III, 253-257).

¹¹ The vote in the House on this question was by states.

¹² The rules adopted on that day are in *Annals*, 6 Cong., pp. 1009-1011.

have no way of knowing precisely what the non-submission of Virginia would have amounted to, but it might well have been accompanied by the display, even by the use, of force.

Speaking of his own plan years later, Gallatin said: "No appeal whatever to physical force was contemplated, nor did it contain a single particle of revolutionary spirit."¹³ The statement seems accurate enough as applied to the purposes of the man who actually directed the successful fight in the House. The only contingency he really feared was that this body would adjourn without reaching a decision, thus bringing on an interregnum; and in that case he was disposed to await the meeting of the next Congress, which would be safely Republican, rather than that the Republicans should themselves assume the executive power. He feared that this might result in the withdrawal of New England from the Union. In the remote contingency of "usurpation" on the part of the Federalist majority in the present Congress, he favored peaceful refusal to submit to unconstitutional authority. Yet he afterwards recognized that, if necessary, this "usurpation" would have been put down by force.

As might have been expected, Jefferson kept aloof from this controversy insofar as he could, but he afterwards said that he conversed with John Adams about the state of affairs when he chanced to meet the President walking on Pennsylvania Avenue. At the moment he was disturbed by reports that "a very dangerous experiment was then in contemplation, to defeat the Presidential election by an act of Congress," devolving the government in any interregnum on a president of the Senate, who would be elected by that Federalist body. This alleged plan was the more dangerous because it contemplated provision for a contingency in advance of the voting and thus would have encouraged the Federalists to prevent a constitutional election.¹⁴ He asserted to Adams that "such a measure would probably produce resistance by force and incalculable consequences," which the President could prevent by negating it. He got no satisfaction out of Adams, whom he reported as having suggested the simplest and quickest way out — that is, that he insure his election by giving assurances that he would honor the public debt, maintain the navy, and not displace the federal officers.

Jefferson spoke more categorically in a few letters to intimate political friends. After the House had been balloting for four days and while the issue was still uncertain, he wrote Governor Monroe:

¹³ Gallatin to H. A. Muhlenberg, May 8, 1848 (Henry Adams, *Life*, p. 248).

¹⁴ TJ reported the conversation with Adams in a memo. of Apr. 15, 1806 (Ford, I, 313), and in a letter to Benjamin Rush, Jan. 16, 1811 (Ford, IX, 297-298). It probably took place before the House adopted its rules of procedure on Feb. 9, 1801.

If they could have been permitted to pass a law putting the government into the hands of an officer, they would certainly have prevented an election. But we thought it best to declare openly and firmly, one & all, that the day such an act passed, the middle States would arm, & that no such usurpation, even for a single day, should be submitted to. This first shook them; and they were completely alarmed at the resource for which we declared, to wit, a convention to re-organize the government, & to amend it. The very word convention gives them the horrors, as in the present democratical spirit of America, they fear they should lose some of the favorite morsels of the constitution.¹⁵

When reporting his election to Madison soon thereafter, he said that the Federalists were confronted not only with the impossibility of electing Burr, but also with "the certainty that a legislative usurpation would be resisted by arms, and a recourse to a convention to reorganize and amend the government."¹⁶ A few weeks later, after his inauguration and at a time of calm, he wrote differently to his learned friend Joseph Priestley. "There was no idea of force, nor of any occasion for it," he then said.¹⁷ A more correct statement, nearer the full truth, would have been that there was no idea of force among the responsible leaders, *except in the case of attempted usurpation by the Federalists*, and that the occasion for employing it did not arise. At the moment Jefferson, who was congratulating the country on the peaceful settlement of this dispute, presented a half-truth to a lover of peace. Also, he described the probable course of events in the case of the non-election of a President, when the federal government would have been like a clock that had run down.

A convention, invited by the Republican members of Congress, with the virtual President & Vice President, would have been on the ground in 8 weeks, would have repaired the Constitution where it was defective, & wound it up again.

This surmise was not in accord with Gallatin's later recollection. Many years after the crisis the leader of the congressional Republicans said that there was no intention or even suggestion that a convention be called to reorganize the government and amend the Constitution; only when Jefferson's correspondence was published and when Gallatin read Jefferson's letters to Monroe and Madison did he learn that "such a measure floated in the mind." He said that Jefferson might have wished

¹⁵ TJ to Monroe, Feb. 15, 1801 (Ford, VII, 491).

¹⁶ TJ to Madison, Feb. 18, 1801 (L. & B., X, 202).

¹⁷ TJ to Priestley, Mar. 21, 1801 (Ford, VIII, 22).

for something of the sort or believed that the threat of it would frighten the Federalists, but asserted that under no circumstances would this have been done by the Republicans, whose real strength lay in their devotion to the Constitution.¹⁸ In his plan of 1801, however, Gallatin did refer to the possibility of a Republican meeting in case a new election should be required or usurpation be attempted — a meeting “to form an uniform plan of acting.”¹⁹ This contemporary document had greater validity than his letter of old age. Jefferson may have been thinking of this suggestion and have read into it more than Gallatin intended.

That he himself would have summarily seized the position to which he was morally entitled is virtually unthinkable in view of his temperament and philosophy. Judge Hugh Henry Brackenridge of western Pennsylvania, who thought the Federalists quite capable of usurpation, had suggested bold measures. Writing Jefferson in January, he said:

Were I in the place of President designate, in my present mind I would not hesitate one moment, to announce myself on the fourth day of March next President, and to convene the legitimate authorities instantly to ratify that annunciation.

His thought was that in the meantime the consent of “the rival candidate if he might be so called” could have been obtained in writing; and that in such a case everything depended on “the decision and rapidity of the movement.”²⁰ It is hard to think of Jefferson’s playing a part in such a *coup d’état*, and impossible to think of him as initiating it. The role of an American Bonaparte did not suit him. His letter to Priestley may perhaps be viewed as a rationalization after the event, as a description of a possible solution of a desperate situation to which he could have acceded. He could have accepted the first office if backed by the sort of convention that had framed the Constitution, and this convention could have repaired the inadequate provisions for the election of a President. Thus, after he was secure in office, his mind turned to the “peaceable and legitimate resource” which was always in reach, “superseding all appeal to force,” and he found comfort in the thought of it.

The actualities of the case in the strategic state of Pennsylvania were better described in a letter written him that day by its governor.²¹ Thomas McKean, while saying that his state would have acquiesced in

¹⁸ Gallatin to H. A. Muhlenberg, May 8, 1848 (*Life*, pp. 248–249).

¹⁹ Gallatin, *Writings*, I, 20.

²⁰ Brackenridge to TJ, Jan. 19, 1801 (LC, 18645–18649a); received Jan. 30.

²¹ McKean to TJ, Mar. 21, 1801 (LC, 19021).

the election of Burr, asserted that it would *not* have submitted to the appointment of any person who had not received a majority of the electoral vote. In fact, he had framed a proclamation, enjoining the obedience of all officers to Jefferson as President and Burr as Vice President, in case they should agree, as was expected. A resolution, approving the proclamation and pledging support to it, had been drawn for adoption by the state House of Representatives, which his party controlled, along with an instrument to be signed by the Republican senators, in case they were in a minority. The militia would have been warned to be ready, arms for 20,000 having been secured along with brass fieldpieces. An order would have been given for the arrest and trial of any member of Congress or other person found in Pennsylvania who should have been concerned with the "treason" of appointing somebody other than Jefferson or Burr as President. All this, however, the Governor had committed to the flames on his receipt of the pleasing intelligence of Jefferson's election. Had the event been different, he said, the consequences might have been deplorable indeed.

While the Governor and legislature of Pennsylvania were standing by and Monroe was on the alert in Virginia, the issue was decided in the federal House of Representatives in Washington according to constitutional procedure, just as Albert Gallatin had confidently expected. In later years he was disposed to minimize Jefferson's personal part in these events, and that gentleman himself said that it was his duty to be passive and silent. Congressional supporters of his cause chatted with him at Conrad's during all the weeks he was there, but they waged their final fight behind closed doors, ably directed by Gallatin. The loyalty that Jefferson commanded among them stood the crucial test, for their lines held firm, and he did not need to rally them. We may ask, however, if he did anything whatever to win over the reluctant Federalists.

Shortly before his election he wrote Monroe that many attempts had been made to obtain terms and promises from him. "I have declared to them unequivocally," he said, "that I would not receive the government on capitulation, that I would not go into it with my hands tied."²² Yet he was afterwards charged with having made a "deal" with the Federalist representatives who permitted his election by withholding their votes against him, especially James A. Bayard of Delaware, who actually held the decision in his hands. Since this charge did not become a matter of formal record until his second term and was not widely publicized until after his death, the precise circumstances under which

²² TJ to Monroe, Feb. 15, 1801 (Ford, VII, 491).

it was made and denied need not be described here.²³ However, the episode on which it was based has some bearing on the vexatious problem of appointments which the new President faced, and on his broad policy of reassurance after a period of intolerant partisan warfare and a crisis which threatened to disrupt the country.

According to Jefferson's own record, President John Adams and Senator Gouverneur Morris told him that all he had to do to gain the election over Burr was to give assurance on the points which most disturbed the Federalists — the public debt, the navy, and the retention of Federalist officeholders. If such reassurance should be regarded as a promise or a deal, the suggestion that he make one came from these high officials. His own reply, he afterwards said, was that the world must judge of his future course by his conduct in the past.²⁴ He undoubtedly believed that a public statement would have been improper and unwise, and he claimed that it was unnecessary. It should be remembered, however, that in this campaign there was no official party platform, that he had made no public speeches, and that, ever since his retirement from the secretaryship of state at the end of 1793, his views on current questions had been set forth almost entirely in private letters and conversations. It was by no means as clear to his opponents as it was to his intimate friends then, and as it is to students now, just how he himself stood on public issues. Therefore, it was not unnatural for Federalists — especially moderates who were disposed to prefer him to Burr — to seek assurance of some sort. And, by the same token, it was not improper for friends and supporters who were familiar with his views to be as reassuring as they honestly could, while avoiding specific commitments.

On one of the points at issue in the minds of the Federalists, anybody who was acquainted with Jefferson's past record could have spoken with entire confidence. He had never wavered from the position that the national debt was a sacred obligation. There was no reason to expect him to repudiate Hamilton's fiscal policy as established by law, whether or not he liked it. What he had recently objected to was his former colleague's *conduct* of the Treasury and Hamilton's indifference, as he saw it, to the actual payment of the debt. His attitude toward the navy was more ambiguous. He himself regarded that attitude as realistic and flexible, but if his enemies had had access to all the things he had said they could not have satisfied John Adams and Secretary Benjamin Stoddert on this point. But it was not the main point. The crucial question was that of Jefferson's attitude toward the Feder-

²³ For fuller details, see Appendix I.

²⁴ Memo. of Apr. 15, 1806 (Ford, I, 313).

alists then in public office. With reference to these, James A. Bayard admitted that he himself tried to make a "deal."²⁵

Speaking for himself and the Federalist representatives from Maryland and Vermont with whom he was acting, the sole representative from Delaware said: "In determining to recede from the opposition to Mr. Jefferson, it occurred to us that probably, instead of being obliged to surrender at discretion, we might obtain terms of capitulation."²⁶ His employment of the language of war suggests the deep animosities of the time but was in fact unfortunate: this was a question of bowing to the obvious will of the American electorate, not of surrendering to a victorious military chieftain. First approaching Representative John Nicholas of Virginia, a close friend of Jefferson's, Bayard set forth his terms. He raised the same questions as Adams and Gouverneur Morris — that is, about the public debt, the navy, and present officeholders. But he spelled out the last and crucial one more fully, claiming that subordinate public officers should not be removed "on the ground of their political character, nor without complaint against their conduct."

Though Nicholas said that he considered these points reasonable and in accordance with the views and intentions of Jefferson, Bayard was not content with reassurance in such general terms. He wanted an "engagement" and asked Nicholas to seek one from Jefferson. When the Representative from Virginia declined to do this, Bayard turned to General Samuel Smith, a Republican congressman from the divided state of Maryland who had already shown a proclivity for maneuvering behind the scenes and who, at this stage, enjoyed the confidence of Jefferson.²⁷ To Smith, Bayard was specific: he mentioned by name the collectors of the ports of Philadelphia and Wilmington, George Latimer and Allen McLane, of whose security he was particularly solicitous. Five years later Bayard said that Smith, after consulting Jefferson, brought back the desired assurances, whereupon he and the other gentlemen named by him withheld their votes from Burr, enabling Jefferson to be elected. Writing his friend McLane on the day of the election, Bayard reported that he had direct information that Jefferson would not engage in a general proscription of Federalist officeholders. "I have taken good care of you," he said, "and think if prudent, you are safe."²⁸ Thus, from his own account of the episode, it could be argued

²⁵ In his deposition of Apr. 3, 1806. (M. L. Davis, *Memoirs of Burr*, II, 129-133). See Appendix I, below.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, II, 130.

²⁷ For Smith's earlier activities in connection with the presidential tie, see *Jefferson and the Ordeal of Liberty*, pp. 497-498.

²⁸ Bayard to McLane, Feb. 17, 1801 (*A.H.A. Report for 1913*, II [1915], 128-129).

that Bayard's personal decision in this fateful presidential contest hinged on his friend's security in a minor office. In view of the high character that was given him by both friends and foes, one would prefer to believe that his major motive in 1801 was the preservation of constitutional government and the Union, as he also stated at the time.²⁹

The assumption that Jefferson would not make an indiscriminate sweep of Federalist officeholders, such as Bayard had now come to fear from Burr, could have been honestly made, without special consultation, by Samuel Smith or Congressman John Nicholas or any other Republican leader who knew him well. Five years later Smith recalled, however, that he did consult Jefferson after Bayard had asked him to, and that he raised the three points at issue. Jefferson himself said, after the same passage of time, that he did not remember this particular conversation, among the many he had in which such matters were discussed, but that it may have occurred. Presumably it did take place, and Smith's further statement, many years later, that Jefferson was unaware of his purposes was disingenuous, for no doubt the most distinguished boarder at Conrad's expected his views to be passed on. Obviously it would have been unwise, however, for Smith to have mentioned Bayard's name; and such a conversation as occurred must have been informal and casual. The Marylander was no recognized emissary, and in reporting back to Bayard he spoke with only such authority as he himself had assumed. In giving his own opinion of Jefferson's intentions, he probably made these more palatable than he had a right to, overreaching himself in his zeal. He said later that he mentioned the name of McLane, about whom somebody else had already spoken to Jefferson, and that the latter stated that the reports he had received of McLane led to the supposition that this officer was meritorious. Jefferson may have said that at the moment, without committing himself to act otherwise than on the merits of the case when he looked into it further. Actually, McLane underwent an official inquiry but was not removed.³⁰ Altogether, the charge of a "deal," based on fallible human memory, turns out to be a gross distortion; and if there was discredit in this episode it appears to belong far more to Bayard and Smith than to Jefferson.

If he gave any special assurances, either Bayard did not inform the Federalist caucus of them or the information he gave had very slight effect. Though a little handful of Federalist congressmen abstained on

²⁹ See, especially, his letter to Samuel Bayard, Feb. 22, 1801 (*ibid.*, 131-132). It should be noted, however, that TJ himself was and continued to be highly suspicious of Bayard.

³⁰ For further details about the statements of Smith and TJ after the event, and about what happened in the confused case of McLane, see Appendix I.

the final ballot, they did not vote for Jefferson; and all the others remained adamant, supporting Burr to the very last. Far from yielding with grace and proper sportsmanship, they did not yield at all. Jefferson's first conclusion from this was that they had issued a new declaration of war on him and meant to maintain an unbroken phalanx. At the moment he was referring to the House of Representatives. His departure from the presiding officer's chair in the Senate, the day after the publication of his *Manual of Parliamentary Practice*, was marked by an exchange of compliments, but on the senatorial side these were affected in some degree by continuing bitterness.³¹ The reply to his graceful farewell address which was presented by Gouverneur Morris for an all-Federalist committee, though laudatory only with respect to the recent Vice President's conduct as a presiding officer, was likewise marked by felicity. It expressed confidence that his official conduct as President would be directed to the honor and interests of the country — "a confidence derived from past events." An amendment was moved, however, to strike out the words we have quoted and nine senators voted for it, to nineteen against.³²

Whether or not Jefferson was aware of this futile final gesture of disapproval in the Senate, he believed that his unyielding foes in Congress had alienated the large body of moderates within their own party. Looking backward, we can see that these representatives needlessly prolonged partisan animosity and exposed their country to unnecessary danger, compounding the offense by continued intransigence. At the same time they made the conciliatory policy of the new President all the more appealing by contrast. That policy was owing to no deal he had made with his foes, but it was congenial with his own temperament and admirably adapted to the country's immediate needs.

He had no doubt that his election met with popular approval. If the Republican papers may be believed, the news of it was received in the various parts of the country not merely with relief but with joy. Bells were rung and cannon fired in Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and even in Boston. Since inauguration day was now so near, major celebrations were generally delayed till then, but one gentleman of the Federalist persuasion in Philadelphia asserted that there had been too much

³¹ On inauguration day, Mar. 4, 1801, the *National Intelligencer* reported the publication of the *Manual* on Feb. 27. A long review of it appeared in this paper on his birthday, Apr. 13.

³² Mar. 2, 1801 (*Annals*, 6 Cong., pp. 755-756); see also *Jefferson and the Ordeal of Liberty*, pp. 457-458. The nine die-hard Federalists were Chipman and Paine of Vt., Hindman and Howard of Md., Livermore of N.H., Read of S.C., Ross of Pa., Tracy of Conn., and Wells of Del. Morris and the other two committeemen, Dayton of N.J. and J. Mason of Mass., were among the 19.

bell-ringing already. To the celebrants he addressed this bit of irate doggerel:

Oh ye rascally Ringers and Jacobin foes,
Ye disturbers of all who delight in repose,
How I wish, for the quiet and peace of the Land,
That ye had round your *necks* what ye hold in your *hands*.³³

The night before the inauguration, a citizen of a neighboring town, whom the now-jubilant *Aurora* identified with the irreconcilable "aristocrats," acted on another idea. He removed the clapper from a churchbell, so that the triumphant "democrats" would not have the pleasure of hearing it next day.³⁴ This minor episode may perhaps be dismissed as a mere political prank, though the humorlessness and self-righteousness of implacable Federalism argue against such designation. A protesting witness saw a lesson in it: he remarked that the man who removed the clapper was defeating his own ends, for now the bell would be heard all over the continent, instead of merely in that single town. A similar observation may be made on the conspicuously obstructive tactics of the Federalists in Congress and their uncharitable extremism elsewhere. They provoked a reaction of which the new President, who sought a consensus and tried to guide his conduct by the light of reason, hastened to avail himself.

³³ *Gazette of the U.S.*, Feb. 20, 1801.

³⁴ *Aurora*, Mar. 10, 1801, speaking of Burlington, N.J.

[II]

Profession and Promise: The First Inaugural

SINCE the House of Representatives did not elect him until February 17, Jefferson had only a little more than two weeks in which to prepare his inaugural address. This was somewhat less time than he had to write the Declaration of Independence. He drafted both documents without any secretarial assistance, consulting no book or paper in the earlier instance and having no need to do so now. As the author of the immortal Declaration, he was out of sight at the climactic moment; that paper issued from the Continental Congress as a manifesto, not as a personal pronouncement. He spoke for the Patriot party then, as he now did for the Republican, but more particularly he now spoke for himself, with his own voice. It was not a loud voice; only a portion of the persons assembled in the crowded Senate chamber could hear it. But, since he gave an advance copy of his address to the publisher of the *National Intelligencer* and Samuel Harrison Smith had it set in type beforehand, the new President's auditors could quickly become readers if they wanted to.

The speech made great noise out of doors, according to contemporary report, and it echoed through subsequent generations. No precise estimate of its immediate impact is possible, but this was undoubtedly considerable, and the first presidential inaugural in Washington proved to be one of the most memorable in the long series. Its enduring appeal may be attributed to its verbal felicity and to the fact that much of it has been deemed timeless, but first emphasis must be laid on the timeliness of this utterance. Whatever may be thought of its bearing on the twentieth century, the address was admirably adapted to the particular circumstances of March 4, 1801.

One of the auditors in the Senate chamber, Margaret Bayard Smith, clearly perceived the significance of the occasion. Writing her sister-in-law, she said: "The changes of administration, which in every government and in every age have most generally been epochs of confusion,

villainy and bloodshed, in this our happy country take place without any species of distraction, or disorder. This day, has one of the most amiable and worthy men taken that seat to which he was called by the voice of his country.”¹ Since there had been grave doubt until the last two weeks that the transition would be peaceful and orderly, and the people’s choice confirmed, the most obvious meaning of this event was that constitutional processes had been maintained and popular sovereignty vindicated. The good lady, who was a cousin of the Federalist Congressman from Delaware as well as the wife of the local Republican publisher, did not refer to previous uncertainty or cast reproach on anybody. Neither did the new President, but he seized upon this occasion to define succinctly the proper relations between the majority and minority in a self-governing society. His words bore directly on recent events and the existing situation, but they also set a pattern for future conduct. That is, they were both timely *and* timeless.

Putting the most polite and magnanimous interpretation on the fierce conflict in which his countrymen had recently been engaged, he characterized this as a contest of *opinion*. He recognized that its violence might have surprised strangers not accustomed to American freedom of expression, thus anticipating the comments of innumerable later visitors on American presidential campaigns. But, he added, the issue now being decided by the voice of the country under the rules of the Constitution, all would “*of course*, arrange themselves under the will of the law, and unite in common efforts for the common good.”² By assuming this to be a matter of course he helped to make it so, then and thereafter. The acquiescence of the minority and of defeated candidates was not merely a manifestation of good political manners — or, as one would say in the twentieth century, of good sportsmanship. He correctly saw it as a necessary maxim of self-governing society, “a vital principle of republics,” the only alternative to which was an appeal to force, “the vital principle and immediate parent of despotism.”

Assuming the acquiescence of the bulk of the minority as he did, Jefferson was not disposed to chide or lecture his defeated foes, though some of them appeared obdurate. The main purpose of this man who so

¹ Margaret Bayard Smith to Susan B. Smith, Mar. 4, 1801, in *First Forty Years of Washington Society* (1906), p. 25.

² Italics inserted. In quoting from TJ’s first inaugural, I have used the draft in his papers (LC, 18836–18837). This is full of abbreviations but does not appear to be a first draft, as Ford says the one printed by him is (VIII, 1–6). With the abbreviations spelled out and capitals placed at the beginning of sentences, this differs in only a few minor respects from the text in the *National Intelligencer*, and in the journals of the legislative and executive proceedings of the U.S. Senate. More editorial changes were made in the text in *A.S.P.F.R.*, I, 56–57; and in J. D. Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, I (1907), 321–324.

disliked contention was to assure them, and in seeking to do this he proclaimed a "sacred" principle:

that though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, *that will, to be rightful, must be reasonable*; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal laws must protect, and to violate would be oppression.³

Few passages in this memorable address better deserve to be remembered. Though he did not speak of the "tyranny of the majority," as Tocqueville was to do in classic phrase, he showed that he was fully aware of its possibility and of the necessity to guard against it. One of the things he had striven for, and which his election had served to vindicate (if not yet, perhaps, to establish fully), was the right of political opposition; but, judging from a later portion of his address in which he virtually repeated the guarantees of the constitutional Bill of Rights, he was now thinking more of individuals than of a minority party.

He did not speak here of divisions that were based on the rivalry of organizations or on a continuing struggle between the "ins" and "outs." He believed that parties represented, or should represent, differences of opinion; and in his effort to restore the social harmony which he so greatly prized he now tended to minimize even these. Recent experience warranted his assertion that political intolerance could be as despotic and wicked as the religious intolerance which, as he optimistically averred, had been banished from these shores. But, wisely refraining from uttering a public rebuke to anyone, he attributed the loss of harmony and affection chiefly to the struggle in Europe and concern for national security. In one of his most moving passages he said:

During the throes and convulsions of the ancient world, during the agonizing spasms of infuriated man, seeking through blood and slaughter his long lost liberty, it was not wonderful that the agitation of the billows should reach even this distant and peaceful shore; that this should be more felt and feared by some and less by others, and should divide opinions as to measures of safety.

One may doubt if the aspirations and excesses of the French Revolution and its aftermath, and the mixed American reaction to these, could be better summed up than they are in this single poetical sentence. Allowance must be made for rhetoric, but beyond question the political bitterness of the last decade of the eighteenth century in the young American Republic was enormously accentuated by the exigencies of the international situation. Then it was that domestic partisans were

³ Italics inserted.

termed "Anglomen" and "Jacobins." Fortunately for the new President, there was now little excuse to harp on external danger and the time was ripe to remind Americans of their essential unity. This he did by making a distinction between principles and opinions and then resorting to a seeming paradox:

But every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle.
We have called by different names brethren of the same principle.
We are all republicans: we are all federalists.

In viewing the last sentence of this famous passage, one should observe that Jefferson did not capitalize the key words and thus turn them into unquestionable party names, as later editors of this address took the liberty of doing. Allowance may be made for his characteristic dislike for capitals, and also for his failure to use terms with the precision of an academic philosopher, but his thought can be best understood if the words are left just as he wrote them. From other things he said about this time, it is evident that he regarded the hard core of the Federalists as unyielding and irreconcilable. He could only have meant that nearly all Americans favored a republic rather than a monarchy and accepted the federal system of government, as contrasted with consolidation on the one hand and full state sovereignty on the other. In this sense, he had used almost the same language several years earlier.⁴ This was another way of saying that nearly everybody approved of the Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution, which in his opinion had been clearly vindicated in the election, and the Constitution, which the House of Representatives had so recently maintained. Also, this was another way of saying that they were all loyal Americans, whose patriotism should not be impugned and who should not be at one another's throats. They were not enemies, as might have been supposed by a foreigner viewing the recent election and reading the rival newspapers, but brethren. Presumably he was thinking of those whom he elsewhere designated as "monocrats" when he referred to such as might wish to "dissolve the Union or change its republican form." Not even they need be disturbed, however, since "error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it."

While pronouncing what he regarded as abiding truth he was brushing off the diehards; but they did not need to apply these words to themselves unless they accepted the designation of monocrats, which they could not have been expected to do. Actually, Jefferson's minimiz-

⁴ To John Wise, Feb. 12, 1798, saying: "both parties claim to be federalists and republicans, and I believe with truth as to the great mass of them: these appellations therefore designate neither exclusively . . ." (See *Jefferson and the Ordeal of Liberty*, pp. 364-365).

ing of differences, along with his conciliatory tone, was agreeable at the moment to the Federalists of all shades — more so than to many members of his own party, as George Cabot and others soon said. What his recent opponents most feared was political proscription, and these words pointed away from that.

The new President touched on a basic difference between himself and the High Federalists when he spoke of the fear of some that a republican government, and more particularly this government, was not strong enough. It was in this connection, in one of the most memorable of his many memorable phrases, that he referred to it as “the world’s best hope,” anticipating Lincoln’s “the last best hope of earth.” He himself believed this government the strongest on earth, because of the personal concern of its citizens for it; and he was convinced that it would grow in strength as self-government was extended. Otherwise, he showed no disposition to make the government any stronger, but he spoke of its being “in the full tide of successful experiment,” and from this one might have supposed that he did not intend to weaken it.

This hope was implicit in the public approbation Hamilton gave the speech a few weeks later. Seizing upon the reference to “successful experiment,” and also on what Jefferson had said about the honest payment of the national debt and the sacred preservation of the public faith, he interpreted the address “as virtually a candid retraction of past misapprehensions, and a pledge to the community, that the new President will not lend himself to dangerous innovations, but in essential points will tread in the steps of his predecessors.”⁵ This was an overstatement, made with a political purpose of its own, but Hamilton correctly surmised that, in practice, his inveterate foe would recognize the desirability of continuity in public policy and of the obligation to honor past commitments. He rightly sensed Jefferson’s desire that the transition from the previous administration be orderly and gradual, as well as peaceful.

Hamilton was not being wholly complimentary when he privately predicted, early in the year, that Jefferson would follow a temporizing rather than a violent policy; he did not say, as he could have said truthfully, that his ancient foe was experienced in government and realistic when confronted with actual problems.⁶ But neither before the inauguration nor after it did he view Jefferson as a reckless revolutionary. The

⁵ In Address to the Electors of the State of New York, 1801 (Lodge, VII, 194–195). He was opposing the candidacy of George Clinton for governor and comparing the latter unfavorably to TJ on grounds of moderation.

⁶ To J. A. Bayard, Jan. 16, 1801 (Lodge, VIII, 581–582). At the time he was urging the Federalists to support TJ rather than Burr; see *Jefferson and the Ordeal of Liberty*, pp. 500–501.

same can be said of John Marshall, though he had had less opportunity to observe his distant kinsman's practicality and made no allowance for it. On the morning of inauguration day, the Chief Justice wrote: "The democrats are divided into speculative theorists and absolute terrorists. With the latter I am *not* disposed to class Mr. Jefferson."⁷ Adding a postscript in the afternoon, Marshall aptly characterized the inaugural address: "It is in general well judged and conciliatory. It is in direct terms giving the lie to the violent party declamation which has elected him, but it is strongly characteristic of the general cast of his political theory." The Chief Justice did not care for that "general cast" and Hamilton must have liked it even less, for he was the most conspicuous champion of political positivism in his day while Jefferson sounded here like an apostle of negation.

After recounting his country's many blessings, the new President asked what else was necessary for the happiness and prosperity of its people. His own answer, which was destined to be quoted out of its context of time and circumstance through generations of growth and change, was as follows:

a wise and frugal government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned. This is the sum of good government, and this is necessary to close the circle of our felicities.

Judging from this passage alone, he would reduce the functions of the federal government virtually to those of a disinterested policeman and unexacting landlord. The system he would set up, as one might suppose from this, was the absence of a system.

At a later time he said that his first inaugural address, from the nature of the case, was "all profession and promise."⁸ The professions were of undaunted confidence in the future of his fortunately situated country, and in the loyalty of its citizens and their ability to direct their own affairs. This was a testament of faith in freedom and self-government, wholly in accord with the Declaration of Independence and presenting a refreshing contrast to the doubts of the High Federalists. It assumed loyalty to the Constitution, which had recently been less conspicuous

⁷ To C. C. Pinckney, Mar. 4, 1801. The correct text of this letter is in *A.H.R.*, April, 1948, pp. 518-520. Quoting it in his *Life of John Marshall*, III (1919), 11, A. J. Beveridge, who may have had a defective copy, omitted the word "*not*," which I have italicized.

⁸ To John Tyler, Mar. 29, 1805 (*L. & B.*, XI, 69).

among them than among the Republicans. Though he said little here about the construction of that document, he gave some clues in listing "essential principles" which amounted to promises. One of these was:

the support of the state governments in all their rights, as the most competent administrations for our domestic concerns and the surest bulwarks against anti-republican tendencies.

This suggested a shift of emphasis in the direction of state rights, without specifying just what these were. It was followed by another principle or promise:

the preservation of the general government in its whole constitutional vigor, as the sheet anchor of our peace at home and safety abroad.

Elsewhere he spoke somewhat more specifically of the distribution of functions within the federal structure. Replying a few weeks later to an address from the General Assembly of Rhode Island, he said:

To the united nation belong our external & mutual relations: to each state severally the care of our persons, our property, our reputation, & religious freedom. This wise distribution, if carefully preserved, will prove, I trust from example, that while smaller governments are better adapted to the ordinary objects of society, larger confederations more effectually secure independence and the preservation of republican government.⁹

To Hamilton and Marshall, words like these may have seemed the reflection of a pale nationality, but at that time, when communication was so difficult and slow, this view of federalism was far from unrealistic. And the fact that he advocated a limited national government did not necessarily mean that this would be feeble within those limits, or that he himself would be inflexible.

Some of his other "promises" need not be regarded as negative. The rendering of "equal and exact justice to all men" would require diligence no less than fairness; and, even as a policeman, the federal government could extend its power far. The "encouragement of agriculture, and of commerce as its handmaid" might necessitate positive action, despite the present presumption that it would not. The assurance that entangling foreign alliances would be avoided was a negative statement, but the man who made it had already shown positiveness and initiative in the conduct of foreign affairs. Other promises of his can be stated affirmatively, but mostly he talked of rights which must not be disregarded, laying major emphasis on what his government should *not*

⁹ May 26, 1801 (LC, 19340).

do. The "sum of good government" as given here was intended to be small.

In his thinking about the proper relations between the majority and minority, he had emerged from the mood of a leader of the opposition and become the responsible leader of a united people. The revelation of this in his address was probably the most important fact about it in the eyes of his contemporaries, and for this reason it was all but universally acclaimed. In his views of governmental functions, however, he had advanced little beyond the mood of opposition — partly, perhaps, because he had had so little time. He was saying essentially what he had said in letters in the last few years.¹⁰ With a felicity which no one else could match, he was setting forth the tenets of his party, which he believed to be also those of the vast preponderance of Americans. He was listing the maxims of republicanism. Fully approving of them, his friend Dr. Benjamin Rush wrote him: "You have concentrated whole chapters into a few aphorisms in defense of the principles and *form* of our government." Margaret Bayard Smith expressed the sentiments of others as well as herself when she said that the address contained "principles the most correct, sentiments the most liberal, and wishes the most benevolent, conveyed in the most appropriate and elegant language and in a manner mild as it was firm."¹¹ The expressions which seemed most "visionary" to his former foes were those that reflected faith in the sovereign people, and their earliest criticisms of his conduct of the government chiefly related to removals from and appointments to office. The negativeness of his political philosophy was more remarked upon at a later time than it was then.

One of the most pungent early comments on it came from a friend of Hamilton's, as might have been expected. Robert Troup, while admitting that he did not apprehend the serious mischiefs from Jefferson's administration that had been predicted, gave the opinion that it would be "the little contemptible thing that grows of a trimming system and a studied adherence to popular notions."¹² To the High Federalists the designation of the new President as the "Man of the People" carried a connotation of reproach. But the author of the Declaration of Independence took it as a matter of course that in this sort of political society the chief magistrate should "lead things into the channel of harmony between the governors and governed"; and few of his successors

¹⁰ See especially TJ to E. Gerry, Jan. 26, 1799 (Ford, VII, 327); *Jefferson and the Ordeal of Liberty*, pp. 408-409.

¹¹ Rush to TJ, Mar. 12, 1801 (Butterfield, II, 831; M. B. Smith, *First Forty Years*, pp. 25-26).

¹² R. Troup to R. King, May 27, 1801 (King, III, 461).

have doubted that the President must.¹³ It was by rendering it truly representative and responsive that he hoped to strengthen the government. Troup added that in Hamilton's judgment Jefferson and his friends could not really conduct the political vessel in "the tempestuous sea of liberty." Perhaps more people would have expressed similar doubts if the affairs of the country had been in as critical a state as they were in 1793 or 1797. But, since the foreign storm had largely subsided and the new President himself was pouring oil on the home waters, it may be doubted if there were many outside of Hamilton's circle who saw any pressing need for the government to do much.

If the former Secretary of the Treasury was not the American originator of the idea of powerfully positive national government, he was unquestionably its most conspicuous early exponent, but he was now in an eclipse from which in fact he never emerged. If it may be claimed that he defeated himself by his own excesses, it may also be said that he could now be ignored *because of* his past successes in establishing the public credit and strengthening the government. An arm like his was not now needed, or at least did not seem to be. The major problems of the Adams administration had lain in the field of foreign relations, with which the domestic turmoil of the time was directly related. But Adams no more conceived of the federal government as a positive instrument in domestic affairs than Jefferson now did, and actually his mind was less flexible. He thought of it primarily as a guardian of public order, and he was likewise concerned to splinter power in order to render it less dangerous. Even if one grant that Hamilton, in seeking a greater degree of consolidation, was doing so in the national interest as he perceived it, one cannot deny that the immediate benefits of his policies accrued to a relatively small group; they did not appear to be in the popular interest. The idea of central power wielded positively in behalf of the people as a whole had dawned on none of these men; and, after allowing for the true Hamiltonians, one may doubt if any considerable number of people now desired much more of the federal government in the domestic field than the maintenance of order, the rendering of impartial justice, and the faithful administration of other affairs expressly assigned to it.

The issue was not between *laissez faire* and the welfare state, for in pre-industrial America nobody envisioned the latter. The extreme against which Jefferson had recoiled was despotism such as he had observed in pre-revolutionary Europe, and which his countrymen had revolted against in a much milder form in their own Revolution. When

¹³ TJ to Monroe, July 10, 1796 (Ford, VII, 89).

he was in France, viewing a higher degree of tyranny than anything he had seen previously, he said that European society was divided into wolves and sheep, that officials of all sorts tended to become wolves, that governments tended to devour the governed, while the rich preyed upon the poor.¹⁴ In viewing the economic and social contrasts in the Old World, he expressed the opinion that people living under no government but that of public opinion, like the Indians, were happier than those living under existing European governments. An astute modern commentator suggests that what Jefferson himself aimed at was "a government too weak to aid the wolves, and yet strong enough to protect the sheep."¹⁵ It may be doubted, however, if he ever regarded this figure of speech as applicable to his own fortunate country, whose inhabitants had been schooled for so long a time in self-government, and surely he did not think so now, when his faith in them had been sustained and strengthened. Shortly after his inauguration he wrote: "It is rare that the public sentiment decides immorally or unwisely, and the individual who differs from it ought to distrust and examine well his own opinion."¹⁶ He had deep respect for public opinion, never doubting that government must rest on the consent of the governed. He had not lost, and never did lose, his distrust of governors. His hopes lay in a society of relatively unrestricted individuals. His desire was that all artificial restrictions be removed and men left to master their environment and attain their natural potentialities. Thus, on the American scene at least, his negativeness on the side of government was matched by positiveness on the side of persons. Herein lies a clue to a seeming paradox. For all his gentleness, this advocate of minimal government was not weak or pale as a person; he was vibrant and multi-dimensional, attesting throughout his long, incessantly active, and unceasingly useful life what a man can do under freedom. In his own personality he rounded out an otherwise one-sided philosophy.

During the last decade of his life, in a private letter, he spoke of the "revolution of 1800," saying that, although effected by the suffrage of the people and not by the sword, it was "as real a revolution in the principles of our government as that of 1776 was in its form."¹⁷ The question of the accuracy of this expression can be resolved, in part at

¹⁴ TJ to Edward Carrington, Jan. 16, 1787 (Ford, IV, 360). For a stimulating discussion of this, see D. J. Boorstin, *The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson* (1948), pp. 177-178.

¹⁵ Boorstin, p. 190.

¹⁶ TJ to William Findley, Mar. 24, 1801 (Ford, VIII, 27).

¹⁷ TJ to Spencer Roane, Sept. 6, 1819 (Ford, X, 140). Early in his administration he spoke privately of the "two revolutions," but this is his most familiar quotation on the subject.

least, into one of semantics. The term "revolution" assumed in the twentieth century new dimensions of economic and social upheaval which he could not have been expected to anticipate. To him the word had a predominantly political connotation, and if Americans were basically agreed on the principles of the government, as he said in his inaugural address, he might just as well have used the word "restoration." The most accurate statement of the matter, it seems, is that in 1801 he was seeking to return to the principles of the American Revolution, especially by recognizing the sovereignty of the people more fully, and that, in the United States, on the political front at least, he checked what he regarded as a counter-revolution. At the moment he sounded like no revolutionary; indeed, he hardly sounded like a reformer. On the last day of March, reflecting on the difficulty of effecting social change, he recognized the wisdom of Solon's remark, "that no more good must be attempted than the nation can bear." The chief thing was "to reform the waste of public money, and thus drive away the vultures who prey upon it, and improve some little on old routines." To this statement he added another rather tentative one: "Some new fences for securing constitutional rights may, with the aid of a good legislature, perhaps be attainable."¹⁸ The major change that he anticipated was in the spirit of the government. He was promising very little and appears to have been content, now that the danger of tyranny was removed, to let nature take its course.

Yet there can be no possible doubt of his belief, at this dawn of a century, that he and his country were in the morning of a new era. Nowhere did he express this better than in a letter to Dr. Joseph Priestley, the clergyman-scientist whom he recognized as a kindred spirit.

As the storm is now subsiding, and the horizon becoming serene, it is pleasant to consider the phenomenon with attention. We can no longer say there is nothing new under the sun. For this whole chapter in the history of man is new. The great experiment of our Republic is new. Its sparse habitation is new. The mighty wave of public opinion which has rolled over it is new. But the most pleasing novelty is its so quickly subsidizing over such an extent of surface to its true level again. The order & good sense displayed in this recovery from delusion, and in the momentous crisis which lately arose, really bespeak a strength of character in our nation which augurs well for the duration of our Republic; & I am much better satisfied now of its stability than I was before it was tried.¹⁹

¹⁸ TJ to Dr. Walter Jones, Mar. 31, 1801 (L. & B., X, 255-256).

¹⁹ TJ to Joseph Priestley, Mar. 21, 1801 (Ford, VIII, 22).

In the ringing words of his inaugural address, this "rising nation, spread over a wide and fruitful land," was "advancing rapidly to destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye." To his mind the attainment of these "transcendent objects" lay far less with political governors than with the people, who were intent on possessing and developing this land. His chief domestic task, as he now saw it, was to maintain freedom and approximate equality of opportunity. If, in theory, he carried the minimization of government too far even for that time, and also created confusion by speaking of current policies as though they were abiding principles, one who believed that the earth belongs always to the living generation could adjust himself to changed circumstances and newly perceived realities. His actual conduct of the presidency conclusively proved that. If he was prone to be too sanguine, his hope, in essence, was the historic American dream. The predominantly agricultural setting in which he placed it was destined to change far beyond his expectations, and problems were to arise that he could not imagine. But in that century, except perhaps in the years of civil war, relatively few of his countrymen doubted the ultimate fulfillment of this dream of unparalleled individual achievement and human happiness in the invigorating air of freedom. And until this day he remains its historic embodiment.

If, however, he had been a mere dreamer the great new experiment of the Republic, which as he believed had been interrupted and was now resumed, might have failed or faltered. Nothing of the sort was being attempted elsewhere: the French Revolution had issued in one-man rule, and the counter-revolutionary spirit generally prevailed elsewhere in the Old World. His first task was to make the federal government more nearly a government of the people, and at the same time to make it work. His manners were conciliatory and his preferred methods those of gradualism and patience, but within a year he had manifested a degree of presidential leadership which he himself probably did not anticipate and actually tried to keep out of sight. Thus it came about that the herald of freedom wrote a notable chapter in the history of the American presidency, and, on the national scene, established his historic claim to the title of father of American political democracy. This he did by force of the public opinion he always cherished and now cultivated with conspicuous success.

Prime Minister Tony Blair -- Remarks to the French National Assembly

Prime Minister Tony Blair
Speech to the French National Assembly
March 24, 1998

President, Prime Minister, Ministers, Deputies: I am delighted to be able to speak to the National Assembly today, and am most grateful to you, President Laurent Fabius, for inviting me to do so.

Britain and France are both countries of achievement, and ambition. Many things link our countries. Our deep sense of nationhood. Our pride in our history. Our military prowess. Our science and engineering. Our standing shoulder-to-shoulder in the great struggles of this century. Our political engagement on a global scale.

[...]

More than trade and work, we exchange ideas and tastes, too. About fashion. Food. Design. Lifestyle. Culture.

[...]

Between the people of our countries there is a genuine contact. It is real. It is rooted. And it matters. And today, France and Britain face the same challenges of profound economic, social and political change.

To some, the New Labour Government in Britain exhibits what they call an ideological confusion. How can you say you are of the left but welcome business into Government? How can you help the poor but say you are in favour of wealth and an absence of penal taxes on it? How can you introduce greater competition and yet say you are in favour of job security? How are you against too much power being vested in Government but in favour of social action?

But to me, there is no confusion. There is, instead, an attempt to make realistic sense of the modern world. It is a world in which love of ideals is essential, but addiction to ideology can be fatal. It is a world in which people seek from their Governments not dogma and doctrine, but a strong sense of national purpose, underpinned by clear values.

Above all, it is a world in which ordinary people see change happening at a pace and depth they find frightening. They seek security amidst the whirlwind. They try to retain some control over their lives as change hurls them this way and that.

Our task as modern Governments, is to help them do it. But here is the dilemma. People know that change cannot be resisted. There is no comfort in isolation. It doesn't work. But neither do they want change to control them, to rule them. So: our task is to equip people for change, to shape its impact, to make sense of it, to embrace it in order that we make it work for us.

In case anyone should doubt the nature of change, just look around us. Global financial markets that can send currencies and shares soaring or falling. Mass media, music, art and communications that alter tastes, perceptions and national culture with stunning rapidity. New technology and competition transforming the world of work, bringing revolutions in jobs and industries. In turn, this breaks up traditional family and social structures, which are already feeling the effects of changes in social and moral thinking. Much of this is exhilarating. But its impact is enormous on the lives of our people.

What impresses me most is not the differences in the challenge this change poses for our countries. It is the similarities. And not just for countries like France and Great Britain that are at similar stages of economic development. But in Latin America, in Eastern Europe, in the Far East, even in parts of Africa. All of us struggle with these two questions:

How do we equip ourselves for economic change?

How do we impose some order in the face of social change?

In other words, how to provide security in a world of change? Our guide has to be our values. And here let me explain what I mean when I talk of a Third Way or New Labour. My conviction is that we have to be absolute in our adherence to our basic values, otherwise we have no compass to guide us through change. But we should be infinitely adaptable and imaginative in the means of applying those values. There are no ideological preconditions, no pre-determined veto on means. What counts is what works. If we don't take this attitude, change traps us, paralyses us and defeats us. But it is modernisation for a purpose. These values: solidarity, justice, freedom, tolerance and equal opportunity for all, the belief in a strong community and society as the necessary means of individual advancement. These are the values that drive and govern my political life.

But to fulfill those values now, today, we need new ways of working, and of recreating the bonds of community life. In each case, it will mean a changed role for Government.

In economic terms, it has four consequences.

First, we must maintain strong, prudent discipline over financial and monetary policy, within financial systems that are open and transparent. There is no right or left politics in economic management today. There is good and bad. The situation in Asia has been an object lesson in why a lack of transparency and clarity leads to crisis.

In Britain we have given the Bank of England independence in setting interest rates and we have dramatically reduced the budget deficit. The price is hard. Short-term interest rates have gone up; the spending squeeze has been unpopular. But long-term it must be right and will pay dividends.

Secondly, the role of Government becomes less about regulation than about equipping people for economic change by focussing on education, skills, technology, high quality infrastructure and a Welfare State which promotes work and makes it pay. This is the third way:

not laissez-faire nor state control and rigidity; but an active Government role linked to improving the employability of the workforce.

Thirdly, we need specific measures to tackle the scourge of social exclusion. I mean that group of people cut off from society's mainstream, inhabiting a culture increasingly connected with crime, drugs, family instability, poor housing and education and long-term unemployment. Since taking office, we have launched the largest programme of work for the young and long-term unemployed Britain has ever seen. We have set up a specific unit – the Social Exclusion Unit – to co-ordinate action across Government Departments to meet this challenge. I believe in one nation, one Britain. There should be none shut out from its opportunities.

Fourthly, we need a new emphasis on entrepreneurship, small business creation and creating a climate in which our people are ready to take risks in becoming self-employed, in learning new ways of working, in recognising that starting your own business is a natural and sensible thing to do.

As proof of that, I am pleased to announce that Lionel Jospin and I have agreed that the British and French governments will work together closely on the specific issue of encouraging small businesses.

We are establishing a Franco-British Task Force, led on the UK side by David Simon, to examine specific ways in which public policy at national, and where appropriate European levels, would be made more positive towards the smaller business sector.

The Task Force will examine business start-ups and their early development. It will consider how we can get wider access for entrepreneurs to venture capital on the right terms. It will look at difficult questions such as regulatory structures, cost burdens and how an economy with a preponderance of small firms ensures an adequate supply of high quality labour to the business sector. We are asking the Task Force to report back by October 1998 and identify key areas for priority action.

None of this means that in Britain we reject the idea of basic fair terms of employment for people. The New Labour Government is introducing a minimum wage; trade union representation; and has signed the Social Chapter. What is more, I embrace with enthusiasm the notion that successful companies are those which value their workforce and regard them as partners in the enterprise.

But the partnership must show an understanding on both sides of the challenge the modern economy poses. The word "flexible" has a loaded meaning in the French translation. But for me it means adaptable. In the world of change, business and employees need to be constantly open to new ideas and new opportunities; constantly adapting so that change can be properly faced. If our labour market or our economy becomes too rigid, if it is too hard for businesses to function effectively or too expensive for them to employ, the result is merely another form of injustice. In truth, the best job security today comes not simply from legal protection but from having skills, making the most of your talent and having an active employment and welfare

service that enables you to move on and move up.

In the end, none of our nations can compete in the old way. There is no future as low wage, low skill sweatshop economies with the rewards going to the few, in the hope they trickle down eventually to the many.

Nor is there any hope in maintaining the old processes of mass production, of intervention and control. Rather we use the power of Government to set a framework in which the potential and talent of our people is liberated, in which new businesses can be created and old ones adapted to survive. We called last week's Budget – "new ambitions for Britain". But it is ambition married to compassion. It is ambition for all.

The challenge is just as great when we analyse the state of our society. Ask any of our constituents what is their biggest worry; and large numbers will say: crime and the fear of crime. I remember in my constituency in the north of England, growing up there, when you could leave your door unlocked without any hint of fear, where elderly people were treated with respect. Yes, the young men fought as they always have. But there was not the sheer brutality and wickedness we see in our cities and even our towns today, crimes which leave numb our powers of comprehension.

For some, the objective is to get back to the old days. But it is an illusion, as indeed many of the best political lines are. In that north of England constituency, in those old days, there were 25 local mines. Everyone knew everyone. People worked together. At night in the club or pub they socialised together. Today, there are no mines left. The communities do not have that powerful glue to bind people together. But, of course, their standard of living is higher, they enjoy the good things of life in a way their grandparents never dreamt of.

Women have the chance to work. That is good. There are different attitudes to sex, sexuality, to the moral world. Yet amongst the material wealth and freedom, people search for stability. We need to respond to that quest. We need to fashion some order amongst the disintegration. People want a society free from prejudice but not from rules. In Britain now, we are toughening up our youth justice system; there are stronger penalties for certain crimes. We have banned guns. We are taking new measures against drugs. Parents are being held more responsible for the conduct of their children.

We are trying to tackle the underlying causes of crime; fighting social exclusion, creating jobs, improving the worst estates in some of our cities. But also – here again a third way – we are examining how to strengthen family life, attacking truancy and indiscipline at school and insisting that our welfare system is there to provide opportunity, not be fleeced by fraud, abuse and people playing the system. The new contract between citizens and society is made up of rights, but also of responsibilities.

We should combine these measures with an absolute commitment to equality of treatment for all our citizens. We may be Conservative or Labour in our politics. But when it comes to race, we are all human beings. And we must never allow the evil of racism to disfigure our

nations. That is one lesson Europe does not need to repeat.

In meeting both the economic and the social challenge we face, we need a new and changed concept of Government itself.

Our people have almost lost confidence in the very institution of government. They believe it is bloated, inefficient, and designed to look after itself rather than to help them.

It is only by reinventing the machinery of government that we can begin to reconnect the governed and those that govern them.

Government should not try to do everything itself, but work with private and voluntary sectors. The government should set the parameters and policy goals, but it does not always have to deliver the outcome itself.

Power should be decentralised. A project you in France started in 1982. The hardest thing of all for any government to do is to give power away. But we believe in subsidiarity not just for Brussels but for Whitehall and Westminster too. Power should be exercised as close as possible to the people whose lives it affects. We are passing legislation to devolve power to a Parliament in Scotland and an Assembly in Wales, and we will do the same in Northern Ireland where we continue to work for peace.

The citizen should have clear rights and they should be properly protected. That is why we are going to pass a Freedom of Information act. That is why we require information about the performance of schools, hospitals, and local government to be made public.

Yet it is these same fundamental changes which call for new ways of working and organising our society that impel us to cooperate ever more closely between nations. Just over half a century ago, Europe was at war. Then for 40 years or more, the Iron Curtain descended. Now we are members of the European Union, and clamouring to enter are the former East European communist dictatorships. It is on any basis a remarkable achievement.

Yet here too the challenge of change confronts us. Let me first clear away any remaining doubts about the new British Government's position. Britain's future lies in being full partners in Europe. At Amsterdam, we played a constructive part in bringing about a new European Treaty. Now, as EU President, we are launching the enlargement negotiations and doing our best to ensure the Euro starts successfully.

As for Britain joining the Euro, there must be sustainable economic convergence between our economies. That does not presently exist. I have never made any secret of my concerns at the economic risks in EMU unless the economic conditions are correct. It is a very big step, which implies huge changes in our economies. We have said that a single currency in a single market makes sense and already British business and the City of London are fully geared up to dealing in and using the Euro. We will be prepared - do not doubt that - and will make a decision based on clear and unambiguous economic facts.

But you do not have to be a Eurosceptic, in any shape or form, to appreciate the deep concern amongst our peoples as to how they make sense and relate to the new Europe. They worry about their national identity. They find, let us be frank, Brussels and the European institutions often remote and unsympathetic. They ask what Europe does for them. It comes back to their search for control and freedom over their own lives, when they see so much change around them.

I believe these concerns can be answered. I believe too that France and Britain can help, together, to answer them. But we have to explain to our people what our vision of Europe is.

I believe in a Europe of enlightened self-interest. Without chauvinism. It is the nation-state's rational response to the modern world. If globalisation of the world economy is a reality; if peace and security can only be guaranteed collectively; if the world is moving to larger blocs of trade and cooperation – and look at ASEAN or Latin America: if all this is so, then the EU is a practical necessity. I happen to share the European idealism. I am by instinct internationalist. But even if I weren't, I should be internationalist through realism. The forces of necessity, even of survival are driving us to cooperation. In the United Nations, in Bosnia, no less than in international trade.

But we politicians must constantly explain, and justify, our vision. For me, the spirit of Europe's development is the idealism of practical people; high ideals pursued with new realism.

I have little doubt Europe will in time move closer still. But choosing where and how to move closer will determine whether our peoples accept these changes or rebel against them. There is a sense in which there is a third way in EU development also. We integrate where it makes sense to do so; if not, we celebrate the diversity which subsidiarity brings.

In economic union, in trade and the single market, in the conditions of competition, it makes complete sense for us to cooperate ever more closely. How can we tackle the environmental challenges, pollution and the degradation of our planet, except together? How can we defeat organised crime and the menace of drugs other than together.

In all these areas, cooperation and integration over time is sensible and is clearly in our self-interest. There is one other area in which France and Britain are particularly well qualified to cooperate: defence. In defence we can and should do more together. We are both nations that are used to power. We are not frightened of it or ashamed of it. We both want to remain a power for good in the world.

And we start off with great advantages. We both possess a minimum nuclear deterrent. We are both permanent members of the Security Council. We have without doubt the best equipped, most deployable, most effective military forces in Europe.

During the last government defence contacts between the military of our own two countries did improve. We set up a joint nuclear commission for the first time. We are also working together to harmonize our doctrine and procedures for peacekeeping.

More than that, on the ground in Bosnia, our soldiers led the UN Force, delivering vital aid through three winters of war. On the ground, Britain and French forces enjoyed the closest possible cooperation, serving under each other's command.

I would like this process of practical co-operation to advance much further and faster.

Now is the time for a new initiative on the military side. We are in the final stages of conducting a major Defence Review. You are in the middle of the complex process of professionalising and restructuring your armed forces. When our review is complete, I am asking the Defence Secretary and Chiefs of Staff to report to me urgently on the scope for future Anglo-French co-operation. How we can create a capacity to deploy forces rapidly on a joint basis in future crises, where both countries agree.

I know that some feel that being close with the United States is an inhibition on closer European cooperation. On the contrary, I believe it is essential that the isolationist voices in the United States are kept at bay and we encourage our American allies to be our partners in issues of world peace and security. Strong in Europe. Strong with the United States. That should be our goal.

So in some areas, we integrate more closely. In others, how we run our education and health systems, welfare state, personal taxes, matters affecting our culture and identity I say: be proud of our diversity and let subsidiarity rule. We don't want a Europe of conformity, a United States of Europe run by bureaucrats.

A word of warning here, perhaps. We have an economic framework for the EU. We now need a political framework that is dramatically more relevant, more in touch than the present one. I say this quite apart from the pressure of enlargement. The next step for Europe is to match its vision of its economic role with one for its political and social role.

This political vision for Europe is necessary now more than ever. There is a political deficit, which our people feel keenly. As we enlarge, there is the opportunity for us to reconsider the essential mechanisms of political accountability and control. We have had the courage to create the European Union. We must now have the courage to reform it.

For Europe to grow and prosper, Europe must be close to ordinary people's concerns. Europe must reflect the wider social and moral values we all share. The construction of Europe must not reflect a technical commitment to the market-place – but a political commitment to community. Europe must reflect the best of our regional and national traditions. It must be founded on our heritage of freedom, and of social concern. It must be confident. Its economy must be dynamic, innovative and open to the outside world.

I want to work with you to achieve this. The first vote I cast was in favour of Britain entering the Common Market. As I watch my children grow up now, I want them to live in a Europe in which they feel as at home in the glory of Paris, the beauty of Rome, the majesty of Vienna as they do in their own London, where they enjoy a Europe peaceful, secure and

prosperous because men like Monet and Schumann and, yes, Churchill had the vision to declare that the world they found was not going to be the world they would leave to future generations.

I believe that you, in France, share that vision with the British. So let us open up a new epoch in relations between Britain and France. Today I stand before you, conscious of the gap that separates me from the generation formed by the war. But pledging on my behalf, and on behalf of my country, that the friendship between Britain and France must be renewed.

That is my ambition: that France and Britain come closer together in a real entente, a deep entente, and in a genuine partnership with the other countries of Europe. Let us create together a new world on the old continent.

President Vaclav Havel -- Remarks at the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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The speech given by President Václav Havel at the event commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Switzerland, Geneva, 16th of March 1998

**Mr. Secretary General,
Madam High Commissioner,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

First of all, I want to thank you for honouring me with the invitation to offer a few introductory remarks to this assembly on the Fiftieth Anniversary of a momentous occasion - the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A number of diverse texts have played fundamental roles in human history. The Declaration of Human Rights differs from all the others primarily in one respect: its impact has not been meant to remain confined within one culture or one civilization. From the very outset, it has been envisaged as a universal, so to speak planetary, set of principles to govern human coexistence, and it has gradually become the point of departure for countless successive guidelines defining the rules of a worthy life together for the people and nations on this Earth. Texts of such fundamental nature are not easily born. The Declaration of Human Rights was obviously the fruit of a very special climate right after World War II, when all humanity realized that if the world wanted to prevent repetitions of such apocalyptic horrors it had to rise above the various particular interests or concerns of prestige, and to agree on a certain fundamental code.

The life of the Declaration of Human Rights has been marked by contradictions.

On one hand, the Declaration has notably predetermined the direction of the United Nations in the fifty years that have followed. Its imprint is borne by many ensuing UN documents, as well as by hundreds of international treaties and constitutional instruments of individual nations. It was also present in the background of the well-known Final Act of the 1975 Helsinki conference. The emphasis placed in that document on human rights helped to put an end to the bipolar division of the world. It added momentum to the opposition movements in the communist countries who took the accords signed by their governments seriously, and intensified their struggle for the observance of human rights, thus challenging the very essence of totalitarian systems.

On the other hand, it is also true that human rights have been violated, ignored or suppressed in many countries of the world - in some of them in milder forms, in others very brutally - throughout the fifty years since the Declaration was adopted. This is not surprising: the immensely complex world that we live in can hardly be changed overnight simply by passing a declaration.

Nevertheless, I believe that the frequent breaches of its principles have been by far outweighed by the historic importance of this global commitment. For the first time in history, there has been a valid, and globally respected, instrument holding up a mirror to the misery of this world: a universal standard with which we can constantly compare the actual state of affairs, to which we can point, and in whose name we can act, to combat injustices if need be. Since everyone has subscribed to this standard, few would venture to criticize it as such. This means that all those who commit substantial violations of its principles must face this historical novelty.

To put it simply: the life of all those who scorn human rights is much more difficult with the Declaration in place, than it was before.

For this reason we must not allow the subject of human rights and their consistent enforcement to be quietly relegated to a second-class or third-class status as an inconvenient and politically inexpedient issue. Massive violations of fundamental human rights, which clearly include the right to life, is, in fact, often invoked to explain or defend national or state interests, and is, unfortunately, becoming an everyday reality which, in the past decade, we could watch in almost a live transmission. The genocide in Rwanda, the killing in Chechnya, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the situation in Tibet, North Korea, Burma, Cuba and Kosovo - this is but a part of the list of events we have to bear in mind. Backed by the

provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we should be able to confront these threats to human life, freedom and dignity, or at least to always clearly identify them.

Why have human beings the prerogative to enjoy any human rights? I often ask myself this question, and I have dealt with it many times in my speeches. Time and again, I come to the conclusion that this is something essentially different, and much more profound, than a mere contract among people who have found it practical to have their rights articulated and guaranteed in some way or other, and to have an instrument restricting, automatically, the rights of those who could, or who would wish to, deny them their rights or jeopardize their exercise. In formal terms, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, indeed, takes the form of a contract or covenant, like the hundreds of thousands of laws or regulations governing human coexistence. This covenant, however, derives from certain paradigms, established notions or preconditions that need no further explanation. Let us take, for example, the concept of human dignity. In one way or another, it permeates all the fundamental human rights and human rights documents. We find this so natural that we see no point in asking what human dignity actually means, or why should humanity possess it; nor do we inquire why it is practical for us all to recognize it for one another.

I am convinced that the deepest roots of that which we now call human rights lie somewhere beyond us, and above us; somewhere deeper than the world of human covenants - in a realm that I would, for simplicity's sake, describe as metaphysical. Although they may fail to realize this, human beings - the only creatures who are fully aware of their own being and of their mortality, and who perceive their surroundings as a world and have an inner relationship to that world - derive their dignity, as well as their responsibility, from the world as a whole; that is, from that in which they see the world's central theme, its backbone, its order, its direction, its essence, its soul - name it as you will. Christians put this quite simply: man is here in the image of God.

The world has markedly changed in the past fifty years. There are many more of us on this planet now; the colonial system has fallen apart; the bipolar division is gone; globalization is advancing at a dizzying pace. The Euro-American culture that largely moulded the character of our present civilization is no longer the predominant. We are entering an era of multi-culturalism. While the world is now enveloped by one single global civilization, this civilization is based on coexistence of many cultures, religions or spheres of civilization that are equal, and equally powerful.

These different worlds naturally have their different historical, spiritual, political and moral traditions. More and more often, we have witnessed clashes between these traditions and the human rights notion embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Many times, an alleged contradiction has simply served as an ignoble pretext for various autocrats who have sought to legitimate their evil actions by pointing out the "otherness" of their cultures. On other occasions, however, the incongruity is real, and the various standards developed by the Euro-American world are truly perceived in all sincerity as an alien creation that can perhaps be respected, but not inwardly embraced. Moreover, some find this creation much too secular, much too mundane, much too material, claiming that it fails to pay regard to the higher authority that is the only source of all moral imperatives and all the rights that are derived from these imperatives, or safeguarded by them. This is not quite correct: the Western human rights standards are, in fact, a modern application of the Christian principles. Seen from the outside, however, this does not appear to be so - and things might be even worse if it was seen that way, because then it might well be regarded as a religious imperialism under a civil cloak.

What can be done in this situation?

Certainly there are a thousand avenues. In the sphere we are dealing with today, I see one viable course in placing emphasis on the spiritual source of human rights. This is something that will not make these rights an alien phenomenon for the non-European or non-American worlds, on the contrary: it may bring them closer to these realms. First and foremost, however, it may bring them closer to us who come from the Euro-American environment, for we seem to be the ones who are most inclined to lose sight of the spiritual dimension of the values we believe in, and of the metaphysical origin of the rights we claim; and to regard documents like the Declaration of Human Rights simply as some kind of a good business.

Most importantly, the primeval foundations of all the main religious systems of the world contain, in

different forms, the same basic principles, and the same moral imperatives. The various religions differ tremendously in accentuation, in spirit, in character and in liturgy, but somewhere deep down we always find the same fundament - the same call for humility before that which is around us and above us, for decency and for solidarity; the same reference to the memory of the universe where all our actions are proven for their true worth; the same emphasis on our responsibility for the whole world.

I do not think that the United Nations, today, could ratify a document whose significance would match that of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I could see that for myself during the preparations of the Anniversary Summit, when attempts were made behind the scenes with a view to adopting a concise document of a declaratory nature that would respond, in a fundamental way, to the changes in the world in the past fifty years. Taking part in the preparations, I soon realized how difficult it was to reach agreement on anything. Not that nobody agreed to the proposed texts, but many were concerned about who wrote them, and whether the authors were not people whom they should oppose; while others wanted to have something added or deleted for reasons of sheer prestige. As a result of this - not surprisingly - no document was produced in the end. Nevertheless, I still believe that those of us who want to could make an effort to highlight the spiritual dimension and spiritual origin of the values guarded by the United Nations, and to translate this also into the Organization's practical activities. If a better future for this world lies in the realm of spirit, of moral order, and of a renewed sense of responsibility for this world, who but the United Nations should be the one to restate this again and again?

Much has been said about reform of the Organization. With your permission, I shall conclude with a few general remarks. They may sound rather unrealistic at present, but I still feel that I should share them with you, because I am deeply convinced that they could enrich the endeavours of this unique and tremendously important institution in the future.

I have already mentioned the first point: I would deem it advisable if the United Nations became the scene of a quest for a common denominator of spiritual values uniting the different cultures of our present world. The UN should look for ways in which the entire system that is aimed to foster human rights, and all the other rights and responsibilities shared by humanity today, could be more deeply implanted in this spiritual foundation.

Second: I think that the United Nations and the various UN agencies, committees and commissions should, in an increasing measure, instill their efforts with a systematic concern for human rights. All their actions should be rooted in, related to, or derived from, the concept of human rights. This might, perhaps, create a climate in which there would not be so much particularism, so much indifference, so much tolerance for obvious evil, motivated by egoism or by economic or geopolitical interests. To my mind, the biggest problem of today's multipolar world - a world which has witnessed a reawakening of hundreds of atavistic national interests - does not lie in evil as such, but in tolerance for evil. To give just one example: let us remember how long it took before Europe was able to stop the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina! And who knows whether that war would not have continued to this day had the United States not intervened!

The third remark that I shall make is certainly not new: it is necessary to debureaucratize and deformalize all of the UN bodies, institutions and procedures and achieve, thusly, substantial cuts in the Organization's budget.

Fourth: the United Nations should give thought to the structure of the Security Council, difficult as it may be. In many respects, the present Council is but a relic of post-war circumstances. I envision a Security Council with a permanent presence of states that have the largest populations, wield the greatest influence and are best equipped to represent the various continents of this world and spheres of its civilization. Integrated regions, such as Europe, might well be represented by one common representative. And I also envision much more flexible decision-making if, for example, the right of veto would be applicable only when exercised by at least two permanent members.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I think that the United Nations should do everything in its power in order that people should perceive it as their very own organization, not just as a club of their governments. Undoubtedly, this perception could be enhanced in a number of different ways. For

example, people could pay the United Nations directly, with the government authorities of their countries just transferring the funds to their destination. Contributions to the UN would then be contributions of all the inhabitants of this planet, not of governments. It would be marvellous if every man and woman knew that the United Nations is their organization, even if they paid no more than one millionth of their annual incomes.

Mr. Secretary General,

I know of the broad-minded reform concept which you have prepared for the United Nations, and I fully support it. Nevertheless, I have also wanted to offer, on this occasion, a few suggestions - perhaps somewhat utopian - of my own.

Madam High Commissioner,
My dear friend Mary Robinson,

I thank you for your invitation to beautiful Geneva - a city that has been traditionally associated with attempts to build a peaceful order for this continent and for our world. Some of these attempts were more successful, others less so. It is my wish for you, and for us all, that the post-war attempt, called the United Nations, succeeds and thrives. It is my hope that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose birth we are commemorating today, will not be just a dream about what humanity's position should be like in this world. May it gradually turn, in all countries, into a living reality.

Thank you.

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

December 2, 1998

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP COUNCIL DINNER

The Corcoran Gallery of Art

8:30 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, I have to ask a couple of questions. The first question I want to ask is whether you can actually hear us. Can you hear? Some say yes, some say no. So-so. One of these mikes is working, but is that better? Okay. Still so-so. I'll do the best I can.

You know, this magnificent gallery may not be the best place for a speech, but most of you have heard my speech anyway. But it is a wonderful place, full of the rich history of Washington, full of the great culture of our country. It has special memories for me, because I once stood on a platform in this very same spot, a little over three years ago, with King Hussein, Shimon Peres, Yasser Arafat and the late Prime Minister Rabin -- the last time I ever saw him. So I have always very strong feelings when I come to this place about the importance of the public mission of citizens.

I was thinking on the way over here of the day, seven years ago, when I spoke to the DLC in Cleveland, when our party was suffering, our nation was struggling. The DLC was a very small group with very large ideas. And I said that we had to offer the American people a new choice rooted in old values, that offers opportunity, demands responsibility, gives citizens more say, provides them with responsive government because we recognize that in fact we are a community. We are all in this together; we will go up or down together.

These words -- opportunity, responsibility, community -- came to identify and embody a new approach to government and politics, tying our oldest, most enduring values to the Information Age. We said we wouldn't seek to stop the currents of economic change, but we would not, as Americans and as Democrats, tell our people they had to sink or swim on their own. We said that the way to advance the spirit of FDR was not to preserve his programs in amber, but to remember that he said, "New conditions impose new requirements." We said we were New Democrats, and we called our approach the Third Way.

I think it's fair to say that our ideas were not universally welcomed, or even wholly understood by some of our own fellow partisans, by the Republicans, or by the press.

But we believed America could work again and America could lead again, and we won the Presidency in 1992. (Applause.)

Then we made some tough, and sometimes controversial, decisions -- on the economy, on foreign policy, on crime, the environment, welfare, health care -- but we got America moving again. And with our commitment to build a bridge to the 21st century, the American people gave our party the White House again in 1996, for the first time since 1936. (Applause.)

And in 1997 and 1998 we continued to push these new ideas, and I believe we have regained the trust of the American people in their government. Last month, standing strong and united on a platform of fiscal responsibility, strengthening Social Security, renewing our public schools, protecting people in the new health care marketplace, dealing with the challenges of the global financial crisis, our party won an historic election victory. (Applause.)

I'm sure all of you know that it was the first time the President's party has gained seats in the House in the sixth year of the Presidency since 1822. (Applause.) Now, since I'm not a candidate anymore, I can say that the last time that happened, in 1822, the other party disappeared. (Laughter.)

I don't believe that will happen this time -- partly because those in the other party who had the greatest success in this election year were those who campaigned with language and often even policies strikingly similar to our own. When Republican governors stand in front of banners that say "opportunity" and "responsibility," when they talk of community, it may not be the sincerest form of flattery, but it's flattery nonetheless. And even more, it's a sign that America is moving in the right direction, that the common sense and the uncommon dreams of the American people are being heard.

All of you know, I'm sure, that these same ideas are reviving center-left political parties throughout the industrialized world as people everywhere struggle to put a human face on the global economy, from Great Britain and Germany to Greece and the Netherlands.

Far from Europe, in Brazil, bold actions by like-minded President Cardoso have tamed that country's notorious inflation, pointed the way for a new model for emerging democracies. And it all started with the DLC -- a political movement begun by people, many of whom were in rooms like this when we all began. Today, less than 15 years after we started, the ideas pushed by the DLC are literally sweeping the world, and you should be very, very proud. (Applause.)

I also think it is very important to point out that we have done more than fashion a politically appealing agenda that is well marketed. We have actually worked hard to find the right way to have a leading industrial nation thrive in the 21st century. We have worked hard to marry politics and policy, to build a new American consensus.

Now, having said that, here's the main point I want to make tonight: This is not a time for self-congratulation.

I applaud the work being done by the DLC, bringing in people today to talk about tomorrow's ideas, working on finding and training people to run for public office who share those ideas.

We have got America working again, but many of the difficult tasks of transforming our country for a new century and a new millennium still lie ahead. And we have to understand that there will be obstacles in the path. There are genuine problems out there in the global economy. We are beginning to feel them here -- in energy, in aerospace, in steel, in agriculture. We have to face these challenges.

There are also many Americans who have not yet felt the benefit of the ideas we are pushing. There are many neighborhoods which still haven't seen the revitalization of enterprise that we're so proud of. There are many schools that still aren't working for their children. There are many challenges we have not met. Therefore, we have to move forward with a little humility, as well as with a great deal of determination.

I'd like to talk about how we got here and ask you to remember three things as you go forward. First, our ideas have met the most important test: They actually work in the real world. If we want our ideas for tomorrow and the next day to work, they have to meet that test as well.

There was a best-seller when I ran for President called "America, What Went Wrong?" In my first inaugural address, I said there is nothing wrong with America that can't be fixed by what is right with America. Today the question is, America, what went right? What went right was new ideas: welfare reform; community policing; doubling the Earned Income Tax Credit; creating Americorps, which now has its 100,000th member, and -- they're doing a wonderful job around the country -- (applause) -- and an economic plan that focused on reducing the deficit, expanding investment, and expanding trade.

By almost every measure, American families are better off. We have also met our responsibilities to promote peace, prosperity, and security around the world. And perhaps best of all, our country is regaining its legendary faith in itself. We actually believe that we can make tomorrow better than today for all Americans willing to work hard and be good citizens.

The second thing I think we ought to remember is that our ideas work because they're true to our values and our common sense. For too long, politics treated issues like education or crime or health care or welfare -- you name it, any issue -- as a battle over ideology; not a problem to be solved, but a political matter to be exploited. The idea was to divide and conquer the electorate, to split blacks from whites, to split Hispanics and other immigrants from Americans who were born here, even though their parents or their grandparents or their great-grandparents weren't, to split the North from the South, the middle class from the working class.

If the American people said anything at all in the last election with a loud, resounding roar, it was, "No, thank you, we do not want to be split anymore. We choose progress over partisanship." (Applause.)

The American people, out of the wreckage of Oklahoma City, out of the horror of the African American citizen being brutally murdered in east Texas, out of the awful death of young Matthew Sheppard, out of the shooting of the doctor in New York, out of the arguments around the kitchen table -- somehow they always get it right if they've got enough time. And they said, in the world we're living in, our diversity is a blessing; it is a richness; it is our key to the future. We will not be divided. We are going forward together. There cannot be opportunity and responsibility unless there is community.

And we must never forget that lesson. It is our key, our heart and soul as a party.
(Applause.)

And as we look ahead, we have to confront these difficult issues. I want to remind you that we did not say ever that all the choices would be easy, but that if we had to make hard choices, they ought to be the real choices. It is a false choice to say that we have to choose between work and help for the needy. It is a false choice to say people ought to have to choose between doing right by their children and being effective at their jobs. It is a false choice to say we have to choose between punishing people who commit violent crimes and trying to prevent kids from committing those crimes in the first place. It is a false choice to say you have to choose between cleaning up the environment and growing the economy. And it is false choice to say you have to choose between being proud of your race, your religion, or any other special characteristic you have, and being most proud of being an American and a child of God.

Those are false choices. We have enough hard, real choices to make, and we should make them. (Applause.)

The third thing I want to remind you of is that we made a decision that was profoundly important, that the way government works matters, that we could not maintain the confidence of the American people and we could not have ideas that delivered unless the government was functioning in a sensible, modern, and prudent way. Things that used to be boring, things you could never get people to stand still at a standup reception like that and listen to, became the Vice President's Reinventing Government program. And we have worked at it very, very hard.

We didn't take a chainsaw to the government, but we did slim it down, and we did change the programs. And we now have the smallest federal government since the first time John Glenn went into space. And it works better.

The last time John Glenn went into space, a couple of weeks ago, just for example, in the last six years, NASA, with a smaller staff and a smaller budget, had gone from two space launches a year to six space launches a year. That matters to people.

It matters whether this thing works or not. And I know it will never get the headlines, and I know that it will not be in the reports of my speech tomorrow in the press, but it matters.

If you like the fact that the crime rate went down, remember there had to be a system for getting the 100,000 police out there.

If you believe it's a good thing to have welfare reform, but people who are moved from welfare to work should have child care and health care for their children, there had to be a system to do that. If you like the fact that we could cut the size of the deficit and increase our investment in education and transportation and many other areas, remember we had to reduce the size of government by over 300,000 people to do that.

So I ask you, don't forget about the nuts and bolts. They matter. It really does matter whether people get up every day and go to work and worry more about what they're doing than what is said about what they're doing in the daily columns. It is very, very important that we remain serious about this. (Applause.)

The fourth thing that I want to say is that we have succeeded in no small measure because we understood that America's interests at home could no longer be divided from America's interests around the world; that America's values at home could no longer be protected unless we stood up for those values around the world. This is a very small globe. It is a good thing that we work for peace in the Middle East, in Bosnia, in Kosovo, in Northern Ireland. It is a good thing that we worry about nuclear weapons on the Indian subcontinent. It is a good thing that we worry about whether people half a world away will have their children's legs blown off by land mines, or may be subject to chemical or biological weapons. It is a good thing that we worry about whether pollution is destroying the environment of people in Latin America, in Asia, in some other place, because it will all come home here.

We live in a world where our responsibilities to others are important and integral to our ability to do right by ourselves and our future. Those things we must remember.

And as we look ahead, let me say that I am very, very excited about the next two years. I'm looking forward to this State of the Union; I'm looking forward to working with this Congress. As we always do, we will do our best to work with members of both parties. We hope that the people in the other party will come forward and work with us, because we have a big agenda.

In the 20th century, we built a safety net to give dignity to our parents. In the 21st century, we have to prove that we can strengthen the Social Security system so we can take care of the baby boomers without bankrupting their children. We can do that. (Applause.)

In the 20th century, we built the first ever mass middle class in the world, in no small measure through strong public schools. In the 21st century, with a much more diverse population, we have got to prove we can revolutionize those schools so they can prepare our children for the Information Age.

In the 20th century, we found a way to tackle the cycles of boom and bust, to prevent another Great Depression from occurring. In the 21st century, we have to prove we can do that with the global financial crisis so that we can be secure at home.

I will say again what I said before: What you see here -- when farm prices go down in the high plains because of the Asian financial crisis; when Boeing has to lay people off because people can't buy the airplanes they've ordered; when the steel industry is overwhelmed by imports from countries who can sell for nothing because their currencies have depleted -- when you see these crises, they are simply symptoms of the larger reality that will govern our children's and our grandchildren's lives.

We must be prepared to undertake the duty of leading the world toward a new resolution so that we can continue to grow the global economy without having another global collapse because we did not do our duty in our time, as our forebears did 50 years ago. (Applause.)

Now, there are a lot of other things to do, but you get the point. I am so grateful that I was given a chance to serve as President; that I was given a chance to implement so many of the ideas that many of us began, in the mid-'80s, to articulate. But it is just a beginning. It took a good while just to get America up and working again.

But when you reel off all the statistics -- the lowest unemployment in 28 years, the smallest percentage of people on welfare in 29 years, the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years, the fastest-rising wages in over two decades, the lowest crime rate in 25 years, the highest home ownership in history -- I say to you, all that means is that America is working again, and that's a great tribute to the American people as well as to the ideas that we have helped to make real. But we have not completed the process of transforming this country for the 21st century, for the Information Age, and all of you know it.

So I say again, I ask you to leave here with renewed determination, with renewed energy, and with no little humility for the task ahead. When we met in Cleveland in 1991, no one there dreamed that we could have accomplished, either politically or substantively for our country, what has happened in the intervening years. No one but Al From; he knew it all along. (Laughter.) No one else.

And you can be proud of that. This is the work worthy of a lifetime. I'm proud that I was fortunate enough to meet Al and Will Marshall and all the DLC people; I'm proud that I was able to work with people like Joe Lieberman and John Breaux. And I have to mention one other of our early DLC members who had a very good day today, former Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy. I know we all wish him well and are happy for him. (Applause.)

But I leave you with this thought. The real test of our ideas is whether they outlive this presidency; whether they are bigger than any candidate, any speech, any campaign, any debate. The real test is whether we can find a way to carry them on and on and on, and whether we can find a way to avoid self-satisfaction and self-congratulations, and always be searching for the new answers to the new challenges.

If we remember the basic things that got us here; if we remember how we were when we started; if we keep the fire for the future of not only our party but our children, our country, and our world, then eight years from now -- 80 years from now -- the DLC will be here, doing its job in America's greatest days.

Thank you, and God bless you. (Applause.)

END

8:58 P.M. EST

Alan Brinkley, “Imagining The Twentieth Century”

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***IMAGINING THE TWENTIETH CENTURY:
Perspectives from Two Fins-de-Siecle***

University Lecture, April 13, 1998
Columbia University

Alan Brinkley
Allan Nevins Professor of History

"As we stand on the threshold of a new century, it is natural to look into the past and to desire to look into the future." That is the first sentence of *The Twentieth-Century City*, a book published exactly a century ago by Josiah Strong, a Congregationalist minister, an officer of the Evangelical Alliance for the United States, and already in 1898 a well-known writer and social critic. In it, he attempted to envision what twentieth-century cities -- and twentieth-century society generally (for, he believed, "the city is to control the nation") -- would look like. His predictions, suffused with Christian optimism, described "a new social spirit, and a new social ideal" that would, before the new century was out, create a "city redeemed . . . the symbol of *heaven* -- heaven on earth -- the Kingdom fully come."¹

Strong was one of countless writers, scholars, intellectuals, journalists, politicians, and others who -- in the closing years of the nineteenth century -- recorded their visions of what the next hundred years would be like. And as we contemplate our own fin-de-siecle, it is worth considering for a moment, I think, how our not-too-distant ancestors envisioned theirs -- how they tried to imagine the twentieth century just as we try to imagine the twenty-first.

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The effort to predict the future is such a familiar part of our cultural landscape that it is easy to forget how relatively new an activity it is. Through most of human history, the vast majority of the world's population had few doubts about what the future would be like. It would, they assumed, be much like the present and the past, dominated by the unchanging cycles of agrarian life. Individuals might wonder about their own fates, or the fates of their children. They might try to envision the nature of the afterlife. They might speculate about the future of their rulers. They might embrace astrology or cherish other superstitions that they believed would help them predict their health, or the weather, or the success of their crops. But the essential character of the world they knew -- the structures of their everyday lives -- changed so slowly (with occasional catastrophic exceptions) that for many millennia the idea of a future dramatically different from the present rarely occurred to anyone but a few visionaries and mystics.²

The expectation that the future would, in fact, be substantially different from the present began to become widespread less than 300 years ago. That expectation emerged in part as a result of the Enlightenment, and its suggestion that individuals might shape their own lives and that humans might shape the character of their societies. It emerged in part as a result of the scientific revolution that the Enlightenment helped produce, and the spread of the idea that the world could be explained and perhaps restructured along rational scientific lines. It emerged as a result of modern industrialization, which transformed societies rapidly and radically, again and again, generation after generation. And it emerged as well in response to the political revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which suggested the possibility that social structures were not

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- fixed and timeless, but subject to purposeful change.

By the end of the nineteenth century, citizens of much of the world -- and certainly citizens of the United States -- had already experienced such dramatic changes in their own lifetimes that they considered it all but certain that the future would see changes even more profound. Out of that belief had emerged a vast enterprise of prediction that has survived into our own time. In the late nineteenth century, it was visible in the works of such famous futurists as H. G. Wells and Edward Bellamy, and in the wide currency of the economic ideas of Adam Smith and Thomas Malthus and Karl Marx. Today, it is visible even more widely. The academic social sciences -- economics in particular -- have been deeply committed to predictive projects for several generations. But social science is only a small part of a much larger futurist project, of which the most numerous and visible parts are unconstrained by conventional rules of evidence or boundaries of tested methodologies. There are celebrated writers, scholars, and entrepreneurs who confidently predict a dazzling techno-Utopian future -- Alvin Toffler, Arthur Clarke, Nicholas Negroponte, Bill Gates. There is a modest but growing academic field -- "Futures Studies" -- with conferences, quarterly journals, courses offered in major universities, and books published by reputable university presses.³ And there is a steady drumbeat of images of the future in our popular culture -- in films, on television, in national magazines, and of course in science fiction.

The unreliability of almost all such predictions does nothing to deter us from making them, and it is not hard to understand why. The effort to understand the future gives us a sense of connection to a world that we ourselves will never know. It helps us to believe that we might somehow shape the time in which our children and grandchildren will live. It makes our own brief lives seem somehow part of a larger and continuing story. To historians, however, predictions are

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valuable for other reasons as well -- for what they reveal of our cultural history. Whether or not they help us to understand the world to come, they do help us to understand the world of the past and the present. For predictions provide us, if nothing else, a window into the hopes and fears of those who have made them.

A hundred years ago, those who envisioned the twentieth century described futures of boundless variety, both wonderful and terrible, good and evil, attractive and repellent. Some predicted such grandiose and happily unrealized achievements as the expansion of the United States to include Canada, Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and all of South America. Others envisioned a time when people of color, presumably unassimilable into the white-dominated society of the United States, would voluntarily and contentedly resettle in other lands (one writer suggested some sparsely populated areas of Venezuela).⁴ One stiff-backed futurist predicted a day when, for hygienic reasons, humans would no longer kiss one another but would signify affection by "a gentle patting of the cheek."⁵ Another foresaw an era when women would replace men in the public world, while men retreated to the domestic sphere and began to take on "feminine" characteristics.⁶ One prominent futurist foresaw a day when an earnest, educated middle class -- "the active, scientifically-trained people" -- would decide that raising children was a distraction from the more important business of managing society and would establish a series of boarding schools for toddlers to which all children, beginning at the age of 3, would be sent.⁷ Still another predicted that by the year 2000 everyone would be a vegetarian, that all farm land would be devoted to raising food crops, and that new kinds of fungi would be developed that would replicate, and improve upon, fish and meat.⁸ In a particularly bold effort at prediction, one American writer predicted the

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- end of Christianity and its replacement with art; the rise of polygamy; the improvement of human capacity through scientific breeding; a single world language; and women receiving the vote.⁹

- But the most frequent and most serious predictions from the Victorian age of what the twentieth century would look like focused on one or more of three areas that were of deep concern in the 1890s and remain of concern to us today. Late nineteenth-century Americans wondered, first what scientific and technological advances the twentieth century would bring and how such advances would change their lives. They wondered, too, about the future of industrial capitalism, and about how and whether the then-troubled relationships among the various classes in industrial society might eventually resolves themselves. And they wondered, finally, about the future of democracy, about its chances of survival and its prospects for improvement.

Nothing was more alluring, and at times alarming, to late nineteenth-century futurists than the vision of dramatic scientific and technological change. The nineteenth century, they believed, had seen unparalleled material progress: dramatic changes in the science and technology of production, the creation of the steamship and the railroad, the invention of the telegraph and the telephone, the spread of electricity, the discovery of anesthesia and antisepsis. "The world did not double or treble its movement between 1800 and 1900," Henry Adams wrote at the time, "but measured by any standard -- by horsepower, calories, volts, mass in any shape -- the tension and vibration and volume and so-called progression of society were fully a thousand times greater in 1900 than in 1800." The future, Adams's contemporaries assumed, could hardly be less dazzling. "If progress is as swift as it has been since Professor Bell demonstrated that the human voice can be conveyed over a wire charged electrically," one successful engineer wrote in 1893, "we are likely to

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see [in the next century] some developments that will be simply revolutionary."¹⁰

The material changes of the modern world, the Victorians believed, were what differentiated their time from all the centuries before them. Those changes had propelled history onto a fundamentally new and different course. William Thackeray, in the mid-nineteenth century, had called the railroad the "great demarcation line between past and present."¹¹ By the end of the century, even the railroad had receded into the background in the face of dazzling predictions of future change: great ships that skimmed across the ocean, travelling from Europe to America in a day; electric illumination that would turn night into day; enormous feats of production that would end want and produce social equality; and of course -- in the writings of Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, and many others -- new airborne vehicles that would circle the world and even carry humans to distant planets.

The past and the expected future achievements of scientists and engineers gave them a place of remarkable prestige in the minds of many Victorians. In imagining the twentieth century, they envisioned a world in which technically proficient people would move naturally into positions of leadership. One example was Thorstein Veblen. His *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, published in 1899, is remembered primarily for its savage portrayal of the very rich, whom he considered smug, flabby, and reactionary. (It is remembered, too, for its introduction into our language of the phrase "conspicuous consumption.") But Veblen satirized the "leisure class" not simply to denounce them, but also to legitimize a new class of leaders that he assumed would, and should, gradually assume control of society in the twentieth century: the engineers. By 1921, when he published *The Engineer and the Price System*, he had become convinced that the only rational way for society to govern itself was to delegate social and political power to a "soviet of technicians," to replace

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democracy with an enlightened autocracy run on scientific principles.

Even those who did not follow Veblen's radical path often expected the march of science to transform not just the material world, but the social, economic, and political worlds as well. H. G. Wells, one the most prominent figures among those trying to envision the world of the twentieth century, pinned many of his hopes for the future on "a really functional social body of engineering, managing men, scientifically trained and having common ideals and interests," a genuinely new class that would "segregate and disentangle itself from our present confusion of aimless and ill-directed lives."¹² They would transform business, politics, even the military, for there would also be a "new sort of soldier . . . a sober, considerate engineering man -- no more of a gentleman than his subordinate or any other self-respecting person."¹³

What is most striking about these predictions is not their prescience (although some were prescient indeed) or their grandiosity (although some of them were preposterously grand). What is striking, rather, is the tendency of these late-nineteenth-century writers to attribute vast social and moral authority to modern science and technology, and to the people who were driving it forward. It would be too much to say, as some claimed at the time, that science had replaced religion in the late nineteenth century. But as the response to Darwin of nineteenth-century theologians suggests -- a response in some cases fearful and defensive, in other cases adaptive and transforming -- science had become a powerful rival to traditional religion and had already begun to change it.

What is also striking about the veneration of science and technology, and about the predictions of their future impact, was how often they were fused to new visions of industrial capitalism and to an image of a fundamentally new class structure.

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If the twentieth century's greatest promise seemed to Victorian eyes to be breathtaking advances in science and technology, its greatest danger, many believed, was the class system of the burgeoning industrial world. From Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and Eugene V. Debs, to Benjamin Disraeli and William Gladstone and Theodore Roosevelt, the deepening chasm and the bitter battles between capital and labor were the principal problems of the age. Industrial capitalism had, it was true, produced wealth and innovation of a sort scarcely imagined a century before. Marx and Engels themselves conceded its miraculous power in *The Communist Manifesto*:

The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. . . . What earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labour?¹⁴

But if industrial capitalism had produced great wealth, it had also produced inequality, immiseration, and conflict, as Marx and Engels, of course, also knew. And so one of the principal questions confronting those who attempted to imagine the twentieth century was whether, and how, this great and terrible problem might be resolved. "If any man now living solves the great question of the true relation of capital and labor," the popular writer Ella Wheeler Wilcox wrote in 1893, "to him will [the late twentieth century] accord the honor of the greatest man."¹⁵

Some writers saw little chance of a successful resolution of this problem and predicted revolution and even apocalypse. Ignatius Donnelly, a fiery and somewhat erratic populist leader in Minnesota, presented such a vision in 1890 in one of the more bizarre dystopian novels of the late nineteenth century, *Caesar's Column*. In it, he described a twentieth century world in which the political and economic system, perverted by the demands of modern capitalism, had utterly failed

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and had produced a violent revolution of almost unimaginable horror. In one particularly lurid chapter, "The Ocean Overpeers Its List," he presented an extraordinary and terrible vision of how a great mob of the people -- finally reaching the limits of their frustration -- breaks loose to destroy the demons that had oppressed them and, in the process, destroy civilization itself:

... like a huge flood, long damned up, turbid, muddy, loaded with wrecks and debris, the gigantic mass broke loose, full of foam and terror, and flowed in every direction. A foul and brutal and ravenous multitude it was, dark with dust and sweat, armed with the weapons of civilization but possessing only the instincts of wild beasts. ... Civilization is gone, and all the devils are loose! That which it took the world ten thousand years to create has gone in an hour.¹⁶

More common, however, were visions of new social and economic arrangements that would, at last, end the conflict of classes and the inequities of capitalism. The most famous and most influential such prediction was Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, published in 1887. Bellamy told the story of a wealthy Boston businessman, Julian West, who seals himself in a subterranean chamber, goes into a deep trance, and awakes in the year 2000 to find a world utterly unlike the one he had known -- a world of social harmony, universal abundance, and full employment. When he asks the late-twentieth-century Bostonians he encounters what had led to this remarkable change, he is told that America in the late nineteenth century had been collapsing as a result of the chaos and instability of the old industrial economy. But the nation had found a solution, finally, in the creation of a single, giant trust, which absorbed all the businesses of all the citizens into one great monopoly, which then shared the abundance of the industrial economy equally with everyone. Workers were now organized into a great industrial army, through which

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they had acquired "habits of obedience, subordination, devotion to duty." This army had complete political control over society, and it used its efficiently ordered industrial workforce as a model for the efficient ordering of society at large. "If I were to give you . . . a key to what may seem the mysteries of our civilization as compared with that of your age," a late-twentieth-century man tells the nineteenth-century West, "I should say that it is the fact that the solidarity of the race and the brotherhood of man, which to you were but fine phrases, are, to our thinking and feeling, ties as real and as vital as physical fraternity."¹⁷

The publication of *Looking Backward* was one of the great cultural, and indeed, political events of the late nineteenth century. The book sold hundreds of thousands of copies, made Bellamy a national figure, and launched a shortlived political movement in support of Bellamy's political vision, which he called "Nationalism." But Bellamy was only one of many turn-of-the-century visionaries to envision a dramatically different future for industrial society.¹⁸

In the decade or so following the publication of *Looking Backward*, and undoubtedly in part because of it, predictions of a great quasi-socialist or corporatist solution to the problems of capitalism became commonplace. Terence Powderly, the leader of the Knights of Labor, the great workers' organization of the 1870s and 1880s, predicted in 1893 that in the late twentieth century, industrial society would have become an efficient, classless mechanism working for the good of all. "Labor organizations will have disappeared," he wrote, "for there will be no longer a necessity for their existence."¹⁹ "The general tendency of Industrialism" in the twentieth century, the writer Henry Cadman predicted in 1899, would be towards "the aggregation of Capital, with the Corporation as a unit, . . . the mobilization of Labor, with the Trade Union as a unit," and a "general acceptance of some form of Profit-Sharing as the basis of an industrial union between

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Capital and Labor." The result would be a "new Industrialism, richer in promise of unity, more perfect in justice, and warmer in its humanity."²⁰

These visions of a natural movement of the industrial economy toward a more ordered, efficient, and socially just future were, of course, far from universal in the late nineteenth century -- the age of laissez faire and Social Darwinism. But they were remarkable nevertheless for their popularity and their variety. They reflected the belief of many Victorians that modern corporate capitalism, despite its obvious power, was still a new economic system, still malleable, still subject to transformation through social control. Their present economy was, many believed, a transitional phase in economic history between the old preindustrial world and a new social order as yet unborn. "In a few years," H. G. Wells predicted in 1899, "I believe many men who are now rather aimless, men who have disconsolately watched the collapse of the old Liberalism, will be clearly telling themselves and one another of their adhesion to this new ideal" -- the ideal of a new economy intelligently organized and governed for the benefit of the many not the few.²¹

Such predictions also reflected the assumption among many late-nineteenth-century visionaries that new forms of government -- what Wells called a "New Republic" -- would emerge in the twentieth century to replace, or perfect, the allegedly democratic systems of the nineteenth.

"There is a question as old as history itself, always disputed, never settled," Walter Besant wrote from England to an American journal in 1901, a question, he said, that would surely "receive an answer" in the century just begun. "Is government by the people possible? . . . And shall it prevail? . . . Would that in the year 1999 or 2000 one could come back to earth, in order to hear the answer. May it be favorable to democracy. And may it be final!"²²

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Democracy, of course, had many definitions at the beginning of the twentieth century, just as it does at its end. To W. E. B. Du Bois, writing in 1903 in *The Souls of Black Folk* about what he called the "problem of the twentieth century," democracy meant the still unrealized goal of extending political rights to everyone, and to disenfranchised African Americans in particular. "We are awakening," he said, "to the fact that the perpetuity of republican institutions on this continent depends on the purification of the ballot, the civic training of voters, and the raising of voting to the plane of a solemn duty which a patriotic citizen neglects to his peril and the peril of his children's children."²³ To Terence Powderly and other labor leaders, democracy meant overcoming class-based barriers to political participation. Powderly predicted a society in which everyone would be educated enough to consider political questions intelligently, a society in which "the initiative and referendum would prevail," and one in which "lawmakers will not be the autocrats they now are, for they will truly register the will of the people."²⁴

To others envisioning a political system for the twentieth century, the purpose of democracy was not to increase participation, but to create a government capable of giving enlightened leadership to the dramatically different world the future would surely bring. "My contention," one self-proclaimed Utopian wrote, "is that the ideal government of the future will be a complex one -- that it will be plastic and will not have one rule applicable to all races."²⁵ H. G. Wells, who in 1899 so confidently predicted the rise of a new, educated governing class in 1899, wrote at the same time that "I know of no case for the elective democratic governments of modern states that cannot be knocked to pieces in five minutes. It is manifest that upon countless, important, public issues there is no collective will and nothing in the mind of the average man except blank indifference, that an electoral system simply places power in the hands of the most

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skillful electioneers." A new politics would require not more political participation, but more intelligence among those entrusted with governance.²⁶ Even many advocates of the most important expansion of the electorate in American history, those who battled for woman suffrage, did not argue their case by appealing to the ideal of universal democratic participation but by suggesting that enfranchising women would be valuable to society less because it would expand than because it would "improve" the pool of voters.

And yet despite the great differences among late nineteenth-century visions of democracy, and despite the manifestly anti-democratic character of some of them, the belief that politics and government would play an important role in making twentieth-century society just and equitable and dynamic was strong and widespread. Just as fin-de-siecle visionaries predicted great new scientific breakthroughs and dramatic improvements in the character of capitalism, so they also envisioned new and better governments capable of achievements that previous generations had never imagined. That was certainly the view of the great political hero of the first years of the new century, Theodore Roosevelt. He believed that the twentieth century -- which he expected to play an important role in shaping -- would create a new, national center of power capable of advancing broad national interests and opposing the clamor of divergent interest groups. "A simple and poor society can exist as a democracy on the bases of sheer individualism," he said early in his presidency. "But a rich and complex society cannot so exist." If America was to achieve its twentieth-century destiny -- if it was to become the great nation of the world -- it would need the "power to attain a high degree of social efficiency," the "capacity to subordinate the interests of the individual to the interests of the community," and the ability to "fearlessly champion a system of increased governmental control."

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The expansion of political will -- whether through unleashing the power of a broad popular electorate or through creating enlightened leaders and institutions capable of defending democratic ends -- was one of the most powerful visions of the late nineteenth century, a vision largely untroubled by the failure of the contemporary political system to fulfill it. It was, moreover, closely tied to a much larger and more powerful late-nineteenth-century faith: the idea of progress; the belief that the life of mankind was destined to move steadily and inevitably from an inferior past toward a superior future; the conviction that the purpose, and the destiny, of society was to grow, to improve, to move closer to perfection. The belief in progress had supported the great scientific and technological achievements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It had sustained faith in the ameliorative power of industrial capitalism, and in the possibility of transforming it into a more just and stable economic system. And it had drawn strength from and in turn sustained the political revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which had shattered old orders that once seemed timeless and which had opened at least the possibility of creating new and more democratic regimes.

This faith in progress, although relatively new as a force in human history, was already remarkably durable, capable of surviving extraordinary tragedies and disappointments. How else can we explain the optimism of, for example, the French philosopher Condorcet, watching the Revolution he had once welcomed turn against him in the 1790s and writing his last book in the shadow of the guillotine (which he escaped only by taking his own life shortly after finishing the work). It was published after his death as *The Progress of the Human Spirit*. Condorcet described human history as moving steadily and progressively forward, through a series of epochs, of which

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the French Revolution was the penultimate. The tenth, and last, was still to come -- the achievement of human perfection. "Human perfectibility is in reality infinite," he said, "and the progress of this perfectibility . . . has no other limit than the duration of the globe upon which nature has placed us." Those who despair of the present, he wrote, no doubt referring to himself, need only look to the shining future, which he exultantly described:

What a picture of the human race, freed from its chains, removed from the empire of chance as from that of the enemies of its progress, and advancing with a firm and happy step on the pathway of truth, of virtue, and of happiness, is presented to the philosopher to console him from the errors, the crimes, and the injustices with which the earth is still soiled, and of which he is often the victim!²⁷

A hundred years after Condorcet's death, that picture of social progress and human perfectibility had not only survived but grown stronger and more widespread. And it was nowhere more visible than in what Theodore Roosevelt called the "unflinching hearts and undimmed eyes" of a generation envisioning the century yet before them.

Looking back from our own fin-de-siecle on the dynamic and troubled world of a century ago, it is hard not to be struck by the boldness and even the audacity of the predictions our ancestors produced. The problems facing the generation of the late nineteenth century were terrible, daunting, seemingly intractable. And yet many of those who dared imagine the future did so with confidence and optimism and faith.

It is hard, too, not to be struck by the prescience of at least some of their predictions. Looking back across the twentieth century as we near its end, we can see that it was indeed an age

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of dramatic scientific and technological progress, as the Victorians envisioned -- in fact an age that has produced discoveries and advances that exceed most of their boldest visions. We can see, too, that the twentieth century did indeed bring dramatic growth and change to the industrial capitalist economy, that it elevated millions of workers and ordinary people from poverty to new levels of comfort and dignity, that it placed at least some limitations on the prerogatives of capital and the tyranny of employers. And we can see as well that the twentieth century produced new forms of politics and new institutions of government that greatly expanded the ranks of the enfranchised and dramatically enlarged the social responsibilities of the state.

But it is also clear that almost nothing in the imaginings of our ancestors of a century ago could have prepared them for the horrors and disappointments that have also been a part of the history of the twentieth century. The nineteenth-century clergyman, writer, and social critic Orestes Brownson, listening skeptically to his contemporaries' predictions that history would move steadily forward into an ever improving future, tartly responded to one of them: "Are there no calamities in history? Nothing tragic?"²⁸ No one living through the twentieth century would likely be surprised by such a question. For ours has been a time not just of the great feats of progress the Victorians predicted, but also of terrible wars, inconceivable genocides, great famines, ecological catastrophes, widespread alienation and disillusionment.

Many in the nineteenth century saw science and technology as society's new gods, destined to shape and control a great new future. Today, science and technology -- far from having won the unchallenged social authority the Victorians predicted -- struggle with moral, religious, and political challenges from all sides, and with broad popular doubts about the value of some of their achievements. Nineteenth-century visionaries saw industrial capitalism evolving toward a new,

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more humane and rational form in which class divisions would disappear before the great wave of prosperity and wisdom the new century would certainly bring. Today we see an economy much vaster and more productive than anything the Victorians could have envisioned, but one that has created more, not less, inequality as it has expanded and one in which workers in most parts of the nation -- and the world -- are as powerless as they were a century ago. In the nineteenth century, many of those who looked to the future predicted a shining era of political progress, in which citizens would gain control over the institutions that control their lives and governments would become wise and enlightened vehicles of social progress. Today, we see a massive loss of faith throughout the western, industrialized world in the institutions of politics and government, a loss of hope so profound that many citizens expect almost nothing of government and turn their hopes -- some rapturously and others resignedly -- toward the same unregulated market that some Victorians were determined to tame and master.

It should not be surprising, then, that our own fin-de- siecle seems less hopeful, less exuberant, less confident of the future than the last; that we have, on the whole, shied away from the bold predictions and exuberant visions that the Victorians so often embraced; and that we have grown somewhat skeptical even of that most basic of nineteenth century faiths -- the idea of progress. We too expect the world of the new century to change rapidly and profoundly. We too believe that our descendants will live in a society very different from our own. But we are, I think, far less likely than nineteenth-century men and women to feel certain that these changes will bring real "progress," that the life of humankind will inevitably improve, that the path to human perfection -- or even to significant betterment of the human condition -- lies before us.

It may be that our visions of the future are more realistic than those that emerged from the

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exuberant optimism of our ancestors. It may be that the bold attempts of past generations to seize control of history and bend it to their imaginings has produced tragedy as much as it has produced progress. It may be, as Christopher Lasch has written, that "progressive optimism rests, at bottom, on a denial of the natural limits on human power and freedom, and it cannot survive for very long in a world in which an awareness of those limits has become inescapable."²⁹

And yet it is hard, nevertheless, to look back from our own jaundiced, ironic, skeptical, disillusioned age at the bold imaginings of a century ago and not feel some admiration for a generation that, in the midst of dramatic and often terrible changes of their own, had the courage to believe, as Edward Bellamy once wrote, "that the Golden Age lies before us and not behind us, and is not far away."³⁰

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Nicholas Lemann, “Government of, by, and For the Comfortable”

The New American Consensus

Government of, by and For the Comfortable

The Smallness of Centrism

By Nicholas Lemann

T

he other day, while Washington was going up in flames, the two candidates for what is probably the most important office at stake in the 1998 elections, the governorship of California, held a debate in Sacramento. Gray Davis, the Democrat, is a veteran liberal politician whose fate it is to be known for the goodness of fit between his first name and his mien. Dan Lungren, the Republican, is a hearty, easy-talking guy whose reputation over the years has been as something close to a movement conservative. The debate, their third in a series of five, had a disorienting quality. The candidates had obviously decided in advance that they were going to "go negative," so they tried to be mean, sarcastic and vicious toward each other.

They huffed and interrupted. Davis made sure to work in a reference to his military service. (Lungren didn't serve.) Lungren made sure to work in a reference to his three children. (Davis is married but childless.) The debate's tonal culmination was Lungren's use of his closing statement to advance a cheerfully out-of-left-field theory about the undetected assonance between the police

unions' support of Gray Davis and the notorious incident in which Latrell Sprewell, the basketball player, throttled his coach.

But the larger end to which this fiesta of contempt was directed was the elimination of all meaningful differences between the two candidates. This debate, like the two that had preceded it, conformed to the following structure: Candidate A, with a malicious glint in his eye, accuses Candidate B of taking an unpopular position. Candidate B draws himself up self-righteously and protests that, no, in fact his position is actually almost indistinguishable from Candidate A's. Lungren wants to cut taxes on innovative new businesses. Davis wants to also, in a slightly different way. Lungren is for eliminating the car tax, Davis is for reducing the car tax. Davis supports abortion rights. Lungren insists that during the five terms he served in the House of Representatives, "we never once voted on denying a woman the right to have an abortion." Lungren is for the

York, the two major-party Senate candidates, Charles Schumer and Alfonse D'Amato, are presenting themselves as pragmatists. Jeb Bush, who lost the Florida Governor's race four years ago, is running again this year as a distinctly more moderate Republican. Even Lauch Faircloth of North Carolina, one of the two or three most conservative members of the United States Senate, is stressing his support for environmentalism and health care reform in his re-election campaign.

Wedge issues aren't cutting the way they used to. Democrats are now against high taxes, welfare, crime and big government. Republicans are for public education, environmentalism, Social Security, Medicare — and, in most cases, legal abortion. The new consensus has been forged through the heavy (even by the standards of modern American politics) use of public-opinion polling. When candidates talk this fall, you can almost hear the sheaves of poll results rustling offstage — there's a uniform, finely honed set of positions

The consensus represents an embrace of a kind of one-way libertarianism: the average citizen has no obligation to the country, but the government has a very serious obligation to that citizen.

death penalty. Davis, suspect because he used to be Gov. Jerry Brown's chief of staff, insists, "I have always believed in the death penalty." They are both committed environmentalists. They are both for H.M.O. reform. They are both for establishing tough new standards in public education.

Here are the last sentences uttered in the third debate, except for two words, which I'll save for later in this article so that you can guess at them now: "Kids first. Safety first. Jobs first. That's what you'll get with [a) Gray Davis or b) Dan Lungren?] as Governor of the state of California."

What we've got here is a relatively new but quite powerful working consensus between the political parties on most major issues. It's easy to miss — consensus is not the subject to which the mind naturally turns at a time when the top item on the national political agenda is Presidential impeachment. Still, it's there. During the midterm elections four years ago, Newt Gingrich's Contract With America, a clear list of 10 items that Republicans were for and Democrats were against, set the tone. This year, Gingrich has notably not produced a successor document.

All over the country, Republicans and Democrats seem to be racing for the center. In New

York, the two major-party Senate candidates, Charles Schumer and Alfonse D'Amato, are presenting themselves as pragmatists. Jeb Bush, who lost the Florida Governor's race four years ago, is running again this year as a distinctly more moderate Republican. Even Lauch Faircloth of North Carolina, one of the two or three most conservative members of the United States Senate, is stressing his support for environmentalism and health care reform in his re-election campaign.

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THE MODERN HISTORY OF AMERICANS' COMPACT with the Federal Government begins with the Presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Robert

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Teeter, pollster to Republican Presidents from Nixon through Bush, says: "For most of our history, we've had a broad consensus. The last consensus was the New Deal, which lasted, really, 50 years — the longest-lasting in our history. There are big, important issues that bring a consensus together, that serve as the glue. The reason it falls apart is, the cause goes away, plus the extreme gets in control."

The cause that generated the New Deal consensus was the Great Depression; the central idea was that government should protect people from the worst vagaries of a market economy. In order to accomplish this new mission, government had to become much, much bigger. In 1933, when Roosevelt took office, the Federal Government had 604,000 civilian employees. In severe deficit because of the Depression, it took in \$2 billion in taxes and spent \$4.7 billion on programs. In 1945, when Roosevelt died, the Federal Government had 3.8 million civilian employees, took in \$50.2 billion and spent \$95.2 billion. With the end of the Second World War, those numbers began to drift downward; still, Roosevelt had presided over a wholesale, permanent expansion of the central government that the Republicans did not try to undo.

Cracks began to appear in the New Deal consensus around the time of the 1966 midterm elections — during the Presidency of Lyndon Johnson, a protégé of Roosevelt's who saw himself as having an electoral mandate (the Democratic landslide of 1964) to complete his mentor's work. The "glue," as Teeter puts it, was gone: the Depression was a faded memory, and raw economic fear no longer dominated the mind of the electorate. The civil rights movement and the Vietnam War generated dissension within the Democratic Party, whose improbable base of white Southerners and Northern liberals was becoming increasingly difficult to maintain. Nobody since Johnson has won the Presidency as an unrepentant New Dealer.

But there wasn't a profound demonstration that the New Deal consensus was gone until the election of 1980, which made Ronald Reagan President. In his first inaugural address, Reagan proclaimed: "Government is not the solution to our problem; Government is the problem." The signal couldn't have been clearer. Reagan's main domestic initiative was a big, quick tax cut, which was meant not just to put money into voters' pockets but also to signify that government was going to be reduced.

Reagan was the rare exception to the rule that the ideological wings always lose in American politics. Rather than moving to the center, as politicians usually do, he moved the location of the center in his direction — that is, to the right. The

KEN WHITMIRE/WHITMIRE & WOLFE



The Van de Graafs, Sunnyside, Wash.

JIM JOHNSON



The Wallaces, Wash.

JUDD BRADLEY/KIM JEW PHOTOGRAPHY



The Nakagawas, Albuquerque, N.M.

Democrats, rather than marshaling an all-out response, also moved to the right. All through the Reagan and Bush Administrations, there didn't seem to be an electorally potent counter to Republican rhetoric of opposition to taxes, government and (Newt Gingrich's signature phrase in his younger days) "the liberal welfare state."

Clinton accomplished something remarkable in being elected President in 1992: following three Democratic candidates who were flattened by the Republican argument, he found a way of stating a Democratic case in post-New Deal language. It helped him that the country was in a mild recession and that the cold war had just ended, a pair of circumstances that underscored one of the Democrats' strengths (helping people in hard times) and minimized one of their weaknesses (being the less tough party on defense and foreign affairs).

But there was more than just lucky timing involved. Clinton carefully neutralized each of what had been the Democrats' main vulnerabilities

reactions at once: toward the Democratic Leadership Council by cutting the deficit and toward the social democrats by proposing health insurance for all. The first worked; the second didn't. Even if Clinton didn't want to decide what he was, the political world had decided for him that he was a moderate Democrat. Now that he's too weak to pass any major programs, it seems that he'll go down in history as the Democratic Eisenhower, the President who declined to reverse the political revolution that preceded him. "The Democrats have accepted the market," says Seymour Martin Lipset, the sociologist. "The consensus of today is around a different center, a further right, laissez-faire center."

The Republican landslide in the 1994 elections made it look as if the country had taken another hard turn to the right. In hindsight, though, Gingrich had merely succeeded in capitalizing on the failure of the Clinton health plan, unfairly but with great skill. In 1995, Clinton, with Dick

Any project that entails government acting in the broad national interest (rather than in the narrower interest of the suburban middle class) probably won't get done.

since the Johnson Administration. He wanted to end welfare, he liked the police and he didn't present himself as a liberal do-gooder. ("You never, ever hear Clinton talk about the poor, which every Democrat did for years," Robert Teeter says.) Then Clinton added language and ideas that seemed to offer voters a distinctly different compact from F.D.R.'s. He would "reinvent" government — that is, by implication, make it more efficient rather than expanding it. He would provide the middle class with health and education programs that they needed and were never going to get from the Republicans. He would cut the deficit and get the economy going.

Because of Clinton's eerie skill at making audiences think he agrees with them, his stance during the campaign was taken to mean different things by different constituencies. The more conservative wing of the Democratic Party, allied with business and the South and associated with the Democratic Leadership Council (of which Clinton had been chairman), saw him as a market-oriented moderate. The liberal wing — more Northern, more urban, more union, more minority — saw him as the American version of a Western European social democrat, someone who would offer broad new government benefits programs that would cement the loyalty of another generation of voters to the party.

In the early going, Clinton moved in both di-

Morris at his side, began exploring ways to present himself as less liberal and the Republicans as scary. By the end of the year, also unfairly but with great skill, he had planted the impression in the public's mind that Gingrich was less than fully dedicated to the huge, popular Medicare program and that nothing the government did was truly safe from him. Gingrich frightened people — his period of maximum power coincided with the appearance in poll results of a strong new public emotion, fear of excessive change. "It's psycho-social," says Richard Wirthlin, who was Reagan's chief pollster. "Americans are seeking reassurance on their own peace of mind and personal security. One of the most dominant values is: 'I want to feel secure. I want to feel that what I have will endure.' That's what we picked up, about, I'd say, three years ago. These values don't change very quickly. They move fairly slowly. The fact that it has emerged is significant."

Clinton also extensively revised the nuances of his formula from 1992, and in so doing he formulated the consensus that prevails right now. In his 1996 State of the Union Message, he memorably declared, in what sounded like an explicit, intentional echo of Reagan's first inaugural address, "The era of big government is over." The line was originally written with a little brake at the end — "but we must never go

back to the era of every man for himself" — but that phrase was left on the cutting-room floor, and the public got a picture of liberalism in full retreat. Clinton embraced the cause of balancing the budget as soon as possible. He signed into law the elimination of the unpopular Federal welfare program. And in addition to letting the voters know that he was against the things they were against, he generated a list of things he was for. These were mainly low-cost government initiatives that signaled empathy with middle-class families who felt embattled, in the social rather than economic sense: the V-chip to screen out Internet pornography, extended family leave, school uniforms.

THERE WAS A FIT BETWEEN CLINTON'S POLITICAL moves and changing social conditions in the country. The 2000 Census will show that, for the first time, a majority of Americans live in the suburbs. Because voter turnout has been falling for decades, particularly in the cities, the electorate in 1992 became majority-suburban before the country as a whole. Two other wholesale changes that Clinton was playing to are the mass entry of married women into the work force since 1970 and the less remarked upon but no less dramatic increase in what economists call "return to education." Today the earnings gap between the high-school and college educated is the biggest it has been since the early 40's. A politics aimed at suburban families who are worried about their children studying hard and staying on course even though neither parent is around to keep an eye on them seems, in retrospect, like the most obvious idea in the world.

Clinton reversed his political fortunes between November 1994 and November 1996. On Election Night in Little Rock two years ago, he exuberantly declared, "The vital American center is alive and well." In his second inaugural address, two months later, he came within range of directly repudiating Reaganism by saying, "Government is not the problem, and government is not the solution."

These were broad (though not grand) formulations. What Clinton had really done was leave his fellow Democratic politicians with a set of positions, not a big idea. One reason he failed to produce a widely usable Democratic slogan was that from the moment he started running for President, he was severely constrained by the rhetorical unpopularity of the word government. "It turned out that a Democrat couldn't talk about government," says Donald Baer, the former White House communications director and a key player in the repositioning of Clinton between 1994 and 1996. *Continued on page 68*

LEMANN

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"It was a bad word. Clinton came in and relied on a lot of verbal hip fakes, talking about opportunity, responsibility and community." The Republicans, on the other hand, did have a big idea, wholesale opposition to government, but it was beginning to hurt them with the voters, who realized that most of what government did, they approved of and depended upon. So the G.O.P. dropped it and went with a bunch of poll-tested positions, too. Hence the current consensus.

The onset of a crisis, foreign or domestic, could cause the consensus to disintegrate. At the moment, for example, the economic gap between rich and poor is widening, but polls show that voters are hostile to government policies aimed at closing it; in a recession, the class-war theme might reappear in American politics. But to dismiss the consensus as temporary, fragile and patchwork-quilty is to miss something important about it: it does, in fact, have an overarching idea, which nobody has stated memorably enough yet for it to have registered. The idea is that government should serve the ordinary, hard-working individual — providing safety, public goods like roads and parks and the tools necessary to seek opportunity, like education. It should protect people from unfair or excessive aspects of the marketplace. Geoffrey Gartin, a Democratic pollster, describes the consensus this way: "Problems are more likely to be solved when people have the resources to solve them on their own. Government ought to do things that provide people with resources to solve problems. There's also a very clear view that government has a referee role to play, enforcing fairness, making sure people with power don't exercise it in

an irresponsible way: H.M.O.'s, tobacco companies, polluters."

But that's it. The idea that government is an emblem of the highest, broadest purpose of a nation and should be regarded by the citizenry with loyalty and pride — that idea is completely outside the consensus. In an article in the premier issue of the Democratic Leadership Council's new magazine, *Blueprint*, Mark Penn, Clinton's pollster, says that in the 25 years since 1973, the percentage of Americans who agree with the statement, "The best government is the government that governs the least," has nearly doubled, from 32 to 56. Today, Penn says, only 16 percent of Americans agree with the statement, "Government should spend on social programs where necessary, because America is not about leaving every one to fend for himself." Only 12 percent agree with the statement, "Government should solve problems and protect people from adversity." It almost goes without saying that the consensus is one of voters, not the entire citizenry. Polling shows that African-Americans, Latinos and people with no higher education, whose turnout is relatively low, haven't signed on to it.

The consensus represents a national embrace of a kind of one-way libertarianism. Its main assumption is that the government has a very serious obligation to the middle class: it must provide a degree of protection. On the other hand, the middle class is in no way obligated to commit time or money to larger national projects — anything from military service to solving problems that are off somewhere out of immediate view. (O.K., there's paying taxes, but that's never mentioned in a campaign season.)

The traditional view, that a national government can assume the loyalty and trust of its citizens as it goes

about using its resources to do the country's business, doesn't apply in America today. When next we have to do something that requires this view, we'll have to remake the social compact first. Meanwhile, any project that entails government acting in the broad national interest (rather than the narrower interest of the suburban middle class) probably won't get done.

Americans' suspicion of government is really a suspicion of some association the word evokes rather than of the thing itself. When principal (if you measure in dollars and personnel) functions of government — public education, Social Security, Medicare — appear threatened, voters rush to their defense. Since 1960, the Federal Government, if you go by such measures as number of employees and budget as a percentage of the gross domestic product, has not fluctuated greatly in size. It didn't become big under Johnson, and it didn't become small under Reagan. The top peacetime income-tax rates peaked during the Eisenhower Administration.

"Big government" is shorthand for a series of developments the public didn't like that didn't much affect the actual size of government. These included a more aggressive role by the courts and regulatory agencies in making policy, and the government's taking on new missions, like the War on Poverty, that didn't cost a lot but were controversial. (It's not irrelevant that the original impulse driving these activities was to engineer a rapid increase in the social and economic status of blacks.) What people really don't want isn't big government; it's aggressively liberal government.

We pay a price, though, for the rhetorical confusion. Because the word government has come to stand for something unpopular, the question of what the real institution should do in the

broad sense — the question, that is, of public purpose or national purpose — cannot be discussed by campaigning politicians. Garin, the Democratic pollster, says: "Part of the consensus today is the devolution to the individual to the maximum extent possible. Most people in America think most other people are morally deficient. Public policies that depend on the good will of others are hard to sell."

The consensus right now is not to have a consensus about what the country as a whole should be or do.

AS A TOPIC, CONSENSUS has a curious history. The word was introduced into political discussion in quite a specific way: John Higham, a historian, wrote an article in the February 1959 issue of *Commentary* called "The Cult of the 'American Consensus.'" Higham's article was mainly an attack on a single book, "The Americans: The Colonial Experience," by Daniel J. Boorstin. Consensus was Higham's word, not Boorstin's. The argument Boorstin makes in the book is that Americans have never had fixed ideas about anything: "One of the ways in which American experience liberated the New World," Boorstin wrote, "was by freeing men from the notion that every grand institution needed a grand foundation of systematic thought."

Higham thought Boorstin had underplayed the deep-seated conflicts in American history, and turned the country retrospectively into a paradise of cracker-barrel pragmatism. Consensus was the sneering label he put on Boorstin's idea, and it stuck.

"Consensus" has a pacific, positive ring when it appears in newspaper headlines, but in the intellectual world it's a dirty word, denoting artificial cheerfulness and a refusal to face tough, fundamental issues. The consensus school in American history,

such as it was, lay in ruins within a few years of the publication of Higham's devastating article. Even now, when politicians try to present themselves as embodying the ideas of consensus intellectuals of the peaceful era before the 1960's, the intellectuals in question usually send up howls of protest and denial. After Clinton's victory speech in 1996, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. complained loudly about the misuse of the title of his 1949 book, "The Vital Center." "I did not mean middle of the road in domestic politics," Schlesinger says. "I regard the middle of the road as the dead center, not the vital center."

There is a final twist. John Higham, the original consensus-hater, began to soften on the idea of consensus soon after writing his famous article. In 1960, he gave a talk on consensus at a historians' convention and found himself upset by the audience's wild, unquestioning enthusiasm for what he had to say. In 1994, 35 years after his *Commentary* article, Higham published an article in *The Journal of American History* arguing for consensus history, without using the dreaded term itself: he called on historians to take on "the reconstruction of a genuinely national history, a history of the connections through which state and society have defined one another and dealt with change."

I went to see Higham in Baltimore, where he is a professor emeritus at Johns Hopkins, to find out what he thinks about the consensus we have now. The answer, which he delivered mournfully over crab cakes, is, not much. In the old days, Higham didn't like the idea of an American political consensus because he thought it represented a papering over of diversity and dissent. Now he longs for the kind of consensus that would represent, instead, a national commitment to a

public life that revolves around something more than self-protection and distrust. "I'd have a different name for it than consensus," he says. "I think of it as a kind of privatism that excludes and denigrates the public sphere. The emergence of widespread indifference, somewhat flecked with disgust, is the most distinctive phenomenon of the present day. I don't think there's ever been anything like it."

IF CONSENSUS MEANS A rough set of prevailing views with no particular relation to one another, then we've got one. If it means a working agreement about what we as citizens owe one another and the country as a whole, then we don't have one.

There are national problems almost universally acknowledged, like unacceptably bad urban schools, that politicians just don't have a vocabulary to discuss in any-

thing but vague, bland ways. That isn't the real trouble, though. The real trouble is that if a new problem arises that doesn't fit the current framework of American politics — government is there to protect me, and I refuse to support its doing anything else — we won't be able to handle it.

Did you see "Saving Private Ryan" over the summer? It's presented as a glorification of good old-fashioned, white-bread, pre-1960's American values. These values include a willingness to put aside personal concerns to serve other people and a larger cause, and a grumbling but total loyalty to a big government bureaucracy even though it often behaves idiotically. It's nice that we can be nostalgic — more than nostalgic, moved — by exposure to the American ethos of a half-century ago, but we ought to understand, too, that it no longer exists. ■

AMERICA THE O.K.

By Gregg Easterbrook

I don't wish to alarm you, but American life is getting better. Crime has fallen sharply. The economy is booming. Teen pregnancy is declining. The federal budget is in surplus. The air and water are getting cleaner. Health is improving by almost every measure, including the first-ever decline in cancer incidence. Deaths in accidents are decreasing. Standards of living continue to improve. The use of drugs and cigarettes is waning. Levels of education keep rising. Women and minorities are acquiring an ever-larger slice of the national pie. Personal liberty has never been greater, while American culture becomes more and more diverse. Even home runs are at an all-time high!

Yet the steady betterment of American life is practically a taboo subject for intellectual debate. Left-wing thinkers shy from it because it smacks of triumphalism or simply spoils the doomsday script. Right-wing thinkers are terrified of having to admit that recent decades of progress have occurred under a regime of strong central government. Pundits and politicians see only calamity—in 1995, Newt Gingrich called the United States “a civilization in danger of simply falling apart”—while the country around them indecorously gets better. Right now, Washington is busily sinking to an all-time low in the disconnect between governors and governed, obsessively generating an institutional crisis, in part, just to make sure there's some really bad news.

To the extent favorable trends are remarked upon, they are often treated as ephemera of a strong economy—though impressive social transitions, such as pollution reduction, exist outside the business cycle. Notes Orlando Patterson, a Harvard sociologist: “It's astonishing how the Washington and New York elites, the people who benefit most from the improvement of the United States, are so out of sync with it, endlessly talking about how things are getting worse when the country is clearly improving.”

As David Whitman points out in his cogent new book, *The Optimism Gap*, polls show that personal optimism is at or near record levels—most people rating their own prospects around eight on a scale of ten—but national optimism has never been lower, most people thinking that the country is in decline. Whitman calls this the “I'm O.K., they're not” syndrome. Failure to heed the improvement of the United States feeds cynicism and

robs us of valid congratulation: after race riots, Vietnam, and stagflation, isn't it good for everyone if America can like what it sees in the mirror again? And inattention to the optimistic deprives public thought of the chance to benefit from the lessons of successful reform.

Of course, there are gloomy trends, worst among them the persistence of poverty. Today, about 13 percent of U.S. households live below the poverty level, which seems ever less tolerable as the nation grows richer. As Michael Novak has noted, when the Bible declared, “You always have the poor with you,” the context was a feudal agrarian economy in which some poverty was unavoidable. Today's high-tech, knows-no-obstacle economy could transfer enough goods to everyone, and, until it does, a sword will hang over American abundance.

And, of course, the international scene presents anxieties. Beyond the specters of war and ethnic hostility, the developing world's ecosystems continue to deteriorate. Global population will rise to around nine billion before stabilizing in the twenty-first century. This means the world must eventually feed, educate, employ, and care for the health of a human race half again its present size. There's no way the United States will be able to sit out that great challenge and no sign we are preparing for it.

But, overall, the American scene is progressively more encouraging. Let's review the facts:

ACCIDENTS. Despite the sirens-and-carnage images projected by local TV news, accidents have been declining pretty much across the board for more than a decade. In 1985, 40 Americans out of every 100,000 died accidental deaths; by 1996, the rate was down to 35 of 100,000, a twelve percent decline. Workplace fatalities dropped spectacularly during this period, from about 11,600 in 1985 to 6,218 in 1997. Traffic fatalities have been declining, too, and in 1997 reached a record low of just 1.6 deaths per 100 million miles driven, the smallest such figure since federal agencies began keeping traffic-death statistics in the 1960s. Highway fatalities are going down in absolute numbers—in 1984, there were 46,200 traffic deaths, for example, versus 41,967 in 1997—even as there are more people driving more cars at faster speeds for more total miles.

On a related front, building fires are steadily declining.

The National Fire Protection Association reports that the total number of "structure" fires in the United States went from three million in 1980 to slightly less than two million in 1996. Jill Leovy recently reported in the *Los Angeles Times* that, in her city, building fires fell from 8,557 in 1979 to 3,406 in 1997. Firefighters now have so much free time that they are teaching boating and bicycle safety. More than 6,000 Americans died in home fires in 1960; in 1996, just 2,900 did, though the population had risen almost 50 percent through the period. Trends like this have nothing to do with the economy.

What's behind such developments? Liability pressure, consumer activism, and improving technology have made cars notably safer. Automakers spent years resisting air bags and crash-impact engineering, claiming cars would become exorbitantly expensive while losing functionality. Instead, auto offerings are getting zipperier and roomier—today's Ford Taurus, loaded with new safety features plus air-conditioning and a CD player, costs 70 percent less in real-dollar terms than a Model T did. Never underestimate the ability of industry to make products less dangerous—or excuse corporations from doing so.

While auto manufacturers have improved the safety engineering of products, crusades against drunken driving, plus lower legal tolerance for the same, have had the desired effect. Once, to get behind the wheel after knocking back a few was viewed as boys-will-be-boys behavior; now, it's viewed as idiocy and dishonor. The lesson: Public awareness campaigns really can work.

The drop in fires stems from a similar mix of awareness, regulation, and better management. In the past 20 years, smoke detectors have become ubiquities, a reform driven both by government rules and awareness campaigns. Federal regulators have required increasingly strict standards for fire-resistance in products and building materials. Local fire codes have become ever-tighter: Scottsdale, Arizona, now requires built-in sprinklers in every newly constructed room, even confessional booths. Fire departments and building-code writers have switched from a philosophy of fire fighting to one of prevention, with an emphasis on careful inspections of buildings or blueprints. Many big-city fire departments are becoming ambulance departments that fight fires as a sidelight. It's a wonderful transition.

CRIME. Homicide is down about 20 percent from the level of the early '90s; in 1997, it reached the lowest rate in 30 years. During the '80s, Brooklyn averaged two murders per day; last March, Brooklyn went a full week without a homicide for the first time in a generation. Crime is down in nearly every category, including burglary and robbery. Since 1993, not only has the felony rate dropped, but the total number of violent felonies has fallen 14 percent, even while the population continues to grow. As Gordon Witkin has written, "It's hard to think of a social trend with greater significance."

Many factors are at play here, among them the sheer reduction in perpetrators. Tougher laws and sentences

have led to a furious rate of incarceration, with 1.8 million Americans now jailed, more than double the figure of a decade ago. The shift toward "community policing" has helped, though felonies are also falling in cities that have not adopted this system. It's important to note that, while most policing has improved in the past decade, there has been no national initiative on this score, just lots of local experiments.

The adoption of James Q. Wilson's "broken windows" theory of civic propriety has helped, too. Annoying as New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani's anti-jaywalking campaign might be, there is no doubt that an environment in which people take petty laws seriously creates sociological pressure to respect the sort of laws we really care about. Putting more officers on the street has helped, as has the upgunning of law enforcement. During the '80s, when most police carried revolvers, drug-runners had superior weapons. Now that half of all cops bear the high-rate-of-fire Glock semiautomatic, only a fool would try to shoot his way out of an arrest.

Conspicuous in recent crime trends is the decline of crack. The nature of this drug product—packaged for volume sales of inexpensive rocks that produce only a brief high, requiring the user to make multiple purchases—made it a street-corner enterprise. Lots of salesmen were needed, so the young and intemperate were recruited. As Alfred Blumstein, a criminologist at Carnegie Mellon University, describes it, crack crews carrying wads of cash themselves became the targets of crime, and, since drug dealers who were robbed couldn't exactly dial 911, they armed themselves. The result was thousands of teenagers toting guns in tense situations.

Thus, not the intoxicating effects of crack but its distribution by armed, fidgety teenagers caused the '80s homicide wave. Nearly all the murder surge occurred among under-30 males; the homicide rate in other groups actually declined during the very period of the murder epidemic. Leading the current homicide decline is a rapid drop in killings among those under 30—though the rate among those under 18 remains historically high.

Then there's the "younger brother effect." The '90s generation of inner-city kids, having seen the medically destructive effects of crack and the self-genocide it produced in minority communities, wants little to do with the opiate of the '80s. Crack use continues, but mostly among older addicts who do their buying from a new breed of dealers, who work from client lists and beepers, avoiding street confrontations.

For police, an essential policy shift was a campaign against weapons possession. Traditionally, police departments have looked the other way regarding guns alone: If someone had an illegal weapon but hadn't used it, he'd get off lightly. Beginning around 1990, patrol officers and prosecutors began going after the guns themselves. It proved easier to make cases involving traceable firearms than cases based on plastic bags of crack the suspect could claim he never saw before. Arrests of minors for weapons possession peaked in 1993; by 1994, the incidence of minors carrying firearms began to

decline. Perhaps not coincidentally, it was also in 1994 that the homicide rate began its fall.

Both a growth economy and social circumstances now work against violent crime. As Jeffrey Fagan, a professor of public health at Columbia University, notes, the kids who became crack-runners in the '80s had been born into a period of upheaval: inner cities were in decline, parents were losing jobs as industry fled urban areas, welfare was pushing fathers out of homes, and, to many whose parents traversed the '60s, rioting—violent contempt for law—had briefly been seen as somehow useful to minority aspirations. Now, Fagan says, "the phase of social reorganization is basically over for the inner city." Downtown areas have stopped declining, and some are improving. People have made their peace with the new service industries, rendering legitimate employment possible again. Stability is returning, and, with it, community contempt for crime.

Within the positive trends an obvious worry is that some new street drug or an economic downturn could cause a new spate of crime. But what's most striking about falling homicide rates is that they represent rapid progress in an area where bad news was widely believed inevitable. "It's possible you won't be able to solve this problem," New York Governor Mario Cuomo said of the murder rate in 1989. Nine years later, the arrows point up.

DRINK, DRUGS, AND FOOLING AROUND. Crack is hardly the only bane in decline. On the key barometer of ingestion by high school seniors, cocaine has declined from something tried by 17 percent of students in 1985 to seven percent in 1996. Twenty-two percent of high school seniors in 1975 had tried stimulant drugs; by 1996, the figure was down to 15 percent. Use of some, though not all, other illegal drugs is also down.

Even legal, socially acceptable forms of indulgence are in remission. In 1965, 42 percent of American adults smoked; today, 25 percent do. Per capita U.S. consump-

tion of spirits has been going down for years. In 1980, 72 percent of high school seniors reported having consumed alcohol recently. This figure has gone down steadily since, falling to 51 percent in 1996. Can it be that half of America's young aren't even sneaking beers anymore?

Another entirely legal (except in Washington) form of earthly pleasure, sex, also seems in decline, at least among the supposedly incorrigible young. The portion of teenage girls reporting to have had intercourse had been climbing steadily since the '60s, a statistic commonly cited—often by middle-age commentators who

themselves once devoted countless hours to the pursuit of teenage sex—as a sign of American moral erosion. Now, according to the National Center for Health Statistics, the percentage of sexually active girls ages 15 to 19 has dropped from a peak of 53 percent in 1988 to 50 percent in 1995. Teen pregnancy rates have begun to decline; in 1995, teen pregnancy fell to the same rate as that of 1975, and the downward statistical slope continues. Births to teens have dropped twelve percent since 1991. The number of teen abortions has fallen for seven consecutive years.

Smoking's decline clearly reflects improved awareness of lung cancer. Drug declines probably result from a combination of

law-enforcement intensification and rising understanding of the fact that, with the possible exception of marijuana, drugs simply aren't innocuous private choices. Less drinking seems to stem from anti-drunken-driving campaigns and a changing anthropology of the social event, today less viewed as a sanctioned time during which to get schnockered (think *Virginia Woolf*) than as a time at which to sip wine and listen to music.

Less sexual activity among young people may be influenced by concern about sexually transmitted diseases and by religious feeling. A reaction against cultural pressure in favor of sex, especially the repulsively phony Hollywood and rock-video conceptions of sex, might be just as important. Teenage pregnancy decline results directly



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

from higher birth control use—contraceptive use at first intercourse is up from 48 percent among females in the early '80s to 78 percent in 1995. Contraceptives are getting safer (the low-dose Pill) and more convenient (the inject-and-forget Depo-Provera). As important, probably, is a shifting sociology of birth control—which is increasingly seen as smart and responsible.

Less drug use, less drinking, less smoking, and less fooling around hardly synchronize with conventional hand-wringing about the United States as a self-indulgent, libertine realm where anything goes. Rather, these trends suggest that public habits can be moderated through awareness campaigns, rational arguments, and common sense.

THE ECONOMY. Financial situations can change rapidly, so the milk might curdle; that admonition aside, the American economic outlook is the best it's ever been. Unemployment and inflation are at their lowest points in a quarter-century. Growth is strong, though below record levels. Economic troubles elsewhere in the world seem barely to have dented the system here. Gasoline prices are at a postwar low in real-dollar terms, while mortgage rates are at 30-year lows. Industry isn't disappearing, as is commonly assumed—current U.S. industrial production is 90 percent greater than in 1970, though that figure is achieved with fewer workers. It's common to hear analysts bemoaning the fact that median household income has risen only slightly in the past quarter-century. But the standard concept doesn't take into account that fewer and fewer people live in the median household: factor that in, and household income is up about 15 percent since 1970. The only major negative indicators are the savings rate and the balance-of-trade deficit. As problems go, that's not bad.

The transition from federal deficit to surplus should remind us how often "impossible" problems are solved. Think back to the hollow legislative rituals of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings law, written to be vacuous on the assumption that real deficit reduction simply could not happen. Now the federal balance sheet has improved so much that lower government borrowing helps drive down interest rates, benefiting everyone. And this has been accomplished without punitive taxation. As Derek Bok pointed out in his 1996 *The State of the Nation*, the American tax burden is 27 percent of GDP, versus 44 percent in France or 50 percent in Sweden.

Having lived the past few years in Europe, I often heard Euros express astonishment at the American economic engine. How could it be, they would ask, that your system has so much litigation, adversarial confrontation, hype, spin, glibness, and overwrought scandal, and yet functions so marvelously? I liked to reply that lawsuits, hype, spin, and scandal must in some way aid American success, forcing our society to accept perpetual change. The sincere answer might be that positive trends in U.S. national wealth have been sparked by ever-greater acceptance of true market economics, with its tumult and endless unanticipated results.

"It's only in the last generation that most people have been converted to the belief that market economics is good for everybody, not just a tool of the wealthy," says John Mueller, a political scientist at the University of Rochester and a rising star in the study of what makes societies run well. Stagflation stopped after Jimmy Carter began deregulation, freeing air travel, energy, and telecommunications. National economic performance shot upward not long thereafter, and, though not all results of deregulation have been favorable, each year brings more evidence that the country is better off with market forces driving most decisions.

ENVIRONMENT. Twenty-five years ago, only one-third of America's lakes and rivers were safe for fishing and swimming; today two-thirds are, and the proportion continues to rise. Annual wetlands loss has fallen by 80 percent in the same period, while soil losses to agricultural runoff have been almost cut in half. Total American water consumption has declined nine percent in the past 15 years, even as the population expands, especially in the arid Southwest. Since 1970, smog has declined by about a third, even as the number of cars has increased by half; acid rain has fallen by 40 percent; airborne soot particles are down 69 percent, which is why big cities have blue skies again; carbon monoxide or "winter smog" is down 31 percent; airborne lead, a poison, is down 98 percent. Emissions of CFCs, which deplete stratospheric ozone, have all but ended.

Other environmental measures are almost uniformly positive. Toxic emissions by industry declined 46 percent from 1988 to 1996, even as petrochemical manufacturers enjoyed record U.S. production and copious profits. About one-third of Superfund toxic waste sites are now cleaned up, with the pace of cleanup accelerating. The forested acreage of the United States is expanding, with wildlife numbers up in most areas, led by the comeback of eastern deer, now thought to be at pre-colonial numbers. Since the Endangered Species Act was passed, only a few U.S. species have fallen extinct, not the thousands predicted, while species such as the bald eagle, gray whale, and peregrine falcon have recovered enough to no longer require full legal protection. Only two major U.S. environmental gauges are now negative: continuing inaction against greenhouse gases and continuing loss of wildlife habitats to urban expansion.

An important conceptual lesson is being learned: When pollution stops, natural recovery does not require ponderous geological time. Consider Boston Harbor, whose filth was an issue in George Bush's 1988 campaign against Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis. Even as Bush filmed his memorable commercial standing on the sludge-caked Boston shore, a \$4 billion water treatment plant was rising in the background. At the time, most experts predicted that it would take 50 years or more to rinse the harbor. Instead, cleanup has been so rapid that Boston Harbor is already safe again for swimming and fishing. Activists, who once had to rail against sludge by the ton, are down to complaining

about detection in the harbor of trace parts-per-billion or even parts-per-trillion of compounds. As Paul Levy, who ran the first phase of the cleanup project, has said, the fact that activists now remonstrate about smaller and smaller issues shows that the big issues are under control.

The left side of the environmental debate can't seem to deal with the fact that technology has (for the moment, at least) entered a relatively benign phase in which products and industrial processes consume steadily fewer resources and produce steadily less waste. Says Jesse Ausubel, director of the environment program at Rockefeller University and a leading thinker in the new field of industrial ecology: "The larger lesson here is about the sparing of resources," driven by new technological ideas. The right can't seem to deal with the fact that, if it weren't for ecological regulations, most positive trends in the environment would not have happened. Tailpipe controls on automobiles, for example, not only cleared the air but also saved the car industry. If cars still spewed smog as they once did, Los Angeles's air would be poison gas; mandatory driving bans would be unavoidable.

Because the character of environmental progress is nonideological—reflecting well both on federal initiatives and on business—neither political camp knows how to extol what's happened. That no interest group sees itself as benefiting from public awareness of environmental success might be just a political foible, but it has the effect of preventing commentators and voters from focusing on the locus of the real environmental emergencies—the developing world.

HEALTH. Both incidence and death rates for cancer began to ebb in the early '90s, reversing a 20-year trend of increase. Cancer incidence, or the occurrence of new cases, had risen about 1.2 percent per year from 1973 to 1990; since then, incidence has fallen by almost one percent per year, with the decline manifesting in the big-four cancer forms (lung, prostate, breast, and colon-rectum) for both genders and across all major age and ethnic groups other than black males. Mortality for most cancers is now either level (as it is for breast cancer) or in slight decline. Only melanoma and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma are now rising.

By nearly all other measures, U.S. public health is getting steadily better. Heart disease and stroke are both in decline relative to population growth, with heart disease deaths, the number-one medical killer, falling 3.4 percent from 1996 to 1997. Infant mortality is now down to 0.7 percent of live births, the lowest such figure ever for the United States. (Some European countries do slightly better.) AIDS deaths are declining markedly in the United States. The rate of suicides is declining, falling 4.6 percent in 1997. There are a few worrisome public-health trends, such as the reappearance of TB and the emergence of microbes that resist currently available antibiotics. But, in the main, public health is getting better by leaps and bounds.

Most remarkable is the continued rise in life expectancy, now 76 years at birth for the typical American,

up from 54 years when the World War II generation was being born. The rise in life expectancy is global, expressing itself in nearly every country in the world, outside Central Africa. Indeed, the reason there is global population growth is not that the world's women are having more babies—per capita they are having steadily fewer, even in developing nations—but that people the world over are living so much longer.

Most of what's going on in public health appears to be a mix of advancing medical knowledge and public awareness. The biggest factor in the cancer decline, for example, is the drop in smoking. Heart disease decline has been aided by better drugs, better therapy (the coronary-artery bypass operation, touch-and-go 20 years ago, has gotten so much more efficacious that it's now working even for the elderly), and advancing understanding of lifestyle issues such as fat intake. The improving sophistication of medical education and other factors are also at play.

Better public health hasn't come cheaply: medical spending was seven percent of GDP in 1970 and is almost 14 percent now. Yet, much as you may detest your HMO, keep in mind that most trends in health care costs are favorable, too. During the late '80s, costs were rising so rapidly that it was common to predict that 15 to 20 percent of GDP would be spent on health care by the end of the century. If that had happened, American prosperity would have been damaged. Instead, in the past five years, there has been little medical inflation. Managed care creates annoying preapproval hassles and longer waits for some appointments. But on the key points—protecting health at an affordable cost—the system is doing well.

PUBLIC DEBATE. Despite so many auspicious indicators, the America depicted in political and intellectual debate is invariably a place we should be building starships to flee. To the left, the United States remains a land of racial and sexual repression, corporate oligarchy, and environmental decay; to the right, a country where all things pure are collapsing. Such views hold considerable sway. Whitman's *The Optimism Gap* reports that 1996 polls showed that only 15 percent of Americans believe the country is getting better. In similar polls, about half said the nation is worse off compared to how it was when their parents were growing up, and 60 percent believed the United States in which their children dwell will be worse still. Though most Americans are today healthier, better housed, better fed, better paid, better educated, better defended, more free, and diverted by a cornucopia of new entertainment products and services, somehow they've managed to convince themselves their parents had it better during the Dust Bowl.

As Robert J. Samuelson noted in his skillful *The Good Life and Its Discontents*, the revolution of rising expectations has taken on a life of its own: "[T]here can never be enough prosperity." (Polls now suggest that, regardless of how much money an American has, he or she believes that twice as much is required.) Samuelson further contends that one reason for all the unfocused

anxiety is that the media have gotten so much better at emphasizing things to worry about. Tropical storms that *might* hit the United States get more network coverage than any favorable turn of events.

Television crime coverage, especially, now seems pitched to cause civic fright, while movies and network entertainment programming depict violence as far more pervasive than it actually is. As Christopher Jencks, a professor of government at Harvard University, notes: "When I was growing up there was violence on TV, but it was cowboys having shootouts. I never worried that rustlers would come over the hill into my neighborhood. Now the violence on television is presented as if it's about to get you personally. Every screen you look at, at home or in theaters, has something disastrous on it. No wonder people think the country is out of control."

Conservative thinkers and politicians seem distressed by the contemporary milieu in part because Americans are more or less willingly adopting gender equality and cultural openness, including a culture in which minority writing and art are being admitted to the canon. (Recent polls have found that three of the most admired people in the United States are Colin Powell, Oprah Winfrey, and Michael Jordan.) The political and academic left can't stand the contemporary milieu in part because class war, economic breakdown, and environmental calamity seem less and less likely. "The left elites talk with obsessive negativism about the religious right because it's one of the few things they can find to still get upset about," notes Orlando Patterson of Harvard. "The right elite is similarly obsessive about the supposed culture war, when all the evidence is that the United States is becoming ever more tolerant and ever more at peace with diversity."

Of course, generations at least as far back as Plato have felt that nations were sweetly ordered in their youths but now decline. "When we think about the past, we focus on our childhoods, to a time when our parents protected us from the world," Jencks notes. "Now as adults, even if society's gotten better, the sense of being sheltered is gone. Nobody's taking care of you anymore, so it feels like everything is getting more worrisome, even if objectively it's getting better." Mueller of the University of Rochester has memorably phrased it this way: "Golden ages do happen, but we are never actually in them."

RACE. As William Julius Wilson has extensively documented, attention to the problems of inner-city dysfunction causes us to overlook what history will judge as the big racial story of late-twentieth-century America: the emergence of a black middle class.

Through the last generation, the portion of African Americans living in middle-class circumstances has more than doubled. Some kind of watershed was crossed in 1994, when the average income of black families in Queens, long a community treated as symbolic of working-class to middle-class transition, surpassed the average income of white families there.

Georgia, Maryland, and other states now contain large, economically independent black middle-class areas where life is suburban, family structures conventional, and values entirely middle-American.

African American income still lags significantly behind that of whites, but, as Steven Holmes has written, in the past few years poverty rates "have dipped below 30 percent of black households for the first time in the country's history." Black male college graduates now make, on average, twelve percent less than their white counterparts, a much smaller gap than a generation ago, while black female college grads now earn slightly more than white female grads. Jencks's 1972 book, *Inequality*, argued that, even if minority education rose, minority income levels would not, owing to barriers of prejudice. Jencks now feels the situation has changed, with minority education "look[ing] far more important than it did in the 1960s," because African American accomplishment in school can now translate into economic success.

Minority educational accomplishment continues to improve. In 1996, black high school graduation rates became about the same as white rates—needless to say, a historical first. The black-white math SAT score gap, which was 140 points in 1976, is 110 points now, owing to black improvement, not white erosion. Bok and William Bowen write in *The Shape of the River* that, although African Americans entering most colleges have lower overall grades and SAT scores than white schoolmates, on the real-world test of what they do when they leave the university, top black students now have about the same career achievement as top whites.

At the turn of this century, many African Americans weren't even literate; today, the college-completion rates of black Americans exceed the comparable figures for much of Europe. If one views African Americans as an immigrant cohort that "arrived" in the United States with the passage of the civil rights laws, black rates of social progress are similar to those previously displayed by white ethnic immigrant groups, which typically required two to three generations to join the establishment.

STANDARDS OF LIVING. Living standards are improving so fast and so consistently that to mention them today seems almost banal. Most fundamental is housing. The typical contemporary home is 40 percent larger than a 1970 house, while only three percent of Americans, the lowest percentage ever, live in overcrowded conditions, defined as more than one person per room. That every person should have at least one room to call his or her own is a social innovation of the American present. The majority of today's dwellings have air-conditioning and other improvements. More than half of Americans now live in suburbs, which may be superficial and intellectually insufferable but are physically pleasant: the reason they are popular.

The metric of living standards is rising so rapidly that merely how to track its ascent has become a controversy, centering on whether the Consumer Price Index

adequately recognizes such once-rare, now-quotidian indicators as computer ownership or eating out. Another way to meter the evolution of living standards, championed by Richard Alm and W. Michael Cox in the forthcoming book *Myths of Rich and Poor*, is how long the typical person must work to acquire consumer items. Between rising wages and larger dwellings, for example, in 1956 the typical worker had to invest 16 weeks at labor to buy 100 square feet of home; now the figure has fallen to less than 14 weeks. The McDonald's brothers' first burgers cost half an hour of work at the time; now 180 seconds buys one. Only health care and university-level education are growing more expensive when measured by work hours required for purchase.

"A seven-day Caribbean cruise," Alm and Cox write, "slipped from 51 hours in 1972 to 45 hours in 1997." Not only are they getting cheaper, excursions on 42-deck luxury liners with names like *Insatiable Princess* are another indication of the rising standard of living: such experiences may be stupefying, but what matters is that they are becoming standard middle-class events. Leisure and tourism barely existed as economic sectors a generation ago; today they are a hefty slice of the GDP.

As Robert J. Samuelson has written, overall the U.S. standard of living has continued to rise in the '80s and '90s roughly as rapidly as it did in the '50s and '60s; it's just that we now take out a considerable share of national wealth in forms that don't show up well in price indexes, such as better health, cleaner air, and the ability to fly anywhere, anytime, at an affordable price.

WEDLOCK. The family-breakup wave may have crested. The divorce rate, which was 2.5 per 1,000 people in 1966, peaked at 5.3 per 1,000 in 1981. The rate leveled off in the early '90s at about 4.7 and now appears to be in a shallow decline. A few years ago, half of all new marriages were expected to fail; now only 40 percent are, with the average length of a marriage starting to creep back up again. And Census Bureau figures suggest that the reduction in conventional two-parent families—which dominated American demographics from 1970 to 1990—is "flattening" and might be about to end.

Whether the decline of divorce is just a blip or suggests some larger social trend can't be determined by only a few years of data. But it's worth noting that sociologists and writers have spent the past decade elaborately documenting the fact that, whatever it means in terms of adult personal freedom, family breakup harms children. That message may be sinking in.

At first glance, there seems no single thread that runs through the subjects where life is improving. Some seem a case for more Washington: environmental protection is arguably the most impressive achievement of progressive government since the establishment of the Social Security system. But "outside of pollution control, it's hard to see where federal regulations have been the driving factor in recent social improvements," says Gary Becker, a Nobel Prize-winning

economist at the University of Chicago. Economic vigor has been aided by deregulation. Crime reduction, welfare reform, and other positive trends have arisen mainly through state and local initiatives. Public health has certainly benefited from federal investments, but advancing knowledge is the primary factor. Betterment of personal behavior, such as the reduction in drunken driving, has been inspired mainly through private efforts.

It's possible that what the surge of national good news tells us is that, as pragmatism supplants ideology, society will get better at fixing things. "We're living in an age with very few romantics and revolutionaries," says Mueller of the University of Rochester. "People with vast, sweeping visions caused most of this century's problems. Most of the time you don't want leaders with visions, you want society run by cautious pragmatists. At the moment, the pragmatists are in control of most nations, and it's making things better."

It's possible that the upswing in good news tells us that reform initiatives of the '60s and '70s have finally begun to work. Pollution-control regulations, affirmative action programs, crime crackdowns—all started off clunky and problem-plagued, but, as the snafus were ironed out, results began to flow. And it's possible that what the late-century tidings convey is simply what the United States would have looked like all along if so much of its brainpower and resources had not been diverted to the cold war.

But what the good news unequivocally tells us is that it's never too late to change the world. In that sense, there is a bright thread running through all these examples: intractable or "impossible" dilemmas can be solved. Our efforts matter; when we attempt reform, we can be crowned with success. It is no coincidence that the aspects of life that have gotten better are those that people have dedicated themselves to improving. America can still become whatever it wants to be. We do not have to accept what we see out the window; rather, we can make the view the one of our choosing.

Knowing that reform still works should grant us courage to strive for change in areas where progress now seems "impossible." For instance, the greenhouse effect may seem unstoppable today, but that's only because we have not yet tried to stop it. There is no reason we need accept poverty: it can be bested. Polls show that, far from thinking society spends too much to lift up the poor, 60 percent of Americans think the country should take more action against poverty. So let's—because it will work!

Consider an astonishing figure: The United Nations estimates that it would cost \$40 billion per year to provide the basics of life—adequate food, clean water, health care, shelter, and literacy—to every person on the planet. That works out to \$151 per American. Every one of us would gladly write that check, if only there were a way to be sure the money were properly used. All that's stopping us from attempting reform of this noble magnitude is the false belief that life is rolling irrevocably downhill.

It's not, and the proof gets stronger each day. •

Nickel-and-Dimed

On (not) getting by in America

BY BARBARA EHRENREICH

At the beginning of June 1998 I leave behind everything that normally soothes the ego and sustains the body—home, career, companion, reputation, ATM card—for a plunge into the low-wage workforce. There, I become another, occupationally much diminished “Barbara Ehrenreich”—depicted on job-application forms as a divorced homemaker whose sole work experience consists of housekeeping in a few private homes. I am terrified, at the beginning, of being unmasked for what I am: a middle-class journalist setting out to explore the world that welfare mothers are entering, at the rate of approximately 50,000 a month, as welfare reform kicks in. Happily, though, my fears turn out to be entirely unwarranted: during a month of poverty and toil, my name goes unnoticed and for the most part unuttered. In this parallel universe where my father never got out of the mines and I never got through college, I am “baby,” “honey,” “blondie,” and, most commonly, “girl.”

My first task is to find a place to live. I figure that if I can earn \$7 an hour—which, from the want ads, seems doable—I can afford to spend \$500 on rent, or maybe, with severe economies, \$600. In the Key West area, where I live, this pretty much confines me to flophouses and trailer homes—like the one, a pleasing fifteen-minute drive from



town, that has no air-conditioning, no screens, no fans, no television, and, by way of diversion, only the challenge of evading the landlord's Doberman pinscher. The big problem with this place, though, is the rent, which at \$675 a month is well beyond my reach. All right, Key West is expensive. But so is New York City, or the Bay Area, or Jackson Hole, or

Telluride, or Boston, or any other place where tourists and the wealthy compete for living space with the people who clean their toilets and fry their hash browns.¹ Still, it is a shock to realize that “trailer trash” has become, for me, a demographic category to aspire to.

So I decide to make the common trade-off between affordability and convenience, and go for a \$500-a-month efficiency thirty miles up a two-lane highway from the employment opportunities of Key West, meaning forty-five minutes if there's no road construction and I don't get caught behind

¹ According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the “fair-market rent” for an efficiency is \$551 here in Monroe County, Florida. A comparable rent in the five boroughs of New York City is \$704; in San Francisco, \$713; and in the heart of Silicon Valley, \$808. The fair-market rent for an area is defined as the amount that would be needed to pay rent plus utilities for “privately owned, decent, safe, and sanitary rental housing of a modest (non-luxury) nature with suitable amenities.”

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some sun-dazed Canadian tourists. I hate the drive, along a roadside studded with white crosses commemorating the more effective head-on collisions, but it's a sweet little place—a cabin, more or less, set in the swampy back yard of the converted mobile home where my landlord, an affable TV repairman, lives with his bartender girlfriend. Anthropologically speaking, a bustling trailer park would be preferable, but here I have a gleaming white floor and a firm mattress, and the

apartment, and the Preamble Center for Public Policy estimates that the odds against a typical welfare recipient's landing a job at such a "living wage" are about 97 to 1. If these numbers are right, low-wage work is not a solution to poverty and possibly not even to homelessness.

It may seem excessive to put this proposition to an experimental test. As certain family members keep unhelpfully reminding me, the viability of low-wage work could be tested, after a fashion,

To stack Cheerio boxes in chemically fascist America, you have to be willing to pee in front of a health-care worker

few resident bugs are easily vanquished.

Besides, I am not doing this for the anthropology. My aim is nothing so mistily subjective as to "experience poverty" or find out how it "really feels" to be a long-term low-wage worker. I've had enough unchosen encounters with poverty and the world of low-wage work to know it's not a place you want to visit for touristic purposes; it just smells too much like fear. And with all my real-life assets—bank account, IRA, health insurance, multiroom home—waiting indulgently in the background, I am, of course, thoroughly insulated from the terrors that afflict the genuinely poor.

No, this is a purely objective, scientific sort of mission. The humanitarian rationale for welfare reform—as opposed to the more punitive and stingy impulses that may actually have motivated it—is that work will lift poor women out of poverty while simultaneously inflating their self-esteem and hence their future value in the labor market. Thus, whatever the hassles involved in finding child care, transportation, etc., the transition from welfare to work will end happily, in greater prosperity for all. Now there are many problems with this comforting prediction, such as the fact that the economy will inevitably undergo a downturn, eliminating many jobs. Even without a downturn, the influx of a million former welfare recipients into the low-wage labor market could depress wages by as much as 11.9 percent, according to the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) in Washington, D.C.

But is it really possible to make a living on the kinds of jobs currently available to unskilled people? Mathematically, the answer is no, as can be shown by taking \$6 to \$7 an hour, perhaps subtracting a dollar or two an hour for child care, multiplying by 160 hours a month, and comparing the result to the prevailing rents. According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, for example, in 1998 it took, on average nationwide, an hourly wage of \$8.89 to afford a one-bedroom

without ever leaving my study. I could just pay myself \$7 an hour for eight hours a day, charge myself for room and board, and total up the numbers after a month. Why leave the people and work that I love? But I am an experimental scientist by training. In that business, you don't just sit at a desk and theorize; you plunge into the everyday chaos of nature, where surprises lurk in the most mundane measurements. Maybe, when I got into it, I would discover some hidden economies in the world of the low-wage worker. After all, if 30 percent of the workforce toils for less than \$8 an hour, according to the EPI, they may have found some tricks as yet unknown to me. Maybe—who knows?—I would even be able to detect in myself the bracing psychological effects of getting out of the house, as promised by the welfare works at places like the Heritage Foundation. Or, on the other hand, maybe there would be unexpected costs—physical, mental, or financial—to throw off all my calculations. Ideally, I should do this with two small children in tow, that being the welfare average, but mine are grown and no one is willing to lend me theirs for a month-long vacation in penury. So this is not the perfect experiment, just a test of the best possible case: an unencumbered woman, smart and even strong, attempting to live more or less off the land.

On the morning of my first full day of job searching, I take a red pen to the want ads, which are auspiciously numerous. Everyone in Key West's booming "hospitality industry" seems to be looking for someone like me—trainable, flexible, and with suitably humble expectations as to pay. I know I possess certain traits that might be advantageous—I'm white and, I like to think, well-spoken and poised—but I decide on two rules: One, I cannot use any skills derived from my education or usual work—not that there are a lot of want ads for satirical essayists anyway. Two, I have to take the best-paid job that is of-

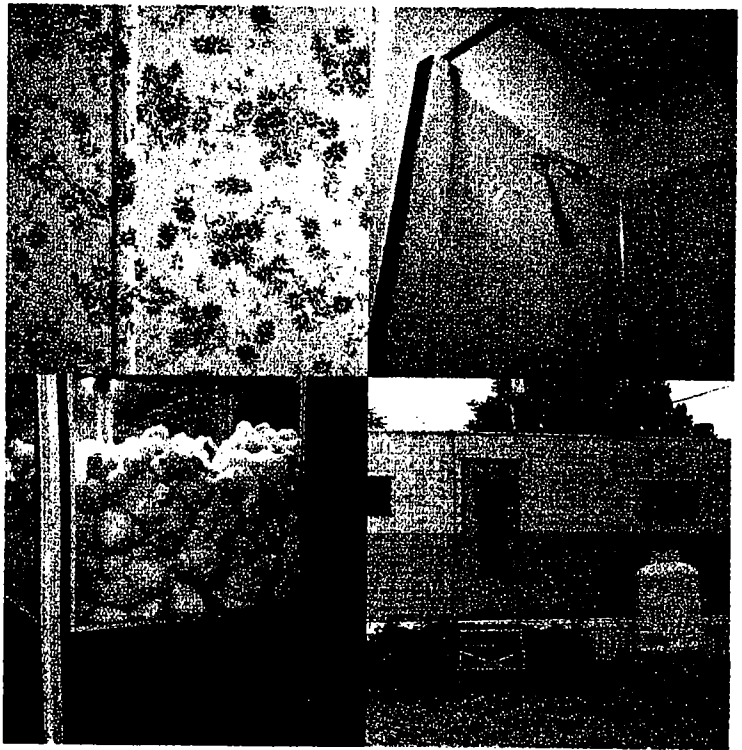
ferred me and of course do my best to hold it; no Marxist rants or sneaking off to read novels in the ladies' room. In addition, I rule out various occupations for one reason or another: Hotel front-desk clerk, for example, which to my surprise is regarded as unskilled and pays around \$7 an hour, gets eliminated because it involves standing in one spot for eight hours a day. Waitressing is similarly something I'd like to avoid, because I remember it leaving me bone tired when I was eighteen, and I'm decades of varicosities and back pain beyond that now. Telemarketing, one of the first refuges of the suddenly indigent, can be dismissed on grounds of personality. This leaves certain supermarket jobs, such as deli clerk, or housekeeping in Key West's thousands of hotel and guest rooms. Housekeeping is especially appealing, for reasons both atavistic and practical: it's what my mother did before I came along, and it can't be too different from what I've been doing part-time, in my own home, all my life.

So I put on what I take to be a respectful-looking outfit of ironed Bermuda shorts and scooped-neck T-shirt and set out for a tour of the local hotels and supermarkets. Best Western, Econo Lodge, and Hojo's all let me fill out application forms, and these are, to my relief, interested in little more than whether I am a legal resident of the United States and have committed any felonies. My next stop is Winn-Dixie, the supermarket, which turns out to have a particularly onerous application process, featuring a fifteen-minute "interview" by computer since, apparently, no human on the premises is deemed capable of representing the corporate point of view. I am conducted to a large room decorated with posters illustrating how to look "professional" (it helps to be white and, if female, permed) and warning of the slick promises that union organizers might try to tempt me with. The interview is multiple choice: Do I have anything, such as child-care problems, that might make it hard for me to get to work on time? Do I think safety on the job is the responsibility of management? Then, popping up cunningly out of the blue: How many dollars' worth of stolen goods have I purchased in the last year? Would I turn in a fellow employee if I caught him stealing? Finally, "Are you an honest person?"

Apparently, I ace the interview, because I am told that all I have to do is show up in some doctor's office tomorrow for a urine test. This seems to be a fairly general rule: if you want to stack Cheerio boxes or vacuum hotel rooms in chemically fascist America, you have to be willing to squat down and pee in front of some health worker (who has no doubt had to do the same thing herself). The wages Winn-Dixie is

offering—\$6 and a couple of dimes to start with—are not enough, I decide, to compensate for this indignity.²

I lunch at Wendy's, where \$4.99 gets you unlimited refills at the Mexican part of the Superbar, a comforting surfeit of refried beans and "cheese sauce." A teenage employee, seeing me studying the want ads, kindly offers me an application form, which I fill out, though here, too, the pay is just \$6 and change an hour. Then it's off for



a round of the locally owned inns and guest-houses. At "The Palms," let's call it, a bouncy manager actually takes me around to see the rooms and meet the existing housekeepers, who, I note with satisfaction, look pretty much like me—faded ex-hippie types in shorts with long hair pulled back in braids. Mostly, though, no one speaks to me or even looks at me except to proffer an application form. At my last stop, a pala-

² According to the Monthly Labor Review (November 1996), 28 percent of work sites surveyed in the service industry conduct drug tests (corporate workplaces have much higher rates), and the incidence of testing has risen markedly since the Eighties. The rate of testing is highest in the South (56 percent of work sites polled), with the Midwest in second place (50 percent). The drug most likely to be detected—marijuana, which can be detected in urine for weeks—is also the most innocuous, while heroin and cocaine are generally undetectable three days after use. Prospective employees sometimes try to cheat the tests by consuming excessive amounts of liquids and taking diuretics and even masking substances available through the Internet.

tial B&B, I wait twenty minutes to meet "Max," only to be told that there are no jobs now but there should be one soon, since "nobody lasts more than a couple weeks." (Because none of the people I talked to knew I was a reporter, I have changed their names to protect their privacy and, in some cases perhaps, their jobs.)

Three days go by like this, and, to my chagrin, no one out of the approximately twenty places I've applied calls me for an interview. I had been



vain enough to worry about coming across as too educated for the jobs I sought, but no one even seems interested in finding out how overqualified I am. Only later will I realize that the want ads are not a reliable measure of the actual jobs available at any particular time. They are, as I should have guessed from Max's comment, the employers' insurance policy against the relentless turnover of the low-wage workforce. Most of the big hotels run ads almost continually, just to build a supply of applicants to replace the current workers as they drift away or are fired, so finding a job is just a matter of being at the right place at the right time and flexible enough to take whatever is being offered that day. This finally happens to me at a one of the big discount hotel chains, where I go, as usual, for housekeeping and am sent, instead, to try out as a waitress at the attached "family restaurant," a dismal spot with a counter and about thirty tables that looks out on a parking garage and features such tempting fare as "Polish [sic] sausage and BBQ sauce" on 95-degree days. Phillip, the dapper young West Indian who introduces him-

self as the manager, interviews me with about as much enthusiasm as if he were a clerk processing me for Medicare, the principal questions being what shifts can I work and when can I start. I mutter something about being woefully out of practice as a waitress, but he's already on to the uniform: I'm to show up tomorrow wearing black slacks and black shoes; he'll provide the rust-colored polo shirt with HEARTHSIDE embroidered on it, though I might want to wear my own shirt to get to work, ha ha. At the word "tomorrow," something between fear and indignation rises in my chest. I want to say, "Thank you for your time, sir, but this is just an experiment, you know, not my actual life."

So begins my career at the Hearthside, I shall call it, one small profit center within a global discount hotel chain, where for two weeks I work from 2:00 till 10:00 P.M. for \$2.43 an hour plus tips.³ In some futile bid for gentility, the management has barred employees from using the front door, so my first day I enter through the kitchen, where a red-faced man with shoulder-length blond hair is throwing frozen steaks against the wall and yelling, "Fuck this shit!" "That's just Jack," explains Gail, the wiry middle-aged waitress who is assigned to train me. "He's on the rag again"—a condition occasioned, in this instance, by the fact that the cook on the morning shift had forgotten to thaw out the steaks. For the next eight hours, I run after the agile Gail, absorbing bits of instruction along with fragments of personal tragedy. All food must be trayed, and the reason she's so tired today is that she woke up in a cold sweat thinking of her boyfriend, who killed himself recently in an upstate prison. No refills on lemonade. And the reason he was in prison is that a few DUIs caught up with him, that's all, could have happened to anyone. Carry the creamers to the table in a monkey bowl, never in your hand. And after he was gone she spent several months living in her truck, peeing in a plastic pee bottle and reading by candlelight at night, but you can't live in a truck in the summer, since you need to have the windows down, which means anything can get in, from mosquitoes on up.

At least Gail puts to rest any fears I had of appearing overqualified. From the first day on, I find that of all the things I have left behind, such as home and identity, what I miss the most is com-

³ According to the Fair Labor Standards Act, employers are not required to pay "tipped employees," such as restaurant servers, more than \$2.13 an hour in direct wages. However, if the sum of tips plus \$2.13 an hour falls below the minimum wage, or \$5.15 an hour, the employer is required to make up the difference. This fact was not mentioned by managers or otherwise publicized at either of the restaurants where I worked.

petence. Not that I have ever felt utterly competent in the writing business, in which one day's success augurs nothing at all for the next. But in my writing life, I at least have some notion of procedure: do the research, make the outline, rough out a draft, etc. As a server, though, I am beset by requests like bees: more iced tea here, ketchup over there, a to-go box for table fourteen, and where are the high chairs, anyway? Of the twen-

customers, or "patients," as I can't help thinking of them on account of the mysterious vulnerability that seems to have left them temporarily unable to feed themselves. After a few days at the Hearthside, I feel the service ethic kick in like a shot of oxytocin, the nurturance hormone. The plurality of my customers are hard-working locals—truck drivers, construction workers, even housekeepers from the attached hotel—and I want

Want ads are not a reliable measure of available jobs but rather employers' insurance policy against relentless turnover

ty-seven tables, up to six are usually mine at any time, though on slow afternoons or if Gail is off, I sometimes have the whole place to myself. There is the touch-screen computer-ordering system to master, which is, I suppose, meant to minimize server-cook contact, but in practice requires constant verbal fine-tuning: "That's gravy on the mashed, okay? None on the meatloaf," and so forth—while the cook scowls as if I were inventing these refinements just to torment him. Plus, something I had forgotten in the years since I was eighteen: about a third of a server's job is "side work" that's invisible to customers—sweeping, scrubbing, slicing, refilling, and restocking. If it isn't all done, every little bit of it, you're going to face the 6:00 P.M. dinner rush defenseless and probably go down in flames. I screw up dozens of times at the beginning, sustained in my shame entirely by Gail's support—"It's okay, baby, everyone does that sometime"—because, to my total surprise and despite the scientific detachment I am doing my best to maintain, I care.

The whole thing would be a lot easier if I could just skate through it as Lily Tomlin in one of her waitress skits, but I was raised by the absurd Booker T. Washingtonian precept that says: If you're going to do something, do it well. In fact, "well" isn't good enough by half. Do it better than anyone has ever done it before. Or so said my father, who must have known what he was talking about because he managed to pull himself, and us with him, up from the mile-deep copper mines of Butte to the leafy suburbs of the Northeast, ascending from boilermakers to martinis before booze beat out ambition. As in most endeavors I have encountered in my life, doing it "better than anyone" is not a reasonable goal. Still, when I wake up at 4:00 A.M. in my own cold sweat, I am not thinking about the writing deadlines I'm neglecting; I'm thinking about the table whose order I screwed up so that one of the boys didn't get his kiddie meal until the rest of the family had moved on to their Key Lime pies. That's the other powerful motivation I hadn't expected—the

them to have the closest to a "fine dining" experience that the grubby circumstances will allow. No "you guys" for me; everyone over twelve is "sir" or "ma'am." I ply them with iced tea and coffee refills; I return, mid-meal, to inquire how everything is; I doll up their salads with chopped raw mushrooms, summer squash slices, or whatever bits of produce I can find that have survived their sojourn in the cold-storage room mold-free.

There is Benny, for example, a short, tight-muscled sewer repairman, who cannot even think of eating until he has absorbed a half hour of air-conditioning and ice water. We chat about hyperthermia and electrolytes until he is ready to order some finicky combination like soup of the day, garden salad, and a side of grits. There are the German tourists who are so touched by my pidgin "Willkommen" and "Ist alles gut?" that they actually tip. (Europeans, spoiled by their trade-union-ridden, high-wage welfare states, generally do not know that they are supposed to tip. Some restaurants, the Hearthside included, allow servers to "grat" their foreign customers, or add a tip to the bill. Since this amount is added before the customers have a chance to tip or not tip, the practice amounts to an automatic penalty for imperfect English.) There are the two dirt-smudged lesbians, just off their construction shift, who are impressed enough by my suave handling of the fly in the piña colada that they take the time to praise me to Stu, the assistant manager. There's Sam, the kindly retired cop, who has to plug up his tracheotomy hole with one finger in order to force the cigarette smoke into his lungs.

Sometimes I play with the fantasy that I am a princess who, in penance for some tiny transgression, has undertaken to feed each of her subjects by hand. But the non-princesses working with me are just as indulgent, even when this means flouting management rules—concerning, for example, the number of croutons that can go on a salad (six). "Put on all you want," Gail whispers, "as long as Stu isn't looking." She dips into her own tip money to buy biscuits and gravy for

an out-of-work mechanic who's used up all his money on dental surgery, inspiring me to pick up the tab for his milk and pie. Maybe the same high levels of agape can be found throughout the "hospitality industry." I remember the poster decorating one of the apartments I looked at, which said "If you seek happiness for yourself you will never find it. Only when you seek happiness for others will it come to you," or words to that effect—an odd sentiment, it seemed to me at the time, to find in the dank one-room basement apartment of a bellhop at the Best Western. At the Hearthside, we utilize whatever bits of autonomy we have to ply our customers with the illicit calories that signal our love. It is our job as servers to assemble the salads and desserts, pouring the dressings and squirting the whipped cream. We also control the number of butter patties our customers get and the amount of sour cream on their baked potatoes. So if you wonder why Americans are so obese, consider the fact that waitresses both express their humanity and earn their tips through the covert distribution of fats.

Ten days into it, this is beginning to look like a livable lifestyle. I like Gail, who is "looking at fifty" but moves so fast she can alight in one place and then another without apparently being any-

Mao's central instruction, as laid out in the Little Red Book, which was: Serve the people.

I could drift along like this, in some dreamy proletarian idyll, except for two things. One is management. If I have kept this subject on the margins thus far it is because I still flinch to think that I spent all those weeks under the surveillance of men (and later women) whose job it was to monitor my behavior for signs of sloth, theft, drug abuse, or worse. Not that managers and especially "assistant managers" in low-wage settings like this are exactly the class enemy. In the restaurant business, they are mostly former cooks or servers, still capable of pinch-hitting in the kitchen or on the floor, just as in hotels they are likely to be former clerks, and paid a salary of only about \$400 a week. But everyone knows they have crossed over to the other side, which is, crudely put, corporate as opposed to human. Cooks want to prepare tasty meals; servers want to serve them graciously; but managers are there for only one reason—to make sure that money is made for some theoretical entity that exists far away in Chicago or New York, if a corporation can be said to have a physical existence at all. Reflecting

I haven't been lined up in a corridor, threatened with locker searches, and peppered with accusations since junior high

where between them. I clown around with Lionel, the teenage Haitian busboy, and catch a few fragments of conversation with Joan, the svelte fortyish hostess and militant feminist who is the only one of us who dares to tell Jack to shut the fuck up. I even warm up to Jack when, on a slow night and to make up for a particularly unwarranted attack on my abilities, or so I imagine, he tells me about his glory days as a young man at "coronary school"—or do you say "culinary"?—in Brooklyn, where he dated a knock-out Puerto Rican chick and learned everything there is to know about food. I finish up at 10:00 or 10:30, depending on how much side work I've been able to get done during the shift, and cruise home to the tapes I snatched up at random when I left my real home—Marianne Faithfull, Tracy Chapman, Enigma, King Sunny Ade, the Violent Femmes—just drained enough for the music to set my cranium resonating but hardly dead. Midnight snack is Wheat Thins and Monterey Jack, accompanied by cheap white wine on ice and whatever AMC has to offer. To bed by 1:30 or 2:00, up at 9:00 or 10:00, read for an hour while my uniform whirls around in the landlord's washing machine, and then it's another eight hours spent following

on her career, Gail tells me ruefully that she had sworn, years ago, never to work for a corporation again. "They don't cut you no slack. You give and you give, and they take."

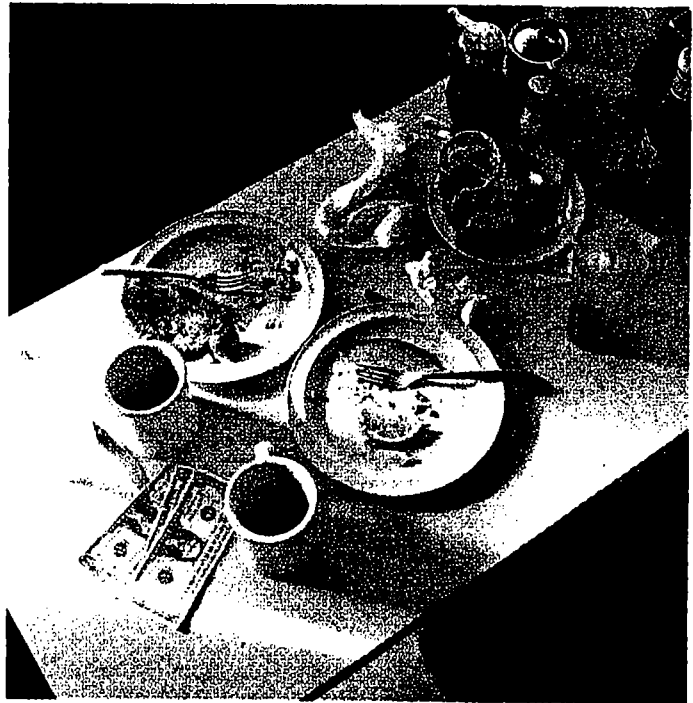
Managers can sit—for hours at a time if they want—but it's their job to see that no one else ever does, even when there's nothing to do, and this is why, for servers, slow times can be as exhausting as rushes. You start dragging out each little chore, because if the manager on duty catches you in an idle moment, he will give you something far nastier to do. So I wipe, I clean, I consolidate ketchup bottles and recheck the cheesecake supply, even tour the tables to make sure the customer evaluation forms are all standing perkily in their places—wondering all the time how many calories I burn in these strictly theatrical exercises. When, on a particularly dead afternoon, Stu finds me glancing at a *USA Today* a customer has left behind, he assigns me to vacuum the entire floor with the broken vacuum cleaner that has a handle only two feet long, and the only way to do that without incurring orthopedic damage is to proceed from spot to spot on your knees.

On my first Friday at the Hearthside there is a "mandatory meeting for all restaurant em-

ployees," which I attend, eager for insight into our overall marketing strategy and the niche (your basic Ohio cuisine with a tropical twist?) we aim to inhabit. But there is no "we" at this meeting. Phillip, our top manager except for an occasional "consultant" sent out by corporate headquarters, opens it with a sneer: "The break room—it's disgusting. Butts in the ashtrays, newspapers lying around, crumbs." This windowless little room, which also houses the time clock for the entire hotel, is where we stash our bags and civilian clothes and take our half-hour meal breaks. But a break room is not a right, he tells us. It can be taken away. We should also know that the lockers in the break room and whatever is in them can be searched at any time. Then comes gossip; there has been gossip; gossip (which seems to mean employees talking among themselves) must stop. Off-duty employees are henceforth barred from eating at the restaurant, because "other servers gather around them and gossip." When Phillip has exhausted his agenda of rebukes, Joan complains about the condition of the ladies' room and I throw in my two bits about the vacuum cleaner. But I don't see any backup coming from my fellow servers, each of whom has subsided into her own personal funk; Gail, my role model, stares sorrowfully at a point six inches from her nose. The meeting ends when Andy, one of the cooks, gets up, muttering about breaking up his day off for this almighty bullshit.

Just four days later we are suddenly summoned into the kitchen at 3:30 P.M., even though there are live tables on the floor. We all—about ten of us—stand around Phillip, who announces grimly that there has been a report of some "drug activity" on the night shift and that, as a result, we are now to be a "drug-free" workplace, meaning that all new hires will be tested, as will possibly current employees on a random basis. I am glad that this part of the kitchen is so dark, because I find myself blushing as hard as if I had been caught toking up in the ladies' room myself: I haven't been treated this way—lined up in the corridor, threatened with locker searches, peppered with carelessly aimed accusations—since junior high school. Back on the floor, Joan cracks, "Next they'll be telling us we can't have sex on the job." When I ask Stu what happened to inspire the crackdown, he just mutters about "management decisions" and takes the opportunity to upbraid Gail and me for being too generous with the rolls. From now on there's to be only one per customer, and it goes out with the dinner, not with the salad. He's also been riding the cooks, prompting Andy to come out of the kitchen and observe—with the serenity of a man whose customary implement is a butcher knife—that "Stu has a death wish today."

Later in the evening, the gossip crystallizes around the theory that Stu is himself the drug culprit, that he uses the restaurant phone to order up marijuana and sends one of the late servers out to



fetch it for him. The server was caught, and she may have ratted Stu out or at least said enough to cast some suspicion on him, thus accounting for his pissy behavior. Who knows? Lionel, the busboy, entertains us for the rest of the shift by standing just behind Stu's back and sucking deliriously on an imaginary joint.

The other problem, in addition to the less-than-nurturing management style, is that this job shows no sign of being financially viable. You might imagine, from a comfortable distance, that people who live, year in and year out, on \$6 to \$10 an hour have discovered some survival stratagems unknown to the middle class. But no. It's not hard to get my co-workers to talk about their living situations, because housing, in almost every case, is the principal source of disruption in their lives, the first thing they fill you in on when they arrive for their shifts. After a week, I have compiled the following survey:

- Gail is sharing a room in a well-known downtown flophouse for which she and a roommate pay about \$250 a week. Her roommate, a male friend, has begun hitting on her, driving her nuts, but the rent would be impossible alone.
- Claude, the Haitian cook, is desperate to get out of the two-room apartment he shares with his girlfriend and two other, unrelated, people. As far as I can determine, the other Haitian men (most

of whom only speak Creole) live in similarly crowded situations.

- Annette, a twenty-year-old server who is six months pregnant and has been abandoned by her boyfriend, lives with her mother, a postal clerk.

- Marianne and her boyfriend are paying \$170 a week for a one-person trailer.

- Jack, who is, at \$10 an hour, the wealthiest of us, lives in the trailer he owns, paying only the \$400-a-month lot fee.

- The other white cook, Andy, lives on his dry-docked boat, which, as far as I can tell from his loving descriptions, can't be more than twenty

start-up costs when I began my low-wage life: \$1,000 for the first month's rent and deposit, \$100 for initial groceries and cash in my pocket, \$200 stuffed away for emergencies. In poverty, as in certain propositions in physics, starting conditions are everything.

There are no secret economies that nourish the poor; on the contrary, there are a host of special costs. If you can't put up the two months' rent you need to secure an apartment, you end up paying through the nose for a room by the week. If you have only a room, with a hot plate at best, you can't save by cooking up huge lentil stews that can be frozen for the week ahead. You eat fast

The floor of the restaurant is slick with spills, forcing us to walk with tiny steps, like Susan McDougal in leg irons

ty feet long. He offers to take me out on it, once it's repaired, but the offer comes with inquiries as to my marital status, so I do not follow up on it.

- Tina and her husband are paying \$60 a night for a double room in a Days Inn. This is because they have no car and the Days Inn is within walking distance of the Hearthside. When Marianne, one of the breakfast servers, is tossed out of her trailer for subletting (which is against the trailer-park rules), she leaves her boyfriend and moves in with Tina and her husband.

- Joan, who had fooled me with her numerous and tasteful outfits (hostesses wear their own clothes), lives in a van she parks behind a shopping center at night and showers in Tina's motel room. The clothes are from thrift shops.⁴

It strikes me, in my middle-class solipsism, that there is gross improvidence in some of these arrangements. When Gail and I are wrapping silverware in napkins—the only task for which we are permitted to sit—she tells me she is thinking of escaping from her roommate by moving into the Days Inn herself. I am astounded: How can she even think of paying between \$40 and \$60 a day? But if I was afraid of sounding like a social worker, I come out just sounding like a fool. She squints at me in disbelief, “And where am I supposed to get a month's rent and a month's deposit for an apartment?” I'd been feeling pretty smug about my \$500 efficiency, but of course it was made possible only by the \$1,300 I had allotted myself for

food, or the hot dogs and styrofoam cups of soup that can be microwaved in a convenience store. If you have no money for health insurance—and the Hearthside's niggardly plan kicks in only after three months—you go without routine care or prescription drugs and end up paying the price. Gail, for example, was fine until she ran out of money for estrogen pills. She is supposed to be on the company plan by now, but they claim to have lost her application form and need to begin the paperwork all over again. So she spends \$9 per migraine pill to control the headaches she wouldn't have, she insists, if her estrogen supplements were covered. Similarly, Marianne's boyfriend lost his job as a roofer because he missed so much time after getting a cut on his foot for which he couldn't afford the prescribed antibiotic.

My own situation, when I sit down to assess it after two weeks of work, would not be much better if this were my actual life. The seductive thing about waitressing is that you don't have to wait for payday to feel a few bills in your pocket, and my tips usually cover meals and gas, plus something left over to stuff into the kitchen drawer I use as a bank. But as the tourist business slows in the summer heat, I sometimes leave work with only \$20 in tips (the gross is higher, but servers share about 15 percent of their tips with the busboys and bartenders). With wages included, this amounts to about the minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour. Although the sum in the drawer is piling up, at the present rate of accumulation it will be more than a hundred dollars short of my rent when the end of the month comes around. Nor can I see any expenses to cut. True, I haven't gone the lentil-stew route yet, but that's because I don't have a large cooking pot, pot holders, or a ladle to stir with (which cost about \$30 at Kmart, less at thrift stores), not to mention

⁴ I could find no statistics on the number of employed people living in cars or vans, but according to the National Coalition for the Homeless's 1997 report “Myths and Facts About Homelessness,” nearly one in five homeless people (in twenty-nine cities across the nation) is employed in a full- or part-time job.

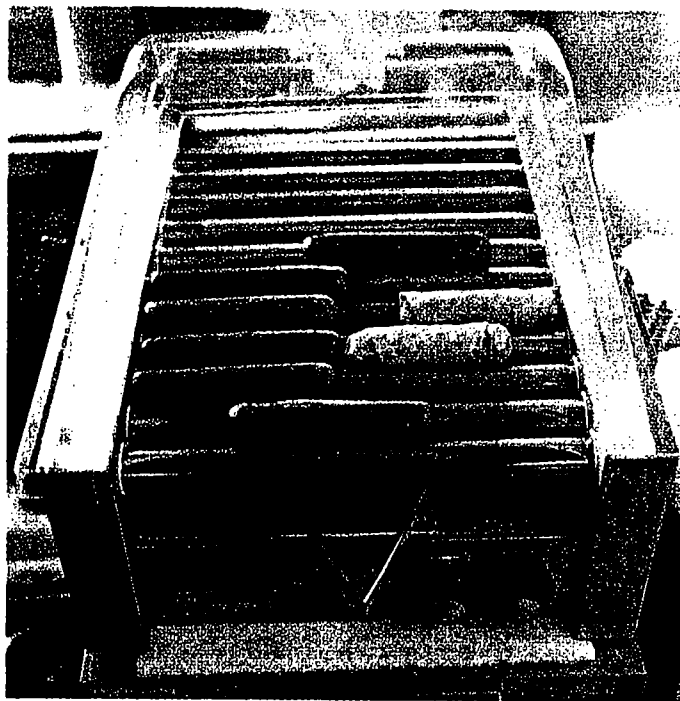
onions, carrots, and the indispensable bay leaf. I do make my lunch almost every day—usually some slow-burning, high-protein combo like frozen chicken patties with melted cheese on top and canned pinto beans on the side. Dinner is at the Hearthside, which offers its employees a choice of BLT, fish sandwich, or hamburger for only \$2. The burger lasts longest, especially if it's heaped with gut-puckering jalapeños, but by midnight my stomach is growling again.

So unless I want to start using my car as a residence, I have to find a second, or alternative, job. I call all the hotels where I filled out housekeeping applications weeks ago—the Hyatt, Holiday Inn, Econo Lodge, HoJo's, Best Western, plus a half dozen or so locally run guesthouses. Nothing. Then I start making the rounds again, wasting whole mornings waiting for some assistant manager to show up, even dipping into places so creepy that the front-desk clerk greets you from behind bulletproof glass and sells pints of liquor over the counter. But either someone has exposed my real-life housekeeping habits—which are, shall we say, mellow—or I am at the wrong end of some infallible ethnic equation: most, but by no means all, of the working housekeepers I see on my job searches are African Americans, Spanish-speaking, or immigrants from the Central European post-Communist world, whereas servers are almost invariably white and monolingually English-speaking. When I finally get a positive response, I have been identified once again as server material. Jerry's, which is part of a well-known national family restaurant chain and physically attached here to another budget hotel chain, is ready to use me at once. The prospect is both exciting and terrifying, because, with about the same number of tables and counter seats, Jerry's attracts three or four times the volume of customers as the gloomy old Hearthside.

Picture a fat person's hell, and I don't mean a place with no food. Instead there is everything you might eat if eating had no bodily consequences—cheese fries, chicken-fried steaks, fudge-laden desserts—only here every bite must be paid for, one way or another, in human discomfort. The kitchen is a cavern, a stomach leading to the lower intestine that is the garbage and dishwashing area, from which issue bizarre smells combining the edible and the offal: creamy carrion, pizza barf, and that unique and enigmatic Jerry's scent—citrus fart. The floor is slick with spills, forcing us to walk through the kitchen with tiny steps, like Susan McDougal in leg irons. Sinks everywhere are clogged with scraps of lettuce, decomposing lemon wedges, waterlogged toast crusts. Put your hand down on any counter and you risk being stuck to it by the film of ancient syrup spills,

and this is unfortunate, because hands are utensils here, used for scooping up lettuce onto salad plates, lifting out pie slices, and even moving hash browns from one plate to another. The regulation poster in the single unisex restroom admonishes us to wash our hands thoroughly and even offers instructions for doing so, but there is always some vital substance missing—soap, paper towels, toilet paper—and I never find all three at once. You learn to stuff your pockets with napkins before going in there, and too bad about the customers, who must eat, though they don't realize this, almost literally out of our hands.

The break room typifies the whole situation: there is none, because there are no breaks at Jerry's. For six to eight hours in a row, you never sit except to pee. Actually, there are three folding chairs at a table immediately adjacent to the bathroom, but hardly anyone ever sits here, in the very rectum of the gastro-architectural system. Rather, the function of the peritoilet area is to house the ashtrays in which servers and dishwashers leave their cigarettes burning at all times, like votive candles, so that they don't have to waste time lighting up again when they dash back for a puff. Almost everyone smokes as if his or her pulmonary well-being depended on



it—the multinational mélange of cooks, the Czech dishwashers, the servers, who are all American natives—creating an atmosphere in which oxygen is only an occasional pollutant. My first morning at Jerry's, when the hypoglycemic shakes set in, I complain to one of my fellow servers

that I don't understand how she can go so long without food. "Well, I don't understand how you can go so long without a cigarette," she responds in a tone of reproach—because work is what you do for others; smoking is what you do for yourself. I don't know why the antismoking crusaders have never grasped the element of defiant self-nurturance that makes the habit so endearing to its victims—as if, in the American workplace, the only thing people have to call their own is the tumors they are nourishing and the spare moments they devote to feeding them.

Now, the Industrial Revolution is not an easy transition, especially when you have to zip through it in just a couple of days. I have gone from craft work straight into the factory, from the air-conditioned morgue of the Hearthside directly into the flames. Customers arrive in human waves, sometimes disgorged fifty at a time from their tour buses, peckish and whiny. Instead of two "girls" on the floor at once, there can be as many as six of us running around in our brilliant pink-



and-orange Hawaiian shirts. Conversations, either with customers or fellow employees, seldom last more than twenty seconds at a time. On my first day, in fact, I am hurt by my sister servers' coldness. My mentor for the day is an emotionally uninflected twenty-three-year-old, and the others, who gossip a little among themselves about the real reason someone is out sick today and the size of the bail bond someone else has had to pay, ignore me completely. On my second day, I find out why. "Well, it's good to see you again," one of them says in greeting. "Hardly anyone comes

back after the first day." I feel powerfully vindicated—a survivor—but it would take a long time, probably months, before I could hope to be accepted into this sorority.

I start out with the beautiful, heroic idea of handling the two jobs at once, and for two days I almost do it: the breakfast/lunch shift at Jerry's, which goes till 2:00, arriving at the Hearthside at 2:10, and attempting to hold out until 10:00. In the ten minutes between jobs, I pick up a spicy chicken sandwich at the Wendy's drive-through window, gobble it down in the car, and change from khaki slacks to black, from Hawaiian to rust polo. There is a problem, though. When during the 3:00 to 4:00 P.M. dead time I finally sit down to wrap silver, my flesh seems to bond to the seat. I try to refuel with a purloined cup of soup, as I've seen Gail and Joan do dozens of times, but a manager catches me and hisses "No eating!" though there's not a customer around to be offended by the sight of food making contact with a server's lips. So I tell Gail I'm going to quit, and she hugs me and says she might just follow me to Jerry's herself.

But the chances of this are minuscule. She has left the flophouse and her annoying roommate and is back to living in her beat-up old truck. But guess what? she reports to me excitedly later that evening: Phillip has given her permission to park overnight in the hotel parking lot, as long as she keeps out of sight, and the parking lot should be totally safe, since it's patrolled by a hotel security guard! With the Hearthside offering benefits like that, how could anyone think of leaving?

Gail would have triumphed at Jerry's, I'm sure, but for me it's a crash course in exhaustion management. Years ago, the kindly fry cook who trained me to waitress at a Los Angeles truck stop used to say: Never make an unnecessary trip; if you don't have to walk fast, walk slow; if you don't have to walk, stand. But at Jerry's the effort of distinguishing necessary from unnecessary and urgent from whenever would itself be too much of an energy drain. The only thing to do is to treat each shift as a one-time-only emergency: you've got fifty starving people out there, lying scattered on the battlefield, so get out there and feed them! Forget that you will have to do this again tomorrow, forget that you will have to be alert enough to dodge the drunks on the drive home tonight—just burn, burn, burn! Ideally, at some point you enter what servers call "a rhythm" and psychologists term a "flow state," in which signals pass from the sense organs directly to the muscles, bypassing the cerebral cortex, and a Zen-like emptiness sets in. A male server from the Hearthside's morning shift tells me about the time he "pulled a triple"—three shifts in a row, all the way around the clock—and then got off and had a drink and met this girl, and

maybe he shouldn't tell me this, but they had sex right then and there, and it was like, beautiful.

But there's another capacity of the neuromuscular system, which is pain. I start tossing back drugstore-brand ibuprofen pills as if they were vitamin C, four before each shift, because an old mouse-related repetitive-stress injury in my upper back has come back to full-spasm strength, thanks to the tray carrying. In my ordinary life, this level of disability might justify a day of ice packs and stretching. Here I comfort myself with the Aleve commercial in which the cute blue-collar guy asks: If you quit after working four hours, what would your boss say? And the not-so-cute blue-collar guy, who's lugging a metal beam on his back, answers: He'd fire me, that's what. But for-

bara, didn't you see you've got another table out there? Come on, girl!" Among other things, she is hated for having replaced the whipped-cream squirt cans with big plastic whipped-cream-filled baggies that have to be squeezed with both hands—because, reportedly, she saw or thought she saw employees trying to inhale the propellant gas from the squirt cans, in the hope that it might be nitrous oxide. On my third night, she pulls me aside abruptly and brings her face so close that it looks as if she's planning to butt me with her forehead. But instead of saying, "You're fired," she says, "You're doing fine." The only trouble is I'm spending time chatting with customers: "That's how they're getting you." Furthermore I am letting them "run me," which means harassment by se-

Customers prevent the smooth transformation of information into food and food into money. They are the enemy

fortunately, the commercial tells us, we workers can exert the same kind of authority over our painkillers that our bosses exert over us. If Tylenol doesn't want to work for more than four hours, you just fire its ass and switch to Aleve.

True, I take occasional breaks from this life, going home now and then to catch up on e-mail and for conjugal visits (though I am careful to "pay" for anything I eat there), seeing *The Truman Show* with friends and letting them buy my ticket. And I still have those what-am-I-doing-here moments at work, when I get so homesick for the printed word that I obsessively reread the six-page menu. But as the days go by, my old life is beginning to look exceedingly strange. The e-mails and phone messages addressed to my former self come from a distant race of people with exotic concerns and far too much time on their hands. The neighborly market I used to cruise for produce now looks forbiddingly like a Manhattan yuppie emporium. And when I sit down one morning in my real home to pay bills from my past life, I am dazzled at the two- and three-figure sums owed to outfits like Club BodyTech and Amazon.com.

Management at Jerry's is generally calmer and more "professional" than at the Hearthside, with two exceptions. One is Joy, a plump, blowsy woman in her early thirties, who once kindly devoted several minutes to instructing me in the correct one-handed method of carrying trays but whose moods change disconcertingly from shift to shift and even within one. Then there's B.J., a.k.a. B.J.-the-bitch, whose contribution is to stand by the kitchen counter and yell, "Nita, your order's up, move it!" or, "Bar-

quential demands: you bring the ketchup and they decide they want extra Thousand Island; you bring that and they announce they now need a side of fries; and so on into distraction. Finally she tells me not to take her wrong. She tries to say things in a nice way, but you get into a mode, you know, because everything has to move so fast.⁵

I mumble thanks for the advice, feeling like I've just been stripped naked by the crazed enforcer of some ancient sumptuary law: No chatting for you, girl. No fancy service ethic allowed for the serfs. Chatting with customers is for the beautiful young college-educated servers in the downtown carpaccio joints, the kids who can make \$70 to \$100 a night. What had I been thinking? My job is to move orders from tables to kitchen and then trays from kitchen to tables. Customers are, in fact, the major obstacle to the smooth transformation of information into food and food into money—they are, in short, the enemy. And the painful thing is that I'm beginning to see it this way myself. There are the traditional asshole types—frat boys who down multiple Buds and then make a fuss because the steaks are so emaciated and the fries so sparse—as well as the variously impaired—due to age, diabetes, or literacy issues—who require patient nutritional counseling. The worst, for some reason, are the Visible Christians—like the ten-person table, all jolly and sanctified after Sun-

⁵ In *Workers in a Lean World: Unions in the International Economy* (Verso, 1997), Kim Moody cites studies finding an increase in stress-related workplace injuries and illness between the mid-1980s and the early 1990s. He argues that rising stress levels reflect a new system of "management by stress," in which workers in a variety of industries are being squeezed to extract maximum productivity, to the detriment of their health.

day-night service, who run me mercilessly and then leave me \$1 on a \$92 bill. Or the guy with the crucifixion T-shirt (SOMEONE TO LOOK UP TO) who complains that his baked potato is too hard and his iced tea too icy (I cheerfully fix both) and leaves no tip. As a general rule, people wearing crosses or W@JJD? (What Would Jesus Do?) buttons

ers will do their best to conceal her absence from the enforcers of corporate rationality.

But my saving human connection—my oxytocin receptor, as it were—is George, the nineteen-year-old, fresh-off-the-boat Czech dishwasher. We get to talking when he asks me, tortuously, how much cigarettes cost at Jerry's. I do my best to ex-

There are not exactly people here in the trailer park, but canned labor, being preserved from the heat between shifts

look at us disapprovingly no matter what we do, as if they were confusing waitressing with Mary Magdalene's original profession.

I make friends, over time, with the other "girls" who work my shift: Nita, the tattooed twenty-something who taunts us by going around saying brightly, "Have we started making money yet?" Ellen, whose teenage son cooks on the graveyard shift and who once managed a restaurant in Massachusetts but won't try out for management here because she prefers being a "common worker" and not "ordering people around." Easy-going fiftyish Lucy, with the raucous laugh, who limps toward the end of the shift because of something that has gone wrong with her leg, the exact nature of which cannot be determined without health insurance. We talk about the usual girl things—men, children, and the sinister allure of Jerry's chocolate peanut-butter cream pie—though no one, I notice, ever brings up anything potentially expensive, like shopping or movies. As at the Hearthside, the only recreation ever referred to is partying, which requires little more than some beer, a joint, and a few close friends. Still, no one here is homeless, or cops to it anyway, thanks usually to a working husband or boyfriend. All in all, we form a reliable mutual-support group: If one of us is feeling sick or overwhelmed, another one will "bev" a table or even carry trays for her. If one of us is off sneaking a cigarette or a pee,⁶ the oth-

plain that they cost over a dollar more here than at a regular store and suggest that he just take one from the half-filled packs that are always lying around on the break table. But that would be unthinkable. Except for the one tiny earring signaling his allegiance to some vaguely alternative point of view, George is a perfect straight arrow—crew-cut, hardworking, and hungry for eye contact: "Czech Republic," I ask, "or Slovakia?" and he seems delighted that I know the difference. "Václav Havel," I try. "Velvet Revolution, Frank Zappa?" "Yes, yes, 1989," he says, and I realize we are talking about history.

My project is to teach George English. "How are you today, George?" I say at the start of each shift. "I am good, and how are you today, Barbara?" I learn that he is not paid by Jerry's but by the "agent" who shipped him over—\$5 an hour, with the agent getting the dollar or so difference between that and what Jerry's pays dishwashers. I learn also that he shares an apartment with a crowd of other Czech "dishers," as he calls them, and that he cannot sleep until one of them goes off for his shift, leaving a vacant bed. We are having one of our ESL sessions late one afternoon when B.J. catches us at it and orders "Joseph" to take up the rubber mats on the floor near the dishwashing sinks and mop underneath. "I thought your name was George," I say loud enough for B.J. to hear as she strides off back to the counter. Is she embarrassed? Maybe a little, because she greets me back at the counter with "George, Joseph—there are so many of them!" I say nothing, neither nodding nor smiling, and for this I am punished later when I think I am ready to go and she announces that I need to roll fifty more sets of silverware and isn't it time I mixed up a fresh four-gallon batch of blue-cheese dressing? May you grow old in this place, B.J., is the curse I beam out at her when I am finally permitted to leave. May the syrup spills glue your feet to the floor.

I make the decision to move closer to Key West. First, because of the drive. Second and third, also because of the drive: gas is eating up \$4 to \$5 a day, and although Jerry's is as high-vol-

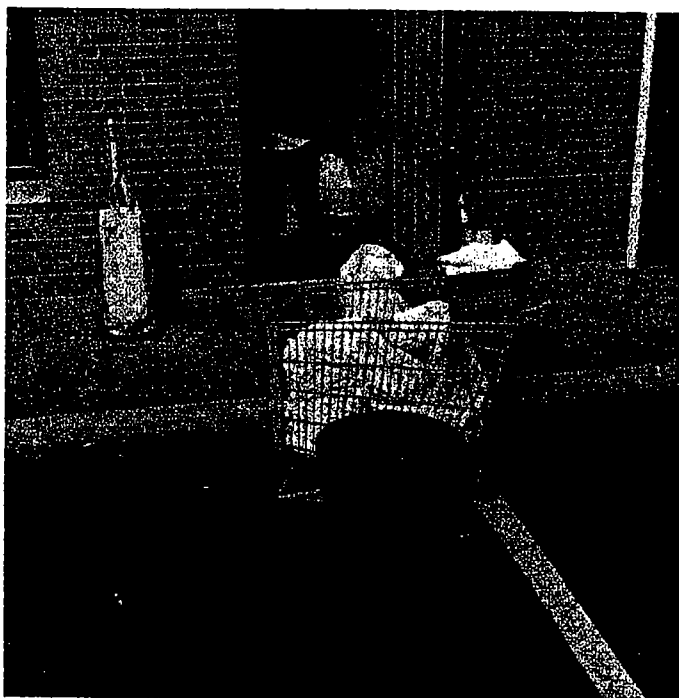
⁶ Until April 1998, there was no federally mandated right to bathroom breaks. According to Marc Linder and Ingrid Nygaard, authors of *Void Where Prohibited: Rest Breaks and the Right to Urinate on Company Time* (Cornell University Press, 1997), "The right to rest and void at work is not high on the list of social or political causes supported by professional or executive employees, who enjoy personal workplace liberties that millions of factory workers can only daydream about. . . . While we were dismayed to discover that workers lacked an acknowledged legal right to void at work, [the workers] were amazed by outsiders' naive belief that their employers would permit them to perform this basic bodily function when necessary. . . . A factory worker, not allowed a break for six-hour stretches, voided into pads worn inside her uniform; and a kindergarten teacher in a school without aides had to take all twenty children with her to the bathroom and line them up outside the stall door when she voided."

ume as you can get, the tips average only 10 percent, and not just for a newbie like me. Between the base pay of \$2.15 an hour and the obligation to share tips with the busboys and dishwashers, we're averaging only about \$7.50 an hour. Then there is the \$30 I had to spend on the regulation tan slacks worn by Jerry's servers—a setback it could take weeks to absorb. (I had combed the town's two downscale department stores hoping for something cheaper but decided in the end that these marked-down Dockers, originally \$49, were more likely to survive a daily washing.) Of my fellow servers, everyone who lacks a working husband or boyfriend seems to have a second job: Nita does something at a computer eight hours a day; another welds. Without the forty-five-minute commute, I can picture myself working two jobs and having the time to shower between them.

So I take the \$500 deposit I have coming from my landlord, the \$400 I have earned toward the next month's rent, plus the \$200 reserved for emergencies, and use the \$1,100 to pay the rent and deposit on trailer number 46 in the Overseas Trailer Park, a mile from the cluster of budget hotels that constitute Key West's version of an industrial park. Number 46 is about eight feet in width and shaped like a barbell inside, with a narrow region—because of the sink and the stove—separating the bedroom from what might optimistically be called the "living" area, with its two-person table and half-sized couch. The bathroom is so small my knees rub against the shower stall when I sit on the toilet, and you can't just leap out of the bed, you have to climb down to the foot of it in order to find a patch of floor space to stand on. Outside, I am within a few yards of a liquor store, a bar that advertises "free beer tomorrow," a convenience store, and a Burger King—but no supermarket or, alas, laundromat. By reputation, the Overseas park is a nest of crime and crack, and I am hoping at least for some vibrant, multicultural street life. But desolation rules night and day, except for a thin stream of pedestrian traffic heading for their jobs at the Sheraton or 7-Eleven. There are not exactly people here but what amounts to canned labor, being preserved from the heat between shifts.

In line with my reduced living conditions, a new form of ugliness arises at Jerry's. First we are confronted—via an announcement on the computers through which we input orders—with the new rule that the hotel bar is henceforth off-limits to restaurant employees. The culprit, I learn through the grapevine, is the ultra-efficient gal who trained me—another trailer-home dweller and a mother of three. Something had set her off one morning, so she slipped out for a nip and returned to the floor impaired. This mostly hurts

Ellen, whose habit it is to free her hair from its rubber band and drop by the bar for a couple of Zins before heading home at the end of the shift, but all of us feel the chill. Then the next day, when I go for straws, for the first time I find the dry-storage room locked. Ted, the portly assistant manager who opens it for me, explains that he caught one of the dishwashers attempting to steal something, and, unfortunately, the miscreant will be with us until a replacement can be



found—hence the locked door. I neglect to ask what he had been trying to steal, but Ted tells me who he is—the kid with the buzz cut and the earring. You know, he's back there right now.

I wish I could say I rushed back and confronted George to get his side of the story. I wish I could say I stood up to Ted and insisted that George be given a translator and allowed to defend himself, or announced that I'd find a lawyer who'd handle the case pro bono. The mystery to me is that there's not much worth stealing in the dry-storage room, at least not in any fenceable quantity: "Is Gyorgi here, and am having 200—maybe 250—ketchup packets. What do you say?" My guess is that he had taken—if he had taken anything at all—some Saltines or a can of cherry-pie mix, and that the motive for taking it was hunger.

So why didn't I intervene? Certainly not because I was held back by the kind of moral paralysis that can pass as journalistic objectivity. On the contrary, something new—something loathsome and servile—had infected me, along with

the kitchen odors that I could still sniff on my bra when I finally undressed at night. In real life I am moderately brave, but plenty of brave people shed their courage in concentration camps, and maybe something similar goes on in the infinitely more congenial milieu of the low-wage American workplace. Maybe, in a month or two more at Jerry's, I might have regained my crusading spirit. Then again, in a month or two I might have turned into a different person altogether—say, the kind of person who would have turned George in.

But this is not something I am slated to find out. When my month-long plunge into poverty is almost over, I finally land my dream job—housekeeping. I do this by walking into the



personnel office of the only place I figure I might have some credibility, the hotel attached to Jerry's, and confiding urgently that I have to have a second job if I am to pay my rent and, no, it couldn't be front-desk clerk. "All right," the personnel lady fairly spits, "So it's housekeeping," and she marches me back to meet Maria, the housekeeping manager, a tiny, frenetic Hispanic woman who greets me as "babe" and hands me a pamphlet emphasizing the need for a positive attitude. The hours are nine in the morning till whenever, the pay is \$6.10 an hour, and there's one week of vacation a year. I don't have to ask about health insurance once I meet Carlotta, the middle-aged African-American woman who will be training me. Carla, as she tells me to call her, is missing all of her top front teeth.

On that first day of housekeeping and last day of my entire project—although I don't yet know it's the last—Carla is in a foul mood. We have been given nineteen rooms to clean, most of them "checkouts," as opposed to "stay-overs," that require the whole enchilada of bed-stripping, vacuuming, and bathroom-scrubbing. When one of the rooms that had been listed as a stay-over turns out to be a checkout, Carla calls Maria to complain, but of course to no avail. "So make up the motherfucker," Carla orders me, and I do the beds while she sloshes around the bathroom. For four hours without a break I strip and remake beds, taking about four and a half minutes per queen-sized bed, which I could get down to three if there were any reason to. We try to avoid vacuuming by picking up the larger specks by hand, but often there is nothing to do but drag the monstrous vacuum cleaner—it weighs about thirty pounds—off our cart and try to wrestle it around the floor. Sometimes Carla hands me the squirt bottle of "BAM" (an acronym for something that begins, ominously, with "butyric"; the rest has been worn off the label) and lets me do the bathrooms. No service ethic challenges me here to new heights of performance. I just concentrate on removing the pubic hairs from the bathtubs, or at least the dark ones that I can see.

I had looked forward to the breaking-and-entering aspect of cleaning the stay-overs, the chance to examine the secret, physical existence of strangers. But the contents of the rooms are always banal and surprisingly neat—zipped up shaving kits, shoes lined up against the wall (there are no closets), flyers for snorkeling trips, maybe an empty wine bottle or two. It is the TV that keeps us going, from Jerry to Sally to *Hawaii Five-O* and then on to the soaps. If there's something especially arresting, like "Won't Take No for an Answer" on Jerry, we sit down on the edge of a bed and giggle for a moment as if this were a pajama party instead of a terminally dead-end job. The soaps are the best, and Carla turns the volume up full blast so that she won't miss anything from the bathroom or while the vacuum is on. In room 503, Marcia confronts Jeff about Lauren. In 505, Lauren taunts poor cuckolded Marcia. In 511, Helen offers Amanda \$10,000 to stop seeing Eric, prompting Carla to emerge from the bathroom to study Amanda's troubled face. "You take it, girl," she advises. "I would for sure."

The tourists' rooms that we clean and, beyond them, the far more expensively appointed interiors in the soaps, begin after a while to merge. We have entered a better world—a world of comfort where every day is a day off, waiting to be filled up with sexual intrigue. We, however, are only gate-crashers in this fantasy, forced to pay for our presence with backaches and perpetual thirst. The mirrors, and there are far too many of them in ho-

tel rooms, contain the kind of person you would normally find pushing a shopping cart down a city street—bedraggled, dressed in a damp hotel polo shirt two sizes too large, and with sweat dribbling down her chin like drool. I am enormously relieved when Carla announces a half-hour meal break, but my appetite fades when I see that the bag of hot-dog rolls she has been carrying around on our cart is not trash salvaged from a checkout but what she has brought for her lunch.

When I request permission to leave at about 3:30, another housekeeper warns me that no one has so far succeeded in combining housekeeping

shared vocabulary, but I am called to the floor for a table. I resolve to give him all my tips that night and to hell with the experiment in low-wage money management. At eight, Ellen and I grab a snack together standing at the mephitic end of the kitchen counter, but I can only manage two or three mozzarella sticks and lunch had been a mere handful of McNuggets. I am not tired at all, I assure myself, though it may be that there is simply no more "I" left to do the tiredness monitoring. What I would see, if I were more alert to the situation, is that the forces of destruction are already massing against me. There is only one cook

I couldn't hold on to two jobs even with advantages unthinkable to many of the working poor, and I couldn't get by on one

at the hotel with serving at Jerry's: "Some kid did it once for five days, and you're no kid." With that helpful information in mind, I rush back to number 46, down four Advils (the name brand this time), shower, stooping to fit into the stall, and attempt to compose myself for the oncoming shift. So much for what Marx termed the "reproduction of labor power," meaning the things a worker has to do just so she'll be ready to work again. The only unforeseen obstacle to the smooth transition from job to job is that my tan Jerry's slacks, which had looked reasonably clean by 40-watt bulb last night when I handwashed my Hawaiian shirt, prove by daylight to be mottled with ketchup and ranch-dressing stains. I spend most of my hour-long break between jobs attempting to remove the edible portions with a sponge and then drying the slacks over the hood of my car in the sun.

I can do this two-job thing, is my theory, if I can drink enough caffeine and avoid getting distracted by George's ever more obvious suffering.⁷ The first few days after being caught he seemed not to understand the trouble he was in, and our chirpy little conversations had continued. But the last couple of shifts he's been listless and unshaven, and tonight he looks like the ghost we all know him to be, with dark half-moons hanging from his eyes. At one point, when I am briefly immobilized by the task of filling little paper cups with sour cream for baked potatoes, he comes over and looks as if he'd like to explore the limits of our

on duty, a young man named Jesus ("Hay-Sue," that is) and he is new to the job. And there is Joy, who shows up to take over in the middle of the shift, wearing high heels and a long, clingy white dress and fuming as if she'd just been stood up in some cocktail bar.

Then it comes, the perfect storm. Four of my tables fill up at once. Four tables is nothing for me now, but only so long as they are obligingly staggered. As I bev table 27, tables 25, 28, and 24 are watching enviously. As I bev 25, 24 glowers because their bevs haven't even been ordered. Twenty-eight is four yuppyish types, meaning everything on the side and agonizing instructions as to the chicken Caesars. Twenty-five is a middle-aged black couple, who complain, with some justice, that the iced tea isn't fresh and the tabletop is sticky. But table 24 is the meteorological event of the century: ten British tourists who seem to have made the decision to absorb the American experience entirely by mouth. Here everyone has at least two drinks—iced tea and milk shake, Michelob and water (with lemon slice, please)—and a huge promiscuous orgy of breakfast specials, mozz sticks, chicken strips, quesadillas, burgers with cheese and without, sides of hash browns with cheddar, with onions, with gravy, seasoned fries, plain fries, banana splits. Poor Jesus! Poor me! Because when I arrive with their first tray of food—after three prior trips just to refill bevs—Princess Di refuses to eat her chicken strips with her pancake-and-sausage special, since, as she now reveals, the strips were meant to be an appetizer. Maybe the others would have accepted their meals, but Di, who is deep into her third Michelob, insists that everything else go back while they work on their "starters." Meanwhile, the yuppies are waving me down for more decaf and the black couple looks ready to summon the NAACP.

⁷ In 1996, the number of persons holding two or more jobs averaged 7.8 million, or 6.2 percent of the workforce. It was about the same rate for men and for women (6.1 versus 6.2), though the kinds of jobs differ by gender. About two thirds of multiple jobholders work one job full-time and the other part-time. Only a heroic minority—4 percent of men and 2 percent of women—work two full-time jobs simultaneously. (From John F. Stinson Jr., "New Data on Multiple Jobholding Available from the CPS," in the Monthly Labor Review, March 1997.)

Much of what happened next is lost in the fog of war. Jesus starts going under. The little printer on the counter in front of him is spewing out orders faster than he can rip them off, much less produce the meals. Even the invincible Ellen is ashen from stress. I bring table 24 their reheated main courses, which they immediately reject as either too cold or fossilized by the microwave. When I return to the kitchen with their trays (three trays in three trips), Joy confronts me with arms akimbo: "What is this?" She means the food—the plates of rejected pancakes, hash browns in assorted flavors, toasts, burgers, sausages, eggs. "Uh, scrambled with cheddar," I try, "and that's . . ." "NO," she screams in my face. "Is it a traditional, a super-scramble, an eye-opener?" I pretend to study my check for a clue, but entropy has been up to its tricks, not only on the plates but in my head, and I have to admit that the original order is beyond reconstruction. "You don't know an eye-opener from a traditional?" she demands in outrage. All I know, in fact, is that my legs have lost interest in the current venture and have announced their intention to fold. I am saved by a yuppie (mercifully not one of mine) who chooses this moment to charge into the kitchen to bellow that his food is twenty-five minutes late. Joy screams at him to get the hell out of her kitchen, please, and then turns on Jesus in a fury, hurling an empty tray across the room for emphasis.

I leave. I don't walk out, I just leave. I don't finish my side work or pick up my credit-card tips, if any, at the cash register or, of course, ask Joy's permission to go. And the surprising thing is that you can walk out without permission, that the door opens, that the thick tropical night air parts to let me pass, that my car is still parked where I left it. There is no vindication in this exit, no fuck-you surge of relief, just an overwhelming, dank sense of failure pressing down on me and the entire parking lot. I had gone into this venture in the spirit of science, to test a mathematical proposition, but somewhere along the line, in the tunnel vision imposed by long shifts and relentless concentration, it became a test of myself, and clearly I have failed. Not only had I flamed out as a housekeeper/server, I had even forgotten to give George my tips, and, for reasons perhaps best known to hardworking, generous people like Gail and Ellen, this hurts. I don't cry, but I am in a position to realize, for the first time in many years, that the tear ducts are still there, and still capable of doing their job.

When I moved out of the trailer park, I gave the key to number 46 to Gail and arranged for my deposit to be transferred to her. She told me that Joan is still living in her van and

that Stu had been fired from the Hearthside. I never found out what happened to George.

In one month, I had earned approximately \$1,040 and spent \$517 on food, gas, toiletries, laundry, phone, and utilities. If I had remained in my \$500 efficiency, I would have been able to pay the rent and have \$22 left over (which is \$78 less than the cash I had in my pocket at the start of the month). During this time I bought no clothing except for the required slacks and no prescription drugs or medical care (I did finally buy some vitamin B to compensate for the lack of vegetables in my diet). Perhaps I could have saved a little on food if I had gotten to a supermarket more often, instead of convenience stores, but it should be noted that I lost almost four pounds in four weeks, on a diet weighted heavily toward burgers and fries.

How former welfare recipients and single mothers will (and do) survive in the low-wage workforce, I cannot imagine. Maybe they will figure out how to condense their lives—including child-raising, laundry, romance, and meals—into the couple of hours between full-time jobs. Maybe they will take up residence in their vehicles, if they have one. All I know is that I couldn't hold two jobs and I couldn't make enough money to live on with one. And I had advantages unthinkable to many of the long-term poor—health, stamina, a working car, and no children to care for and support. Certainly nothing in my experience contradicts the conclusion of Kathryn Edin and Laura Lein, in their recent book *Making Ends Meet: How Single Mothers Survive Welfare and Low-Wage Work*, that low-wage work actually involves more hardship and deprivation than life at the mercy of the welfare state. In the coming months and years, economic conditions for the working poor are bound to worsen, even without the almost inevitable recession. As mentioned earlier, the influx of former welfare recipients into the low-skilled workforce will have a depressing effect on both wages and the number of jobs available. A general economic downturn will only enhance these effects, and the working poor will of course be facing it without the slight, but nonetheless often saving, protection of welfare as a backup.

The thinking behind welfare reform was that even the humblest jobs are morally uplifting and psychologically buoying. In reality they are likely to be fraught with insult and stress. But I did discover one redeeming feature of the most abject low-wage work—the camaraderie of people who are, in almost all cases, far too smart and funny and caring for the work they do and the wages they're paid. The hope, of course, is that someday these people will come to know what they're worth, and take appropriate action. ■

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Return of the L-Word?

By Michael Ignatieff

It seems incredible now that Lionel Trilling could have written in 1950 that "liberalism is not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition" in America. This wasn't true even then: Trilling blithely ignored the vigorous life of American conservatism and radicalism.

He also failed to foresee just how brief the liberal ascendancy would be: from Roosevelt's second inaugural in 1937 through to Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, with the Civil Rights Act of 1965 as American liberalism's last hurrah.

Since then, retreat has been the order of the day. Though not the toxic label it was earlier in the 1990's, liberalism remains the politics that dares not speak its name. In their strong electoral showing last week, the Democrats successfully depicted themselves as moderates, not liberals.

But these hedgings make for a political discourse that denies some important realities. Americans who despise the very word liberalism actually live within a polity ordered by liberal institutions, like Social Security and Medicare.

The rhetoric of American politics requires Democrats and Republicans alike to praise the free market, but every day bankers and traders actually pray that market regulators like Alan Greenspan, chairman of that eminently Rooseveltian institution, the Federal Reserve, will deliver them from the ravages of markets red in tooth and claw.

This paradox -- made familiar by John Kenneth Galbraith -- seems to do nothing to restore liberalism's prestige. Its political achievements cannot rescue its moral status. For the real obstacle to liberalism's revival is its association with moral relativism. The liberal hour ushered in the moral and sexual revolution of the 1960's, only to be devoured by it after 1968. It was then, as Middle America reacted to the new-found freedoms of its sons and daughters, that Richard Nixon became the first politician to discover that he could ride all the way to the White House by equating liberalism with permissiveness.

But this, too, was paradoxical: even as Americans voted for politicians who ran against the 60's and all of that decade's supposedly diabolical experimentation, the larger culture slowly embraced the permissive revolution: freer divorce,

more sexual explicitness, more tolerant attitudes toward homosexuality. The liberal causes of the 60's won out, and American society is more inclusive and open as a result.

But liberalism paid the price of losing its own moral legitimacy. It was seen rightly as being both too permissive on the one hand and too dismissive on the other of the family values of most Americans.

In retrospect, the reasons for the conservatives' ascendancy in the 1970's seem clear. They had proved more adept than liberals at understanding the anxiety and unease of a generation living through rapid moral change. Conservatism had the virtue of nostalgic simplicity: it preached "values," preferably ones with divine sanction. In doing so, it effectively associated liberalism with relativism, with "anything goes."

But in the late 1990's, the conservative counter-revolution is encountering difficulties of its own. "Values" are anything but the rigid moral compass that conservatives suppose. For values conflict. Even for the devout and the faithful, there is no rock of ages to cling to.

As the legal philosopher Ronald Dworkin has persuasively argued, the abortion issue is not a debate, as conservatives contend, between those who hold life sacred and those who don't. It is a furious, even violent confrontation between people who believe equally in the special importance of human life but derive radically different practical conclusions from that shared moral premise.

Likewise, the debate about the conduct of President Clinton is not, as many conservatives claim, between those who don't care about immorality and those who do. It is between those who believe that private immorality forfeits public trust and those who do not. And if public immorality -- that is, perjury -- is in question, the debate is between those who believe equivocation in any court of law is wrong and those who believe exceptions can be made if the court in question is actually a witch trial.

In the largest terms, this is a debate not between relativists and conservatives, but between pluralists and absolutists. Liberals, I would argue, should be pluralists, not relativists: their claim should be not that objective standards of moral behavior don't exist, but that public and private standards conflict.

Moral judgment is inescapable, but it requires, at a minimum, an understanding of which moral standards are relevant to which arena. Judging from the failure of the moral absolutists to convict President Clinton in the court of American opinion, it appears that most Americans are practicing pluralists. That is, they believe there are absolute standards of private and public conduct but they do not suppose that these both point in the same direction.

They know that there have been good Presidents who have been less than perfect human beings, and fine fathers and husbands who turned out to be indifferent Presidents. They think that while lying is a bad thing, not all lies are equally bad. A majority appear to believe that the stability of government institutions is jeopardized if the law becomes the instrument of politically motivated moral absolutism.

If this is how Americans are making their moral choices, it would appear that the times are right for liberalism, for a revival of a political mode of thought that takes its stand not only against moral absolutism and its intolerance, but also against its absurd and sometimes violent simplifications.

Yet simplifications are seductive and pluralism is complex. Liberalism's revival does not just require politicians with the courage to talk to Americans in a manner that respects their moral intelligence. It also requires an intellectual revival that gets the distinction between relativism and pluralism clear.

Conservatives will insist that the one is just a fancy name for the other. But as Isaiah Berlin argued in "Two Concepts of Liberty," a relativist believes morals are a matter of taste and inclination; a pluralist believes adherence to moral standards is not a matter of taste but the very definition of what it is to be a human being.

The mistake absolutists make is to suppose, first, "that all values can be graded on one scale," in Berlin's words, and, second, that values must have divine sanction. Not so, Berlin insisted: "Principles are not less sacred because their duration cannot be guaranteed." We choose one moral principle over another. Every choice entails loss, but the act of free choice is what defines us as human.

Liberalism has always derived its authority and persuasiveness from this vision of human nobility, from this idea that our dignity is derived from the exercise of moral choice. Moral absolutism fears this act of choice and fears the freedom required by the act of choosing. Liberalism depends, ultimately, on faith in human choosing, and a liberal revival depends on recovering the inspiration of this central conviction.

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Color Codes

Moving
beyond
Clinton's
race initia-
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Black-White
reality and
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bridges

BY MARY FRANCES **BERRY**

PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON'S YEARLONG RACE INITIATIVE was a political success, but it did not deal with the fundamental issues. It missed the central crisis in U.S. racial tensions, rooted in the four-centuries-old interactions between Blacks and Whites. This long experience affects the progress of not just African-Americans, but other people of color, as well.

"Taking America's Pulse," a recent poll by the National Conference, a human relations organization, found that people of color share negative attitudes toward Whites but they express even more bigoted views toward each other than Whites do. These attitudes, evolving from the long-term effects of color consciousness, cause conflict between and among people of color and Whites along the rapidly moving color line. The origins of color consciousness and its pervasiveness as a tool of subordination explains why ending racism against African-Americans should be a goal of anyone interested in eradicating racism for everyone.

The president was right to use the prestige of his office to start the initiative. Any effort to end the United States' racial conflict should be applauded. The initiative did increase conversations about race, aired anti-prejudice public service announcements, and produced a report of accomplishments and recommendations to the president titled, "One America in the 21st Century." However, the One America dialogues drew, for the most part, not heated discussion from dissonant voices, but the already converted. The recommendations, as it turned out, were mostly recycled and repackaged Clinton policy proposals on work

and education, and pleas for more funding for civil rights enforcement, which all were ignored by the Republican Congress.

When commissions and boards make history, it has little to do with the specificity of their recommendations, but whether they reflect the temper of the times and set the tone of debate for years to come. The Truman 1946 Committee on Civil Rights did this by so committing the Democratic Party to civil rights for African-Americans that one almost immediate result was a Dixiecrat walkout to support Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.) for president in 1948. The Kerner Commission explained how we became two nations, one Black and one White, and placed on the agenda for a generation, gap-closing government programs and private sector activities to tear down the walls between those nations.

If there is any overriding theme in the report from the Advisory Board to the President's Initiative on Race, it is that African-Americans are just another group of "colored people" with no special place in the pantheon of those who have suffered from subordination, and are at the periphery of discussion. The report's focus presents both opportunities and problems for African-Americans.

The limited treatment of African-Americans is ironic given the enduring joblessness and poverty in the poorest Black communi-

pleading. We may be concerned about DWB, driving while Black, or being black jelly beans in a jar, but politicians and the public are only sporadically interested at best. Just as the Kerner report caused private institutions, including the media, to become more inclusive of Black people, the Clinton initiative gives the seal of approval to a shift in focus to emphasize the inclusion of anyone but African-Americans in well-paying jobs, entrepreneurship and educational opportunities, since Black people have had "their turn."

The increasing conflict between and among people of color in Los Angeles is one version of our future. As Ron Wakabayashi, executive director of the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations, said in an article in *The Washington Post*, "Politicians like to say that diversity is our greatest strength. That is b.s. Diversity simply is. The core question is how do we extract its assets while minimizing its liabilities?" Unless we are careful, instead of cementing coalition politics, different groups of minorities and poor Whites will be pitted each against the other, fighting over crumbs while well-off White America continues to feast at the table. The proof of the pudding will be in the eating.

Any discussion of race is necessarily tricky, especially in a multiracial society, but the management problems that plagued the

Unless we are careful, different groups of minorities and poor Whites will be pitted against the other, fighting over crumbs.

ties. It also is ironic because Black people form the most reliable voting constituency for the president's party. Furthermore, the chair of the Advisory Board, John Hope Franklin; the staff executive director, Judith Winston; and Harvard scholar Christopher Edley Jr., who was tasked to help write Clinton's reactions to the initiative to the American people, are all African-American.

The de-emphasis on African-American concerns is curious for other reasons. It accords with changing demographics, but also the work of a long line of Black conservatives, including Thomas Sowell, the "Clarences" — Pendleton and Thomas — Robert L. Woodson, Shelby Steele and Johnny-come-lately Ward Connerly. They successfully echoed White conservative and neo-liberal claims that racism has little or nothing to do with problems of upward mobility that African-Americans experience. African-Americans have not been in vogue in policy discussions for quite some time, except for self-help projects and admonitions to be responsible, no matter how responsible we believe we already are being. The important concerns of responsible fatherhood, motherhood and childhood comprise the policy agenda devoted to African-Americans. Racial biases in housing, employment, health care and other fields that constrain the ability to be "responsible" no longer attract serious policy interest. The federal courts are practically closed to us by hostile Reagan- and Bush-appointed judges. Victory has been declared and the guns spiked. Foundations and politicians have moved on.

In any discussion about racism, beyond a brutal murder such as what occurred in Jasper County, Texas, the predicament of African-Americans risks being rejected as insignificant or a case of special

president's initiative from the beginning were almost fatal. There was the frightened "deer in the headlights" reaction to the blind-siding by Connerly and other conservatives early in the process. Also, the board seemed unable to articulate positions on contentious issues, or to control the media message and spin on its endeavor. It also faced public disinterest in the dialogues unless the president was involved or the subject was a protest by some groups or persons claiming they had been excluded. Then the protesters attracted more attention than they would have if they had been participants in the first place.

The race initiative became useful politically to the president as he became entangled in the Lewinsky-Starr crisis. The African-American elites gathered at Martha's Vineyard who stood up for him on the anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington, cited the initiative as one of his accomplishments. The Vineyard vacationers' support was in accord with the 94 percent of African-Americans who approved of Clinton in the darkest days of his travails when only 60 percent of Whites did. Black America knew that Clinton was the first president to acknowledge publicly that one of his best friends was a Black man, Vernon E. Jordan Jr. Besides, rumors of Clinton's sexual escapades have long evoked high-fives in African-American barbershops across the land.

Perhaps the political context of the initiative led to the treatment of people of color as if they were the targets of a political campaign. On the campaign trail, politicians join Mexican-American and Chicano communities at a Cinco de Mayo festival, where they eat burritos and speak a few words of Spanish; go to a Black church on Sunday and preach, or speak after the sermon, and eat

sweet potato pie; then they're off to celebrate Chinese New Year in Chinatown and march in the St. Patrick's Day parade. This approach may win votes, but it is not the stuff of which reconciliation and racial unity are made.

Perhaps the media characterization of the Advisory Board as being in conflict over whether it was for or against a dead-end dichotomy of discussing Blacks and Whites, or discussing other people of color and Whites, interfered with consideration of the hard issues. I can understand the difficulty. When I tried to explain why focusing on the long history of interactions between Blacks and Whites is necessary to understand racism in general, I was widely misinterpreted as being only interested in African-Americans instead of other people of color [see *Emerge*, September 1997]. Defensiveness may have led the initiative to discuss African-American problems as historical, thus minimizing the present-day impact of long-standing Black and White interactions on everyone, including other people of color.

Our experiences of interactions between African-Americans and Whites are at the heart of our nation's racial woes. They provide a vantage point for understanding that the essence of racism is color consciousness, which serves as a marker for social and

one modification: to point out that the virus is so pervasive that immigrants may be infected whether their native country has a Black population or not.

Becoming White means distancing one's self from blackness, which means overcoming inequality, legal exclusion, and moving up the political and economic ladder from powerlessness. African-Americans as the quintessential purveyors of blackness find it difficult to make the leap. Individuals such as Michael Jordan and Sammy Sosa, who is Dominican, are exceptions because of their celebrated achievements. They prove the rule. They can come closer to White privilege and more easily transcend color boundaries and avoid some of the burden of race.

By discussing people of color without fuller analysis of the roots of color consciousness and its consequences, the race initiative has made it necessary for the rest of us to do some hard analytical work. We must construct joint efforts to achieve specific proposals and launch a unified attack on color consciousness. Our efforts in the policy arena will be affected by how people will identify themselves given rates of intermarriage and line-crossing and the permission to use more than one racial designation in the census. Just as Tiger Woods defines himself as Cablinasian, many African-Americans could

Our experiences of interactions between African-Americans and Whites are at the heart of our nation's racial woes.

economic inequality. Whenever Europeans have encountered darker people, this phenomenon has existed, and it continues to influence race relations, economic opportunity, and how we see ourselves and how others see us. Among American Indians, redness serves as a marker of conquered status, targets for extermination and subordination. As a consequence, the Indian use of tribal sovereignty to profit from casinos or to maintain fishing rights is necessarily unpalatable to those Whites who see them as becoming empowered and, therefore, accuse Indians of wanting "special rights." Among African-Americans, blackness has marked our status as inferior from the beginning.

In Latin American and Caribbean countries with large Black and/or Indian populations, a fair-skinned elite perpetuated by race-mixing or immigration has always run things, and darker people are poorer and discriminated against. Deference to White privilege is also a well-known phenomenon in Asian societies. Among Hispanics or Latinos and Asian Americans in the United States, the darker ones are generally the most subordinated and deprived and the least likely to be literate in English. They may not be literate even in their own indigenous languages.

Scholars, including David R. Roediger in *The Wages of Whiteness* and Noel Ignatiev in *How the Irish Became White*, have explained how color consciousness has played out among every group to live in this country. They discuss the phenomenon of how immigrants from Europe overcame powerlessness to become White and distance themselves from blackness. Camille Cosby's discussion of how Mikhail Markhasev, who was convicted of murdering her son, Ennis, was infected with racism needs only

define themselves as Cablaindian, a composite of African, Caucasian and slaveholder and Indian ancestry. Any analysis of color consciousness also necessarily requires inclusion of the impact of gender roles, language, religion and class.

Understanding the perpetuation of color consciousness can help us figure out how to address disparities in social and economic opportunity. It also can help us avoid policies that will worsen the inequality marked by color, which solidifies class distinctions within communities of people of color. Getting our share for any group must include leaving no person behind in the chance for opportunity. It requires understanding the role color — and its extreme signifiers, Black and White — plays in undergirding inequality, not only in the United States, but globally. Otherwise, we unfairly reduce the chances for everyone to become productive citizens and consign them to deprivation and dependency.

In important ways, the president's initiative on race tells us how retrograde are the times. It takes us back to Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma*, published in 1944. Finding a raging conflict between the American creed of democracy and racism, Myrdal ratified an approach that greatly emphasized the role of educating Americans about race, getting the facts straight and making clear that racism is a moral issue. He concluded that if the nation became educated enough to practice its creed, then the problem of race would dissipate to the benefit of everyone. We apparently are again defining the issue as the need to educate Americans about race, but this time about Indians, Asian Americans, Latinos and African-Americans, without acknowledging the diversity of their experiences.

However, the future sometimes has in store the unexpected. *An American Dilemma* did not even recognize the importance of contemporary events such as A. Philip Randolph's March on Washington, the African-American Don't Buy Where You Can't Work campaigns and the burgeoning opposition that later erupted in the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Civil Rights Movement. Similarly, as we ponder the future of One America, the race initiative has not considered the meaning of the Million Man March leading to the Million Woman March, the Black Radical Congress, the two youth marches, the disinterest in mainstream politics and the alienation and separatist focus in much of Black America.

But the president's attention to issues of race has gone beyond the race initiative. In addition to comfortably socializing with African-Americans, he has used patronage to make diverse appointments of Asian Americans, Latinos and African-Americans. For Blacks, he has gone well beyond the traditional civil rights or poverty policy jobs. But an important question for the Black community to ask is: How much difference have the appointments made in improving opportunities for the majority of African-Americans or other people of color?

In his hope to make change in a time of no major civil upheaval around race, the president sought to go against history. As surely historian John Hope Franklin has told him, the country only deals seriously with race when there is a disruptive crisis, a Civil Rights Movement or riots, because the country doesn't want to deal seriously with race. The limitations of the initiative underscore this truth.

We have hard realities to face within the Black community: finding ways to improve K-12 education, to amass capital and increase entrepreneurship, to improve health care, which should

include confronting the scourge of AIDS, and to step up efforts to provide opportunity generally for poor African-Americans. The courts continue to mangle civil rights measures targeted toward Black America, and the president has not appointed enough judges to change their direction.

The college-going rates of African-Americans in predominantly White public institutions that have ended affirmative action and in Southern Black public colleges, which have been forced to change their admissions requirements, have declined. The attacks on affirmative action, and the hypocrisy of state maintenance of inferior public education in predominantly Black schools, while imposing admission requirements in public colleges that they know students cannot meet, amounts to a pincers movement against Black education. Soon, we will go back to the old days when African-Americans could only attend private Black colleges and a few White private institutions, while paying taxes to support state public higher education from which they were excluded.

Clinton deserves praise for developing his race initiative. As countless Civil Rights Commission reports have shown, there is no substitute for presidential leadership.

However, if we want to keep race and social and economic inequality on the frontburner, we must, in coalition with others who have similar goals, act to make neglect impossible. We must acknowledge the role color plays in outcomes between Blacks and Whites, and outcomes between people of different colors within the Asian American and Latino communities. We also must reject all efforts to pit one group against the other, which with changing demographics will become an irresistible temptation for some politicians. The race initiative missed these connections, but our future depends on understanding them. ■



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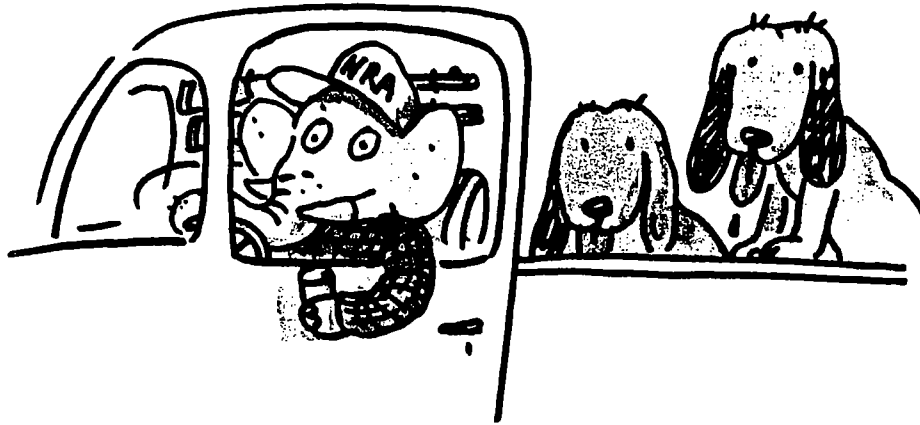
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Christopher Caldwell, “The Southern Captivity of the GOP”

THE SOUTHERN CAPTIVITY OF THE GOP

by CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL



In a geographic and cultural box, with political demography tilting against it, the Republican Party is "an obsolescent one," argues the author, a senior writer for the conservative Weekly Standard

SHORTLY before the 1994 midterm elections, when House Minority Leader Newt Gingrich began talking about a coming Republican takeover of Congress and outlining plans for his speakership, David Dreyer, a White House aide, remarked, "He's done Lord Acton one better. He's corrupted by power he doesn't yet have." After Election Day it was Dreyer who had egg on his face. The Republicans did take over the House and the Senate, controlling the two for the first time since 1955—and by a broad enough margin that they seemed likely to hold both houses indefinitely. Everyone spoke of a "revolution"—both politicians and the wider public, both those who favored and those who feared one. Pundits resurrected the decades-old metaphor of the political analyst Samuel Lubell, according to which America has essentially a one-and-a-half-party system. One party is the sun, illuminating all the planets. The other is the moon, giving off only reflected light. For the first time since before FDR's election, it looked as if Republicans were the sun and Democrats the moon.

Today Dreyer and others who scoffed at a Republican ascendancy seem likely to have the last laugh. There has indeed been a movement to the right on some issues, but it has not translated into a partisan shift. A stunning mid-1997 ABC/*Washington Post* poll, asking voters "Which party do you trust more to . . .," showed the Democrats besting the Republicans on practically all issues, including such Republican staples as taxes, crime, and budget balancing.

<u>Trust more to . . .</u>	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Improve education	51%	30%
Help middle class	51	30
Handle economy	43	39
Hold down taxes	41	38
Balance budget	39	36
Handle crime	38	34
Handle foreign affairs	38	40
Reform campaign finance	34	31
Maintain strong defense	32	50

Suddenly it looked as if either the 1994 election was a fluke or the 104th Congress had done something dramatically wrong. The Republicans have narrowed the gap in party registration until they're only four percentage points behind the Democrats (39–35), but the Democrats still lead on the issues. The Republicans hold a majority in Congress, but that Congress has been trumped by a Democratic President on every major policy initiative of the past three years. And when a midwinter sex scandal initially sees the President's job-approval ratings *rising* to about 70 percent, the Republicans have cause for worry. There is now no sense in which they are the sun of American politics. Far from it: they are a majority giving rise to second thoughts among those who made them one.

This is something the Republicans seem not to realize. Their party was thrashed in the 1996 national elections. In presidential politics they were stuck on the Goldwater-McGovern-Mondale landslide-loser plateau of 40 percent, as they had

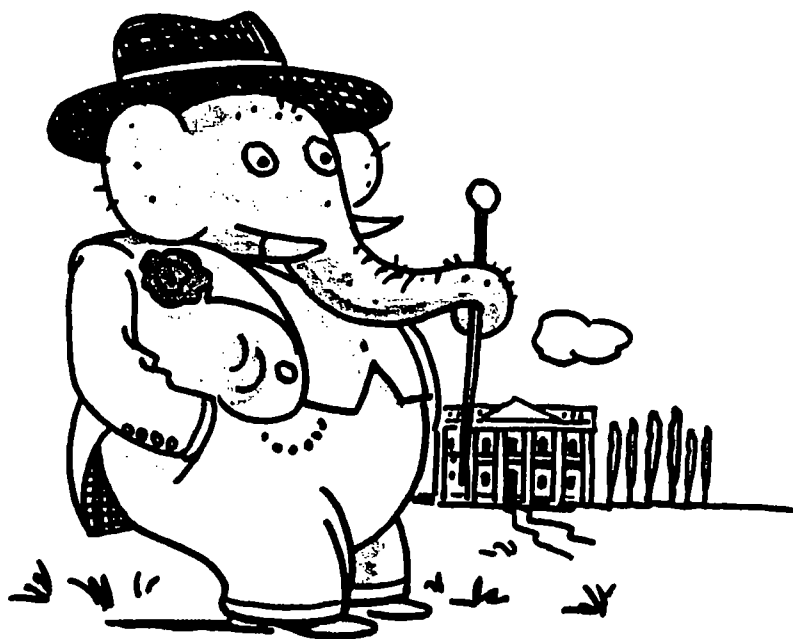
its corner. Still others—among them such Class of '94 congressional firebrands as Steve Largent, of Oklahoma; Linda Smith, of Washington; and Mark Neumann, of Wisconsin—say that the party has ignored centrist, Reform Party-style outrage and made itself a campaign-finance-swilling incumbency-protection machine. Another line of thinking is that the party has merely been victimized by accidents of personality: the mysterious ability of Newt Gingrich to generate loathing and of Bill Clinton to generate support.

Many, if not most, Republicans view the 1994 election as a mandate stolen from them by accidents of leadership and the collusion of the press and other "elite" institutions. In this reading Bill Clinton lifted "their" issues by mouthing conservative positions on the budget and welfare reform, and the credulous media have abetted Clinton's public-relations war of "micro-initiatives" such as school uniforms, the V-chip, portable phones for neighborhood-watch groups, and various small education proposals.

Republican problems go deeper than that, however. The party faces a crisis of confidence that has many symptoms—repudiation in the most sophisticated parts of the country, widespread distrust of the Republican leadership, an inability to speak coherently on issues. All of them grow out of the same root cause: a vain search to rediscover the formula that made that unformulaic President, Ronald Reagan, so broadly appealing—even beloved. Congressional Republicans triumphed decisively in 1994 on such Reaganite issues as free trade, welfare reform, and shrinking the government. But thanks to a deficit-dissolving economy and a dwindling memory of the Cold War, those is-

issues were of declining importance even then, and they have given way to a bipartisan consensus. "Consensus," of course, is only another way of describing the issues that have been taken *off* the table. What remains for the party to talk about? On first thought, not much. The Republican strategist Ed Gillespie says, "We're like the dog that caught the bus."

Now that there is no longer any force on the political landscape to challenge their general principles, the Republicans are clinging to power, even as they grow confused about what exactly they are supposed to do with it. They are infuriating voters by blaming them at every turn for the party's failure to win their hearts. In other words, the Republicans are looking more and more like the Democrats of the 1970s and 1980s, and less and less like the party that overthrew them.



been in 1992. They lost nine seats in Congress. Yet the party is approaching the 1998 election as if it won the last time out. Republicans of all persuasions view their party's problems as temporary, remediable through either ideological fine-tuning or image buffing and spin. Certain Republicans—particularly cosmopolitan governors on the East and West Coasts, such as Christine Todd Whitman, of New Jersey, and Pete Wilson, of California—claim that the party has moved too far to the right, and that its stances on social issues, notably abortion, are driving away centrist voters. Others—particularly those at Christian organizations, such as Gary Bauer, of the Family Research Council, and James Dobson, of Focus on the Family—say it's too far left, lacking the guts to assert itself on family dissolution and related family-values issues on which the public is in

STOLEN BASES

SINCE the 1960s Republican gains at the national level have been built on two trends. One is regional—the capture of more and more southern seats. The other is sociological—the tendency of suburbanites to vote Republican. The party's 1994 majority came thanks to a gain of nineteen seats in the South. In 1996 Republicans picked up another six seats in the Old Confederacy. But that only makes their repudiation in the rest of the country the more dramatic. The party has been all but obliterated in its historical bastion of New England, where it now holds just four of twenty-three congressional seats. The Democrats, in fact, dominate virtually the entire Northeast. The Republicans lost seats in 1996 all over the upper Midwest—Michigan, Wisconsin (two seats), Iowa, and Ohio (two seats). Fatally, they lost seats in all the states on the West Coast. Their justifiable optimism about the South aside, in 1996 it became clear that the Democratic Party was acquiring regional strongholds of equal or greater strength.

As Walter Dean Burnham, a political scientist at the University of Texas, has noted, the 1996 elections almost diametrically oppose those of 1896. (See maps below.) Anyone who is today middle-aged or older was born in a country with a solidly Democratic South and a predominantly Republican Midwest and Northeast, and probably will die in a country in which the Republicans hold the Old Confederacy and the Democrats dominate from the Great Lakes to the Atlantic. In effect, the two parties have spent the twentieth century swapping regional power bases.

Since it is the southern and mountain states—the Republican base—that are adding voters, congressional seats, and electoral votes, this constituency-trading was supposed to be all gravy for the Republicans. It isn't. The bad news for the party in 1996 was not so much regional as sociological. In the suburbs—home to 40 percent of voters, by conservative esti-

mates—Clinton ran even with Bob Dole. Clinton won among eighteen- to twenty-nine-year-olds in 1996 and 1992, reversing Reagan and Bush victories among that cohort in 1984 and 1988, and he also won among Catholics, who had voted Republican in the three previous elections. (In Congress the Republicans won the Catholic vote for the first time ever in 1994; one election later they were routed, by 53 to 45 percent.)

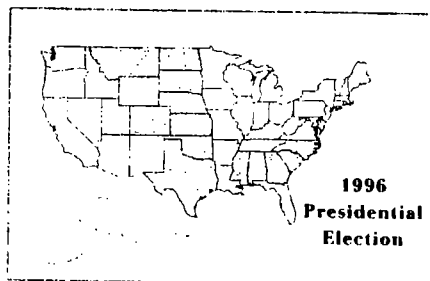
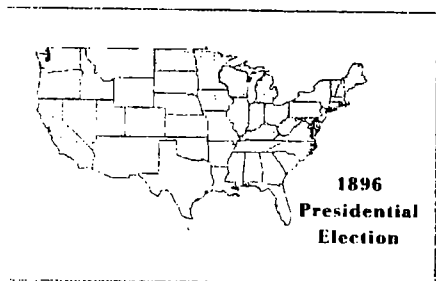
And the Republicans lost heavily among Hispanics, America's fastest-growing voting bloc, who added 1.5 million voters from 1992 to 1996, and will probably add as many again by the next presidential election. This alarming result confounded an earlier Republican optimism. Democrats who had arrogantly assumed that standard-issue minority politics would easily pull Hispanics into the party fold were proved wrong throughout the 1980s. Hispanic voters turned out to be disproportionately entrepreneurial and disproportionately receptive to Republican family-values rhetoric, and gave the party roughly a third of their votes in the three presidential

THE REPUBLICANS have reason to worry. They are a majority party that causes second thoughts among those who make them one. The Republicans are in the midst of a crisis of confidence that has many symptoms.

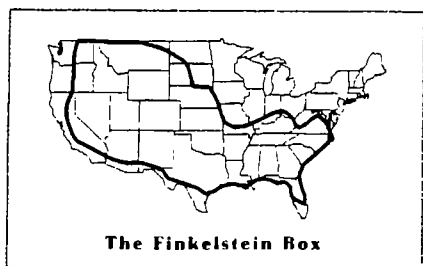
elections from 1980 to 1988. Leaving aside Puerto Ricans and Dominicans in New York, who *do* fit the Democrats' minority paradigm, the Republicans were doing better with the Hispanic vote than might be expected.

But the Republicans in the 104th Congress tried to shore up their Texas and California right wings with hostile rhetoric on immigration. They passed legislation that sought to deprive not just illegal but also legal immigrants of federal benefits. (Newt Gingrich and other Republicans backpedaled in 1997,

reversing some of the measures, but the damage was done.) And California's Proposition 187, supported by Republican Governor Pete Wilson and aimed at denying benefits to illegal immigrants, brought angry Hispanics to the polls in unprecedented numbers. Clinton took 72 percent of the Hispanic vote nationwide, including 81 percent in Arizona and 75 percent in California;



☐ Democrat (or Populist) ☐ Republican



he took 78 percent of Hispanics under thirty. He nearly split the Hispanic vote even in Florida, where 97 percent of the Cuban population voted for Reagan in 1984.

The hardening loyalty of Hispanics is a catastrophe for the Republicans' presidential prospects. According to census projections, by 2025 the country's two most populous states, California and Texas, will be 43 and 38 percent Hispanic respectively. And earlier in the decade California was hemorrhaging Republicans anyway, owing to what could be called the Fuhrman effect: a large secondary migration of older, middle-class whites who appear to have lost patience with the multiracial, multicultural society already in evidence in the state, and have moved to Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, and other more solidly Republican states of the intermountain West.

These in- and out-migrations, coupled with the growth of lifestyle liberalism and federal Democrats' careful nurturing of West Coast interests, could make California close to unwinnable for Republicans. That would put the White House, too, out of reach for a long time. The only Demo-

crat ever to win California and lose the presidency, after all, was Winfield Hancock—who was defeated by James Garfield in 1880, when the state had six electoral votes.

THE FINKELSTEIN BOX

THESE sociological and geographic shifts are part of a broad change in party allegiance. No one has been more astute in outlining its nature than the Republican consultant Arthur Finkelstein, who set the pattern for Republican triumphs in the 1980s by running aggressive, ideological campaigns that went after Democratic candidates for their uncommonsensical "liberalism"—a word that was repeated almost hypnotically in the ads and speeches he wrote. Of late Finkelstein has been criticized by some of his candidates outside the Northeast, largely for having the temerity to suggest that this message must be broadened now that liberals are drubbing Republicans on a range of new issues. These are issues on which the party has historically been silent—education, the environment, and health care, for example. The absence of a Republican voice on them helps to explain why the party has scraped up only about 40 percent of the vote for two presidential elections running.

Finkelstein uses a simple graphic device to show his Republican candidates, geographically, just how differentiated the country is. Put a pen point on Washington, D.C., and draw your way across a map of the continental United States, edging up between Iowa and Nebraska, running through the Dakotas and Montana, dropping down through Washington and Oregon and along the western border of Nevada into California, and then heading back east, with the tips of Texas and Florida south of the line. The box that results leaves you with two different political countries. (See map.) The Finkelstein Box refutes a long-standing axiom among political consultants: that as people prosper and grow more educated and cosmopolitan, they become more likely to be Republicans. In states that have their largest population centers outside the box, no Republican senatorial candidate got a majority in the last election. Inside the box no Democrat got a majority except Mary Landrieu, of Louisiana (and that barely). Although most Republican governors outside the box are pro-choice, almost every single Republican governor inside the box is pro-life.

The Republican Party is increasingly a party of the South and the mountains. The southernness of its congressional leaders—Speaker Newt Gingrich, of Georgia; House Majority Leader Dick Armey and House Majority Whip Tom DeLay, of Texas; Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, of Mississippi; Senate Majority Whip Don Nickles, of Oklahoma—only heightens the identification. There is a big problem with having a southern, as opposed to a midwestern or a California, base. Southern interests diverge from those of the rest of the country, and the southern presence in the Repub-

CORRESPONDENCE

"I hat you," my daughter writes
in her newfound mastery of phonics.
She has taken to sending me notes
from kindergarten: love notes,
joke notes, problem notes,
and now angry notes that say
I don't care about her feelings.
These notes arrive after lunch
in envelopes, like the mail,
marked by hearts or skulls.
You are "meen" she says today,
you just sit around and "rit"
and don't let me watch "moves."
Why do her notes carry more weight
than her spoken accusations?
She isn't the same child now:
she is an owner, a thief.

—TERESA CADER

lican Party has passed a "tipping point," at which it began to alienate voters from other regions.

As southern control over the Republican agenda grows, the party alienates even conservative voters in other regions. The prevalence of right-to-work laws in southern states may be depriving Republicans of the socially conservative midwestern trade unionists whom they managed to split in the Reagan years, and sending Reagan Democrats back to their ancestral party in the process. Anti-government sentiment makes little sense in New England, where government, as even those who hate it will concede, is neither remote nor unresponsive.

The most profound clash between the South and everyone else, of course, is a cultural one. It arises from the southern tradition of putting values—particularly Christian values—at the center of politics. This is not the same as saying that the Republican Party is "too far right"; Americans consistently tell pollsters that they are conservative on values issues. It is,

nual Washington marches still rankles the party's southern wing. Although he several times sent a message by phone hookup, he never once greeted them on the Mall.

Grover Norquist, the president of Americans for Tax Reform, disputes that the two wings were ever at odds, and insists that libertarians and moralists can still cohabit. And since Norquist is a key—if not *the* key—adviser to Newt Gingrich, his interpretation can be taken as a semi-official Republican understanding of what's left of Ronald Reagan's electorate. "The Reagan coalition is the Leave Us Alone coalition," Norquist says. "Tax activists want their paychecks left alone. Pro-family people want their kids left alone. Ralph Reed's constituents are not interested in running other people's lives. They don't care what odd people do in San Francisco on Saturday afternoon."

For his part, Reed, formerly the executive director of the Christian Coalition and now a Georgia-based political and

public-affairs consultant, thinks the two wings get along as well as ever. Looking at the Republican field for President in 2000, he says, "Traditional supply-siders like Steve Forbes are enthusiastically embracing the social dogma of the party. Lamar Alexander is moving to the right, guys like John Ashcroft are picking up steam, John Kasich is talking about faith in God. I see a holistic message developing." To an extent Reed is right: this is not 1963 or 1964, when the Rockefeller

wing and the Goldwater wing fought an intraparty civil war. Yet there is something more troubling going on. Every Republican candidate now has to "make his bones," to prove his good faith by declaring his unequivocal willingness to alienate the "elites" of the country. Describing the Christian right to a reporter last fall, the former Washington congressman Randy Tate, who is now the executive director of the Christian Coalition, said, "They don't just want to be given crumbs off the table and taken for granted." Far from proving Republican tolerance, the rapprochement Reed points to is merely the sound of the Republicans' cosmopolitan wing crying "Uncle."

This southern takeover is part of a natural, if paradoxical, transformation. It parallels the way the Goldwater debacle of 1964 destabilized the Democratic Party—by sending alienated northern Republican progressives into the Democrats' ranks. These progressives joined with northern urbanites to forge a party that was more to their liking, though it was too liberal for the Democratic Party's stalwart southern conservatives—and, eventually, too liberal for the nation as a whole. In like fashion, Democratic excesses since the seventies may have destabilized the Republican Party by chasing those southerners into the

THE SOUTHERN presence in the Republican Party has now passed a "tipping point."

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rather, that the Republicans have narrowly defined "values" as the folkways of one regional subculture, and have urged their imposition on the rest of the country. Again, the non-southerners who object to this style of politics may be just as conservative as those who practice it. But they are put off to see that "traditional" values are now defined by the majority party as the values of the U-Haul-renting denizens of two-year-old churches and three-year-old shopping malls.

Southerners now wag the Republican dog. How did the party let that happen?

THE PARTY

GEORGE McGOVERN BUILT

THROUGHOUT the 1980s the Reagan coalition—economic and social libertarians on the one hand, and largely Christian "social issues" voters on the other—were in rough balance. If anything, southern Christians were the low men on the Reaganite totem pole, coddled far less than tax activists in the prosperous coastal cities. That Reagan paid only lip service to pro-life activists during their an-

fold, transforming the Republican Party into a machine that is steadily becoming too conservative for the country.

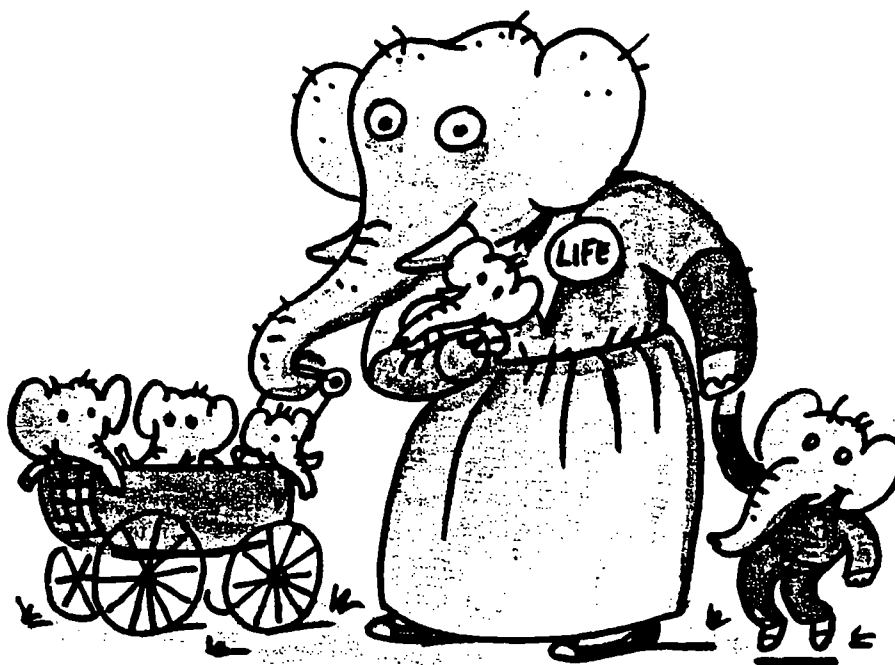
There has always been tension between the Republicans' constituent wings. What long masked it was the Cold War. The Reaganite party was never a two-part but always a three-part coalition, of social conservatives, economic conservatives, and foreign-policy hawks. The hawks' group was minuscule, but it happened that their passion (anti-communism) was shared by Christians and capitalists alike. This was a passion that Democrats—with a few notable exceptions, including Senator Scoop Jackson, of Washington—were renouncing by the mid-1970s. Foreign-policy hawkishness became a permanent electoral advantage for the Republicans, but just as important, it became the party's internal glue. When the Cold War ended, the coalition lost its last point of common ground. As one Republican consultant says, "In 1992 we go to Houston, and Jack Kemp and Pat Buchanan look up at one another and say, 'What the hell are you doing in *my* party?'"

The Republicans have been, in a word, "McGovernized." We think of McGovernization as a Democratic problem, largely because George McGovern was a South Dakota Democrat when he led a commission that reformed party structures three decades ago, increasing the importance of state primaries and thus shifting power away from compromise-oriented national conventions. Not incidentally, McGovern went on to suffer electoral humiliation in the first presidential election conducted under the reforms. The Republicans, too, soon adopted boss-proof electoral rules. These reforms were implemented just when money and television were driving politics away from "local" issues (that is, bread-and-butter ones) and toward "national" issues (that is, ideological ones). One party was bound to win and one to lose. In retrospect—and it was only the aftermath of Richard Nixon's disgrace that blinded people to it at the time—the ideological configuration of the country in the 1970s gave the Republican right a monumental advantage over the Democratic left. What was the 1976 Reagan movement if not a McGovernized groundswell?

Now the shoe is on the other foot. Overrideologization is beginning to work against the Republicans. At the 1996 convention Christian conservatives moved to make their intra-party advantage permanent and institutional, much as racial and social liberals had done before the 1972 Democratic convention. Control over appointments to the Resolutions Com-

mittee was wrested from the national chairman and given to the (largely hard-line) delegates. Organized interest groups of the values right thus grew strong enough to bend the party to their own interests, at the expense of the party's. An unstoppable McGovernesque radicalization was under way.

At a January Republican National Committee meeting near Palm Springs delegates defeated—handily, but only after much effort—an initiative to withhold campaign funds from Republicans who didn't oppose late-term, "partial-birth" abortion. It should be noted that three quarters of Americans back Republicans on the merits of the issue—it may be their single best issue at present. But the vote was not *about* partial-birth abortion, because there are only a half dozen Republican congressional candidates in the entire country who would have been affected by the initiative. If more evidence were necessary that sectional interests trump party ones, last fall the National Right to Life Committee



began running ads against *pro-life* congressmen, including the Republican Zach Wamp, of Tennessee, for supporting a campaign-finance reform that the NRLC feared would threaten its ability to raise money.

At the same time, the abortion issue illustrates that the problems of a southernized Republican Party are not simply a matter of how far right the party is. Opinion on abortion has swung sharply toward the Republican position since the controversy over partial-birth abortions began. A January ABC poll found that the statement "A woman should be able to get an abortion if she decides she wants one no matter what the reason" drew the lowest level of support (50-47) it has since early in the Reagan Administration. Even so, polls asking Americans, in effect, which party they trust more on

the subject aren't budging. Why not? Many Republican politicians complain off the record about party rhetoric on social issues. It's not the issue of abortion that's driving people away, they argue, so much as it is the broader cultural claims of those who put it forward.

In this sense, conservative Christians are to the Republican Party what blacks were to the Democrats in the 1970s: its most loyal troops, the source of its most talented activists, its moral core. For that reason they are also the main source of radicalization and overreach. The activists who in the 1970s married the Democratic Party to a caricature of black interests burdened the party with busing, affirmative action, leniency on crime—all unpopular issues. As voters began to drift away, Democrats resorted to ever-more-preposterous accusations of Republican “racism.” From there it was easy for the Republicans to taunt the Democrats into pursuing policies that taxed the patience even of moderate voters. Attacks on the Demo-

rest of the country grows alienated from the party's southern message. Most members of the party are content with this arrangement, but they're also hoping that the South can be transformed enough to keep voters elsewhere from fleeing the party in droves. “I think the South is a new South,” says the Republican strategist Arnold Steinberg, of California. “You'll see southern cities that are more progressive.”

“On the other hand,” Steinberg admits, “the North doesn't exactly realize that.”

ACLU REPUBLICANS

A GAIN, it is simplistic to see Republican politics as merely too far right, particularly at a time when the difference in total spending between Clinton's and Congress's budget proposals, for instance, is just a fraction of a percentage point. But it's understandable that voters

have found Republicans “frightening,” given the dovetailing of southern Republican anti-government rhetoric with that of right-wing terrorists. From this standpoint the two signal events of the 104th Congress were the Oklahoma City bombing, on April 19, 1995, and the government shutdowns of 1995–1996, advanced in a belligerent rhetoric of “revolution” that, according to Goeas and other pollsters, Americans distrust—and none more so than the Republicans' own base.

THE MOST destructive interest group on the right is the NRA. The Republicans' rabidly pro-gun rhetoric has put the Democrats on the side of cops and crime control, the Republicans on the side of criminals and crime.

crats for coddling “welfare queens” worked politically less because of their substance than because they goaded the Democrats into defending the worst kind of welfare abuse.

But there is an easily overlooked difference between southern Christian Republicans and black Democrats—or any Democratic group, for that matter. The great Democratic electoral liability has always been that the party is a congeries of constituencies—blacks, the welfare-dependent, Jews, union members, feminists, teachers—the loss of any one of which can cost an election. None of the individual Democratic constituencies can produce a commanding majority on its own, but for that reason none is particularly frightening, either. Southern-style Christians are a powerful bloc in a way that none of the Democratic blocs is. Ed Goeas, the president of the Tarrance Group, a Republican polling organization, routinely includes in his polls the question “Has something happened in your life that has caused a recommitment to Christ?” Forty-three percent of respondents answer yes. This is a big enough bloc to take over not just a party but a country.

The bet that Republicans are making is that the South will add congressional seats and electoral votes faster than the

On the morning that Timothy McVeigh sent hundreds of innocents to their graves, the lead story in all the major newspapers was President Clinton's disastrous speech of the night before, the low point of his entire presidency, in which he argued pathetically that he was still “relevant” to the country's politics. Clinton's numbers quickly began to turn around. Newt Gingrich's popularity, meanwhile, remained strikingly low. Gingrich called “pathetic” the media's conflation of his “revolution” and McVeigh's. But the court of public opinion is not a court of law, and politicians who show too much overlap with a force that Americans consider a genuine menace are punished for it, as the Democrats were during the Cold War.

And, like the Democrats of the seventies and eighties, the Republicans in the aftermath of Oklahoma City compounded the problem through their nitpicking libertarian indifference to Americans' fears about armed violence. In thrall to their supporters in the National Rifle Association, the Republicans were soon trying to repeal a 1994 assault-weapons ban, after a brief post-bombing breather. And what could be more like the Democrats' “coddling of criminals” circa 1975 than the Re-

publican attack on "taggants" in the 1996 terrorism bill? Congressional Republicans, in the name of the Second Amendment, fought to prevent the use of chemicals that would allow plastic explosives to be traced. This kind of procedural excuse for letting murderers walk led one analyst at the conservative Heritage Foundation to coin the term "ACLU Republicans."

An apt parallel. If Christians are the blacks of the Republican coalition, then the NRA is its ACLU. The Republicans are not yet as beholden to their special-interest groups—their marksmen, polluters, and plutocrats—as Democrats are to their teachers' unions and race agitators, their feminists and ambulance chasers. But guns are special. The bipartisan political consultant Dick Morris maintains that the single most destructive interest group on the right is the NRA. Representative Henry Hyde, an Illinois Republican, holds guns—not abortion—to blame for the gender gap. Rabidly pro-gun rhetoric has succeeded in

POINTY-HEADED REPUBLICANS

THE rhetorical corner that the Republicans got stuck in after Oklahoma City convinced many of them of what non-Republicans had known for months: that the party had a major problem in its leader, House Speaker Newt Gingrich. First, in his self-aggrandizement. Gingrich set the tone by initially accepting a multimillion-dollar book advance from HarperCollins even before the start of his speakership, a speakership in which he was planning to ask Americans to make a number of difficult sacrifices. (After an uproar he announced that he would forgo the advance.) Second, in a nails-on-the-blackboard loquacity that shows no sign of abating. Last January, outlining his "vision for America" before the Cobb County (Georgia) Chamber of Commerce, Gingrich suggested that students read the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence: "It will do all of us good if every child

begins to learn that they're endowed by the Creator and, by the way, so is the person next to them," he said. Fine, so far, even inspiring—but then came the hallmark, cannot-shut-up Gingrich touch: "... So, if you're a rapist, the person you're raping is endowed by God."

Asked at a press conference last September whether he worried that Gingrich was making headway in attacking the Internal Revenue Service, Michael McCurry, the White House press secretary, responded, "Since I think the speaker, last time I checked, is probably one institution in American political life less popular than the IRS, the more he wants to get up and talk, I guess the better off we are." He's right:

as a former college professor, Gingrich suffers from the stereotype developed by George Wallace but raised to an art by Republicans. He's a "pointy-head"—strange, abstract, condescending, with radical plans for reshaping society even though he's never had a job in the real world.

Under Gingrich's leadership the Republicans have not merely replaced the Democrats of the 1980s; they have *become* them. Gingrich was foremost among Republicans in diagnosing the corruption of the incumbency-protection system that Democratic majorities had consolidated in the wake of Watergate. The Democrats created ever-proliferating subcommittees, controlling ever-more-capricious regulations, to coerce big political donors into giving the party a campaign-finance monopoly. From 1973 on Gingrich called the system



putting the Democrats on the side of the cops and crime control, Republicans on the side of criminals and crime. Suddenly, in the wake of Oklahoma City, Americans noticed that it was conservatives, not liberals, who assailed the FBI and railed against putting 100,000 cops on the streets. It was the NRA, not the ACLU, that was raising money by attacking the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms as "jackbooted thugs." Today it is the right, not the left, on which suspicion falls first whenever a bomb goes off. The identification of Gingrich with McVeigh may have been excessive, but there was no denying that sometime since the Reagan Administration the Republicans had replaced the Democrats as the To-Hell-in-a-Handbasket Party, the party more congenial to haters of America.

a "dictatorship." But he owes his rise not to his diagnosis of the system but to his mastery of it. Last year Gingrich was hit with a \$300,000 fine for using tax-exempt donations for political purposes and for giving false information to the House Ethics Committee. And since coming to power Gingrich's Republicans have been inclined to inhabit, rather than demolish, the corrupt edifice that the Democrats built. Whip Tom DeLay is said to keep lists of "friendly" and "unfriendly" PACs, and has made clear to lobbyists that they will have to send more-conservative operatives to Capitol Hill if they want to get business done.

For much of his tenure Gingrich's approval ratings have hovered in the twenties, even dropping into the teens at times, and the Republican Party suffers to the extent that he's viewed as a national leader. Although profile-oriented news media have certainly played a role in identifying the party with its least popular member, Gingrich bears the lion's

ganomics, and however haphazardly it may have been implemented, its central insight—that beyond a certain level taxes retard investment, hinder economic growth, and lead to declining tax revenues—was merely common sense. At the beginning of the Reagan Administration taxes were indeed at such a level—70 percent for top earners. Today, with top marginal rates in the 30s, they're not. In a climate like this not only do tax cuts always produce less revenue, but modest tax hikes, such as the ones in Clinton's 1993 budget, produce more. Particularly now that U.S. interest rates are highly competitive in a rapidly globalizing capital market, tax cuts can no longer be justified on supply-side grounds. With the budget back in balance (owing partly to Clinton's rate hikes for top earners), and with voters leery of going back into the red, tax cuts are hard to defend on political grounds, too.

There is, however, a way that Republicans can keep promising to cut taxes. The old-fashioned way: by cutting spending. This should play to a Republican strength, because cutting spending means shrinking government, which has always been the noblest and most stirring part of the Republican philosophy, because it means giving people more freedom—and, arguably, not just economic freedom. In 1994 the Republicans promised exactly that with the Contract With America, the list of ten propositions—tax cuts, social-

EVEN IF the Republicans were serious about shrinking government (and they are not), there are good structural reasons that people would begin to desert the party despite accepting its small-government message.

share of blame. Early in the 1980s, after all, the Republicans sought to forge precisely such a direct identification between Tip O'Neill and the Democratic Party. It didn't work, because O'Neill explicitly rejected it, saying that he was elected only by his constituents. Which is true. It's true of Gingrich, too. But Gingrich has treated descriptions of him as the Republican "leader" as an opportunity to compare himself to Churchill, Eisenhower, and FDR, as the former representative Susan Molinari remarked in her recent book.

THE FORBES POSTCARD

IT is taxes and spending, the Republicans' bread and butter, that best show how superannuated the party's agenda is. Just as the Democratic Party fell apart in the seventies and eighties when it could add no more to its proudest achievement, the social safety net, the Republicans are finding that their tax revolution is complete and they have no more reforms to offer the public that are sensible even on their own terms.

However much the Democrats may have derided Rea-

service cuts, and such government reforms as term limits—announced as a manifesto six weeks before the 104th Congress was voted into office. There were two problems with the contract. First, two thirds of Americans didn't know it existed. Second, Republican polling, done by Frank Luntz, had been fraudulently presented to the public as showing that the contract commanded 60 percent support in all its particulars. An NBC/*Wall Street Journal* poll, in fact, found that people disagreed, by 45 to 35 percent, "with most of what the GOP House is proposing to do."

The structural reforms in the contract were the most popular of its items—although all the Republicans promised to do was to bring them to a vote. The Republicans never succeeded in passing the electoral reforms (like term limits) explicit in the contract. Nor could they have, as they well knew, given the impossibility of winning enough Senate votes. What's more, running as the "revolutionary" overthrowers of a corrupt system tends to produce self-delegitimizing victories. If the reform-minded "Perot voters" who played such a big role in the Republicans' 1994 victory were preoccupied with systemic—not economic or cultural—mat-

ters, then the very fact that the Republicans *could* get elected to a majority robbed the party of an issue.

It was the small-government part of the contract that Gingrich publicized and pursued most forcefully. In a series of maneuvers that owed much to his dismal tactical judgment, the new Republican majority frightened voters with what appeared to be a recklessly anti-government agenda. Most famous were the two government shutdowns in the winter of 1995–1996, but there were smaller confrontations as well: over school lunches, whose federal subsidies the Republicans wanted to eliminate; over disaster relief to the flooded Midwest, which Republicans held up to win budget concessions; over tax cuts that almost exactly matched Medicare cuts . . . These minor incidents mobilized much of the American public on behalf of a cause it didn't know it espoused: keeping government roughly the same size.

Gingrich had maneuvered the Republicans into a posi-

ther they had been disgraceful panders all along or they *were* just as reckless as their opponents had said. They suddenly had the worst of both worlds. They were indeed too far to the right for much of the country on social issues. But they were too far to the left for the base that had sacrificed so much to bring them to this point.

To be fair, even if the Republicans were serious about shrinking government (and they're not), there are good structural reasons that people would begin to desert the party despite accepting its small-government message. There must be a reason that countries all over the world have demanded reforms in their welfare states—and entrusted the *more statist* parties, which created the rickety structures in the first place, to enact those reforms. The reason may be this: A welfare state that funds itself on a pay-as-you-go basis, as all welfare states do, creates a "vesting problem." Voters, even voters who think of the Great Society as a con

game and a wretched investment, are on the hook for somewhere between a quarter and half of the money they've earned in their lives. The costs are already sunk. The benefits, however, are in most cases delayed until retirement. Voters will thus be inclined to look kindly on the party that promises to defend the benefits they've already paid for, and to look askance at the party that says, "Just trust me." Particularly when that party is led by a pointy-headed, never-met-a-pay-

roll academic like Newt Gingrich.

The Republicans' loss on the Contract With America set up a chain reaction of political catastrophe. When they gave up small government, they gave up any credible tax plan as well. Too bad: tax cuts were the part of Republicanism that *everyone* loved, provided the deficit was kept in check. When the Republicans can no longer promise tax cuts, they're left with only the most abrasive aspects of the Reagan message, kept under wraps throughout the 1980s: the southern morals business. If the Republicans didn't believe in shrinking government, they didn't believe in the freedom that it was supposed to promote—which made it much harder to argue that their moral agenda was being advanced in the name of live and let live. And what did they have besides the moral agenda? A grab bag of minor issues dredged up from 1988: school choice, the Strategic Defense Initiative, tort reform, abortion. Worthy issues all, but none of them capable of winning elections.

So the Republicans, unable to promise tax cuts credibly, have decided to promise them *incredibly*. What's new is the language: regressivizing taxes is now couched in terms

SUCCESSFUL PARTIES create their own monsters. Reaganomics helped to create a mass upper-middle class, a national culture of childless yuppies who want gay rights, bike trails, and smoke-free restaurants.

tion where either they stood for the noblest kind of self-reliance and freedom or they stood for nothing. As soon as self-reliance was shown to be a bit less popular than Frank Luntz's bogus polling had assured them it would be, they decided they stood for nothing. There were still plenty of opportunities to carve out positions defending freedom against Democratic depredations. But the Republicans wanted none of it. Look at cigarettes: for all the money the party has received from tobacco interests, it is now seemingly impossible to find a Republican who will publicly disassociate himself from the largely Democratic campaign to regulate smoking. Look at affirmative action, the linchpin of the Democratic Party's monopoly on black votes: a petrified Gingrich was soon trying to bottle up in committee a bill that would have abolished it. In 1996 the Republicans chose as their presidential nominee Bob Dole, the archetypal stalwart of liberal-Republican support for the welfare state.

The Republicans have been on the defensive ever since. If they would abandon in a matter of months what they had proclaimed to be the heart and soul of their mission, then ei-

of abolishing the IRS and instituting a flat tax that you can file by filling out a postcard. Of course, since investment income is exempt from taxes under most flat-tax plans, the program is destined to be popular only until some Democratic strategist writes an ad showing that Steve Forbes would pay zero taxes on his enormous stock portfolio. The old Republican program to abolish estate taxes is advanced as the abolition of the "death tax." Even on entitlement reform, Gingrich's talk of "privatizing" Social Security has now yielded to rhetoric about giving taxpayers "personal accounts."

This is little more than a marriage of Reaganite issues—on which the Republicans have already won their victory—to Clintonite sweet talk. The Republicans would like to think that Americans are the dupes of a lecherous Arkansas sleazeball, just as the Democrats in the 1980s saw voters as gulled by a senile B-movie warmonger. But Clinton's success, like Reagan's, has to do with American beliefs and the extent to which he embodies them and his opponents do not.

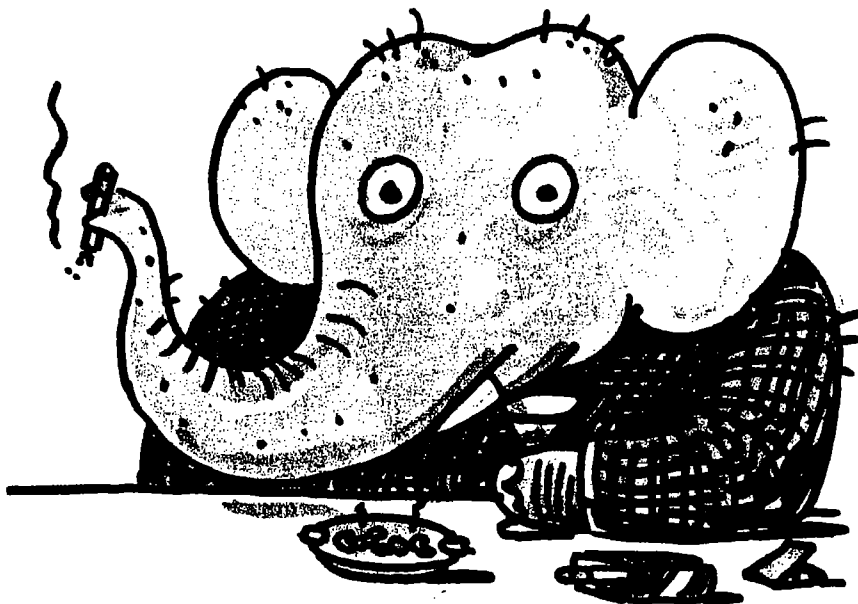
THE HILLARY CLUSTER

THERE is an ideological component to Clinton's success and the Republicans' failure. The end of the Cold War, the increasing significance of information technology, and the growth of identity politics have caused a social revolution since the badly misunderstood 1980s. It's difficult to tell exactly what is going on, but in today's politics such subjects for discussion as Communist imperialism and welfare queens have been replaced by gay rights, women in the workplace, environmentalism, and smoking. On those issues the country has moved leftward. In 1984 the Republicans held a convention that was at times cheerily anti-homosexual, and triumphed at the polls. In 1992 the party was punished for a Houston convention at which Pat Buchanan made his ostensibly less controversial remarks about culture war. Reagan's Interior Secretary James Watt once teasingly drew a distinction between "liberals" and "Americans" while discussing water use, and pushed a plan to allow oil drilling on national wildlife refuges. By 1997 the New Jersey Republican Party was begging its leaders to improve the party's image by joining the Sierra Club.

This is in part a story of how successful parties create their own monsters. Just as Roosevelt's and Truman's labor legis-

lation helped Irish and Polish and Italian members of the working class move to the suburbs (where they became Republicans), Reaganomics helped to create a mass upper-middle class, a national culture of childless yuppies who want gay rights, bike trails, and smoke-free restaurants. One top Republican consultant estimates that 35 to 40 percent of the electorate now votes on a cluster of issues created by "New Class" professionals—abortion rights, women's rights, the environment, health care, and education. He calls it the "Hillary cluster." The political theorist Jean Bethke Elshtain calls it, more revealingly, "real politics."

And with this new landscape of issues Republicans aren't even on the map. Because of the Reagan victory, the Democrats went through the period of globalization and the end of communism amid self-doubt and soul-searching. The experience left them a supple party that quickly became familiar with the Hillary cluster. Bill Clinton's ideology here is



necessarily an inchoate one, and in his heart of hearts he may be to the left of where the country is. But he is the first President to understand that the Hillary cluster is not on one side or the other of a partisan fault line (and that is his greatest contribution to American politics). The American people are not "for" or "against" gay rights. They overwhelmingly say they favor equal rights for gays—but then draw the line at gays in the military. They're for AIDS-research funding—but think gays are pushing their agenda too fast. Americans aren't "for" or "against" environmentalism. They believe that global warming is going on—but waffle on whether major steps should be taken to block it. They have shown a tolerance for paying more taxes to protect the environment, but few list it as their No. 1 concern when asked by pollsters.

Such jagged political fault lines make Americans' ideology look ambiguous by old definitions. In fact, the Boston University sociologist Alan Wolfe doubts whether the old polarity of "conservatives" and "liberals" is any longer meaningful, at least on the increasingly important cultural issues. The big question is whether this blending of conservatives and liberals is happening at the party level—whether President Clinton has effected a wholesale change in his party. Ed Goetas and other Republican pollsters say there's no indication that Clinton is enticing people back to the Democrats. The best evidence, however, from 1996 exit polls is that the Democrats are no longer a liberal party—or at least they are far less liberal than the Republicans are conservative. Whereas 58 percent of Republicans identify themselves as conservative, only a third of Democrats identify themselves as liberal.

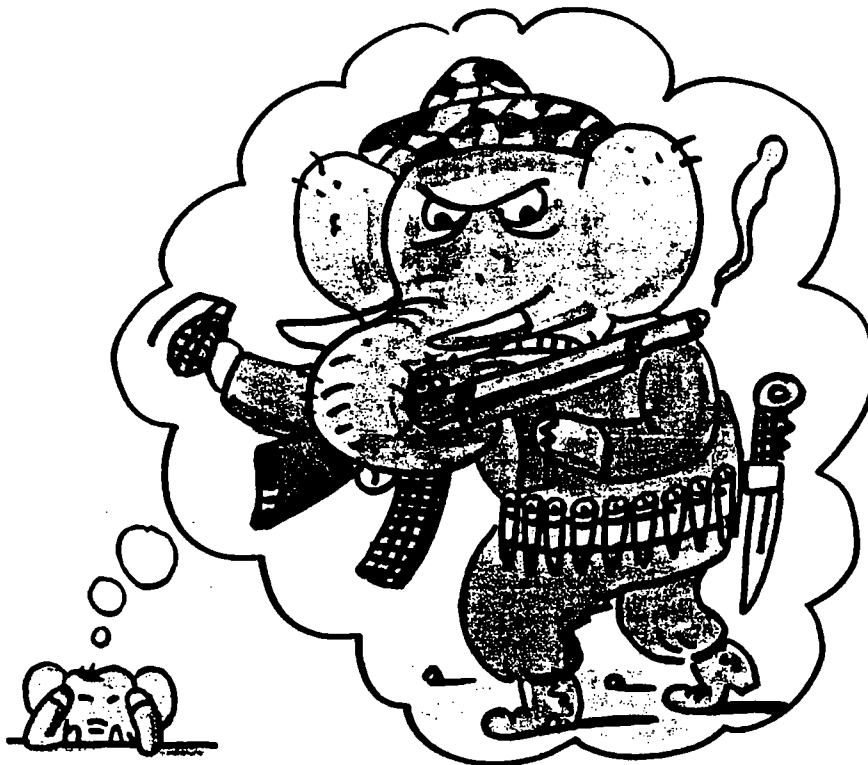
To the Republicans, it doesn't much matter. They've missed all of this, and continue to campaign against the Democrats

without telling people whose policies they are, they approve of them.' So what! Voters are merely making judgments based on the credibility of the party as an institution. And they're right. In 1980 I knew if people understood what many liberal Democrats *really* wanted, our vote would go down."

People are finding out that the Republicans don't want anything at all, other than to re-elect enough of their members to keep enjoying the fruits of a congressional majority. Lacking a voice on the new 1990s issues, the Republicans are retreating to the issues on which they used to have a voice. In this they resemble those "boomerang kids" who after their first career reversal return home in their late twenties to live with their parents. Republicans are going home to Ronald Reagan but are finding that theirs is no longer the only house on the block promoting the most popular part of his agenda—free-market economics. They're finding that there's nothing to do around the house except dress up their old ideas in the clothes of Clintonite insincerity. Where is the broad argument of a "natural majority" here?

There is none. The Republicans are too conservative: their deference to their southern base is persuading much of the country that their vision is a sour and crabbed one. But they're too liberal, too, as their all-out retreat from shrinking the government indicates. At the same time, the Republicans have passed none of the reforms that ingratiated the party with the "radical middle." The Republicans' biggest problem is not their ideology but their lack of one. Stigmatized as rightists, behaving like leftists, and ultimately standing for nothing, they're in the worst of all possible worlds.

That's why the Republicans have spent the past several months waiting for a Clinton scandal to blossom. Like the Democrats of the 1970s, they are now the party with a stake in institutional disruption and bad news. And their resemblance to the corrupt dynasty they overthrew does not stop there. Their party is now directionless, with only two skills to recommend it: first, identifying and prosecuting the excesses of its opponents; second, rigging the campaign-finance system to protect its incumbency long after it has ceased having any ideas that would justify incumbency. The Republican Party is an obsolescent one. It may continue to rule, disguised as a majority by electoral leg- erdemain. But it will be a long time before the party is again able to rule from a place in Americans' hearts. ☛



they wish they were contesting: against Jimmy Carter and his economy, against George McGovern and his foreign policy, against Jesse Jackson and his urban policy. They treat the past two presidential elections—the worst back-to-back disasters that either party has suffered since Roosevelt clobbered Herbert Hoover and Alf Landon in 1932 and 1936—as aberrations, much as certain Democrats throughout the eighties insisted that the only "typical" elections since Truman were in 1960 and 1976. According to Jim Chapin, for decades a New York Democratic activist and now the senior policy adviser to the city's public advocate, "Republicans remind me of us in the late seventies and early eighties. They say, 'If you lay our policies out

blossom. Like the Democrats of the 1970s, they are now the party with a stake in institutional disruption and bad news. And their resemblance to the corrupt dynasty they overthrew does not stop there. Their party is now directionless, with only two skills to recommend it: first, identifying and prosecuting the excesses of its opponents; second, rigging the campaign-finance system to protect its incumbency long after it has ceased having any ideas that would justify incumbency. The Republican Party is an obsolescent one. It may continue to rule, disguised as a majority by electoral leg- erdemain. But it will be a long time before the party is again able to rule from a place in Americans' hearts. ☛

Garry Wills, "The War Between the States...and Washington"

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Administration, starting, altering and killing social programs.

But there's no going back to the Jacksonian era — even if the Federal Government dissolves tomorrow. By Garry Wills

The War Between the States...

SOME PEOPLE PLAY FAVORITES WITH the Bill of Rights. The favorite amendment of gangsters is the fifth (no self-incrimination), of liberals the first (free speech), of drug dealers the fourth (no unauthorized search), of gun fondlers the second (to bear arms). Now, many people have a new favorite, the long-neglected 10th (powers not specifically assigned to Washington are reserved to the states). As recently as 1985, when the Supreme Court reversed one of its rare decisions based on the amendment (Garcia canceling Usery), the 10th was being called a dead letter. Certainly few people tried to "take the 10th" the way gangsters and fellow travelers "took the fifth."

But now the amendment has many takers. The Supreme Court used it in 1992, 1995 and 1997 and shows an eagerness to extend that run. Bob Dole, in his last year in the Senate, began carrying the words of the amendment around with him for instant recitation. Newt Gingrich's insurgents relied on it in 1994 to preach devolution of power from the Federal to the state level. Even President Clinton gives states the title Louis Brandeis thought up for them, "laboratories of democracy." Gov. Tommy Thompson of Wisconsin thinks it is high time for the amendment to be resurrected. He claims he has been a voice for the 10th crying in the wilderness for many years.

The change is not just a matter of theory. States and localities are manifesting a new energy, almost a frenzy, in starting, altering or killing programs. In education alone, they have pioneered charter schools, vouchers for private schools, the canceling of affirmative action in colleges, the retrenchment of bilingualism, new rules for immigrant children, different approaches to truancy and various approaches to teaching religion in public schools or allowing religious groups to gather on public grounds.

In crime, states have reintroduced capital punishment and passed "three strikes" laws. They have experimented with "truth in sentencing" (no parole), mandatory sentencing, alternative sentencing and victims' compensation.

Garry Wills is a frequent contributor to the magazine. In January he wrote about how cultural issues are replacing traditional geopolitics.

In politics, they have promoted term limits, tax caps, mandatory spending percentages, public campaign financing, the control of union dues and extensions of the ballot initiative.

On sexual morality, the states have enacted or reversed bills on gay rights, repealed sodomy laws, supported unmarried partners' benefits and proposed or opposed marriage between homosexuals.

On welfare, the states have tried different forms of job training and placement, compulsory work, public employment or compensated private employment and various forms of benefits for mothers on welfare (including child care and health insurance).

On the environment, they have regulated business, formed new protected areas and successfully defied Federal regulations (for example, on the disposal of nuclear waste in New York v. United States in 1992).

On health, they have considered regulations on assisted suicide, H.M.O.'s, late-term abortions and insurance affecting AIDS patients.

On guns, they have passed bills to protect concealed weapons or to impose local restrictions. They have defeated Federal restrictions on guns near schools (Lopez, 1995) and the attempt to use local sheriffs to implement the Brady Bill (Printz, 1997).

On a whole range of such issues, the states have been out ahead of Federal programs, reversing a long-term trend. In the Progressive era, regulation of corporations was sought at the national level. In the Bull Moose movement, and during Woodrow Wilson's first term, intellectuals aspired to policy roles in Washington. With the New Deal, their drift toward the center became a stampede. From that point on, an overlapping series of crises (Depression, world war, cold war) led to central mobilization and control of resources. But now, with the end of this half-century of crisis, people with new ideas and a passion for public policy are turning away from Washington and attacking social issues at the state and local levels. This shift raises deep questions about the virtues of direct democracy, the merits of federalism and the possibility of isolating states from the national society.

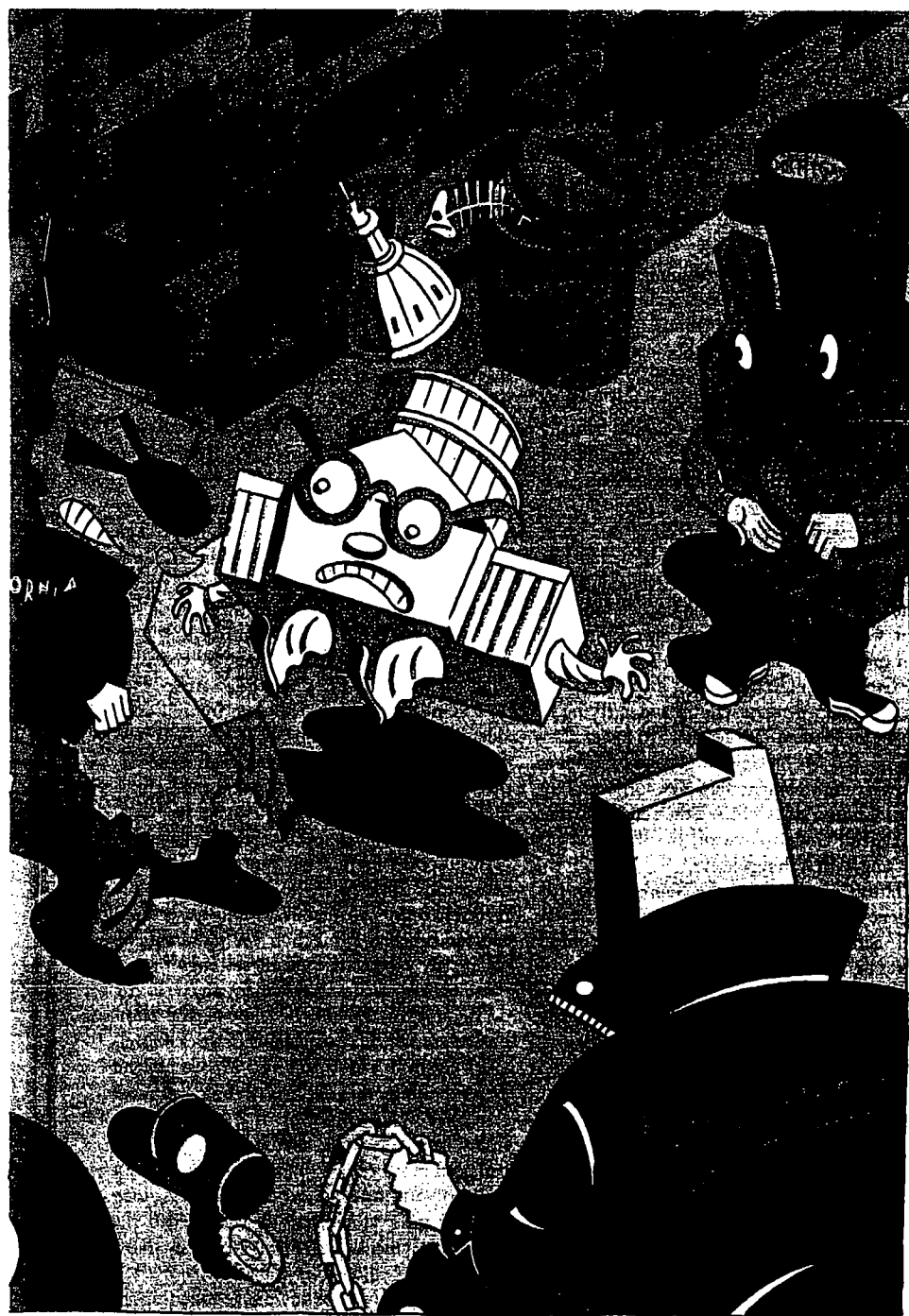
California, as usual, has blundered furthest outward. Ronald Reagan went forth from Cal-

ifornia to shrink the Federal Government and essentially failed. Howard Jarvis stayed home in California and succeeded. His Proposition 13 capped property taxes and thereby (his critics allege) wrecked the state's public education system. The state's punitive measures against immigrants and their children have been checked by the courts, have backfired against their sponsors (including Gov. Pete Wilson) and have unsettled candidates dependent on Hispanic or Asian voters. Draconian term limits (six years for Assembly members) were supposed to curtail careerism, the power of special interests, cronyism and the lobbyists' sway — but have increased all four.

Peter Schrag, in his sobering new book, "Paradise Lost," describes what occurred at the first great turnovers of office, six years after term limits passed in 1990: "By general agreement, the 1995-'96 term-limits-crunch session of the California Legislature was probably the most mean-spirited and unproductive in memory, a unique combination of instability, bad behavior, political frenzy and legislative paralysis. In the two years between 1995 and 1997, California had five Assembly Speakers, two different Republican Assembly leaders, two Republican Senate leaders and eight special legislative elections, not counting runoffs, among them three recalls."

IT IS PROBABLY UNFAIR TO JUDGE ANY MOVEMENT by its effect in California. Some local programs have shown initial promise — school vouchers in Ohio, charter schools in Arizona, inventive policing in New York, job training in Michigan, public campaign financing in Maine. Much of the activity has been stimulated or guided by a new generation of Republican governors whose careers depend on making the program work. The emphasis on localism is partly a byprod-

Illustrations by Steven Guarnaccia



and Washington

been folded into his master plan, implemented this year as W2 (shorthand for W.W., or Wisconsin Works). His critics say that some of those plans have come and gone so fast they are impossible to evaluate. But he says they should be judged as steps toward his overall plan, whose parts are still being assembled.

He has a health plan for the poor (Badger Care) that awaits more waivers. ("President Clinton is setting on it now.") His job-training program is similarly stymied by Washington: "There are 163 different kinds of rules and regulations dealing with school-to-work and job-ready money from the Federal Government. It's just plain idiotic."

Thompson has moved further and faster than other governors in taking control of his state's activities on many levels, but he says he cannot be judged until his whole plan is in operation and that will not happen until Washington unties his hands. Naturally, since he thinks he is just beginning to get his schemes in place after 12 years in the Governor's Mansion, he is adamantly opposed to term limits: "If you have people dumb enough to keep running for office, like me, you should let the people decide."

Thompson's central planning can look good if you consider the California alternative. There, the governor's hands are tied, not so much by Washington as by popular initiatives that have made a traffic jam of election ballots. In 1990, the state's ballot pamphlet setting forth the voters' choices ran to 222 pages. At a city election in San Francisco, there were more than 100 items. Voters, apparently, did not notice that in 1988 they passed one measure for public financing of campaigns (Proposition 68) and, simultaneously, another measure (Proposition 73) outlawing it.

Nor is California alone in this sharpening appetite for plebiscites. In 1996, 90 ballot initiatives were up for passage in 20 states. The referendum, too, is becoming more important, as Maine's overthrow of a gay-rights law demonstrated.

The contrast between California's free-for-all and Wisconsin's central planning shows that the cry for localism is not for a single good thing (state government) against an equally monolithic bad thing (the Federal Government). Local govern-

ment is not the only policy on which the American people now live under Republican governors.

The foremost champion of local control among the governors is Tommy Thompson, a short, chunky man from Elroy, Wis. (population 1,500), who has a Cagney strut and very modest amounts of modesty. "We started it," he says. "I was the front-runner because I started looking at the Federal laws and figuring how I'd go to Washington and get waivers." Such waivers are special dispensations from Federal regulations. "I'm the only governor who still has waivers in existence, in the area of welfare, from Presidents Reagan, Bush and Clinton. I think I've got 75 outstanding waivers, which changed Federal law in over 200 instances in the area of welfare."

Welfare is not the only policy on which Thompson has been an innovator. In education, he fought truancy with "Learnfare" and set up choice schools, charter schools, "prep tech" and apprenticing and high-school courses for college credit. He talks of a "broad menu" of options for students. He clearly does not think that local government has to mean minimal government.

In fact, his administration (begun in 1986) has been a kind of mini-New Deal for proliferating programs, acronyms and slogans — P.F.R. (Parental and Family Responsibility), S.S.F. (Self-Sufficiency First), W.E.J.T. (Work Experience and Job Training Program), Work First, Work Not Welfare, Children First. Many of these have

They're always saying that, that the states are going to be having a race to the bottom,' says Tommy Thompson of Wisconsin. ... 'But right now you've got governors who are so darn competitive. They don't want to read in the paper that they're not taking care of the poor



ment can be improvisational or controlled, experimental or rigid, or anything in between.

Governor Thompson is certainly not a champion of localism if that means cities or counties or the State Legislature can defy his general strategy. He boasts of the 290 items he vetoed in the first budget submitted by the Legislature. He has used the line-item veto more than 1,500 times.

Advocates of direct democracy, like Robert Wiebe, the political historian and theorist, oppose "government by experts," and Thompson sometimes makes fun of Washington "know-it-alls" who could not pass his "Elroy test" (what his little hometown knows is good for it). But Thompson also boasts of his reliance on experts, called in from all quarters to help him with planning. One of those experts, Lawrence Mead, wants to make welfare "the new paternalism," frankly telling people what is good for them. Temperamentally, Thompson is inclined to such hectoring certitude, despite his populist campaign rhetoric.

I recently followed Thompson, who was out to greet some constituents at the state environmental center. With men, he has some of Mario Cuomo's locker-room bluster. ("Don't be a wimp.") With women, he is a palsy chin-chucker. Despite the fact that both his parent were teachers and his wife still is (sixth grade in Elroy), he uses what must pass as "street talk" in rural Wisconsin — "setting" for sitting, "oncommon" for uncommon, "secatary" for secretary.

He presents himself as embattled and with few allies: "I'm the only one still talking devolution." The Republican Congress is "as bad as the President." He feels that he has the spirit of Fighting Bob La Follette, the Wisconsin progressive — except that La Follette went after big business and Thompson is a sworn foe of big government (at least in Washington). If one of Thompson's projects fails, he wants us to believe, it will be because of his encirclement by foes.

TO GET A "TOP DOWN" VIEW OF THE STATES' new activism, I interviewed President Clinton in April. He had just come in from a Rose Garden announcement of his education program. Clinton, the policy wonk, was eager to talk governmental relations even when aides were trying to move him to the next event. He finds the states'-rights activism a healthy development.

"What the states did in assuming greater responsibilities was mostly positive — in education, in taking advantage of the opportunity Congress gave them to be more active in covering more children under child health programs.

What my Administration tried to do was, basically, to emphasize two things — No. 1, states as laboratories of democracy, principally in education, health care and welfare reform; and secondly, actually

reduce the aggregate volume of regulations on them in areas where I thought there was too much micromanagement."

Thompson would clearly not see this waiving of authority as sufficient. He would like even less Clinton's caveat that, in giving up some power to the states, the Federal Government was freed to do new things. "We have been more active in some areas than the Federal Government traditionally has been — in education, in wiring of schools and in trying to actually help them hire teachers to lower class size, the way we broke new ground by helping local law enforcement hire new officers." In short, Clinton does not see the states shoving the Federal Government off the scene but interacting with it in new ways.

Clinton is critical of the Supreme Court's tendency to exclude Washington from state-level activity, going beyond what Clinton praises as "basically a pragmatic reallocation of power between the states and the Federal Government over the last 20 years." He is especially upset by the Supreme Court's Brady Bill decision, "the most troubling of all because it said we couldn't even ask the local law-enforcement officials to do a minor ministerial job" of running background checks on gun purchasers.

On the other hand, Clinton takes a surprisingly benign view of state initiatives that express popular feeling rather than court-imposed mandates: "I don't agree with a lot of those votes, but I think they're votes that people have the right to make as long as they don't contravene a Federal statute or the Constitution.

"Usually there is a legitimate concern that these referenda are designed to address. Either representative government is going to have to move quickly into the breach when one of these proposals is on the ballot, so that it is not necessary by election time, or the progressive populists are going to have to put their own counter-proposals on the ballot. I don't think you can stop this movement any time soon when people want to have a more direct say on public issues."

WE CAN SEE, BY COUNTERPOINTING THE REMARKS of the Governor and the President, that there is little prospect of agreement in detail on the future of states' rights. The President is well disposed toward ballot initiatives, the most di-

rect form of democracy. Governor Thompson is uneasy about uncoordinated proposals that might intrude on his master strategy. Though he once proposed introducing the initiative into the Wisconsin Constitution, that was when he was a young legislator. Now, he says, he is not interested in raising that issue.

Yet as a 10th Amendment fundamentalist, Thompson welcomes the Court's new interest in states' rights — while the President resists any effort to break up the partnership. The place where this disagreement causes a head-on collision is the devolution of power over things like welfare. Thompson thinks Washington has been too slow and niggardly in turning over money. Clinton's liberal critics, by contrast, think he was too quick to untie strings over welfare programs. The President himself considered the Republican bill he signed too sweeping on some matters, but feels he remedied that by restoring food stamps and child-care provisions.

I asked him if he thinks that state welfare programs, spotty in their success even during a prosperous time, will stand up when economic reverses come. "Absolutely, as long as we keep the fundamental protection for children. We had, in my view, state-by-state settling of reimbursement for welfare families anyway.

"Before I signed the welfare bill, the reimbursement schedule for a family of three on welfare went from a low of \$185 in Mississippi and Texas to a high of \$660 in Vermont, and most states had welfare payments that were lower in real dollar terms, considerably lower, than they had been in the early 70's, because they had not kept up with inflation. So the Congress, long before I came along, had de facto ceded the monthly payments to the states anyway. Now the states are responsible.

"In the old days, nobody had to take responsibility for the welfare of the family and of the children, or whether there was a work-based program. Everybody could always kick the responsibility around. They could say that 'in our state the Federal Government has all these rules — and, oh, by the way, it's operated by the county.' I think that locating responsibility and fixing it with the states will be more positive than negative."

It is here that Thompson gets heated in his comments on the President. "President Clinton has done everything he possibly can to stymie what we're trying to do in Wisconsin." He has words just as harsh for Donna Shalala of Health and Human Services. "I could get matching grants" for new programs, Thompson complains, but the Government will not turn over the money he feels he needs. On this point

Thompson will get no help from the Federal courts. They have repeatedly ruled that states have to observe Federal conditions if they accept Federal money.

Thompson desperately needs Federal money. As he readily admits, Workfare, at least at the outset and for some time to come, is more costly than welfare. To train people for work, to deal with obstacles to work (alcohol, drugs, mental problems), to find jobs, to motivate employers, to offer child care for those going to work, to provide health insurance — all this is not only expensive in itself but also has to be closely monitored. That is why the per-person yearly cost for people on welfare has gone up under Thompson, from \$9,000 to \$15,000.

Thompson's programs bring back the resented "social worker," who was an irritant under the old paternalism. His Learnfare program, for instance, was meant to dock welfare payments to any family whose child was not attending school. This involved keeping accurate truancy records, comparing them with welfare payments and weighing any alleviating circumstances (illness, transportation problems, children no longer living with their families, etc.). According to Pamela Fendt, a policy analyst at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee's Center for Economic Development, Learnfare saved \$3 million in welfare payments but cost \$14 million.

The expenses of Workfare exert tremendous pressure on the system to remove people from the program, one way or another. That is why Governor Thompson has tried to reach job-placement goals faster than required by Federal rules. One way to remove people from the rolls is simply to declare them ineligible. In Wisconsin, as in other states, many of those declared ineligible were reinstated on appeal. In Wisconsin, as in other states, the numbers going off welfare are not matched with reported jobs and income. Marcus White, associate director for the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee, says that there has been a quantum leap in the people showing up at Milwaukee shelters and soup kitchens, suggesting that not everyone disappearing from the welfare rolls is getting work.

So far, with the help of a booming economy in Wisconsin, the Governor has kept scrambling ahead of any clear signs of failure. When I suggest that Federal oversight might be justified by less commendable showings in other states, he is dismissive. "They're always saying that, that the states were going to be having a race to the bottom. I told them: 'You're wrong. That may have happened in the 40's and 50's. But right now you've got governors who are so darn competitive. They don't want to read that they're not taking care of the poor, and they're

not going to let a governor in an adjoining state get ahead of them. We're very competitive.'"

But Gov. Phil Batt of Idaho is not, apparently, feeling any competitive pressures. His state has cut welfare rolls by 77 percent, belying President Clinton's claim that disparities will be less acute under the new system. Idaho, which has the highest incidence of child abuse in the nation, spends \$17 per capita for child welfare, as opposed to \$99.30 in New York.

Peter Edelman, who resigned from the Department of Health and Human Services to protest Clinton's signing of the 1996 welfare bill, has kept a close eye on subsequent developments in the states. "There are some bright spots," he says. "There are some good states — Maine, Vermont, Rhode Island, Minnesota, Oregon. But there are some very bad states — Idaho, Mississippi, Georgia — and some states, like Pennsylvania, are not doing much. In California, the Governor proposed a bad plan that the Legislature blocked."

Governor Thompson claims that the states are sure to do things better than the Federal Government, since they are closer to the peoples' needs and wants. "The new ideas are coming from the governors, and when you have that clash of ideas, you're going to bring out the best in education or in government."

When I suggest that not all the ideas coming from the states are great ones, he is quick, as ever, to the challenge: "Tell me some that aren't." I name term limits, three-strikes, anti-immigration measures, anti-gay measures. "You're right," he says. "I'll grant you there are some examples. But tell me some things in Wisconsin you don't like."

Thompson believes that the government closest to the people is the best government, which many people take to be a truism of democracy. Alexis de Tocqueville, during his 1831 visit to America, noted that "the Federal Government scarcely ever interferes in any but foreign affairs; and the governments of the states in reality direct society in America." The result, according to Tocqueville, was a "tyranny of the majority," by which local prejudice and conformity received no outside challenge.

It is the same complaint Madison had against the states' autonomy under the Articles of Confederation. The people were, in effect, the judges in their own cause — which always leads to skewed judgments. John Jay, arguing in "The Federalist" for a larger union, said that the people least likely to make wise policy about Native Americans were those in the friction of greatest proximity to them.

It is the same lesson we learned, in this century, from the assertions of Southern leaders that they best understood blacks.

Though popular sentiment must be expressed in popular government, it is clear that some kinds of dispute need impartial arbiters. The effort of some states to deny education to the children of illegal immigrants, or legal rights to homosexuals, or organization to unions, shows that popular sentiment can be harsh with unpopular people.

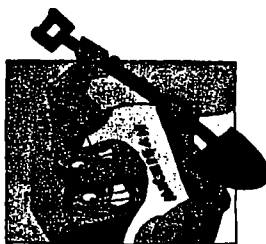
Actually, there is no danger of returning to the Jacksonian days of independent states. Even if you remove the Federal Government from the scene, other national organizations cut across state lines and have to be addressed in a national way.

When I asked Governor Thompson why he did not start his new educational programs in the public schools, he said the teachers' union was too powerful. "If I wanted to hire you from Northwestern to teach in the public schools, I could not give you a contract. The union has to decide what you can teach and where. You might end up teaching music in an out-of-the-way school." Even allowing for hyperbole, teachers' unions are national organizations that can be hard to deal with on the state level.

The best proof of the states' vulnerability to national forces is the flow of outside money and influence into the local arena. When Maine put up its referendum to remove a gay rights law, religious organizations sent in money for ads and teams of "ex-gays" traveled there to support the measure. At an advanced level of communications and transportation, and with the complex organization of religious, ideological and educational enterprises, a return to the independent states of Jackson's time is impossible. To deal with national organizations, whether corporations or unions, philanthropies or crime syndicates, the states are often going to need help from the national Government.

President Clinton ended our interview by noticing how the hard line between domestic and foreign policy is being dissolved. There is a parallel softening of the division between state and national life, not just in government but in every sphere. This does not mean that states are not better at handling some things or at conducting experiments not easily tried on a national scale. There will be, as Clinton says, new

kinds of interaction, dialogue and dispute. All that is healthy. But a 10th Amendment fundamentalism that looks back to the muscular states of the Jacksonian era is, by now, an exercise in nostalgia for "good old days" that were not all that good. ■



'What my Administration tried to do was, basically, to emphasize two things,' President Clinton tells me. 'No. 1, states as laboratories of democracy, principally in education, health care and welfare reform, and secondly, actually reduce the aggregate volume of regulations on them