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FOLDER TITLE:

University of Maryland at College Park: Addressing the Condition of American
Democracy, January 7, 1996 [1]

2019-0774-S

rs3396

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

- P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
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- P4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
- P5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
- P6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

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Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

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UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND AT COLLEGE PARK

INSTITUTE FOR PHILOSOPHY AND PUBLIC POLICY

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ASSESSING THE CONDITION OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

THE WHITE HOUSE
January 7, 1996

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, ROOM 3111 ♦ COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND 20742

**ASSESSING THE CONDITION OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY
THE WHITE HOUSE
JANUARY 7, 1996**

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UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND AT COLLEGE PARK

INSTITUTE FOR PHILOSOPHY AND PUBLIC POLICY

December 21, 1995

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: BILL GALSTON ^{WA9}
SUBJECT: SCHOLARS' DINNER

On January 7, 1996, you will meet with a diverse group of scholars in the residence for dinner and conversation. The purpose of the evening is to assist in the process of thinking both about the State of the Union and about some of the themes and ideas that you might choose to emphasize throughout 1996 and beyond.

The general rubric of the evening will be "Assessing the Condition of American Democracy." Participants will come armed with insights from their respective disciplines--law, political science, literature, and philosophy, among others. Some will offer diagnoses; others will advance prescriptions as well.

The proposed format for the evening is modelled (with the necessary adjustments) on last year's scholars' meeting at Camp David. Shortly after we are seated for dinner, I will call the group to order and define our mission. If you wish, you will make some brief welcoming remarks. I will then ask each participant to make a short opening statement; I will strictly monitor and enforce the 5-minute time limit. After the opening statements are completed, you will then have the opportunity to pose questions to the participants and direct the conversation in any way you see fit. Of course, you will determine how long the conversation proceeds and when the evening ends.

The participants include:

Professor Bruce Ackerman
Yale Law School

Professor Benjamin Barber, Director
The Walt Whitman Center for the Culture and Politics of Democracy

Professor Stephen Carter
Yale Law School

Alan Ehrenhalt
Executive Editor, Governing Magazine

Amitai Etzioni, University Professor
The George Washington University

Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
Department of Afro-American Studies, Harvard University

Professor Amy Gutmann
Dean of the Faculty, Princeton University

Professor Charles Johnson
Department of English, University of Washington

Professor Randall Kennedy
Harvard Law School

Professor Jane Mansbridge
Department of Political Science, Northwestern University

Professor Robert Putnam, Director
Center for International Affairs, Harvard University

The attached briefing book includes brief biographies of the participants (at Tab 2), writings from each of them (Tabs 3 through 13), and a few additional submissions (Tabs 14 and 15).

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: BRUCE ACKERMAN

Bruce Ackerman is one of America's leading political philosophers and constitutional lawyers. His most important works are *Social Justice in the Liberal State* (1980) and *We the People* (1991). He has also written many books on concrete problems ranging from housing policy to environmental law to international relations. His last book in this genre, *Is NAFTA Constitutional?*, was published last month by Harvard University Press.

At the same time, he tries to serve the public as a lawyer in selected cases. At present, he is lead counsel with Lloyd Cutler in a lawsuit, brought on behalf of David Skaggs and other Representatives, that challenges the constitutionality of new House Rules requiring a supermajority vote for income tax increases.

Mr. Ackerman is Sterling Professor of Law and Political Science at Yale. He is spending this year as a Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington D.C.

BENJAMIN R. BARBER

Benjamin R. Barber holds the Walt Whitman Chair of Political Science at Rutgers University, where he is Director of the Walt Whitman Center for the Culture and Politics of Democracy. He is also the Executive Director of the New Jersey Academy for Community Service and Service Learning and a member of the Governor's Commission on National and Community Service. He occupied the French-American Foundation's Chair of American Civilization at the Ecoles des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris for the academic year 1991-92.

Barber brings an abiding concern for democracy and citizenship to issues of politics, culture, education, civil society and the arts both in America and abroad, and consults regularly with political and educational leaders in the United States and Europe, while serving on the advisory boards of a broad spectrum of scholarly and civic organizations including Active Citizenship Today, the Center for Living Democracy, American Health Decisions, the World Without War Council, the UNCF/Ford Foundation Community Service Partnership Project, Moscow Interlegal and the ASCD Urban Advisory Board.

Barber's ten books include the classic **STRONG DEMOCRACY** (1984), with translations in German, Turkish, Polish and other languages, as well as **AN ARISTOCRACY OF EVERYONE: THE POLITICS OF EDUCATION AND THE FUTURE OF AMERICA** (1992) (published in France as **L'EXCELLENCE ET L'EGALITE**); **THE CONQUEST OF POLITICS** (1988); and the novel **MARRIAGE VOICES** published by Simon and Schuster in 1981. With Patrick Watson, he wrote the prize-winning CBC/PBS ten-part television series **THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY**, published by Little, Brown. His latest book is **JIHAD VERSUS MCWORLD** (Times Books, 1995), a critical study of the corrosive effects of tribalism and markets on democracy, based on his acclaimed and widely-reprinted 1992 Atlantic Magazine cover essay. PBS's Frontline is producing a television special based on this book.

From 1973 to 1983 Barber edited the international quarterly **POLITICAL THEORY**. He currently serves on its editorial board, as well as the editorial boards of **THE LEADERSHIP QUARTERLY**, **THE CIVIC ARTS REVIEW**, **COMMON PURPOSES**, **EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF POLITICS**, **AGORA**, and **THE RESPONSIVE COMMUNITY**. He writes a regular feature ("Letter from America") for the British international journal **GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION**, on whose editorial executive board he also sits. He has been a Guggenheim Fellow (1980-81), a senior Fulbright Research Scholar (Essex University, 1976-1977), a visiting fellow at the New York Institute of Humanities (1980-81), and an American Council of Learned Societies Senior Fellow (1984-85). He was a visiting professor at Princeton University in 1986-87, and was awarded an honorary doctor of laws by Grinnell College in 1985. He holds an M.A. and Ph.D. from Harvard University and a certificate from the London School of Economics.

His essays appear in a broad range of scholarly and popular journals and magazines, including **HARPER'S**, **THE ATLANTIC**, **DAEDALUS**, **THE NEW YORK TIMES**, **DISSENT**, **THE NEW REPUBLIC**, **THE LONDON REVIEW OF BOOKS**, **SALMAGUNDI**, **THE NATION**, **ETHICS**, **THE AMERICAN PROSPECT**, **POLITICAL THEORY**, **SOCIETY/TRANSACTION**, **THE BOSTON REVIEW**, and **THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE REVIEW**.

For television, in addition to **THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY**, Barber has contributed to and appeared on **THE A,B,C OF GREEK DEMOCRACY** and **GREEK FIRE** (for Channel Four--U.K.); the Close-Up Foundation's **CITIZEN STORIES**; and two education specials, **TOM PAINE**, and the three-part PBS special **THE AMERICAN PROMISE**.

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To	BILL GALSTON	From	STEPHEN CARTER
Co.		Co.	YALE LAW
Dept.		Phone #	203-432-4839
Fax #	301-344-9346	Fax #	203-432-4871

STEPHEN L. CARTER

Biographical Data

Stephen L. Carter is William Nelson Cromwell Professor of Law at Yale, where he has taught since 1982. He has become known for his provocative work on controversial subjects.

His best-known book is The Culture of Disbelief: How Our Legal and Political Cultures Trivialize Religious Devotion (1993), hailed by critics as one of the best books on religion in decades, which became the first book by a non-theologian to win the prestigious Louisville-Grawemeyer Award in Religion. He is also the author of the critically acclaimed Reflections of an Affirmative Action Baby (1991) and The Confirmation Mess: Cleaning Up the Federal Appointments Process (1994).

He is currently at work on a series of books about elements of good character in a democracy. The first book in that series, Integrity, will be published by Basic Books early in 1996.

Also in 1996, Harvard University Press will publish Professor Carter's Massey Lectures, The Dissent of the Governed: A Meditation on Law, Religion, and Loyalty.

In addition to his dozens of articles on constitutional law and other subjects in law reviews, Professor Carter is a frequent contributor to such publications as The New York Times, The New Yorker, The Wall Street Journal, and The New Republic.

Professor Carter was born in Washington, D.C., and educated in the public schools of Washington, New York City, and Ithaca, New York. He was graduated from Stanford University and the Yale Law School. Following law school, he served as a law clerk to the late Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall. He practiced law briefly before joining the faculty at Yale, where he teaches subjects as diverse as constitutional law, contracts, and intellectual property.

Professor Carter is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In the fall of 1994, he was named one of 50 future leaders of America by Time magazine. He has also received the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters from Seabury-Western Theological Seminary.

Professor Carter and his wife live with their two children near New Haven, Connecticut. They attend an Episcopal church.

[A resume and list of publications are available upon request.]

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Alan Ehrenhalt

Post-It* Fax Note	7671	Date	2-18-95	# of pages	1
To	Bill Garton	From	Alan Ehrenhalt		
Co./Dept.		Co.	Governing Mag		
Phone #		Phone #	202 862-1434		
Fax #	301 314-9846	Fax #	202 862-0030		

Born:

(b)(6)

Education:

University of Chicago High School, 1960-64.
Brandeis University, B.A. in Psychology, 1968.
Columbia University, M.S. in Journalism, 1969.
Harvard University, Nieman Fellow, 1977-78.
U. of Calif., Berkeley, Visiting Scholar, 1987-88.

Professional Career:

Associated Press, Chicago, reporter, 1968, 1969
Washington Star, congressional reporter, 1979-80
Congressional Quarterly, political writer, 1969-75
political editor, 1975-79, 1980-88
Governing Magazine, political editor, 1988-89
deputy editor, 1989-90
executive editor since 1991

Writing:

Author of *The Lost City*, published 1995, Basic Books
The United States of Ambition, published 1991, Times Books

Writer of *Congress and the Country*, a bi-weekly column that appeared in *Congressional Quarterly* from 1981 to 1988. This column was awarded the 1983 Everett McKinley Dirksen award for distinguished reporting of Congress.

Creator and editor of the first four editions of *Politics in America*, a biennial reference book profiling all 535 members of the House and Senate and the places they represent.

Family: Married to Suzanne de Lesseps of Opelousas, La.
Two daughters: Elizabeth, born 1982; Jennie, born 1986

Address: Home: 3128 Key Boulevard, Arlington, Va. 22201
(703) 243-5091

Office: Governing Magazine
2300 N St. NW
Washington D.C. 20037
(202) 862-8802

AMITAI ETZIONI

Dr. Amitai Etzioni is the first University Professor of The George Washington University. He is the 1995 past-president of the American Sociological Association. In 1987-1989, he served as the Thomas Henry Carroll Ford Foundation Professor at the Harvard Business School. He served as Senior Adviser in the White House from 1979-1980. He was guest scholar at the Brookings Institution in 1978-1979. For 20 years (1958-1978), he served as Professor of Sociology at Columbia University; part of the time, as Chairman of the department.

He founded and was the first president ('89-'90) of the international Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics and is now an Honorary Fellow. He is the editor of The Responsive Community: Rights and Responsibilities, a communitarian quarterly. In 1991 the press started referring to Dr. Etzioni as the "guru" of the communitarian movement.

He is the author of fourteen books, including A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations, Modern Organizations, Political Unification, The Active Society, Genetic Fix, Social Problems, An Immodest Agenda, and Capital Corruption, The Moral Dimension: Toward a New Economics, and most recently, The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities and the Communitarian Agenda (Crown Books, 1993).

Dr. Etzioni's achievements in the social sciences have been acknowledged by several fellowships, including those given by the Social Science Research Council (1960-61), The Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (1965-1966), and The Guggenheim Foundation (1968-69).

Outside of academia, Dr. Etzioni's voice is frequently heard in the leading news media, in articles in publications such as The New York Times, The Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal and in appearances on network television.

He founded the Center for Policy Research, a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to public policy, in 1968, and has been its director since its inception.

In 1976, the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration accorded Dr. Etzioni a certificate of appreciation for his outstanding contribution to our nation's bicentennial commemoration.

A 1982 study ranked Dr. Etzioni as the leading expert of 30 who made "major contributions to public policy in the preceding decade." He was awarded an honorary degree by The University of Utah in 1991 and by Colorado College and Connecticut College in 1994.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. was born and raised in Mineral County, West Virginia. In his junior year, at Yale University, he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. He graduated summa cum laude from Yale, as a Scholar of the House in History. He was a London correspondent for Time Magazine before receiving his Ph.D. in English Language and Literature from the University of Cambridge. He writes frequently for such publications as The New Yorker, the New York Times Book Review, and The New Republic: his books include *Figures in Black. The Signifying Monkey* (for which he received an American Book Award), *Loose Canons*, and Colored People : A Memoir, which received several major awards. He is the W.E.B. Du Bois Professor of the Humanities, Chairman of the Department of Afro-American Studies, and Director of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for Afro-American Research at Harvard University. In March, his next book, The Future of the Race, co-authored with Cornel West, will be published by Knopf.

Amy Gutmann

*Laurance S. Rockefeller University Professor
of Politics*

Amy Gutmann is Dean of the Faculty and was the founding director of the University Center for Human Values and of the Program in Ethics and Public Affairs. Among her publications are *Democratic Education*, *Liberal Equality*, *Democracy and the Welfare State*, *Ethics and Politics*, and most recently, *Democracy and Disagreement*. Her articles have appeared in *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, *Political Theory*, *Ethics* and other scholarly journals. Her teaching and research interests include moral and political philosophy, practical ethics, education, and public affairs. She serves on the Executive Boards of the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics and the Center for Policy Research in Education, and has held fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Rockefeller Foundation. She was Tanner Lecturer at Stanford University for 1994-95. She was a Visitor at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton and Visiting Professor at Harvard University. She received a B.A. magna cum laude from Harvard-Radcliffe College, received her M.Sc. from the London School of Economics, and Ph.D. from Harvard University.

Charles Johnson
Condensed Biography
12/1/95

Charles Johnson is the author of three novels *Faith and the Good Thing* (1974), *Oxherding Tale* (1982), and *Middle Passage* (1990); a collection of short stories, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* (1986), a work of aesthetics, *Being and Race: Black Writing Since 1970* (1988), and two collections of comic art, *Black Humor* (1970) and *Half-Past Nation Time* (1972). As a cartoonist and journalist in the early 1970s, he published over 1000 drawings in national publications.

Johnson received the 1990 National Book Award for *Middle Passage* (he was the first African-American male to win this prize since Ralph Ellison in 1953). *Oxherding Tale* was awarded the 1983 Washington State Governor's Award for Literature; *Sorcerer's Apprentice* was one of five finalists for the 1987 PEN/Faulkner Award, and *Being and Race* won a 1989 Governor's Award for Literature. He was named in a survey conducted by the University of Southern California to be one of the ten best short story writers in America, and his short fiction is much anthologized, including on the Internet.

He has written over 20 screenplays, among them "Booker" (1985), which received the international Prix Jeunesse Award and a 1985 Writers Guild Award for "outstanding script in the television category of children's shows." That show, along with "Charlie Smith and the Fritter Tree" (*Visions*, PBS, 1978), now appear on the Disney channel. He was one of two writer-producers for "Up and Coming" (KCET, 1981), and earlier created, hosted, and co-produced "Charlie's Pad" (1970), a PBS how-to-draw series that ran nationally for a decade in the U.S. and Canada.

He has published 44 reviews in *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post* as well as other major newspapers and published numerous critical articles. He has also written an introduction for the commemorative edition for Ellison's *Invisible Man*, has completed an introduction for the *Oxford Mark Twain*, and is drawing a cartoon feature "LitCrits" for *Quarterly Black Review*. He has served as a fiction judge for the Pulitzer Prize, National Book Award, PEN/Faulkner, Los Angeles Times Book Prize, and is also a nominator for the MacArthur fellowships. Professor Johnson has granted 129 interviews for American and foreign papers, radio, and local television, and for Nigeria and Singapore via USIA. He is also co-director of the "Blue Phoenix Kung Fu Club," a Seattle martial-arts school.

Johnson has received both a National Endowment for the Arts grant (1979) and a Guggenheim Fellowship (1986).

Professor Johnson has lectured in 7 countries (eastern Europe, Asia, Spain and Portugal) for the US Information Agency and is a regular speaker at American campuses. He has delivered 171 lectures and readings. Three books about his work are presently being prepared, one by Dr. Jonathan Little (Alverno College), and

two---one critical study, one anthology of essays---by Dr. Rudolph Byrd (Emory University). *African-American Review* will devote its fall, 1996 issue to his work, which has also been the subject of a special session of the Modern Language Association (1991).

A former director of the creative writing program at the University of Washington, he holds an endowed chair, the Pollock Professorship for Excellence in English (the first chair in writing at UW), and currently teaches fiction. Since 1978 he has served as fiction editor for *the Seattle Review*. In 1995 he received an honorary doctorate in Humane Letters from Southern Illinois University, and in 1994 an honorary Doctor of Arts degree from Northwestern. He sponsors the "Marie Clair Davis Award in Creative Writing," given to a secondary student at Evanston Township High School. And his almer mater, SIU, administers the "Charles Johnson Award for Fiction and Poetry," a nationwide competition for college students inaugurated in 1994.

Randall Kennedy graduated from Princeton University (1977), attended Balliol College, Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar, and received his law degree from Yale Law School (1982). He served as a law clerk for Judge J. Skelly Wright and for Justice Thurgood Marshall before joining the faculty of the Harvard Law School. At Harvard, Professor Kennedy teaches courses in contracts and in race relations law and contributes to a wide range of publications including the Harvard Law Review, the Yale Law Journal, The Atlantic, The New Republic, and The Nation.

Jane J. Mansbridge

Jane Mansbridge is Professor of the Arts and Sciences in the Department of Political Science, Northwestern University. She is the author of many books and articles focusing on issues such as feminism, political participation, and the roles of self-interest, public-spiritedness, and deliberation in democratic politics. A member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, she is the recipient of numerous awards and fellowships. Professor Mansbridge received a B.A. from Wellesley College and a Ph.D. from Harvard University.

ROBERT D. PUTNAM

Robert D. Putnam, Clarence Dillon Professor of International Affairs and Director of the Center for International Affairs, is a specialist in comparative government and international relations. He served previously as chairman of Harvard's Department of Government, as Associate Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and as Dean of the John F. Kennedy School of Government. He is the author or co-author of more than thirty scholarly articles and seven books published in eight languages, including *Beliefs of Politicians* (1973); *Comparative Study of Political Elites* (1976); *Bureaucrats and Politicians in Western Democracies* (1981); *Hanging Together: The Seven-Power Summits* (1984; published in English, German, Japanese, and Italian); *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (1993; published in English, Italian, Polish, and Spanish); and *Double-Edged Diplomacy: International Bargaining and Domestic Politics* (1993). Raised in a small town in the Midwest, Professor Putnam graduated from Swarthmore College with Highest Honors in 1963, attended Balliol College, Oxford, and in 1970 received his Ph.D. with distinction from Yale University. He has received honorary degrees from Swarthmore College (1990) and Stockholm University (1993). He taught at the University of Michigan for more than a decade, and served on the staff of the U.S. National Security Council at the White House, before coming to Harvard as professor of government in 1979. A recipient of numerous awards and scholarly honors and a consultant to various governments and international organizations, he is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, where he directs a major interdisciplinary investigation of "Social Capital and Public Affairs." His award-winning book, *Making Democracy Work*, has been lauded by the *New York Times* as "a classic" and praised by *THE ECONOMIST* as "a great work of social science, worthy to rank alongside de Tocqueville, Pareto and Weber." His current research, which also has been commended in a score of editorials and op-ed pieces in the last year, focuses on the revitalization of American democracy.

po

Crediting the Voters

A New Beginning for Campaign Finance

Bruce Ackerman

When Americans register to vote, they should be issued a credit card by a special public company—call it the Patriot card and color it red, white, and blue. This card will become the basis of campaign finance.

Suppose each voter's card were automatically credited with a \$10 balance for the 1996 presidential election. To gain access to this red-white-and-blue money, candidates should be obliged to demonstrate significant popular support by gathering an appropriate number of voter signatures. In exchange for these signatures, the Patriot company would open an account that granted the candidate an initial balance of red-white-and-blue money—say, one million dollars for presidential aspirants. Candidates could then spend their initial stake on a series of advertisements to convince Patriot holders to transfer more red-white-and-blue money to them. Some candidates will, of course, soon see their initial Patriot balance shrink to zero; others will generate tens of millions as the campaign proceeds.

Under this system, only red-white-and-blue money may be used to finance political campaigns. The use of greenbacks would be treated as a form of corruption similar to the use of greenbacks to buy votes.

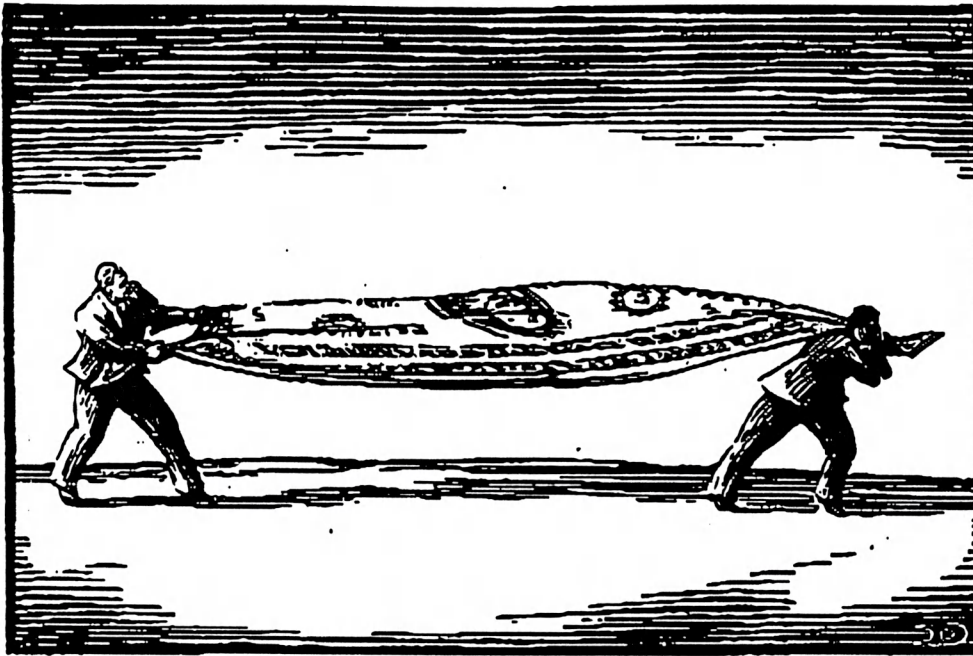
Reforming Reform?

A democratic market society must confront a basic tension between its ideal of equal citizenship and the reality of market inequality. It does so by drawing a line, marking a political sphere within which the power relationships of the market are kept under democratic control. Over the past 150 years, Americans have taken two large steps in this direction. The first, completed

during the age of Andrew Jackson, was the abolition of property requirements for voting. The second development, the secret ballot, came a half-century later. Before this reform, people could buy your vote and hold you to your bargain by watching you at the polling place. Even if you refused a bribe, you were subject to retaliation from your employer or other rich folk. Only with the rise of the secret ballot, in the late nineteenth century, did Americans begin to build a political sphere that was insulated from the inequalities of the market.

Since then, we have been trying to take the next step. Just as the nineteenth century made it tough to buy votes, the twentieth has tried to make it hard to buy candidates—most recently in the 1974 amendments to the Federal Election Campaign Act. Yet these efforts have been painfully ineffective; they have even backfired.

This failure has had multiple causes: the



forward answer that encourages decisive steps against corrosive loopholes. The new system controls the undue influence of wealth without transferring power from the general citizenry to an imperial bureaucracy. Under the proposal, the Patriot company would distribute a sum of red-white-and-blue money to cardholders that, when summed, will be greater than the total spent in the last election held under the green money regime. For example, if \$10 in red-white-and-blue money were distributed to each of America's 130 million registered voters, the \$1.3 billion deposited in Patriot accounts would quadruple the total sum spent by all presidential candidates in 1992. Even if lots of people never used their Patriot cards, more money would still be running through the system than previously without the heavy hand of bureaucratic direction.

Patriot also generates a much more egalitarian distribution of financial power than anything promised by traditional spending limitations. Those ceilings may cut down on the influence of very rich people and interests. They do nothing to confront the fact that the overwhelming majority of citizens give nothing to political

campaigns, and that the small percentage who contribute are overwhelmingly from the upper classes. Under green money, Americans decide whether they are willing to send a \$10 check to the Republican or Democratic candidate at the expense of an extra shirt for their six-year-old. Compare Patriot. Rather than pitting an act of citizenship against an act of private consumption, the voucher system presents a different choice: Do citizens want their Patriot balances "to go to waste" or do they want to take the time to decide which candidate should get the money?

The voucher plan transforms campaign finance from an inegalitarian embarrassment into a new occasion for civic responsibility. Each Patriotic decision will serve as a preliminary vote, encouraging cardholders to focus on the campaign as it develops and support the candidates of their choice at the time of their choice. These tens of millions of decentralized decisions replace acts of centralized authority that bulk large in the traditional subsidy proposals. Rather than authorizing a bureaucracy to determine when, and whether, particular candidates can share in governmental largesse, the Patriot plan places this decision in the

hands of the citizens of the United States, where it belongs.

Designing Patriot

One appealing strategy is to begin with a narrow target: the presidency. In contrast to congressional elections, which have no public financing, we already have in the presidency a large program that seeks to substitute public for private finance. Patriot would simply do the job much better than existing centralized arrangements. If a pilot program were in place for the 1996 election, it would demonstrate concretely to ordinary Americans that they can indeed act constructively to provide a solution to the present disgrace. This demonstration could, in turn, generate a decisive swing in support of a significant expansion of scope on both federal and state levels. Existing doubts about expanding public finance do not revolve around matters of budgetary cost. It would cost much less than a billion dollars a year, for example, to expand Patriot to finance all congressional campaigns. Opposition is based instead on the pervasive suspicion that federal funding will be perverted by incumbents to insulate themselves further from the popular will. The best way to confront these fears is by demonstrating Patriot's capacity to empower ordinary people rather than Washington bureaucrats.

Of course, present discontent with Congress is already so high that it might be preferable to include congressional elections from the outset. The Patriot's cleansing effect on congressional elections is more likely to improve the quality of public life than, say, term limitations forcing the retirement of popular and seasoned members of the House and Senate after a few terms in office. If the Patriot is extended to congressional elections, a second design issue becomes even more important: many voters will have trouble making intelligent funding decisions. If primaries are included within the program, challengers will have a hard time piercing the anonymity barrier. For the scheme to function effectively, card-

holders should be allowed to give their red-white-and-blue money to political brokers to spend where they think it will do the most good.

Millions will refuse to take advantage of this option and will insist on making their own decisions on candidates. But those who wish to delegate their choices should be allowed a broad range of choice. Many will select a political party to serve as broker, but they should also be allowed to transfer funds to a broad range of interest groups—PACs, if you will, representing the full gamut of political opinion.

While PAC-baiting is a part of the conventional wisdom, we should rethink the source of our unease. So long as PACs depend on the supply of green money, it is easy to see how they reinforce those special interests that are relatively advantaged by the market. If, however, PACs are dependent upon red-white-and-blue funds, why not let a thousand flowers bloom, leaving it to the good sense of citizens to determine whether a political party or a PAC or a particular candidate best expresses their vision of the public good?

Some political scientists may find this expression of faith in ordinary people naive. Rather than leaving the role of parties to the political marketplace, they argue that the integrative functions performed by parties are crucial to the operation of a democracy. On this view, it would be healthier in the long run if we refused to allow "special interests" to compete directly for red-white-and-blue funds, requiring them instead to compete for influence by participating actively within the parties.

I am unpersuaded, but more important, so is the Supreme Court. As we shall see, there is no reason to think that the Court will react to Patriot with hostility so long as it remains broadly open to the shifting currents of political opinion. Using it to entrench the power of existing political parties, however, will likely generate a much more hostile response from the Court.

There are many more practical problems to be considered. I hope I have said enough.

however, to make my sketch sufficiently credible that we can step back from these important, but ultimately secondary, details to consider Patriot's place in the larger system.

Drawing the Line

A first basic issue revolves around the relationship between the new red-white-and-blue currency and the ongoing use of familiar greenbacks: Can greenback-holders continue to buy political advertisements in newspapers to announce their "spontaneous and independent" support of a candidate? And what of the normal discussion of political questions in newspapers and other mass media? Presumably these standard media will continue to be financed through green dollars. Should their intervention in political campaigns, then, also be restricted?

Fundamental questions—but there is nothing special about the voucher plan that generates them. Any effort to insulate campaign finance from the unmediated rule of money requires us to cut the world into (at least) two spheres—the sphere of "campaign finance," in which the role of green money is constrained (either through traditional reform measures or as part of a voucher plan), and the world of ordinary commodities, where ability to pay is measured exclusively in terms of green dollars. Unless the market or democracy is allowed to dominate all spheres of life, we must be prepared to draw some lines—pointing out those activities, like voting or campaign finance, in which the democratic aspiration is taken with special seriousness, and those spheres where we are more willing to live

with market-generated inequality. Since line-drawing is a feature of all reform programs, the difficulties it entails cannot be used as a reason for rejecting Patriot and continuing with old-style campaign reform.

Wherever we draw the line, we will be obliged to distinguish close cases. For example, Patriot might mimic existing law by allowing rich citizens and special interest groups to spend green money on political advertisements so long as they act "independently" of the candidate's direction. But there is nothing sacrosanct about this line.

The Patriot voucher plan controls the undue influence of wealth without transferring power from the general citizenry to an imperial bureaucracy. It transforms campaign finance from an egalitarian embarrassment into a new occasion for civic responsibility.

It is a result of Supreme Court decisions that, as we shall see, do not control a constitutional assessment of Patriot. Congress should therefore feel free to bar all purchases of political advertisements with green money, even if the purchaser claims to be acting "independently."

This decision, it bears emphasizing, does not mean an end to independent political action. As we have seen, PACs will remain free to compete with

candidates and parties—for red-white-and-blue money. If PACs choose to spend their Patriot funds on an independent campaign, rather than on contributions to candidates' war chests, that is their choice. Patriot simply deprives PACs of power based on the wealth of their clients; it does not deprive them of their freedom to operate on a more level playing field. If the American Medical Association can convince the doctors of the United States, and perhaps some patients as well, to transfer their ten red-white-and-blue dollars to them, rather than the Sierra Club or the Republican Party, Patriot does not prevent them from continuing to play the game of

electoral politics, albeit on a reduced scale.

Nor will Patriot eliminate the power of green money. General purpose media—ranging from the *New York Times* to the *National Enquirer*—would remain within the green-money sphere. While they could only accept political advertisements in exchange for money coming out of a Patriot account, they would otherwise be free to comment on political matters. Think tanks will continue to shape their messages to win the support of rich donors. By redefining the sphere of political equality, I have no desire to abolish the impact of market-generated inequality on our political life. I am searching for a healthier balance—in which the sphere of political equality is not overly compromised by the pervasive impact of wealth.

Similar line-drawing exercises await when we turn to consider the problem of the political volunteer. Whenever a citizen works for free on a political campaign, he or she is forgoing time that might have been spent on money-making activities. Should we conclude, then, that volunteers are really spending the market value of their time and that their "imputed wages" should be charged against the campaign's red-white-and-blue budget?

Though this suggestion might appeal to some economists, liberal democrats should reject it. The point of a political campaign is to inspire lots of Americans to act as conscientious citizens, putting their money-making cares to one side for a time to consider the public interest. One candidate should not be penalized if he or she successfully engages this civic spirit more than others. Volunteers are not in it for the money, and their energies should not be charged against the campaign's budget.

If so much is accepted, we confront a final question: How should we treat a candidate like Ross Perot, who wants to invest vast sums of green money in his own campaign? Just like everybody else. On the one hand, the fat paycheck Perot could have been earning as a business executive should not be charged to his campaign's Patriot

account as an "imputed" cost of operation. On the other hand, Perot should not be permitted to throw his green money around to buy the presidency or any other office. Like every other American, his purchasing power within the sphere of campaign finance should be measured in terms of red-white-and-blue, not green, dollars.

Corruption

But won't our careful line-drawing efforts be undermined by outright corruption? If a credit card has a balance of 10 red-white-and-blues, what is to prevent its holder from selling this balance in a corrupt exchange for a couple of greens? This is what happens with food stamps, why not with more patriotic forms of "nonnegotiable" currency?

The analogy to food stamps is too quick. The illegal buyer of food stamps can go into any store and exchange them for commodities. The corrupt buyer of a Patriotic balance will have greater difficulties. He must spend time and energy making sure that his promisee goes to a card machine and dials in the codes that will authorize the transfer to the "right" political party or candidate. This will be very costly, given the relatively small sum the corrupting party will gain from each transaction. It will also be hard to keep the media ignorant of a mass effort at corrupt purchases by a political "machine." A misstep here can be disastrous. Wrongdoers will face criminal sanctions equivalent to those involved in voting fraud, and the media carnival following the discovery of "dirty tricks" will seriously damage the tainted candidates.

But we have more to fear than this low level kind of corruption. What is to prevent high-level managers of the Patriot company from abusing their positions of trust? The possibilities are many: leaking lists of contributors, cheating on the accounts, and so forth. While there are institutional safeguards that may be employed to check against abuse, who will guard against abuse by the guardians? There can be no fully satisfactory answer. However, the

campaigns that were "independent" of the main effort controlled by the candidates themselves.

In the lawsuit of the future, the challenge will be to convince the Justices that this part of *Buckley* does not apply to the new reform. Defenders of Patriot must show convincingly that it was one thing for *Buckley* to protect the use of greenbacks when people were not provided with red-white-and-blue money; quite another thing to invalidate Patriot's restrictions on green money when each citizen is compensated in a new political currency.

This shouldn't be too hard—so long as the Supreme Court is prepared to think through the reasons why *Buckley* was so skeptical about expenditure limitations. As we have seen, traditional reforms of this type endanger two distinct interests. The first is a macro-interest: whenever the law tells people that they can't legally buy political advertisements, it reduces the overall quantity of speech-related investment. The second is a micro-interest: regardless of its overall impact, expenditure limitations frustrate each individual's freedom to spend money in the way that he or she thinks makes the most sense. Given this dual threat, Congress's comprehensive effort to restrict private expenditure understandably set off constitutional alarm bells for the Court. While the pursuit of equality is an admirable ideal, are we not running it into the ground when we use it to reduce the resources that would otherwise be devoted to political speech?

Within this context, the Court set about scrutinizing particular efforts at expenditure limitation—passing some and rejecting others, including the two that resemble our Patriot limitations. Though many have questioned these judgments, I agree with them. Without a compensating subsidy, severe limitations on greenbacks can greatly reduce the overall amount of resources devoted to political debate. Since the vitality of this debate lies at the very core of the First Amendment, the Court was right

to look upon an encompassing set of restrictions with skepticism.

But as we have seen, *Buckley* itself recognized that the constitutional calculus can be radically transformed by the addition of a subsidy. Since Patriot distributes four red-white-and-blue dollars for every green dollar spent in the last election, it will lead to more, not less, political debate. Given this fact, the Court should ask itself a new question when confronting Patriot's limitations on the use of green money by candidates and private citizens. Unlike *Buckley*, the constitutional critics of Patriot will not be able to argue that both macro- and micro-interests support invalidation. To the contrary, Patriot's defenders will point to *Buckley*'s support of innovative subsidy programs and will urge the Court to support Congress in designing a program that will generate a much more vibrant political debate than the free market had produced. Rather than threatening the macro-interest in free speech, Patriot is reinvigorating it.

In response, the restricted greenback-holders will only be able to invoke a vague intuition in defense of their micro-interest: "After all, it's my money. Why can't I spend it on an advertisement for a candidate rather than spend it on some trivial act of private consumption—say, an extra television set?" Call this the brute property intuition. The constitutional question, simply put, is whether the Supreme Court would find this a sufficient basis to invalidate the new limitations on green money imposed by Patriot.

"The Spirit of *Lochner*"

There was a time when the right answer could have been yes. During the early twentieth century, courts constructed an elaborate jurisprudence guaranteeing property owners a fundamental constitutional right to use their property as they thought best. The spirit of the time was expressed by the famous *Lochner* decision of 1905. New York had passed a statute restricting the workweek of bakers to sixty hours. The Court invalidated the statute on

the ground that it violated the freedom of the owners and employees to use their property and labor as they thought fit.

If *Lochner* were still good law today, I would fear for Patriot. Since the constitutional revolution of the 1930s, however, cases like *Lochner* stand as the great anti-precedents in the American legal mind. For Justice Scalia, no less than for Justice Brennan, it functions as a powerful symbol of negation, not commendation. Whatever constitutional rights Americans may plausibly claim in the modern era, all sitting Justices recognize one that Americans can't claim—and that is the *Lochnerian* right to use one's property any way one wants. Given the transvaluation of *Lochner*, even the present conservative Court will find it difficult to celebrate the rights of property as a reason for invalidating Patriot's restrictions on green money.

Constitutional Supermoney?

But assume I am wrong in all this, and that the ascendant Republicans on the Supreme Court are willing to breathe new life into the *Lochnerian* premise. Even this change would not be radical enough to endanger the constitutionality of Patriot. The *Lochner* principle has an unproblematic application within a social order where one kind of currency—color it green—serves as legal tender for all legal purposes. But it is precisely this world that Patriot is trying to replace. This multi-currency aspiration, moreover, is shared by a host of other voucher proposals. In education, health care, welfare, environmental control, policy discussion is awash with designs for special-purpose currencies. If a fraction of these initiatives become social realities, the wallets of the future will have a different design: lots of pockets containing monies of different colors, tenderable in different transactional contexts.

Within this brave new world, the neo-*Lochnerian* principle becomes conceptually inadequate. It is no longer enough to say that we have a right to spend money as we please; the question is *which* money do we

have a right to spend—green or red-white-and-blue?

Or perhaps the question is better stated in terms of supermoney: Does the Constitution affirmatively require the creation of a single *supermoney* that must *always* be recognized as legal tender so long as any other kind of money is tenderable?

Since constitutional lawyers have been living in a single-money world, such questions are unfamiliar. As an active Court watcher, I am confident that the Justices, after scurrying to read the applicable precedents, would grant exceptionally broad discretion to the political branches in this area. If Congress insists there be only one currency, that's fine; if it wants to create specialized currencies in addition to an all-purpose money, that's O.K.; but if it wants to create "separate-but-equal" monies—each legal tender only within its own sphere—that's fine too. Since this predictable position leads to straightforward support of Patriot, one could leave the constitutional analysis at this point.

However, there are fundamental principles lurking here. The freedom that old-fashioned green money gives us to shape the contours of our lives is not to be taken lightly. Whenever the state decrees that one kind of money cannot be transferred into another kind, it constrains the freedom of those who would have made a different tradeoff. The proliferation of separate-but-equal monies, each for use in a different sphere of life, could lead to very real constraints upon our traditional practice of liberty. I am unprepared to say that such proliferation should be permitted to proceed without any serious constitutional scrutiny.

It seems wiser, then, to move beyond the conventional answer—the near-plenary power of Congress over the currency—despite the fact that the Court will almost certainly invoke it to sustain Patriot against attack. Whatever may be said of separate-but-equal monies in other emerging contexts, Patriot merits more than rubber-stamp approval. It deserves judicial recog-

nition as a decisive contribution to a problem that gnaws at the very core of modern constitutionalism.

This involves the constitutional status of the American quest for distributive justice. Since the New Deal revolution, the Justices—from the Stone Court through the Warren Court through the Rehnquist Court—have been trying to carry off a delicate balancing act. On the one hand, they have consistently denounced the notion that the Constitution enshrines the market-generated distribution of wealth and income. On the other hand, the Justices have refused to take the idea of social justice to heart and interpret the Constitution's demand for "equal protection" as requiring any particular level of redistribution from the rich to the poor. Instead, they have sought to remove themselves from the business of defining distributive justice by delegating the task to the president and Congress. While this step has insulated the Justices from the endless distributive struggles of the welfare state, it has also left a question gnawing just below the doctrinal surface.

Call it the problem of circularity. It is one thing for the Court to insist that it is up to the politicians to determine the justice of the green-money distribution so long as the politicians are selected through a process in which the green-money distribution does not play an overwhelming role. If, however, the green-money distribution does dominate politics, there is a very vicious circle: the Court defers to politics, which defers to green money on the question whether the existing green-money distribution is politically legitimate. In consigning the question of distributive justice to the political process, surely the Court does not suppose it is inviting the American people to play a shell game?

This embarrassing question does not bulk large on the pages of the United States Reports. Perhaps the Justices' insistence, in the reapportionment cases, on the principle of one-person, one-vote is part of an effort to reassure themselves, and the rest of us,

that the circularity problem isn't too vicious—that the impact of the existing division of wealth, while substantial, isn't entirely undermining the constitutional credibility of political judgments about distributive justice. Perhaps the Justices reconcile themselves to circularity with the thought that there is not much they can do effectively to change matters, and that they must wait for mobilized citizens to insist upon the greater autonomy of politics from wealth.

This is where Patriot enters, breaking the circularity at its most vulnerable point. Patriot allows the Court to stop papering over some uncomfortable circularities whenever it defers to the political branches' interpretation of the constitutional meaning of equality. By insisting that *only* red-white-and-blue be used to run campaigns, Patriot allows the modern constitutional system to work according to its professed principles—requiring property to justify itself to democracy, rather than the other way around.

If, in contrast, the Court were to invalidate Patriot, it would be sabotaging the collective effort to break the circle created by its own pattern of decisions. While the Justices doubtless would continue to say that the question of distributive justice is open for political determination, they would have destroyed the very program that would have endowed this claim with political reality. While I disagree with the Rehnquist Court on other points, I do not believe that the majority would seriously consider such a counterproductive step. Patriot, then, presents an easy constitutional case. Congress and the rest of us should confront it on its merits, without undue anxiety over hostile judicial reaction.

Campaign finance is reemerging as a high priority of the Clinton administration. But the newspapers are already full of fears of more gridlock within the existing framework of reform proposals. Isn't it a good time, then, to redefine the framework?•

Memorandum to President Clinton:
From Benjamin Barber
December 21, 1995

Mr. President: I am submitting these remarks in preparation for our January 7 meeting. As I understand it, like our meeting last year at Camp David, the January discussion is intended to help raise basic issues of democracy and civic values as they impact on the State of the Union and the program (and campaign) for the coming year. Hence, I have tried here to address both the architecture of the State of the Union and the issues I believe we might usefully focus on in our meeting. I have enclosed for the briefing book a few other short items: a column by David Broder on my Prague Speech, my NY Times OpEd piece on the Disney merger, and a short essay on civil society I wrote for THE NEW DEMOCRAT. They provide some context for what follows.

THE STATE OF THE UNION

First, some comments on the State of the Union. The 1996 speech, in addition to assessing the previous year's accomplishments, carries two special burdens: it must set the political tone and themes for the 1996 Presidential campaign without compromising the dignity and Presidential character of the moment by becoming overtly 'political;' and it must address not just the coming year, but the balance of the century -- your second term as prelude to the new Millennium.

The speech needs to be far-sighted and visionary without becoming arch or preachy, and without losing sight of the real concerns of America in this difficult winter of multiple discontents. It cannot just be about what the Republicans are doing wrong (a 1000 page novel unto itself!) but needs to stake out positive ground. It has to offer genuine hope without either understating the obstacles most Americans meet in their everyday lives and without seeming naively panglossian (as Gingrich does when he's waxing futurological). It must be convincingly fresh and inclusive in its approach without sacrificing the Democratic Party's traditional constituencies. Rather the aim is to get those constituencies to rethink their interests and objectives in light of fresh understanding.

I would propose that the leadership theme already being discussed for the campaign might make a forceful focus for the speech under a title like **"Certain Leadership for Uncertain Times."** Substantively, the speech (like our January 7 discussion) might effectively include race, community, civil society and the future of America in a global society. Ideally leadership needs to be practiced rather than talked about; what I am proposing, however, is an approach that avoids proclaiming "I am a leader!" but

instead says "here is what leadership requires of the office of the President, and the office of citizen in America at the close of the century" and then leaves it to the listener to conclude that "if this is what leadership requires, then President Clinton is the right leader for these uncertain times, and I have to do my part as well."

I would argue for brevity and conciseness (as I did last year) because more becomes less in a fairly big hurry: key themes get watered down and overarching vision is lost. For similar reasons, I would also argue against the 'cafeteria approach' which gives every department and every policy domain its own thirty second entree at the expense of a memorable and coherent meal. Including everybody's favorite dessert may be the imperative inside the Administration, but for a listening America the speech is a chance to hear the President at his terse and visionary best. The cafeteria never really satisfies anyway, because once listeners realize the speech is trying to offer something to everyone, they will find the one thing they favor that it does not offer! On the other hand, when the speech sets its own agenda and insists on its own priorities, it compels listeners to enter into its language and vision and, when successful, leaves little room for quibbling.

A concise focus offers an opportunity to weave together the many individual policy pieces and political concerns into a single fabric, displaying the connection between the themes that have been most important over the year: the ideas that animated the Memphis speech on race, the Georgetown July Fourth weekend speech on citizenship, the Texas reflections on the Million Man March, the recent defense of the Bosnian intervention. I think what Americans seek above all is the LINKAGE that draws together the rhetoric and actions of your Administration into a singular coherent vision that allows them to accept rather than quarrel with the details in the name of the whole. Not just why racial justice is vital to Americans of color, but why it is indispensable to our common American future; not just why the Bosnian intervention is necessary for European geo-strategic reasons, but how it reflects concern for distinctly American interests in an ever more interdependent world; and how discharging our responsibilities to NATO impacts on long term trade relations, and what those trade relations mean for our success in the global economy.

With these considerations in mind, here is a draft of a hypothetical speech that along the way raises the key issues that seem to be critical for our January 7 meeting.

**SOME PROPOSED LANGUAGE FOR OUR JANUARY 7 DISCUSSION AND FOR
A STATE OF THE UNION SPEECH:**

"As we approach the end of the century and face the uncertainties of a new millenium, the cold war over, new technologies promising new forms of liberation, new problems promising new forms of servitude, more than ever before America and the world need effective democratic leadership: certain leadership for uncertain times. Certain leadership in times of uncertainty means democratic leadership. Democratic leadership is exacting because it demands shared responsibility that no single woman or man, not a Speaker or a party leader, not the President either, can exercise single-handedly. In a democracy, leadership is exercised in common partnership by citizens and their elected representatives: a strong democracy requires strong citizens no less than strong elected officials.

"Certain leadership for uncertain times brings special responsibilities to all of us in four critical areas: economic fairness, race relations, international cooperation and democratic revitalization.

"Responsibility for fairness: Leadership involves hard decisions that, in the name of common goods, exact real costs. This gives to leadership a special responsibility for fairness. If schools with growing burdens are to tighten their belts, a defense establishment relieved of the burden of cold war, though it faces new challenges, must also tighten its belt. We must do more for our men and women in the field but ask whether their security requires another nuclear submarine designed for a cold war that is over. If the poor are to increase their responsibility for finding a way out of their poverty, must the wealthy expect tax breaks to help them sustain their prosperity? Must loyal employees be the only ones to pay the price of corporate downsizing, when corporate profits are upsizing? A stock market that soars while so many ordinary Americans are suffering a decline in real income may occasion more resentment than celebration.

"On the other hand, whenever there is fairness, Americans have shown themselves willing to make sacrifices for the common goods we all care about. They ask only that the sacrifices are fairly distributed and the benefits equally enjoyed. I believe our seniors will go the extra mile to assure that their grandchildren are not impoverished by debt, I believe those who are not parents will contribute to education budgets, I believe that people able to afford second homes will help assure that others can purchase first homes at affordable interest rates -- but only if they all believe leadership is acting even-handedly, and that fairness is the premise of every request for sacrifice.

"Fairness is also common sense: education dollars spent today guarantee productive citizens and competitive workers tomorrow. An economy that disemploys recklessly erodes its own consumption base. Eradicating poverty not only meets the demands of justice but liberates the economy. Racism disfigures the racist no less than his victim. Young women and men asked to carry the entire burden of social security and medicare may one day rebel and refuse to bear any burden at all. Fairness is in everybody's interest in the long run -- even those who may think they benefit from unfairness in the short run -- because America is one nation that will flourish only if we all flourish together.

"Responsibility for racial harmony: From the time of our miraculous founding, which left slavery in place despite the high ideals of liberty and equality that illuminated the Declaration of Independence and the new Constitution, race has been, as Gunnar Myrdall called it more than a half century ago "The American Dilemma." It has brought out the worst and the best in our nation: slavery and abolition, Jim Crow and the Civil Rights Struggle, Bull Connor and Martin Luther King. Today, though we have come far, we have not come nearly far enough. The suspicion, the recrimination, the reciprocal fear and resentment, the persistent bigotry all abide and their persistence undermines the ideals and the unity that give America its promise. Hatred seeds rage, discrimination engenders resentment, persecution breeds separation. But as two nations, black and white, in Andrew Hacker's dread portrait, "separate, hostile, unequal," America will not flourish and cannot lead. If our leadership means anything, it means addressing racial distrust and racial conflict -- not their problem but our dilemma.

"Responsibility for International Cooperation: If this has been the American century, the next will be a global century in which, however, peace and prosperity will spread only if America continues to exercise forceful leadership in common with other nations. For nations are no longer the only players in the world and in the 21st century world they may not always be the central actors in an arena where transnational corporations and regional associations and non-governmental international organizations will affect not just global affairs but American "domestic" interests as well.

"American Leadership that is blind to the character of global interdependence and the forces affecting us from abroad will not only leave the planet untouched by our interests and unleavened by our ideals, but will fail us here at home. If we wait to act until global environmental problems reach our shores, wait to act until the new Asian and African viruses have entered our cities, wait to act until the distant wars creep across our borders in the form of desperate waves of immigrants or economic dislocation, it

will be too late for our action to count. Where we have acted with seeming 'altruism,' as with the global warming treaty or in Haiti, we have also served our own interests well. It is fashionable to classify American Presidents as preoccupied primarily with domestic policy or with foreign policy. However, the nineteenth century distinction between "domestic" and "foreign" affairs is unlikely to survive into a twenty-first century dominated by global commerce, transnational markets and world technological innovation. Presidential leadership demands bifocal vision; for what happens on the distant horizon alters the landscape in front of our noses.

"America can no more flourish in a world that is floundering than our suburbs can prosper when our inner cities are decaying or our rich can remain secure when our poor are growing desperate. No man is an island, no nation a fortress. We need each other and leadership means forging linkages between domestic and foreign policy, means forging cooperation and consensus abroad as well as at home.

"Responsibility for Democratic Revitalization: Leadership in a democracy is shared. Democracy demands not only that politicians lead and voters follow but that citizens lead and politicians respond. Presidential leadership that pretends every problem can be solved from the Executive Office is fraudulent; leadership that insists government can do nothing at all is hypocritical. In free societies, leadership means partnership. There are some things only citizens can do: responsibility starts with individuals and families and works upwards. But there are other things only government can do, for it represents the sovereign people in action, the kind of power that works from the top downwards. It represents the only power on which we get to vote and so the only power that is legitimate.

"The American government belongs to the American people -- to you. It is your sovereign instrument. Those who would take it away from you in the name of your liberty either do not understand liberty or are engaged in deception. You certainly have the right to demand that government be efficient, that it be accountable, that it serve and not abrogate your common freedoms and that it embody rather than undermine your common needs and common interests. But leadership that pretends you have no right to exercise your sovereignty, leadership that turns over to corporations and bureaucracies in the private sector responsibility for public goods you expect your elected government to secure -- such leadership is not worthy of the name. It leads by rejecting responsibility; it asks from you what it will not ask from itself. A robust economy requires a robust public sector. Privacy, competitiveness and liberty are private values that are publicly secured.

"Politicians who make war on government undercut your sovereignty, for it is popular sovereignty that they have been elected to represent. Their reluctance to serve as sovereign trustees disempowers you. The market can service you as producers and consumers but it cannot represent you as citizens: only your government can do that, as long as it really is YOURS. As elected officials, trustees of your common power, it is our responsibility to assure that it is fairly and effectively exercised, not to surrender it to others.

"Leadership is hard not easy, long-term not short-term, visionary not reactive. To lead, I need active responsible citizens at my side. To engage in civic leadership you need elected representatives unafraid of the responsibilities that accompany power by your side. I cannot promise to make the uncertainties of the new millenium into certainties: I can promise I will make America a country capable of flourishing under conditions of uncertainty. I cannot promise to turn our two oceans into walls that insulate us from the world or turn back the clock to a time when nations could go it alone: I can promise I will make the voice of America heard and its ideals understood in an ever more interdependent world. I cannot promise I will resolve the American dilemma of race that has slowed our progress towards justice and equality for so long; I can promise I will not let the dilemma fester or pretend that it is not our most formidable challenge.

"In the last few years of this, the American century, we can by working together assure that the next century will belong, if not to us alone, to the democratic aspirations and high moral ideals for which we stand. It is our power that has made the twentieth century ours; perhaps our ideals can help make the next an American century for everyone."

Benjamin Barber
Piscataway Township
December 20, 1995

From Disney World to Disney's World

By Benjamin R. Barber

H STOCKBRIDGE, Mass. Having domesticated the Lion King and the Beast and successfully annexed a piece of 42d Street, the Walt Disney Company lacked only a big television network to secure its empire. Acquiring Capital Cities/ABC Inc. was a deal at a mere \$19 billion. After all, back in 1986 when the media merger frenzy first got under way, General Electric paid \$6.5 billion for the RCA Corporation (which owns NBC), and just two years ago Bell Atlantic offered \$33 billion in a failed bid for Tele-Communications Inc., the largest cable company in the world.

The fashionable term for all this vertical and lateral corporate integration is synergy, but synergy turns out to be just another word for monopoly. The Disney acquisition is the latest manifestation of irresistible global economic and technological forces demanding integration and uniformity. Mass producers are mesmerizing people everywhere with fast music, fast computers, fast food and fast images, assembling nations into a network tied together by communications, information, entertainment and commerce.

Disney is a pre-eminent leader in

Benjamin R. Barber, who teaches political science at Rutgers, is author of "Jihad vs. McWorld: How the Planet Is Both Falling Apart and Coming Together."

this booming market. With films, books, theme parks, trademark tie-ins and now Capital Cities/ABC as its subsidiary, the company is poised to become "the greatest entertainment company in the next century," as its chairman, Michael Eisner, rightly boasted yesterday.

In fact, Mr. Eisner understated the truth. An employee of ABC's corporate health and safety division came closer when he gushed that "combining two world-class corporations" begets one "universe-class operation." And Disney has as good a chance as any company to dominate this cosmic market. Its goods are as much images as products, creating a common world taste that is identifiably American. Music, video, films, theater, books and theme parks are the outposts of this civilization in which malls are the public squares, gated suburbs are the neighborless neighborhoods and computer screens the virtual communities.

Disney has simply followed the modern corporate imperative to own deep and own wide. If you own movie studios, buy book companies and theme parks and sports teams (Paramount acquiring Simon & Schuster, Viacom buying Paramount). If you own hardware, buy software (Sony trying to swallow Columbia). If you own TV stations, buy film libraries (Turner and MGM). Or if you own a studio and a film library, get yourself a big network.

The distinctions between information and entertainment, software and hardware, product and distribution are fading fast anyway. The Baby Bells, set loose by a Government increasingly sidelined by the Republi-

can Congress and its deregulatory telecommunications bill, are invading the territory of cable TV even as long-distance companies retake local telephone turf.

For the companies, synergy — monopoly — is just good business. Microsoft's chairman, Bill Gates, knows that the software programs and patents he controls, though spectacularly successful, will be worth exponentially more teamed up with the creative ideas that drive Hollywood and Madison Avenue. That's why he went into

Lessons of the ABC deal: Own deep, own wide.

business with Jeffrey Katzenberg (late of Disney!), Steven Spielberg and David Geffen to create Dreamworks, a natural rival to the new Disney-ABC conglomerate.

Consolidation has its advantages. For one thing, it should allow national decline pessimists like the historian Paul Kennedy to stop worrying so much. In the world created by Disney, Viacom and Time Warner, ideas, information and images are of potentially far greater value than computer hardware or durable goods. Japanese computer programs have yet to pose a threat to the likes of Mr. Gates, any more than German sitcoms discomfit the TV producer Steven Bochco.

And Disney's amusements are

much more than amusing. Amusement is itself an ideology. It offers a vision of life that, for all the protests over sex and violence in the content, is curiously attractive and bland. "Pocahontas" with its echoes in theme parks and tie-ins at Burger King weave mythic stories around cartoon identities that seem to celebrate multiculturalism even as they eradicate real difference. Whether Disney knows it or not, it is buying much more than our leisure time. It has a purchase on our values, on how we feel and think and what we think about.

The real question raised by this latest media merger is inevitably about us. Do Americans want simply to be spectators and consumers of the synergy frenzy that is turning entertainment and media into a subsidiary of a handful of conglomerates like Disney? Do we really wish to refuse the despised Government, our only ally, some measure of control over the new information and entertainment "trusts"? Where do we look for help as we busily dismantle our regulatory institutions?

As it stands poised on the edge of the 21st century, Disney seems to aim at a 19th-century world of conglomeration in which the Government sits back and watches. Michael Eisner is no Rockefeller and Bill Gates is no Vanderbilt and Steven Spielberg is no Carnegie. Mr. Eisner, Mr. Gates and Mr. Spielberg are far more powerful. How are they to be rendered responsible and accountable? After all, theirs is power not over oil, steel and railroads but over pictures, information and ideas. Whose world do we want it to be — Disney's or ours? [1]

David S. Broder

Meeting on the Common

What good is Independence Day without hot dogs and hot air, barbecues and oratory? I can't supply the eats, but I would offer some holiday thoughts, inspired by an intercontinental exchange between Prague and the American groves of academe.

Vaclav Havel, the president of the Czech Republic, was Harvard's commencement speaker, delivering a passionate and eloquent address on the responsibility of politicians and journalists to embody and inculcate the civic virtues that make democracy possible. Both politics and journalism, he said, must aim at "serving the community," which means "morality in practice."

At the same time, in Havel's home city of Prague, Benjamin Barber, the Walt Whitman professor of political science at Rutgers, was offering a related set of thoughts. Barber's comments are as applicable to our own

country as to the representatives of the former Communist lands who were in his audience at a conference sponsored by the Center for Civic Education, the American Federation of Teachers, the Department of Education and the U.S. Information Agency.

In words that Havel would certainly applaud, Barber reminded his listeners that "democracy is a process, not an end; an ongoing experiment, not a set of fixed doctrines. Its ideals, unless we repossess them generation to generation, become little different than any other ideology. The open society means a society without closure, a society open to challenge and criticism."

And then a sentence that I wish could be on every classroom

blackboard and intoned at the start of each day's session of Congress: "When a nation announces the work of democracy is finished, it's usually democracy that is finished in that nation."

We live in a time when a great many politicians are addicted to re-writing the Constitution. No fewer than four constitutional amendments may be voted on in Congress this year. Most of them don't stand scrutiny. But even if they did, Barber reminds us that constitutional protections are only what James Madison called "parchment parapets," from which threats to freedom and democracy can be repelled only if a strong-willed, principled citizenry stands ready at the gates.

"Constitutions do not create democracy," Barber says. "Democracies

create constitutions. . . . America had 150 years of experience with local civic cultures and civil liberty before it codified the experience into the Constitution and Bill of Rights." Those documents will endure only as long as their principles are clearly etched on our minds and enshrined in our hearts. That is why this great national holiday really is the occasion for the kind of patriotic oratory that reminds us of our individual responsibility—Havel's favorite word—to safeguard democracy through active citizenship.

We also live in a time when, as noted here recently, the majority leader of the House of Representatives, Dick Armey of Texas, and many, many other politicians argue that "the market is rational and the government is dumb." The exaggerat-

ed faith in the market is, Barber says, "our most insidious myth, because so many believe it and because the handcuffs of the market feel so comfortable."

He decries the "disastrous confusion between the moderate and mostly well-founded claim that flexibly regulated markets remain the most efficient instruments of economic productivity and wealth accumulation . . . and the zany, overblown claim that naked, wholly unregulated markets are the sole means by which we can produce and distribute everything we care about, from durable goods to spiritual values, from capital development to social justice, from profitability to a sustainable environment, from private wealth to the essential commonweal."

The point is that we are citizens as well as consumers. Individual choice works wonderfully well in guiding our private consumption. But it is only as we join together to sort out the means for meeting our common goals that we can sustain our democracy.

That is why the traditional American Fourth of July involves meeting in the common—whether it is Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, Grant Park in Chicago or the Mall in Washington, where I will be. It is a time to remind ourselves of the blessings—and responsibilities—we share as citizens of this land.

As Havel said at Harvard, "The main task of the coming era is . . . a radical renewal of our sense of responsibility."

There is no better time for pondering that challenge—and acting on it—on Independence Day.

THE SEARCH FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Can We Restore the Middle Ground Between Government and Markets?

BY BENJAMIN R. BARBER

In the Age of Gingrich, no one cares much for government. Yet at the same time, the privatization of public policy—the dominant theme of Republicans since the Reagan revolution—does not and cannot satisfy Americans' longing for family values and a sense of community. Americans are being offered an unpalatable choice between an excessive, elephantine, and paternalistic government and a radically self-absorbed, nearly anarchic private market. No wonder they are outraged at politicians.

Yet once upon a time, between the poles of government and market, there was a vast, vital middle ground known as civil society. Although in eclipse today, civil society was the key to America's early democratic energy and civic activism. Its great virtue was that it shared government's regard for the commonweal, yet unlike government made no claim to exercise a monopoly on legitimate coercion. Rather, it was a voluntary, "private" realm devoted to "public" goods.

Civil society is the domain that can potentially mediate between the state and private sectors and offer women and men a space for activity that is simultaneously voluntary and public; a space that unites the virtue of the private sector—liberty—with the virtue of the public sector—concern for the general good.

Civil society is a societal dwelling place that is neither a capitol building nor a shopping mall. It shares with the private sector the gift of liberty; it is voluntary and is constituted by freely associated individuals and groups. But unlike the private sector, it aims at common ground and consensual, integrative, and collaborative action. Civil society is thus public without being coercive, voluntary without being private.

The best way to think about civil society is to envision the domains Americans occupy daily when they are en-

gaged neither in government (voting, serving on juries, paying taxes) nor in commerce (working, producing, shopping, consuming). Such daily business includes attending church or synagogue, doing community service, participating in a voluntary or civic association, joining

a fraternal organization, contributing to a charity, assuming responsibility in a PTA or a neighborhood watch or a hospital fund-raising society. It is in this civil domain that such traditional institutions as foundations, schools, churches, public interest groups, voluntary associations, civic groups, and social movements belong. The media too, when they place their public responsibilities ahead of their commercial ambitions, are better understood as part of civil society and not the private sector.

People occupy civic space all the time; the trouble is, they seem not to know it. Not long ago, following a lecture on citizenship and civil society, a chastised middle-aged woman raised her hand and said to the speaker: "You shame me, sir!

Clearly, being a citizen in civil society is vitally important. But I have to tell you, what with my chairing the church bazaar committee, my service at the hospital, my assignment on the PTA, and now I've been elected head of my block association, well you see, I just don't have time to be a citizen!"

What we call things counts. We need to understand our civic engagements not as private activities, but as non-governmental public activities, and we need to call the spaces we share for purposes other than shopping or voting civil society. When the free space that is civil society goes unrecognized, we begin to treat the activity that takes place within it as private activity that is on a moral par with the most selfish forms of commerce. This is how associations concerned about the good of all people—for example, labor unions and environmental organizations—lost their identity as "public" interest



Alexis de Tocqueville
THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

groups and re-emerged as "special" interests whose aims are indistinguishable from those of the for-profit corporations with which they compete.

The Lost Tradition

How did it come to pass that a nation that prides itself on its democratic civic tradition lost touch with the foundations that gave that tradition resilience? How could so rich a political idea—drawing sustenance from John Locke, James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, and Alexis de Tocqueville—get shunted aside?

Throughout the 19th century, in Tocqueville's 1830s America and afterward, our society comprised not two but three sectors: government, markets, and civil society. In that era when, as Tocqueville observed, liberty was local and civic activity more prevalent, a modest governmental sphere and an unassuming private sector were overshadowed by an extensive civil society tied together by school, church, town, and voluntary association. However expansive they looked at the time, the Federalist constitution and later the unionist Republican Party were by today's benchmark studies in civic humility. Though his opponents feared he would be a kind of monarch, George Washington in fact governed with an executive staff that numbered only in the dozens. And the states and the people, to whom the 10th Amendment had left all powers not expressly delegated to the central government, were the real theater and agents for civic action.

In this simpler time, individuals thought of themselves as citizens and their groups as civil associations; citizens and associations together composed civil society. After the Civil War, civil society rapidly began losing ground to nascent capitalist corporations with an appetite for expansion and a tendency to monopoly. Market forces soon began to encroach on and crush civil society.

Government responded with an aggressive campaign on behalf of the public weal, though it did not directly involve the public. In assuming the powers it needed to confront the corporations, government inadvertently encroached on and crushed civil society from the opposite side. Squeezed between the warring and ever-expanding state and corporate sectors, civil society began disappearing from American life.

Sometime between the two Roosevelts, it vanished altogether. Its denizens were compelled either to find sanctuary under the feudal tutelage of big government or to join the private sector, where schools, churches, and foundations assumed the identity of corporations and could aspire to be nothing more than agents for

their members. That their objective was the public good became irrelevant since, by definition, all private associations necessarily had private ends.

This melancholy history has left us stranded in an era in which citizens have neither a home for their civic institutions nor a voice with which to speak. Be passively serviced (or passively exploited) by the massive, busy-body, bureaucratic state, where the word "citizen" has no resonance and the only relevant civic act is voting (an activity in which fewer than half of citizens engage); or sign onto the selfishness and radical individualism of the private sector, where the word "citizen" has no resonance and the only relevant activity is consuming (an activity in which just about everybody engages). Be a "citizen" and vote the public scoundrels out of office and/or be a consumer and exercise your private rights on behalf of your private interests—those are the only remaining obligations of the much diminished office of American citizen.

Lessons Old and New

There is no task more pressing for our leaders than the restoration of a non-governmental public space that citizens can call their own. Tocqueville celebrated the *local* character of American liberty and thought that democracy could be sustained only through vigorous civic activity in America's municipalities and neighborhoods. He would scarcely recognize America today, where our alternatives are restricted to government gargantuanism and private greed, and where the main consequence of the recent elections seems to be the supplanting of New Deal arrogance by market arrogance.

Ironically, America's admirers abroad have learned lessons from us that we have forgotten. At the time of the American founding, our Committees of Correspondence played a role comparable to that of the pro-democracy group Civic Forum in Eastern Europe, creating space for civic action in the face of an oppressive government. In Vaclav Havel's Czech Republic, where Civic Forum helped transform the nation, and in Fang Lizhi's China, where a similar spirit is being cultivated, civil society has proved to be a prelude to democracy. It is clear to those who live under tyranny that freedom must first be won by citizens establishing their own public space; only afterward can it be secured by constitutions and law. Although American government today is neither colonial nor totalitarian, it has usurped the space of civil society. The situation cries out for a remedy.

Without a civil society to nourish engaged citizens, politicians turn into "professionals" out of touch with

their constituencies. Consider the wreck of health care last year. In a debate that increasingly became technocratic and abstract, the people in whose names reforms were being drawn up were invisible. The "public" had no voice in the debate and those in search of it hardly knew where to look, for neither opinion surveys nor the special interest groups claiming to speak for the people accurately reflect civil society. The abyss that separated the President's plan from its intended constituents sealed its demise. While the merits of the health care plan recently adopted in Oregon can be debated, Oregon got a plan because it created "health parliaments" and similar institutions that gave citizens a direct hand in shaping the reforms.

The story of AmeriCorps also holds important lessons. National and community service belongs in the domain of neither government nor the private sector, but in civil society—indeed, such service helps *define* citizenship. Yet because civil society is not a part of our political consciousness, many Americans mistakenly view AmeriCorps either as government-sponsored volunteerism (a contradiction in terms) or as a special interest benefit package for college students and the disadvantaged. In truth, it is an exercise in high citizenship of which Americans can feel especially proud.

A Mediating Domain

In the last 30 years, Democrats and Republicans have hardened their battle lines. The former are pledged to defend government, however alienating and inefficient a tool it has become. The latter are committed to privatization, even if it means compromising the ideals (family, religion, liberty) to which they have traditionally been committed. The parties are locked in a zero-sum game in which the government cannot expand justice without diminishing liberty and in which the private sector cannot expand liberty without diminishing justice.

Citizens are happy with neither choice. They sense that democracy is precisely that form of government in which not politicians and bureaucrats but an empowered people put flesh on the bones of their liberty; and in which liberty carries with it the obligations of social responsibility and citizenship in government as well as the rights of legal persons against government. It is that form of government in which rights and responsibilities are two sides of a single civic identity, one that belongs neither to state bureaucrats nor to private consumers but to citizens alone.

Civil society is in fact *the* domain of citizens: a mediating domain between markets and government. It can

contain an obtrusive government without ceding public goods to the private sphere. It also can dissipate the atmosphere of solitude and greed that surround markets without suffocating us in big government's exhaust fumes.

William Bennett's *Book of Virtues* tells many a salutary moral tale, but the virtues it celebrates are the product neither of government nor markets but of families and citizens acting in the free space of civil society. There is a danger that Americans will think that the act of buying the book somehow is tantamount to acquiring the virtues. Character *can* be a source of American renewal, but those who think commercial markets can instill character better than government have not spent much time with the consumption-obsessed shoppers who cruise suburban malls on Thursday nights, when stores stay open late.

We do not need a novel civic architecture to recreate civil society. Rather, we need to reconceptualize and reposition existing institutions. Schools, foundations, community movements, the media, and other civil associations need to reclaim their public voice and political legitimacy against those who would write them off as hypocritical special interests.

Americans are sick of the partisans of both political parties who would make them choose between a far too filling government stout and a much too vapid market lite. Americans want, need, and have a right to civil liberty—the liberty earned by citizens engaging in self-government, willing neither to turn over their destinies to government proxies nor to pretend that commercial markets can produce the social goods and values that are necessary for democratic community life.

A third way needs to be found between private markets and coercive government, between anarchic individualism and dogmatic statism.

If we fail to find it, we seem fated to enter an era in which America's public voice, the nation's civic soul, will be left forever mute. ♦

Benjamin R. Barber is Walt Whitman Professor of Political Science at Rutgers University and author of *Strong Democracy* (1984), *An Aristocracy of Everyone* (1992), and the forthcoming *Jihad Versus McWorld*.

Stephen L. Carter

Integrity (forthcoming, Basic Books, 1996)

(thirteen)

Toward an Integral Politics

EVERY time an American community holds an election for any office something remarkable happens: when the votes have been counted, the losers leave office peacefully. No tanks are needed for a rival political party to lever open the doors of the White House; people need not risk their lives against riot police to force the ouster of the defeated governor; the mayor who fails to win reelection does not have his opponents murdered. We simply assume that the winner will take office, and, time after time, our assumption comes true. This happens at every level, whether we are electing a President or a dog catcher, and it is the signal feature of our politics.

Even today, as we move into what appears to be an increasingly bitter and even mean political era, nobody seriously doubts that if the bad guys are voted out (and it doesn't matter who you happen to think the bad guys are), they will step aside and let the good guys take office. So a political party that is out of power plots the overthrow of its opponents by figuring out how to get the right voters to the polls—not by figuring out how many troops to march into the streets.

I mention this because smooth transitions to power remain rare and wonderful things in our troubled world, and because I think it is important to begin any discussion of American politics with the simple optimism that

all of us, whatever our partisan preferences, should draw from the plain fact that in the United States of America, democracy works. We may not always like the answers that our democracy provides; we may not always like the leaders whom our democracy elects; but the glory of our nation is that the system works."

That glorious system, however, is under threat. The threat comes not so much, as today's media hoopla would have it, from America's many frightening fringe groups, although the groups are real and deserve the condemnation they receive. The threat comes, rather, from the increasing alienation of people from their government, a trend that, if not halted, may yet spell the end of genuine democracy in America. Indeed, a part of democracy is already collapsing, for more and more people see government as a distant, indifferent, and even hostile enterprise, over whose decisions ordinary citizens have little sway.

A few days after the November 1994 elections, I gave a lecture on the role of religion in American society at a small Christian college in western Pennsylvania. Later on, I talked politics with members of the audience. One was a middle-aged white woman who had voted Republican and supported, so she said, the Contract with America. Rather than bog us down in ideology, I decided to talk specifics. I asked her how she felt about federal funding for school lunch programs. She said she supported it in principle—in fact, she thought federal funding was a very good idea. She added, however, that she simply did not trust the federal government to do it. Washington—that was her name, and not hers alone, for the bureaucracy and the Congress together—Washington, she said, would mess it up. Washington would hire too many bureaucrats, would write too many regulations, would somehow ruin things. Of that she was absolutely certain.

And not only that: she felt, keenly, a sense that Washington did not trust local people. People like her. Washington thought that if she, and people like her, made the decisions, the decisions would be wrong. And she resented it.

I am not attempting to elevate an anecdote into a national trend. But nobody doubts that this sense exists or that it is widespread. Conservatives say it is the fault of liberals, whose big-government philosophy has frozen out local people who disagree with particular policies. Liberals say it is the

"This may be why the American tradition rejects the category of political criminal, the person who commits a crime not out of passion or a desire for personal gain but out of devotion to an ideology. Who would believe in the notion of a "political prisoner" in a nation that shares a faith (rightly or wrongly) that all can be fixed through the ballot box?

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fault of conservatives, whose relentless attacks on "the government" have turned it into the enemy. As so often, there is a little bit of truth in both accusations. But placing blame is less important than recognizing that the survival of American democracy into the twenty-first century will require finding ways to overcome the alienation that is driving citizens away from the political mainstream.

When conservative politicians succeed with the rhetoric of "devolution" and "term limits," liberals often respond that the clever words are only gimmicks that mask terribly oppressive cuts in funds for desperately needed programs. But this ubiquitous answer, although sometimes fair, is inadequate. Most Americans are generous, not mean-spirited, and if they are attracted to what seem to liberals to be gimmicks, it is worth examining the gimmicks to see what they offer. And what they offer is quite simple: democracy.

The trouble is that America is too big—not the government, although that may be too big too, but the country. It is too big to work as the easily governed agrarian republic that the Framers of the Constitution envisioned.¹ In the world as the Framers imagined it, Tip O'Neill was precisely right: all politics *was* local. The federal government had little to do. The aspects of governance that affected people most were carried on at levels they could influence: the state house, the parish, and the town meeting. The cumbersome machinery for electing a national legislature every two years was designed to slow the national legislative process to a crawl: unable to anticipate modern transportation and communications, the Framers assumed that the rascals could do relatively little damage in two short years.

Of course, the Framers also limited the franchise in ways that we can now see as inexcusable: women could not vote, nor of course could slaves, nor, in many places, could men who did not happen to own property. This made the nation as a whole less democratic, but it may have made the nation *more* democratic within the narrow sphere of those permitted a voice. After all, the limits on the vote meant limits on the number of voters one had to persuade in order to carry the election. The classic First Amendment image was, for the late eighteenth century, precisely right: one *could* stand on a street corner and orate and, if skillful, gain an immediate audience.

Over the two centuries since the Constitution was written and ratified, America has progressively expanded the franchise, so that men without property, then the freed slaves, then women have been granted the vote. This is all to the nation's credit, although more credit would be due had America awakened sooner to its own moral obtuseness. Still, the nation is, on parchment, far more democratic now than it was two hundred years ago.

At the same time, democracy has grown distant from the lives of the American people. Of national democracy, this is particularly true. Fewer and fewer Americans believe, the polls tell us, that the government cares about people like them.² This frustration, more than any other, creates the danger that many a demagogue tries to exploit and that our politics must find a way to assuage.

The reader might reasonably ask what any of this has to do with integrity, but the point, as will become clear, is a simple one: a politics of integrity is what is needed to draw people back to their faith in our democracy. In this chapter, I hope to offer at least a preliminary sketch of what characteristics an integral politics might possess.

MOVEMENTS AND INTEGRITY

American politics is under siege—by causes. Just about all of us have a few. By a *cause* I mean a desire to put into place an institutional structure that will guarantee that our particular political desires remain triumphant (at least until the next cause comes along and sweeps away the structures we foolishly think will stand forever). The institutional structure matters, because the idea is to find a way to protect the triumph against some future majority that might have a different idea. So many people who want the government smaller demand a Balanced Budget Amendment to the Constitution. Many people who support universal health coverage envision a federal agency (once established, hard to abolish) to administer it. You get the idea.

When people who believe in many different causes band together, we have a political movement. Movements of this kind might be considered a good and noble thing for democracy—groups of citizens working toward a common goal!—if the movements did not turn out, far too often, to be the modern incarnation of what James Madison had in mind when he warned, in *The Federalist No. 10*, against allowing our politics to be taken over by “factions.”

Madison defined a faction as “a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or a minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community.”³ Factions, he believed, are ruinous to democracy, although he also believed that the constitutional design—along with the sheer ungovernable size of the new nation—made them less dangerous here than elsewhere.

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Of course, advocates for every cause will insist that although their opponents are probably factions in the Madisonian sense, they themselves are not, for they have at heart the nation's interest, not something narrower and more ephemeral. And I am sure that they always believe it. Sometimes, certainly, it is true. (As usual, the civil rights movement is my case in point.) But the collapse of our politics into vaguely defined group interests—what business is said to want, what women are said to want, and so on—brings Madison's definition much closer to our reality. So does the relentless (one almost wants to say *rutless*) insistence of too many of today's activists on characterizing their political opponents as outside the mainstream—even when their opponents turn out to comprise a majority of their fellow citizens.

Our commitments are admirable, but they carry the seeds of tragedy. The deeper our commitment to our causes, the weaker may be our commitment to democracy, for it is in the nature of the true believer to have little patience with majoritarian structures that get in the way of progress. Rather than accept the possibility of defeat in democratic politics, we try to enshrine our commitments as beyond the reach of argument, by shoe-horning them into the vast and intimidating structure of constitutional rights or by crafting a rhetoric that makes those who stand against us necessarily stand with the forces of evil. *Un-American* used to be a big word in the vocabulary of silencing, as, today, are such terms as *reactionary* (from the left) and *not normal Americans* (from the right).

I must confess that the great political movements of our day frighten me with their reckless certainties and their insistence on treating people as means to be manipulated rather than as the ends for which government exists. Liberalism and conservatism, in their current incarnations, both possess great ideas, worthy of a fair hearing and fair debate . . . and great capacities for hatred. Too many partisans seem to hate their opponents, who are demonized in terms so creative that I weep at the waste of energy, and, as one who struggles to be Christian, I find the hatred painful. What perhaps is worse, the liberal and conservative movements of our day both make common cause with people who hate on grounds that I would have thought history had by now taught us never to tolerate. I am asked, often, whether I consider myself a liberal or a conservative. My answer, always, is "no." Conservatives too often welcome racists; liberals too often welcome people who look down their noses at "traditional values"; and both movements welcome more than their share of religious bigots. (Think of the evangelical leader who stated at a political dinner in 1980 that God does not hear the prayers of Jews; or the feminist leader who stated in 1991 that there are too many Catholics on the Supreme Court.)

I very much doubt that I am alone in my antipathies, which is why I sometimes wonder whether the American people might rush to embrace a political movement that managed to make a forceful case for its causes without having to hate and demonize those who disagree. The next century is arriving soon, whether we are ready or not, and the only way to avoid a twenty-first-century politics that is every bit as nasty (and, if integrity requires us to tell the truth, undemocratic) as the politics of the current era is to craft a set of principles and then to use our only political weapon—the vote—to make sure that our politicians and their movements follow them.

I mean this quite sincerely. I look forward to the day when we as voters will say, "I agree with So-and-so on most of the issues, but I could never vote for somebody who would say this or do that in order to win." We don't do that, of course. We may complain about the nastiness of our politics, and we may wish it would change, but the fact is that just like the fund-raising appeals we examined in chapter 5, nastiness and lies and unintegral behavior work. We reward them with our votes, perhaps because we see no alternative.³

Perhaps there is no alternative. But I am more of an optimist than that. This chapter, then, is an effort to figure out how to change things, how to begin to bring to our politics a true integrity, which would at last make our democracy as moral as I deeply believe our people are.

EIGHT PRINCIPLES IN SEARCH OF A DEMOCRACY

American politics is a mess. But a careful attention to the demands of integrity may offer us some hope of cleaning it up. What, then, does integrity require of us? The eight principles that I discuss below are a preliminary effort to move toward an answer.

1. *The nation exists for its people.* Integrity, as we have seen, requires that we try to live our ideals. A politics of integrity, then, believes and lives out its own rhetoric. And what is foremost in the rhetoric of liberal democracy? Why, the importance of the individual—not simply as a possessor of rights but as a full participant in the process of national governance. Thus, the first principle of an integral politics is to remember our Kant: *people are ends, not means*. People, and people alone, are the reason there is a United States of America.

One of the reasons for the growing national disgust with politics, I suspect, is precisely that politicians (along with the activists who feed them

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money and position papers) tend to forget this. To them, people are means, not to be listened to but to be manipulated—persuaded to change their minds if possible, or controlled if not. This vision of the people of the United States as the clay rather than the potters is not unique to left or right in America; it is, rather, an elite mentality, the shared vision of people who have in common their certainty that they know all the answers, if they could but get those pigheaded American voters to come along.

Thus, many of the liberals who have been largely on the defensive since 1980 will pronounce solemnly that their electoral defeats are the fault of the successful manipulation of what must be the simpleminded voters of America, or perhaps the essential racism (or sexism or whatever) of those same American voters. This puts one in mind of a story about the cantankerous old Dixiecrat Lester Maddox, who, while serving as governor of Georgia, was asked about unrest in the prison system. He responded that the problem was not the conditions in the prisons but "the quality of prisoner you get these days." And that is what one hears nowadays from liberals: the problem is not the message but the quality of the voters who keep ignoring it. As long as that is the explanation, liberals will keep on losing.

But conservatives have little reason to celebrate, and if they insist on treating recent elections as ideological transformations, they will have even less. Although they have lately learned the lessons of populism—voters want to vote for people who *listen* to them—they are also falling into the same old traps that power always springs. Instead of listening to the voters who put them in power, Republicans spent too much of 1995 listening to the business groups that paid for their successful campaigns, proposing changes in the securities and environmental laws that businesses had long sought—making it harder to win fraud suits and easier to meet environmental standards—changes that precious few Americans had in mind when they voted the Democrats out and that certainly were nowhere to be found in the Contract with America.*

Indeed, the Republicans, just like the Democrats, seem much more comfortable palling around with their favorite interest groups than actually doing the work that most Americans want done. In *The Revolt of the Elites*, the late Christopher Lasch argued that most Washington politicians, on left

*Lobbyists for various business groups were invited to help draft the legislation. Republican protests that the Democrats used to do the same thing with, for example, civil rights groups missed the point: people voted in 1994 for a government that would listen to *them*.

and right alike, actually disdain the common folk of whom they speak so often, preferring the company of one another (even political enemies), as well as lobbyists and journalists, people they consider, in effect, members of their own class.⁶ An overstatement? Probably. On the other hand, members of Congress do everything they can to prove Lasch right. A mystifying example is the combination of arrogance and sheer stupidity through which many members of Congress refuse to make their fax numbers available to their own constituents—even those who call and ask. (I suspect that the numbers are well known to the many lobbyists and media stars with whom they associate.)

Republicans who believe that the 1994 elections were principally about ideology rather than about a sense of a government out of touch with its people should ponder the success of Ross Perot's famous line in 1992, that Capitol Hill is the only place he knows where the employees can park and the owners can't. Too many of our representatives, it must be said, spend less time acting like our employees than like the employees of the PACs that fund their campaigns. Perhaps it is too late to do much about that. But integrity would suggest, at a minimum, that Republicans and Democrats alike should let the voters know their fax numbers—or tell the truth about whose views they care about and whose work they're doing.

I do not mean this indictment to be as harsh as it may seem. Most of our elected representatives are people of good will and a strong desire to do the right. And yet the best will in the world is no insulation against the temptation, once one has gained political office, to forget that the people rule.

2. *Some things are more important than others.* A politics of integrity is a politics that sets priorities, that does not tell the self-serving lie that every program preferred by a particular political movement is of equal value. In the political world toward which we are moving, priorities are essential. Ever since the 1970s, voters have been electing Presidents who promise a government that is smaller and, in the public mind (I suspect), more controllable. That is, the American people quite sensibly see government size as related to government accountability. Many elections that seem to be about something else are probably about this: people want a government they feel is reachable.

For this reason, the debate over the proper relative roles of the federal and state sovereignties—a debate that conservatives keep promising and liberals keep resisting—is actually a very useful one to have. As a nation, we have good historical reasons to be leery of the phrase "states' rights," for it has been used both to permit and to mask racial oppressions that

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should have been deemed intolerable. But that is not the same as saying that it is obvious that anything worth doing well is worth doing only at the federal level. To the citizen, democracy most feels like democracy when the apparatus of government is something that he or she feels capable of affecting. The sense of the federal government as more and more distant from the people (whether the sense is fair or not) is surely a far more important force than ideology in driving the debate over government size.

This is where liberals tend to make a serious mistake. They generally defend a program threatened with reduction or elimination by objecting that the program is a good one: it is cost-effective or it prevents starvation or it fills a need. Often the argument is correct. But it also misses the point of the new politics: it is no longer sufficient in defending a program to demonstrate that it does some good—even a great deal of good. For the government itself is no longer trusted. Consider again the story with which I opened the chapter: the woman in western Pennsylvania who likes school lunch programs but dislikes the feeling that the federal government does not trust people like her to do it right.

Liberalism, and any revised philosophy that favors particular large government initiatives, must have an answer for this woman, and the answer must be more persuasive than "It's a good program," which is no longer sufficient, or the depressingly ubiquitous "The Republicans are starving children," which is hardly rhetoric that will win back lost voters. Lots of programs are good programs, and if the only argument needed to justify a program is that it is a good one, the government will never shrink. And shrinking government is something that the American people very much want, and something that, one way or another, they are going to get.

Any political movement that expects to survive into the next century must make its peace with what a strong majority of voters seem to believe: the federal government (or government generally) cannot do everything that happens to be a good idea. Some things that are very good ideas will have to be scrapped. Some things that work very well will have to be scrapped. Some things that have very powerful constituencies will have to be scrapped. And even some things that are very popular will have to be scrapped.

So our second hesitant step toward an integral politics is to acknowledge that the conversation has changed, that arguments on pragmatics and practicalities will not suffice in an era when the dominant ideology is one of skepticism and mistrust. What is required of both liberalism and conservatism, therefore, is something that for a good two or three decades their

proponents have stubbornly refused to do, perhaps because they have not had to: the setting of priorities. Not paper priorities, the sort one puts in a platform, but real priorities, as in concluding that this cherished program is more important than that one. Less than that the voters will no longer abide.

This stark fact—if true—will make life difficult for conservatives, who, having gained a measure of political power, seem to have decided that shrinking government is less important than replacing a plethora of liberal initiatives with a plethora of conservative ones. The same stark fact—once again, if true—substantially wrecks the contemporary program of liberal political philosophy, which has been to find *justifications* for the programs of the liberal agenda. Many of the justifications offered for very controversial liberal programs are quite strong. Affirmative action, for example, no matter what its flaws, responds to a genuine moral claim that we all too rarely articulate. And many of the challenged liberal programs themselves are wonderful. For example, federal funding for alternatives in television and the arts is a glory, not an aberration, of the budget.

But so what? Justifications, no matter how thoughtful, will no longer suffice as substitutes for the setting of priorities. And here, of course, integrity becomes crucial, because it is folly to pretend that all programs are equally important. Liberals (like everybody else) must begin to draw distinctions. So one might say that federal funding for the arts is important and federal funding for school lunches is important, but is federal funding for the arts *as important* as federal funding for school lunches? I don't think so. Others might strike the balance the other way. The point is that in an era that demands the setting of priorities, balances of this kind must be struck.

3. *Consistency matters.* Third, a politics of integrity requires that the principles for which our parties and institutions stand truly be treated as principles. A principle is not a principle if we will bend it to help our friends.

Consider as an example the current assault on some aspects of the "welfare state." A central theme of the argument against treating government assistance as an entitlement is that reliance on aid supposedly cripples self-reliance. Perhaps it does. But integrity requires that the principles on which the government operates be applied consistently. If welfare programs have bad effects on individuals, they must also have bad effects on corporations, and corporate welfare should receive the same scrutiny—and be subject to the same dismissive rhetoric—as welfare for individuals.

Consider the following examples of corporate welfare, gleaned from 1995 reports by the Cato Institute and the Progressive Policy Institute:⁸

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- "Over the past 20 years, the Forest Service has built 340,000 miles of roads—more than eight times the length of the interstate highway system—primarily for the benefit of logging companies." (The cost of this project was \$140 million in 1994 alone.)⁹
- "Through the Rural Electrification Administration and the federal Power Marketing Administrations [*sic*], the federal government provides some \$2 billion in subsidies each year to large and profitable electric utility cooperatives."¹⁰
- "An estimated 40 percent of the \$1.4 billion sugar price support program benefits the largest one percent of sugar farms."¹¹

Moreover, as the Progressive Policy Institute report points out, the corporate subsidies are deeply regressive, providing benefits to a relatively small group of upper-income Americans, largely with money taxed from those earning far less. In other words, corporate welfare programs are like individual welfare programs, except that they transfer tax dollars from low- and middle-income people to upper-income people, a kind of reverse-Robin Hood effect.

And, as the Cato Institute points out, corporate welfare raises consumer prices, fosters cozy relationships between the government and business, and "converts the American businessman from a capitalist into a lobbyist."¹² In other words, corporate welfare has the same bad effects that individual welfare is supposed to have, only more so, because corporate welfare hits all of us and hits us hard. But the same Congress and administration that are tilting at the windmills of welfare reform for individuals seem content to leave corporate welfare relatively untouched, but for a nip here and a tuck there. (Of course, the recipients of individual assistance do not have political action committees.)

Machiavelli argued that it is more important for a leader to seem to be principled than actually to be principled—indeed, that a truly principled leader, one who tries to live out the deepest moral commitments of a society's public rhetoric, will ultimately be deposed. A politics of integrity must, through its structure and its work, deny the truth of this proposition.

4. *Everybody gets to play.* A politics of integrity does not draw arbitrary boundaries around the public square, screening out some citizens whose political views have been formed in ways of which various elites disapprove. A particular problem of our age has been the astonishing effort to craft a vision of public life in which America's religious traditions play no

important roles, by ruling out of bounds political (and sometimes moral) arguments that rest on explicitly religious bases.¹³ Nowadays, one hears quite commonly the argument that it is morally wrong—perhaps even constitutionally wrong, a violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment—for you to try to “impose” on me your religiously based moral understanding. Usually this argument is stressed in the context of the abortion battle. Of course, had this ever been a seriously defended principle of American public life, we would never have had the abolitionist or civil rights movements, to name only the most obvious two.

When I make this point, as I often do, in lecturing about politics and religion, I often get an answer that goes something like this: “But nobody can reason with these religionists. They say that So-and-so is God’s will, and what can you say in return?” I am always saddened by this answer, because, as a professor at a university, I run into many closed-minded people, and few of them need divine command as an excuse. But nobody tries to ban them from public debate for their closed-mindedness. Besides, this vision of how religious people reason is a caricature. That there are some who cannot be reached by reason is doubtless true. The notion that most religious people are that way seems to me a quite unfounded insult.

A further argument I hear is of this type: “The difference is that the civil rights laws that were supported by religious people, unlike the abortion restrictions that are supported by religious people, do not infringe on anybody’s fundamental rights.” So I point out that the distinction is false, that the civil rights laws infringe on the fundamental right of property, by telling people that they may not segregate in restaurants or hotels they happen to own. The fact that it is a good and honorable and just infringement of those rights does not change the fact that it is an infringement of those rights.

Typically, I am next hit with this one: “Yes, but the right to property is less important than the right to privacy.” Now, apart from the upper-middle-class bias inherent in that proposition, one can at least say that the right to property is mentioned in the Constitution. The right to privacy is not, and although I count myself as glad that the right exists, I am not so hypocritical as to pretend that something other than a rather uncomfortable judicial alchemy put it there and keeps it there. Besides, it would be crude governance indeed to build a hierarchy of constitutional rights—these are important, those are trivial—and then to say, as a matter of law, that religious opinion can be taken into account in the infringement of some but not others.

I am not suggesting that the pro-life religionists who demand access to the public square deserve to prevail. But I do believe in fair procedures.

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There is an air of design about the date of the discovery of a rule against religious politicking: after the civil rights movement (which relied on it heavily) and before the maturity of the pro-life movement (which relies on it heavily). We have spoken of consistency as crucial to a truly reflective integrity, but I have yet to find the pro-choice advocate who will condemn the *Reverend* Martin Luther King, Jr., for daring to ask the state to impose his religiously inspired vision of equality on dissenting segregationists who might prefer to serve only whites at their lunch counters and hotels. In fact, when I raise this point, I am generally told that King's vision was not really religious—that it was grounded in . . . well, natural law or something (his repeated citations to Scripture and theology notwithstanding). Of course, the Roman Catholic Church could argue that its opposition to abortion is not really religious but is grounded in . . . well, natural law or something (repeated citations to Scripture and theology notwithstanding). But nobody on the pro-choice side would say that this fact gets the Church off the Establishment Clause hook.

It does not matter whether one sees the pro-life movement as in any sense the intellectual heir of the civil rights movement. (Indeed, one of the genuine political ironies of our day is that both the pro-choice and pro-life sides can claim a spiritual and intellectual connection to the civil rights movement.) The point, rather, is that a politics of integrity must be consistent in its rules instead of fixing the rules so that one side gets to win. If it is bad to have religious advocacy in the public square, then it was as bad for the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., as it is for the Reverend Pat Robertson.

To be sure, the image of religion in our public life is badly tarnished nowadays by the tendency of some Christian conservatives to pour the most virulent anathemas upon those who disagree with their politics.* (Of course, many secular liberals do the same.) Although the religious voice belongs in American politics, it will be an ineffective and scary voice as long as it seems to be a mean-spirited voice. Moreover, advocates of a strong religious presence in American public life must bear in mind that the freedom of religion, our guarantee of religious pluralism, is one of the great glories of our Constitution. Consequently, any suggestion that there is a single best or even official American religion (for example, the "Chris-

*I am convinced, both by the people I have met as I travel and lecture on religion and politics and by reviewing survey data, that the often strident voices of the *leaders* of some conservative Christian groups are representative of the convictions of only a relatively small number of the *members*.

tian nation" rhetoric) is not only an offense against religious liberty; it is also, if offered as a basis for government policy, blatantly unconstitutional.

However, the rhetorical excess of some conservatives hardly justifies the antireligious sentiments expressed by some liberals. A strong tradition among liberal intellectuals, at least since John Dewey, has been to treat religious faith as a kind of primitive superstition, if that faith governs (or even strongly influences) one's public moral and political stances. Too many liberal theorists, as I have noted elsewhere, write and speak of religion with a kind of elitist despair, recognizing that it is a force in the world but seeming to wish that it would go away.⁴ This tendency puts one in mind of Pliny the Younger, who, early in the second century, wrote a letter to the Roman Emperor Trajan on the treatment of Christianity, which he called "a depraved and extravagant superstition." He tried to get people to see reason, Pliny wrote, even on pain of torture or death, but despite his efforts, he complained, "[t]he contagion of this superstition has spread not only in the cities, but in the villages and rural districts as well."⁵ To which one might simply add: Ah, blessed contagion! Would that we had more of it!

More to the point, it does not ultimately matter how many thoughtful scholars and journalists argue that it is wrong to have religious rhetoric in the public square. It is simply there. Hume argued that one cannot derive an *ought* from an *is*; I would answer that you cannot defeat an *is* with an *ought*. Millions of American citizens seem to have decided that the language of their faith is the language with which they feel most comfortable, and so we must, under our first principle of integral politics, take them as they are, rather than commanding them to become something else.

5. *We must be willing to talk about right and wrong without mentioning the Constitution.* I say this as a longtime teacher of constitutional law and as one who truly loves our foundational document, the greatest and most successful the world has known. A politics of integrity must certainly respect the fundamental (and constitutional) rights of its citizens, and must be vigilant in protecting those rights, even when they are exercised by those we disdain: Nazis, for example, or serial killers. But we must never make the moral mistake of supposing that because I have the right to do something, you lack the right to criticize me for doing it. To pretend that the existence of constitutional protection for an action immunizes the actor against moral criticism is blatantly unintegral: it is as much as says to free and equal citizens, "Shut up about your principles!"

Individual rights are a good thing, but to make a cult of individualism can lead to social disaster. It is no accident that the United States has both

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the highest rate of abortion and the highest rate of private ownership of firearms in the world, for we live in a nation that *has* made a cult of individualism. Our well-known national inability to engage in moral conversation means that once a right exists, nobody seems to feel comfortable urging that it not be exercised. No wonder people who are concerned about the harm that firearms do see no alternative to banning them; no avenue exists for a discussion of the possibility that the "right" to own them should be exercised with greater discretion. And no wonder opponents of abortion believe they must try to make the procedure illegal; not only is there no significant forum for moral suasion against the exercise of the "right" but courts have lately cooperated in destroying such limited forums as do exist, by issuing orders that civil libertarians would countenance in no other context, intended to keep pro-life demonstrators sufficiently far from abortion clinics that their message is likely to be ineffective.¹⁴

We know that our cult of individualism is out of control when a respected federal judge issues an order—as happened in New Jersey—making it impossible for a town to keep a homeless man with offensive body odor from making the public library an unpleasant place for others. It is as though once an individual has made up his mind to do a thing, no matter how tasteless or repulsive, nobody else has legal recourse.

Newton Minow, who as head of the Federal Communications Commission in the 1960s coined the phrase "vast wasteland" to describe the offerings of network television, has raised similar concerns about the direction the rights revolution has taken. Minow cites the example of a student at a California university who decided to attend classes naked. When challenged on his conduct, the student offered as his defense the First Amendment.¹⁷ Now, I am not convinced that the freedom of speech can plausibly be read to shield public disrobing. Even if it can, however, Minow points out that the existence of First Amendment protection says nothing at all about whether the student was doing something wise or unwise, offensive or inoffensive, right or wrong. So there lies the point: that I have a right to do something does not deprive you of your freedom to criticize me as harshly as you like. In particular, it grants me no protection whatsoever from *moral* critique of what I choose to do.¹⁸

Even the philosophers of the Enlightenment, justly credited with modernizing our understanding of freedom to include rights against the state, understood this point. John Locke, for example, stated as his first principle that men belong not to themselves but to God—meaning that the exercise of freedom is to be guided by God's commands. Indeed, our modern notion of freedom in the sense of an exercise of free will is largely a Chris-

tian invention (see chapter 14). The Greeks had no conception of will, which explains Aristotle's maddening insistence on describing virtue as a habit. Christianity needed it, however, to allow human beings a free choice to accept or reject God's offer of grace. And freedom rightly used, of course, meant freedom to follow God.

As a matter of secular ethics, the proper critique of the use of freedom—of rights—is not necessarily that it ignores our particular vision of the will of God (although we also must not rule that critique out of bounds). Whatever the source of the moral critique of how we use our freedom, however, the existence of the Constitution should not be treated as a moral shield. For the Constitution is but a reminder that we possess freedom to choose; it does not tell us which choices are best.

And just as we must be willing to criticize the exercise of constitutional rights when they are used immorally, we must resist the temptation to run to amend the document every time we do not like what is going on. At this writing, American conservatives seem to be lining up to support a great trilogy of amendments: the Balanced Budget Amendment, the Religious Equality Amendment, and the Flag Desecration Amendment. If a cause is just, it seems, the Constitution is the place where we are supposed to enshrine it. Right now, it happens that liberals want to enshrine their programs through the courts and conservatives theirs through the amendment process, but, in reality, both sides are up to the same antidemocratic factional mischief. Conservatives and liberals have grown intoxicated with constitutionalism, staggering together along the same drunken route, propelled by the same bleary logic: the way to make sure that we win is to place our program beyond the reach of politics. But democracy is not about making sure that we win (see my eighth principle). Democracy is about making sure that every voice is heard, that no voice is privileged, and that everybody plays by the rules.

I wonder sometimes what Madison, who worried so much about factionousness, would think if given the chance to ponder our edifice of constitutional rights. Perhaps he would decide that our heavy reliance on the language of rights is simply the crowning jewel in the work that he and the other Founders began. On the other hand, I worry that he would say that by placing so much emphasis on the rights the Constitution protects, we actually promote the rise of factions, because, with all free to do as they like, there is less and less reason for people to work together—as Madison openly hoped they would—in the *national* interest.

Do not mistake my point. Of course there are principles that should be beyond the reach of democratic politics. Of course there are rights with

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which no majority should be allowed to tamper. But a thriving democracy must insist that the set of untouchable icons be as small as possible. Nowadays, the temptation of power is to do just the opposite, to make the set as large as possible. In fact, the temptation is to place *all* our causes beyond the reach of democratic politics, lest some future majority disturb our work. But if ever we allow that to happen, we certainly cease to be a democracy.

6. *Our politics must call us to our higher selves.* The debasement of political language is particularly embarrassing when the negativity is being spread by our elected representatives. The matter is only made worse when we think that even the polite ones seem too often to be calling us to selfishness. In a politics of integrity, we must try to respond to politicians who call us to our highest rather than lowest selves; in particular, we must respond to politicians who talk of the national interest and our shared obligations, not merely those who promise to enrich us.

The trouble is that, nowadays, every politician tries to enrich us. The devil's definition of an honest politician (and quite an unfair definition at that) is one who stays bought. Nowadays, this notion must seem depressingly cynical. Yet something very close to it captures the unhappy political spirit of our selfish age. Most Americans seem to think an honest politician is one who will buy our votes with promises of wealth and then go on to complete the purchase.

The wealth with which politicians make their electoral purchases comes in a variety of forms, but nearly all of them play to our selfish instincts. Conservatives tend to promise tax cuts, which translate to more money for good, honest, hardworking Americans, and less for the despicable *them*, who may be demonic bureaucrats or demonized welfare cheats, according to one's taste. Liberals promise entitlements and, better yet, constitutional rights, which translate to more freedoms for good, honest, hardworking Americans against the despicable *them*, who nowadays are likely to be wealthy fat-cats or what liberals sadly persist in labeling the "religious right."

Promises of both kinds offer something for the voter, and so appeal to our lower instincts.* (Remember our discussion in the previous chapter of *Brown v. Hartlage*.) Neither kind offers the vision of a better nation, except in the narrow sense that the nation is better when it gives us precisely what

*I am well aware of the political science literature arguing that appeals of this kind are precisely what politicians should be doing if government is to aggregate private preferences. I simply disagree.

we desire. In other words, neither kind calls us to duty. One longs for the political candidate who is willing to say, more than three decades after John Kennedy's assassination: "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country." At the time, the borrowed phrases sounded a little hokey. Looking back, they sing with an optimism about America that today's cramped and self-regarding politics altogether lack.

One reads from time to time that changes in the economy are to blame; that it is far harder to be generous of spirit or genuinely optimistic in a nation that is undergoing the rapid and unsettling economic evolution with which America currently wrestles. If true, this explanation is a sad one. Holding to our principles of duty and service and regard for others is most important at times of stress; after all, as we have seen, integrity is not integrity if it is never tested.

7. *We must listen to one another.* A politics of integrity is a politics in which all of us are willing to do the hard work of discernment, to test our views to be sure that we are right. As we have already seen, this in turn implies a dialogue, for in the course of our reflections, especially in a democracy, it is vital to listen to the views of our fellow citizens. If our discernment is genuine, then so must our listening be, which is why our seventh principle, simply put, is that all of us must listen with our ears, not with our mouths.

By this I mean that we must strive to avoid an error I confess to committing all the time: the error of allowing others to speak only because we need to hear their views in order to be able to refute them. In true dialogue, as Martin Buber ~~has~~ pointed out, we not only seek to persuade the other but we allow ourselves the possibility of being persuaded by the other. An integral politics certainly needs citizens who listen; otherwise, the dialogue itself becomes pointless.

20) The trouble is that we may lack the capacity for truly open and thoughtful dialogue. I do not say we have lost it; I am not convinced we ever had it. But what we did have and seem to have forgotten is a strong tradition favoring the old saw "I disapprove of what you say but I will fight to the death for your right to say it." Our public dialogue—our very language—has been debased through the move toward increasing negativity and even hostility, so that, in an argument, the first weapon we reach for is often the most extreme: "That's ridiculous!" or "He's such an idiot!" or "She's full of it!" or "I've never heard anything so crazy in my life!" Missing are such stalwarts of civility as "I'm sorry, but I must respectfully disagree" or "Let's talk about this further" or "I might not go as far as that, but I do see your point." Having lost the talent for argument, we call names instead. But dialogue in

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an integral politics must be civil; if we lose the civility that integrity demands, we trade the possibility of persuasion and compromise for the certainty of provocation and alienation.

In a dry cleaner one day I witnessed a vehement argument between a customer who felt a shirt had not been adequately cleaned and the owner, who was defending his staff. The customer did not want to pay. The owner wanted his money. In their mutual fury, neither one came up with the obvious solution: that the cleaner should try again, free of charge, to get the stain out. Our politics can be that way too: we are so busy being angry at one another that it does not occur to us to try to find ways to work together.

People on the right seem to think that the nastiness of our public discussions is the fault of people on the left; people on the left seem to think that it is the fault of people on the right. But there is plenty of blame for all of us. When we are told, as we often are, that affirmative action is as bad as Jim Crow, we are facing a cruel absurdity; when we are told, as we often are, that only a racist could be troubled by affirmative action, we are facing another. I struggle, hard, with my own habit of concluding that people who disagree with me on the important public issues of the day are obviously deserving of my condemnation. I struggle to understand their points of view, even, as Buber suggested, to search for empathy. I do not claim to do it very well. What is depressing is how solidly that failure places me in the American mainstream.

8. *Sometimes the other side wins.* This is, perhaps, the most important principle of an integral democratic politics, and yet little need be said about it. The point is simple: in the end, politics comes down to votes. Somebody wins and somebody loses. In practical terms, that means that the people have picked one and rejected the other. Integrity requires us to admit the possibility (indeed, the likelihood) that we lost not because of some shameless manipulation by our villainous opponents, and not because of some failure to get our message across, but because our fellow citizens, a basically rational bunch, considered both our views and those of the other side and decided that they liked the other side's better.

To be sure, now and then the other side cheats, as Richard Nixon tried to do (and maybe succeeded) in 1972, and as some say Joseph Kennedy did on behalf of his son John in 1960 (although evidence is thin). But we cannot deduce cheating from the fact that we lost. And when both sides play by the rules, one would hope that the losers would have the integrity and fortitude to say to the winners, "Congratulations; I'll see you in two years" (or four, or six, or whatever), rather than, "Oh, no, the forces of evil

have triumphed, monsters are in the streets, and the Republic is at an end"—which is roughly the tone of far too much postelection commentary from both sides of the political aisle.

"Here, the people rule," pronounced Gerald Ford after Nixon's resignation in August 1974. The fact is one that an integral politics cannot afford to forget.

INTERLUDE: THE ABORTION DISTORTION

Perhaps this is the place to pause and note that in order to get an integral politics back on track, we have to stop allowing so much of politics and principle to be dictated by the nation's moral divisions over abortion rights.

In particular, the press must end its abortion hang-up, its tendency to treat abortion as the most important domestic issue facing America—something almost nobody else believes. When President Clinton announced his 1993 nomination of Ruth Bader Ginsburg to the Supreme Court, I happened to be in my car; the same was true when I heard the news of his 1994 nomination of Stephen Breyer to the same tribunal. In each case, the announcer treated the audience to useless speculation as to each jurist's views on abortion—but mentioned no other issue likely to come before the Court. We heard nothing about the nominee's views on affirmative action or free speech or the separation of powers or the death penalty or, for that matter, interstate banking (which probably affects more people more directly than any of these sexier issues do). Only abortion.

Yet the number of people who consider this the most crucial work of the Supreme Court is probably quite small. Certainly the number of voters (especially on the pro-choice side) who rank the abortion issue as foremost among their electoral concerns borders on the minuscule. I do not mean to suggest that abortion is a trivial matter, either as a matter of constitutionalism or as a matter of ethics. The media, however, should recognize that there are other issues as or more vital to the lives of the American people and stop treating this as the crucial fact that we must know about Supreme Court nominees.

Abortion distorts our political dialogue in other ways as well. So passionately do committed advocates care about the issue that they offer misleading analyses of the data—thus sacrificing integrity in the interest of the cause. Both the pro-life and pro-choice sides tend to offer broad generalizations about the opinions of the American people on the subject, generalizations that are not so much wrong as woefully misleading. Thus the

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pro-life side will point out that a solid majority of Americans say that killing a fetus is as bad as killing a child—indeed, in some surveys, a majority says that a fetus is human from the moment of conception.²² This is an accurate reading of the survey data. But the pro-choice side will point out that a solid majority of the American people opposes banning abortion, and this, too, is an accurate reading of the survey data.

These data sets may appear to be contradictory, but, in truth, the American people have resolved them. Indeed, the data have been consistent for more than twenty years—in short, since *Roe v. Wade* was decided in 1973. What the data show is that if you add together all the people who believe abortion should be banned and all the people who believe that abortion should be an unfettered choice, you still have less than half the American people. Strong majorities of Americans support a number of restrictions on abortion: waiting periods, parental permission for minors, and the like.²³ This compromise position, moreover, is more or less where the Supreme Court, which activists on both sides condemn for its often shaky decisions, has positioned the constitutional law of abortion.²⁴ There is no obvious reason why the Court's decisions have to reflect the views of the American people, and the justices do their most courageous work when they stand in opposition to the polls; nevertheless, activists on both sides, who seem to think public opinion important, would do the nation a favor if they behaved less like the Ravenna forgers we discussed in chapter 7 and more like people of integrity.²⁵

Our abortion-centeredness further distorts our politics by making us seem less civil than we are. The abortion debate suffers quite famously from the rhetoric of demonization: the religious zealots who intimidate women and murder doctors against the baby killers who are perpetrating America's own Holocaust. And much of the media's relentless assault on the so-called religious right (what a biased term) seems abortion-centered. When you leave the abortion issue, there are relatively few subjects of our politics on which Christian conservatives seem significantly out of step with the views of the larger society. (There are a number of issues on which I disagree with the Christian conservatives, but I am willing to admit, as I wish more liberal activists were, that I am often disagreeing with a majority of my fellow citizens as well.)

To the media, abortion seems to be the classic example of an arena in which, all too often, the argumentative ratchet turns only one way—and not merely on the editorial pages. A number of newspapers have adopted, as a matter of style, the term "anti-abortion" to refer to members of the pro-life movement, and the term "abortion rights supporters" to refer to mem-

bers of the pro-choice movement. This decision is troubling because, by using these terms, the newspaper takes sides in the controversy. One side becomes *for* something, the other *against*. It would be as logical to call the pro-life side "fetal rights supporters" and the pro-choice side "anti-fetus," or to call gun-control supporters "anti-gun rights," or, for that matter, to call supporters of historical preservation laws "anti-private property." But nobody, least of all a major newspaper, would countenance such nonsense.

Except in the case of abortion, where the mass media make no pretense to the usual neutrality. Now, I am not an adamant pro-lifer, although I do tend to find much of the pro-choice argument question-begging and, ultimately, resting as solidly as the pro-life argument on undiscussable premises. But the bias of the press on the abortion issue is depressing. In this book, the reader will already have noticed, I use the terms *pro-choice* to refer to people who favor protection of abortion rights over protection of fetal rights and *pro-life* to refer to people who favor protection of fetal rights over protection of abortion rights. My reason is simple: absent a complete collapse of linguistic integrity (that word again), I am willing to call people and groups what they want to be called.

If our politics is to become a politics of integrity, we must not allow one issue to generate so many of the rules and so much of the rhetoric, from either left or right. Particularly the abortion issue. It is shameful that so many otherwise principled liberals and conservatives have made abortion a litmus test of genuine commitment. As Jean Bethke Elshtain has noted: "Dealing with abortion . . . cannot be compared to building a great interstate highway system or desegregating the schools." But the reason is not that our divisions over the issue are insuperable. The reason is that abortion is one of the few moral issues in American history about which it is possible to say, with no sense of irony, that both sides are right.

THE DUTIES OF THE PEOPLE

The greatest error of all in considering how to build an integral politics is to judge the integrity of our politics by the integrity of our politicians. In an electoral democracy, what matters far more is the integrity of voters; in particular, what matters is the willingness of citizens first to envision a national purpose and then to vote consistently in ways that will further it. We, the People of the United States (as the first line of the Constitution

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reads), when we do less, are already making impossible the politics of integrity that the nation needs.

The point is not that politics would not benefit from a healthy dose of integrity—it would—or that politicians do not deserve criticism when they fail to display it—they do. The point is that the nature of integrity in politics is properly understood as referring to more than an individual's consistency to his or her own internal compass. Politics, more than any other institution of our society except the family, rests on an integrity that focuses outward, toward being true to others, rather than inward, toward being true to one's own self.

Bob Herbert, the *New York Times* columnist, has argued that the obligation of black people who face what he describes as a hostile political atmosphere is to vote—and vote and vote. This would seem to be a sensible prescription for everybody, especially for those who have a complaint about what the government is doing. If you don't like it, go out and do something about it. Get involved. Vote. Cast a ballot, preferably an informed one. That surely is at minimum what integrity demands of the citizen.

But all of this may seem rather pie-in-the-sky. In our busy world, the peculiar secret of our electoral politics may be that despite our partisan furries, the day-to-day lives of most Americans remain relatively unaffected by the outcome of national elections. If this is so, there is no obvious reason to suppose that we will do the hard work that is required to alter our choice for rational ignorance (see chapter 12). Even if the fullest practical information is the key to an integral electoral politics, we may lack a ready base of reliable sources to get it. History has taught us that we cannot rely on the candidates themselves to campaign in accordance with the rules for integrity. Instead, we have come to rely on our mass media of communication, sheltered and liberated by the First Amendment's protections, for unbiased and useful information about our politics, which means that if journalists do not do their jobs with integrity (see chapter 7), we, the people, can hardly be expected to do ours.

But this criticism can go too far. If we, the citizens of the United States, are to be people of integrity, then we cannot, past a certain point, blame our politicians for misleading us or our media for misinforming us. If we are too busy or too cynical to go out and do the hard work of democracy—the work of digging up the facts instead of relying on others to spoon-feed them to us—then we can hardly complain when others take advantage of our political laziness or incompetence.

Still, the final truth bears repeating: we cannot expect our politicians to create a politics better than we are. If we the citizens, as we consider gov-

emance, think only of our own narrow interests, whether expressed in terms of "our" tax dollars or "our" constitutional rights, we can hardly expect to find a government, at the local, state, or national levels, that operates with a needed vision of national purpose. Instead, we will find a politics as parochial and selfish as we are. In a democracy, it is not only true that people tend to get the *government* they deserve; it is also true that people tend to get the *politics* they deserve.

Edmund Burke warned, famously, that all that is needed for the forces of evil to triumph is for enough good people to do nothing. When we retreat into cynicism or fatalism, we fertilize the ground from which evil springs. I have friends who believe that the forces of evil triumphed in 1994. I have friends who believe that the forces of evil were defeated in 1994. Both groups of friends, I think, are wrong. But there is evil abroad in the land, as there is evil at work in the human soul. If we do not demand of our politics sufficient integrity to keep evil at bay, we will wake one horrible morning and stare the triumphant evil in the face—in the mirror.

LEARNING FROM THE FIFTIES

Contemplating the turmoil and stress of the last three-and-a-half decades, many Americans idealize the easeful golden days of the 1950s. But as our author shows, the price of security and community may be higher than most Americans are now willing to pay.

BY ALAN EHRENHALT

Most of us in America believe a few simple propositions that seem so clear and self-evident they scarcely need to be said. Choice is a good thing in life, and the more of it we have, the happier we are. Authority is inherently suspect; nobody should have the right to tell others what to think or how to behave. Sin isn't personal, it's social; individual human beings are creatures of the society they live in.

Those ideas are the manifesto of an entire generation in America, the generation born in the baby boom years and now in its thirties and forties. They are powerful ideas. They all have the ring of truth. But in the past quarter-century, taken to excess, they have landed us in a great deal of trouble.

The worship of choice has brought us a world in which nothing we choose seems good enough to be permanent, and we are unable to resist the endless pursuit of new selections—in work, in marriage, in front of the television set. The suspicion of authority has meant the erosion of standards of conduct and civility, visible most clearly in schools where teachers who dare to discipline pupils risk a profane response. The repudiation of sin has given us a collection of wrongdoers who insist that they are not responsible for their actions because they have been dealt bad cards in life. When we declare that there are no sinners, we are a step away from deciding that there is no such thing as right and wrong.

We have grown fond of the saying that there is no free lunch, but we forget that it applies to moral as well as economic matters. Stable relationships, civil classrooms, safe streets—the ingredients of what we call com-

munity—all come at a price. The price is rules, and people who can enforce them; limits on the choices we can make as individuals; and a willingness to accept the fact that there are bad people in the world, and sin in even the best of us. The price is not low, but the life it makes possible is no small achievement.

Not all that long ago in America, we understood the implicit bargain, and most of us were willing to pay the price. What was it really like to live under the terms of that bargain? Would we ever want to do so again?



In 1975, after a long but singularly uneventful career in Illinois politics, a round-faced Chicago tavern owner named John G. Fary was rewarded with a promotion to Congress. On the night of his election, at age 64, he announced his agenda for everyone to hear. "I will go to Washington to help represent Mayor Daley," he declared. "For 21 years, I represented the mayor in the legislature, and he was always right."

Richard J. Daley died the next year, but Fary soon discovered the same qualities of infallibility in Tip O'Neill, the Speaker of the House under whom he served. Over four congressional terms, Fary never cast a single vote against the Speaker's position on any issue of significance. From the leadership's point of view, he was an automatic yes.

And that, in a sense, was his undoing. Faced with a difficult primary challenge from an aggressive Chicago alderman, Fary had little to talk about other than his legendary willingness to do whatever he was told. The Chicago newspapers made sport of him. "Fary's lackluster record,"

one of them said, "forfeits his claim to a House seat." He was beaten badly and sent home to his tavern on the Southwest Side to ponder the troubling changes in modern political life.

It was not an easy thing for him to understand. The one principle John Fary had stood for during 30 years in politics—obedience—had come into obvious disrepute. The legislator who simply followed the rules as they came down to him invited open ridicule as a mindless hack.

No quality is less attractive in American politics these days than obedience—not foolishness or deceit or even blatant corruption. There is no one we are more scornful of than the office-holder who refuses to make choices for himself. There are bumper stickers all over Washington that say, in big block capital letters, QUESTION AUTHORITY. There are none that say LISTEN TO THE BOSS.

John Fary made a career out of listening to the boss. Of course, he didn't have much alternative. In the Chicago politics of the 1950s, you could either be part of the machine, and entertain a realistic hope of holding office, or be against it, and have virtually no hope at all. Fary actually began as something of an upstart. In 1951, he ran in the 12th Ward as a challenger to the Swinarski family, which more or less dominated ward politics in alliance with other machine lieutenants. After that unsuccessful campaign, however, Fary made his accommodations to the system; he had no other choice.

If Fary ever chafed at the rules of his constricted political world, he never did so in public. He seemed content voting with the leadership, gratified to be part of an ordered political system, content working behind the bar at his tavern when he was not practicing politics in Springfield or Washington. He didn't appear to give much thought to the possibilities of doing it any other way. When he achieved passage of the one notable legislative initiative of his long career, a state law legalizing bingo, he celebrated by inventing a new drink called "Bingo Bourbon" and serving it to his customers on the house.

In the years when John Fary was building a political career out of loyalty on the South Side of Chicago, Ernie Banks was making his baseball career on the North Side. From the day he joined the Chicago Cubs in the fall of 1953, Banks was special: skinny and not very powerful looking, he swung with his wrists and propelled line drives out of Wrigley Field with a speed that sometimes seemed hard to believe.

The 1950s were a time of glory for Ernie Banks—40 home runs year after year, two Most Valuable Player awards in a row, gushing praise on the sports page—and yet, in other ways, his rewards were meager. He played on a string of terrible Cubs teams, so he never came close to appearing in a World Series, and because the fans didn't buy many tickets,

Alan Ehrenhalt, executive editor of Governing magazine, is the author of The United States of Ambition: Politicians, Power, and the Pursuit of Office (1991). This article is adapted from The Lost City: Discovering the Forgotten Virtues of Community in the Chicago of the 1950s, which will be published this September by Basic Books. Copyright © 1995 by Alan Ehrenhalt.

the Cubs weren't very generous about salaries. Compared with mediocre ballplayers today, Banks was woefully underpaid, even in the real-dollar terms of his time. In 1959, the year he recorded his second straight MVP season, the Cubs paid him \$45,000.

But Banks never considered leaving the Cubs and going to another team. He couldn't, because he was not a free agent. The Cubs owned him, and according to the baseball rules of the 1950s, his only options were to accept the contract they offered him or leave baseball altogether. Like John Fary, he really didn't have any choice.

If Banks spent any time worrying about his limited choices, it didn't show. The Cubs were his team, they had lifted him out of the weedy fields of the Negro leagues, and he belonged with them. After a few years in Chicago, he became famous not only for his home runs but for his loyalty and enthusiasm. He loved to tell reporters about the "friendly confines" of Wrigley Field. Warming up before a doubleheader on a bright summer day, he would say two games weren't enough. "Let's play three!" Banks would exult.

What John Fary is to the present-day politician Ernie Banks is to the present-day ballplayer. You can compare him, for example, to Rickey Henderson, who in the last 15 years has stolen more bases than anyone in the history of the game. Henderson will be in the Hall of Fame someday, as Ernie Banks already is. Unlike Banks, however, he has been paid fabulous salaries, and the arrival of free agency has allowed him to jump from team to team in search of money and World Series appearances. And yet he has never seemed content with his situation. Everywhere he has played he has expressed his frustration with his contract, the team management, the fans, and even, sometimes, his own play. The market has made Rickey Henderson free, and it has made him rich. It just hasn't made him happy.

The differences between Ernie Banks and Rickey Henderson are, of course, partly a matter of temperament. Some people are content by nature, and some are restless. In another sense, though, the two ballplayers are a metaphor for the changes in American life over the past 40 years. We live today in a time of profuse choice, with all the opportunity and disillusionment that it brings. Ernie Banks and John Fary lived in a world where choice was much more limited—where those in authority made decisions that the free market now throws open to endless individual re-examination.

This observation applies not only to baseball and politics but to all of the important personal relationships in life. In an average year in the 1950s, the number of divorces in America was about 10 per 1,000 marriages—barely a third of what it was to become by 1980. This was not because divorce was impossible to obtain—although it was difficult in a few states—or because it made anyone an outcast in the community. It was because divorce was simply not on the menu of options for most people, no matter how difficult or stressful life might become. The couples of the 1950s got married on the assumption that it was their job to make things work the best way they could. Like Ernie Banks and John Fary, they played the hand they were dealt and refrained from agonizing over what might have been.

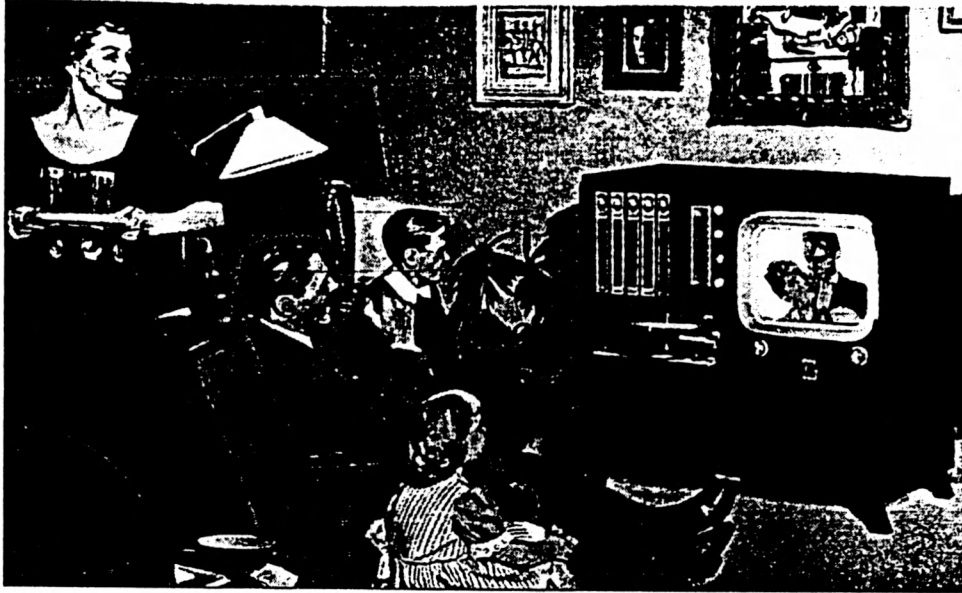
In 1895, David Lennox invented a new kind of steel furnace and set up in business making them in Marshalltown. As the years went by, his company prospered as a manufacturer of boilers, and later, air conditioners. The Lennox Corporation became a reliable source of respectable factory jobs that enabled generations of blue-collar families to enjoy the comforts of middle-class life. Its managers helped with countless local fairs, fund drives, and school-building campaigns.

In 1993, Lennox grew even more restless. It announced that it might have to close the Marshalltown plant altogether. Not because the company was losing money or facing any other sort of crisis, but just because the time had come to seek out the best opportunities. The fact that Marshalltown's very survival might depend on Lennox was of no consequence. "Strictly a business decision," the company vice president said.

There are, of course, technological reasons why companies have gotten wanderlust in the last couple of decades. Computers and telecommunications have made it possible to assemble products almost anywhere in

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TV *happiness shared by all the family!*



the world. But threatening to move a profitable company out of its historic home wasn't done in the 1950s mostly because it wasn't thinkable, in the same way that it wasn't thinkable to cancel employees' vacations or fire them at age 50 or 55 when their productivity began to decline. Those actions also would have improved the bottom line. But they were gross infringements on the enduring relationship between worker and manager that factory employment was supposed to be. Breaking up that arrangement was not on the menu of options.

If it is true to say of 1950s America that it was a world of limited choices, it is also fair to call it a world of lasting relationships. This was as true of commerce as it was of sports and politics, and it was nearly as true of the smallest commercial transactions as it was of the big ones.

When John Fary was not busy at politics, he was the proprietor of the 3600 Club, at the corner of 36th Street and South Damen Avenue, in the Back of the Yards neighborhood of Chicago, where his father had run a tavern before him. Fary lived in an apartment above the bar and operated the place himself most of the time.

There was a saloon like Fary's on virtually every block of his neighborhood during most of the years of his life. Each saloon was a sort of community center, a place where stockyards workers, factory workers, cops, and city patronage employees repaired at the end of the day to rest

and to recycle their earnings back through the neighborhood.

When it came to picking a saloon to patronize, these people actually had quite a bit of choice. Just within walking distance there were a dozen possibilities. Fary's own brother operated a similar establishment a couple of blocks away. But once a customer picked his bar, because he liked the smell of it or liked the people he found there, it was his. The market was not a factor. He didn't switch to another tavern because he heard that Hamm's was available on tap for five cents less. The residents of this neighborhood weren't hard-nosed consumers in the current sense. They had a different view of what was important in life.

It takes only the briefest of excursions back into the daily routine of an imaginary family in John Fary's neighborhood, circa 1957, to demonstrate that theirs was indeed a different sort of life altogether.

From the meal that started off the morning, in which the selection of cereals was tiny and the bread was always white, to the recreation in the evening, provided by a TV set that received four stations, most of them carrying a western or a quiz show at any given moment, this family lived in a world where choice was highly limited and authority meant something it does not mean any more. It was a world for which Wonder Bread and black-and-white TV are appropriate symbols, and no room needed to be made for Pop Tarts or toaster strudel, the Nashville Network or CNN.

If the breadwinner in this family drove to work in the morning, he almost certainly did it without the benefit of radio traffic commentators advising him on the best way to get there. One of the Chicago radio stations actually did institute a traffic alert feature in 1957, with a police officer hovering above the city in a helicopter, but most of the people who heard it were bewildered about what to do with the information. Wherever they were going, they had very few routes to choose from: the option of selecting the least congested freeway did not exist for most of them because the freeways themselves did not yet exist. They chose a city street and stayed on it until they reached their destination. If it was slow, it was slow.

Nor did this breadwinner have many choices, whether he worked in a factory or an office, about when to start the workday, when to take a break, or when to go to lunch. Those decisions, too, were out of the realm of choice for most employees in 1957, determined by the dictate of management or by the equally forceful strictures of habit. How to arrange the hours on the job was one of the many questions that the ordinary workers of the 1950s, white-collar and blue-collar alike, did not spend much time agonizing over.

The wife of this breadwinner, if she did not have a job herself, was likely to devote a substantial portion of her day to shopping, banking, and the other routine tasks of household economic management. Like her husband, she faced relatively few personal decisions about where and how to do them. Chances are she took care of her finances at a place in the neighborhood, where she could deposit money, cash checks, and, at the end of the quarter, enjoy the satisfaction of recording a regular savings dividend. She knew the teller personally—the teller had been with the bank as long

as she had, if not longer. But it was also likely that she knew the manager as well, and perhaps the owner. Once she opened an account, there was no need to re-examine the issue, no reason to check on what the competing bank further down Archer Avenue was offering for her money. They all offered about the same thing anyway.

Shopping, in the same way, was based on associations that were, if not permanent, then at least stable for long periods of time. The grocer was a man with whom the family had a relationship; even if his store was a small "supermarket," shoppers tended to personalize it: "I'm going down to Sam's for a minute," women told their children when they left in the afternoon to



pick up a cartful of groceries. Because of fair-trade agreements and other economic regulations, the neighborhood grocery of 1957 was in fact reasonably competitive in price with the new megagroceries in the suburbs, but price was not the important issue. Day-to-day commerce was based on relationships—on habit, not on choice.

If this Chicagoan had young children, there is a good chance she also spent part of her day on some school-related activity, volunteering around the building or attending a meeting of the PTA. When it came to schools, her family likely faced one important decision: public or Catholic. Once that choice was made, however, few others remained. The idea of selecting the best possible school environment for one's children would have seemed foreign to these people; one lived within the boundaries of a district or a parish, and that determined where the children went to school. If St. Cecilia's or Thomas Edison wasn't quite as good as its counterpart a mile away (fairly improbable, given the uniformity of the product)—well, that was life.

It should not be necessary to belabor the question of how all these rituals have changed in the decades since then. Our daily lives today are monuments

to selection and to making for ourselves decisions that someone above us used to make on our behalf. We breakfast on choice (sometimes on products literally named for it), take any of several alternative but equally frustrating routes to work, shop in stores whose clerks do not know us, bank in banks where we need to show identification after 20 years because the teller has been there two weeks, and come home to a TV that offers so many choices that the newspaper can't devise a grid to display them all.

In the past generation, we have moved whole areas of life, large and small, out of the realm of permanence and authority and into the realm of change and choice. We have gained the psychological freedom to ask ourselves at any moment not only whether we are eating the right cereal but whether we are in the right neighborhood, the right job, the right relationship.

This is, of course, in large measure a function of technology. Birth control pills created new social and sexual options for women; instantaneous communication by computer made possible all the global options of the footloose corporation. And it is in part a function of simple affluence. Choices multiply in tandem with the dollars we have to invest in them.

But our love affair with choice has not been driven solely by machines, and it has not been driven solely by money. The baby boom generation was seduced by the idea of choice in and of itself.

Most of us continue to celebrate the explosion of choice and personal freedom in our time. There are few among us who are willing to say it is a bad bargain, or who mourn for the rigidities and constrictions of American life in the 1950s.

A remarkable number of us, however, do seem to mourn for something about that time. We talk nostalgically of the loyalties and lasting relationships that characterized those days: of the old neighborhoods with mom-and-pop storekeepers who knew us by name; of not having to lock the house at night because no one would think of entering it; of knowing that there would be a neighbor home, whatever the time of day or night, to help us out or take us in if we happened to be in trouble.

There is a longing, among millions of Americans now reaching middle age, for a sense of community that they believe existed during their childhoods and does not exist now. That is why there is a modern movement called communitarianism, and why it has attracted so many adherents and so much attention. "I want to live in a place again where I can walk down any street without being afraid," Hillary Rodham Clinton said shortly after becoming first lady. "I want to be able to take my daughter to a park at any time of day or night in the summer and remember what I used to be able to do when I was a little kid." Those sorts of feelings, and a nostalgia for the benefits of old-fashioned community life at the neighborhood level, are only growing stronger as the century draws to a close.

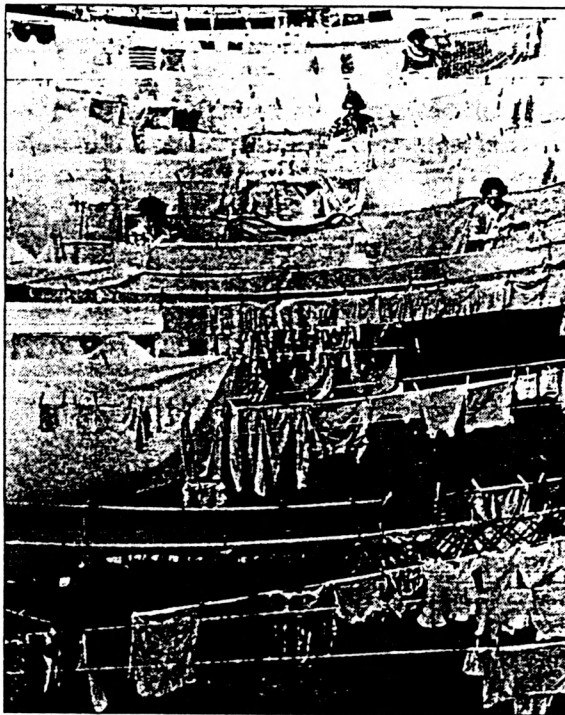
The very word *community* has found a place, however fuzzy and imprecise, all over the ideological spectrum of the present decade. On the Left, it is a code word for a more egalitarian society in which the oppressed of all colors are included and made the beneficiaries of a more generous social wel-

fare system that commits far more than the current amount to education, public health, and the eradication of poverty. On the Right, it signifies an emphasis on individual self-discipline that would replace the welfare state with a private rebirth of personal responsibility. In the middle, it seems to reflect a much simpler yearning for safety, stability, and a network of stable, reliable relationships. But the concept of community has been all over the pages of popular journalism and political discourse in the first half of the 1990s.

Authority is something else again. It evokes no similar feelings of nostalgia. Few would dispute that it has eroded over the last generation. Walk into a large public high school in a typical middle-class suburb today, and you will see a principal who must spend huge portions of the school day having to cajole recalcitrant students, teachers, and staff into accepting direction that, a generation ago, they would have accepted unquestioningly just because the principal was the principal and they were subordinates. You will see teachers who risk a profane response if they dare criticize one of their pupils.

Or consider the mainstream Protestant church. We haven't yet reached the point where congregants curse their minister in the same way high school students curse their teachers, but if it is even a faintly liberal congregation, there is a good chance that the minister is no longer "Dr." but "Jim," or "Bob," or "Kate," or whatever diminutive his or her friends like to use. Putting ministers on a level with their congregations is one small step in the larger unraveling of authority.

Authority and community have in fact unraveled together. But the demise of authority has brought out very few mourners. To most Americans of the baby boom generation, it will always be a word with sinister connotations, calling forth a rush of uncomfortable memories about the schools, churches, and families in which baby boomers grew up. Rebellion against those memories constituted the defining event of their generational lives. Wherever on the political spectrum this generation has



landed, it has brought its suspicion of authority with it. "Authority," says P. J. O'Rourke, speaking for his baby boom cohorts loud and clear, "has always attracted the lowest elements in the human race."

The suspicion of authority and the enshrinement of personal choice are everywhere in the American society of the 1990s. They extend beyond the routines of our individual lives into the debates we conduct on topics as diverse as school reform and corporate management.

Of all the millions of words devoted in the past decade to the subject of educational change, hardly any have suggested improving the schools by putting the rod back in the teacher's hand or returning to a curriculum of required memorization and classroom drill. The center of the discussion is the concept of school choice: the right of families to decide for themselves which schools their children will attend. Many things may be said for and against the concept of school choice, but one point is clear enough—in education, as in virtually every other social enterprise, individual choice is the antithesis of authority. It is a replacement for it.

Similarly, one can comb the shelves of a bookstore crowded with volumes on corporate management without coming across one that defends the old-fashioned pyramid in which orders come down from the chief executive, military-style, and descend intact to the lower reaches of the organization. There are corporations that still operate that way, but they are regarded as dinosaurs. Corporate hierarchies are out of fashion. The literature is all about constructing management out of webs rather than pyramids, about decentralizing the decision process, empowering people at all levels of the organization. The words "command and control" are the obscenities of present-day management writing.

As they are, more broadly, in economic thinking. Five years ago, few Americans were familiar with the phrase "command economy." Now, virtually all of us know what it means. It is the definition of a society that fails because it attempts to make economic decisions by hierarchy rather than by the free choice of its individual citizens. It is the most broadly agreed-upon reason for the abject failure of world communism. The communist implosion both reinforced and seemed to validate our generational suspicions about hierarchy and authority in all their manifestations, foreign and domestic, the American CEOs and school principals of the 1950s almost as much as the dictators who made life miserable in countries throughout the world.

What has happened in education and economics has also happened, not surprisingly, in the precincts of political thought. There has in fact been a discussion about authority among political philosophers during the past two decades, and its tone tells us something. It has been a debate in which scholars who profess to find at least some value in the concept have struggled to defend themselves against libertarian critics who question whether there is any such thing as legitimate authority at all, even for duly constituted democratic governments. "All authority is equally illegiti-

decades was technologically inevitable, or, more positively, that it is the best guarantor of individual freedom, and that individual freedom is the most important value for us to preserve. Or one can say that the market puts more dollars in the ordinary citizen's pocket, and that, after all, the bottom line should be the bottom line. But, in the end, there is no escaping the reality that the market is a force for disruption of existing relationships. To argue that markets are the true friend of community is an inversion of common sense. And to idealize markets and call oneself a conservative is to distort reality.

What is true of market worship is true in a larger sense of personal choice, the even more precious emblem of the baby boom generation. While, like the authors of *Dead Poets Society*, we may wish to place community and unrestricted choice on the same side of the social ledger, the fact is that they do not belong together.

Wal-Mart offers a bonanza of choice: acre upon acre of clothing and hardware, dishes and stationery, detergent and Christmas ornaments, the option of choosing from among dozens of models and manufacturers, a cornucopia that no Main Street store can compete with even if it can somehow compete on price. Such businesses are built not on choice but on custom, on the familiarity and the continuing relationship that buyer and seller create over a long period of time. The Main Street café owed its existence to the irrelevance of choice—to the fact that it was the one place in town to go in the morning. Perhaps that meant that the price of eggs or the incentive to cook them perfectly wasn't what it might have been under a more competitive arrangement. But its sheer staying power provided people with something intangible that many of them now realize was important.

The standard argument against this idea is a simple one: when all is said and done, people are entitled to what they want. If they preferred the café or the hardware store on Main Street, they would drive Wal-Mart and the franchise restaurants out of business. If they vote with their stomachs to have breakfast at McDonald's, what business is it of a bunch of communitarian elitists to tell them they ought to go somewhere else for the sake of tradition?

This is a beguiling argument, hard to counter, and yet it is much too simple. People want all sorts of contradictory things. They want to smoke and be healthy, to bulldoze forests for lumber and still have the trees to look at, to have their taxes cut without losing any government benefits. The fact that they want to buy their hardware at the lowest cost doesn't mean they want their downtown commercial district to fall apart. What they want is unlimited consumer choice and a stable, thriving downtown all at the same time. Unfortunately, such a combination is impossible.

To worship choice and community together is to misunderstand what community is all about. Community means not subjecting every action in life to the burden of choice but rather accepting the familiar and reaping the psychological benefits of having one less calculation to make in the course of the day. It is about being Ernie Banks and playing for the Chi-

cago Cubs for 20 years, or being John Fary and sticking with the Daley machine for life, or being one of John Fary's customers and sticking with his tavern at 36th and Damen year in and year out. It is being the Lennox Corporation and knowing that Marshalltown, Iowa, will always be your home.

It would be a pleasure to be a baseball fan today and not have to read every fall about a player who won the World Series for his team and is now jumping to another team that has dangled a juicier contract in front of him. It would be nice to have some of the old loyalty back—to be able to root for Ernie Banks instead of Rickey Henderson. But the stability of Ernie Banks's world depended precisely upon its limits. Restoration of a stable baseball world awaits the restoration of some form of authority over it—not, one hopes, the rigid wage slavery of the reserve clause, but some form of authority nevertheless. In baseball, as in much of the rest of life, that is the price of stability. The price is not low, but the benefit is not small.

It would similarly be a pleasure to allow one's children to watch television or listen to radio without having to worry that they will be seeing or hearing obscenity, but here too the market has assumed a role that used to be occupied by network authority.

Consider television in the 1950s. Certainly no one could plausibly claim that it was not in the grip of market forces. But beyond certain boundaries, the market simply did not operate. No doubt there would have been considerable viewer demand for a pornographic version of *Some Like It Hot*, or perhaps a version of *20,000 Leagues under the Sea* in which Kirk Douglas was eaten alive in CinemaScope by the giant squid.

Those things were absent from television in the 1950s not because no one would have watched them but because there were sanctions against their being shown. There was someone in a position of authority—in this case, a censor—who stepped in to overrule the market and declare that some things are too lurid, too violent, or too profane for a mass audience to see.

It is in the absence of such authority that five-year-olds can conveniently watch MTV or listen to Howard Stern, and 12-year-olds can buy rap albums that glorify gangsterism, murder, and rape. It is a matter of free choice. Obscenity and violence sell, and we do not feel comfortable ordering anyone, even children, not to choose them. We are not yet willing to pay the price that decency in public entertainment will require. But if children are not to gorge themselves on violent entertainment, then it is an inconvenient fact that someone besides the children themselves must occupy a position of authority.

Some readers will no doubt object that I am portraying the 1950s as a premodern, precapitalist Eden. I am not that naïve. Nobody who spends any time studying the period—nobody who lived through it—can entertain for long the notion that it was a time when people were insulated from market forces. The 1950s were the decade of tail fins, mass-produced suburban subdivisions, and the corruption of television quiz shows by greedy sponsors. The market was immensely powerful; it was the enemy that an entire generation of postwar social critics took aim against.

In the 1950s, however, a whole array of social institutions still stood outside the grip of the market and provided ordinary people with a cushion against it. In the last generation, as sociologist Alan Wolfe and others have eloquently pointed out, that cushion has disappeared. The difference between the 1950s and the 1990s is to a large extent the difference between a society in which market forces challenged traditional values and a society in which they have triumphed over them.

And the decisiveness of that triumph is written in the values that the baby boom generation has carried with it from youth on into middle age: the belief in individual choice and the suspicion of any authority that might interfere with it.

Of course, there will be quite a few people to whom none of this makes any sense, people who believe that individual choice is the most important standard, period; that no society can ever get enough of it; that the problem in the last generation is not that we have abandoned authority but that there are still a few vestiges of it yet to be eradicated. Many of these people call themselves libertarians, and arguing with them is complicated by the fact that they are nearly always intelligent, interesting, and personally decent.

Libertarian ideas are seductive and would be nearly impossible to challenge if one thing were true—if we lived in a world full of P. J. O'Rourkes, all of us bright and articulate and individualistic and wanting nothing more than the freedom to try all the choices and experiments that life has to offer and express our individuality in an endless series of new and creative ways.

But this is the libertarian fallacy: the idea that the world is full of repressed libertarians waiting to be freed from the bondage of rules and authority. Perhaps, if they were right, life would be more interesting. But what they failed to notice, as they squirmed awkwardly through childhood in what seemed to them the straitjacket of school and family and church, is that most people are not like them. Most people want a chart to follow, and are not happy when they don't have one, or when having learned one as children, they later see people all around them ignoring it. While the legitimacy of any particular set of rules is a subject that philosophers will always debate, it nonetheless remains true, and in the end more important, that the uncharted life, the life of unrestricted choice and eroded authority, is one most ordinary people do not enjoy leading.

There is no point in pretending that the 1950s were a happy time for everyone in America. For many, the price of the limited life was an impossibly high one to pay. To have been an independent-minded alderman in the Daley machine, a professional baseball player treated unfairly by his team, a suburban housewife who yearned for a professional career, a black high school student dreaming of possibilities that were foreclosed to him, a gay man or woman forced to conduct a charade in public—to have been any of these things in the 1950s was to live a life that was difficult at best and tragic at worst. That is why so many of us still respond to the memory of those indignities by saying that nothing in the world could justify them.

It is a powerful indictment; it is also a selective one. It is often said that history is written by the winners, but the truth is that the cultural images that come down to us as history are written, in large part, by the dissenters—by those whose strong feelings against life in a particular generation motivate them to become the novelists, playwrights, and social critics of the next, drawing inspiration from the injustices and hypocrisies of the time in which they grew up. We have learned much of what we know about family life in America in the 1950s from women who chafed under its restrictions, either as young, college-educated housewives who found it unfulfilling or as teenage girls secretly appalled by the prom-and-cheerleader social milieu. Much of the image of American Catholic life in those years comes from the work of former Catholics who considered the church they grew up in not only authoritarian but destructive of their free choices and creative instincts. We remember the inconsistencies and absurdities of life a generation ago: the pious, skirt-chasing husbands, the martini-sneaking ministers, the sadistic gym teachers.

I am not arguing with the accuracy of any of those individual memories. And yet, nearly lost to our collective indignation are the millions of people who took the rules seriously and tried to live up to them, within the profound limits of human weakness. They are still around, the true believers of the 1950s, in small towns and suburbs and big-city neighborhoods all over the country, reading the papers, watching television, and wondering in old age what has happened to America in the last 30 years. If you visit middle-class American suburbs today and talk to the elderly women who have lived out their adult years in these places, they do not tell you how constricted and demeaning their lives in the 1950s were. They tell you those were the best years they can remember. And if you visit a working-class Catholic parish in a big city and ask the older parishioners what they think of the church in the days before Vatican II, they don't tell you that it was tyrannical or that it destroyed their individuality. They tell you they wish they could have it back. For them, the erosion of both community and authority in the last generation is not a matter of intellectual debate. It is something they can feel in their bones, and the feeling makes them shiver.

To be sure, America is full of people willing to remind us at every opportunity that the 1950s are not coming back. Ozzie and Harriet are dead, they like to say, offering an instant refutation to just about anyone who ventures to point out something good about the social arrangements of a generation ago—conventional families, traditional neighborhoods, stabler patterns of work, school, politics, religion. All of these belong, it is said, to a world that no longer exists and cannot be retrieved. We have moved on.

And of course they are right. If retrieving the values of the 1950s means recreating a world of men in fedora hats returning home at the end of the day to women beaming at them with apron and carpet sweeper, then it is indeed a foolish idea.

But the real questions raised by our journey back to the 1950s are much more complicated, and they have nothing to do with *Ozzie and Harriet* or *Leave*

It to Beaver. They are questions like these: can we impose some controls on the chaos of individual choice that we have created in the decades since then? Can we develop a majority culture strong enough to tell its children that there are inappropriate ways to behave in a high school corridor, and that there are programs that eight-year-olds should not be free to watch on television? Is there a way to relearn the simple truth that there is sin in the world, and that part of our job in life is to resist its temptations?

The quickest way of dealing with these questions is to say that the genie is out of the bottle and there is no way to put it back. Once people free themselves from rules and regulations, taste the temptations of choice, they will never return to a more-ordered world. Once they have been told they do not have to stay married—to their spouses, communities, careers, to any of the commitments that once were made for life—they will be on the loose forever. Once the global economy convinces corporations that there is no need for the personal and community loyalties they once practiced, those loyalties are a dead letter. So we will be told many times in the years to come.

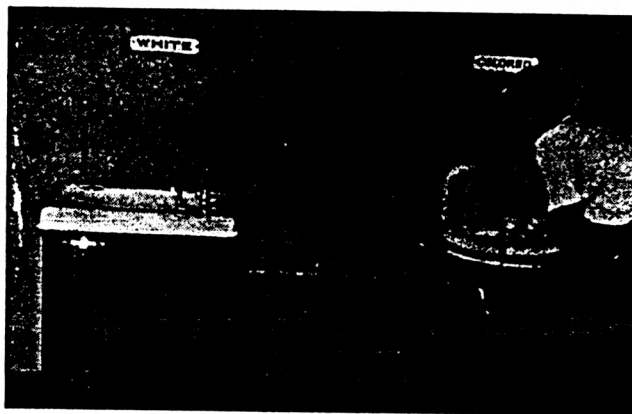
But is it true? Is the only sequel to social disorder further disorder? There are other

scenarios, if we do not mind making a leap to look for them.

It is always dangerous to stack up decades one against the other, but it is remarkable how many of the laments and nostalgic reflections of the 1990s sound curiously like those of one particular time in the history of America in this century. They sound like the rhetoric of the 1920s.

Seventy years ago, the best-selling book in America was Mark Sullivan's *Our Times*, a fond chronicle of everyday life before the Great War and a lament for the lost community of those years. "Preceding the Great War," Sullivan said, "the world had had a status—an equilibrium." Since then, the most prominent feature of social life for the average American had been "a discontent with the postwar commotion, the turbulence and unsettlement that surrounded him and fretted him; it was a wish for settled ways, for conditions that remained the same long enough to become familiar and dear, for routine that remained set, for a world that 'stayed put.'"

More than anything else, Sullivan believed, the eroding values of the 1920s had to do with technology—with the automobile and the methods of mass production that had transformed the American factory in the first quarter of the 20th century. So it is more than marginally interesting that the creator of those methods, Henry Ford, spent the 1920s mourning so-



cial change as much as anyone. In 1926, he began the construction of Greenfield Village, a historic replica of the place where he had grown up, complete with gravel roads, gas lamps, and a country store. "I am trying in a small way," Ford explained, "to help America take a step . . . toward the saner and sweeter idea of life that prevailed in pre-war days."

Ford believed that the pace of living had somehow accelerated beyond easy comprehension or control. So did millions of other people who were less responsible for the change than he was. "In our great cities," the financier Simon Straus worried early in the decade, "people break down in health or reach premature senility because of late hours, loss of sleep, fast pleasures, and headlong, nerve-racking methods of existence."

-- The sense of debilitating change and collapsing rules was not simply an idea loose in the popular culture of the 1920s; it was central to the most sophisticated intellectual debate. Walter Lippmann talked about the "accidents of modernity" undermining traditional truths and authoritative standards. Joseph Wood Krutch, in *The Modern Temper* (1929), argued that science had broken life loose from any moral compass altogether.

In the years since, historians who have studied the 1920s have struggled to come to terms with its palpable tension and longing for a simpler time. Two decades ago, Roderick Nash set out to write a new book about the period after World War I variously described as the "Roaring Twenties" and the "Jazz Age." He ended up with *The Nervous Generation* as his title. "The typical American in 1927 was nervous," he wrote in one chapter. "The values by which he ordered his life seemed in jeopardy of being swept away by the forces of growth and change and complexity."

It was a point reminiscent of one made a few years earlier, by the historian William Leuchtenburg, in *The Perils of Prosperity* (1958). Two things about the 1920s stood out most clearly to Leuchtenburg: the loss of community and the loss of authority.

"The metropolis had shattered the supremacy of the small town," Leuchtenburg wrote, "and life seemed infinitely more impersonal. It was proverbial that the apartment-house dweller did not know his neighbor. . . . In the American town of 1914, class lines, though not frozen, were unmistakable. Each town had its old families. . . . The world they experienced was comprehensible. The people they saw were the people they knew. . . . Moral standards were set by the church and by the family. Parents were confident enforcers of the moral code. By 1932, much of the sense of authority was gone."

It was easy to dismiss those who mourned the social losses of the 1920s by telling them that they were indulging in flights of nostalgic fantasy. The Great War was a social as well as a political watershed; the horse and buggy was gone, and so was the America it represented. Anyone who bothered to point to the communitarian virtues of life before the war ran the risk of being trumped by the all-purpose Ozzie and Harriet rejoinder: "Forget it. Those days are over."

And they were, in the same sense that the 1950s are gone today. But nobody on either side of the argument had any clue as to what lay ahead in the two decades that would follow: extraordinary group effort and so-

cial cohesion in the face of the massive challenges of the Great Depression and another world war, back to back. The 1930s and '40s not only produced real communitarian values but generated real leaders and authority figures whose arrival appeared as unlikely in the individualist era of the 1920s as it does amid the individualism of the 1990s.

It would be foolish to minimize the tensions and divisions that existed in America all through the Great Depression and war years, or to suggest that those years somehow represented a return to the innocence of the time before World War I. Still, it seems fair enough to say that, under the pressures of crisis, the country developed a sense of cohesion and structures of authority that seemed lost forever only a few years before.

Of course, suggesting that community and authority tend to return in times of crisis may not be a very reassuring or relevant argument for the 1990s, a time when both depression and world war seem remote prospects. But could the moral erosion of the present time be, in its way, a crisis sufficient to rival war or economic collapse? And if so, might a swing back to older values be a plausible response? Perhaps that is not so farfetched.

There is an even more interesting case, if one is willing to cross the ocean to look for it.

The year 1820 in England was a time of notorious disrespect for the very highest levels of authority. The king and queen were national laughingstocks, exposed as such by a sensational divorce trial that documented the stupidity of both. The political system was distrusted as a cesspool of corruption, with seats in Parliament bought and sold at the constituency level by private wealth, and the Church of England was widely regarded as a bastion of clerical privilege rather than religious devotion. The cultural superstars were artists such as Byron and Shelley, notorious for their rejection of what they considered obsolete standards of family life and sexual morality: Byron boasted publicly of having slept with 200 women in two years, while Shelley was a wifeswapper and founder of a free love colony. The country was in the midst of a widespread and poorly concealed wave of opium addiction that was disabling some of its most promising talents.

England's conservative social critics of that time lamented the disappearance of authority, community, and all the bonds that had made the place livable in the 18th century. "The ties which kept the different classes of society in a vital and harmonious dependence on each other," William Wordsworth wrote, "have with these 30 years either been greatly impaired or wholly dissolved."

Wordsworth was referring to the 30 years since the events that triggered the French Revolution and launched a revolution in manners all over the Western world. To most thoughtful people, 1789 had been a watershed that set "modern times" off from an old regime that grew fainter and more remote with each passing year. To talk to them about a "return" to the arrangements that prevailed before 1789 would surely have struck them as an exercise in fantasy.

Certainly few of them believed that, a generation later, England would

be in the midst of a period famous to this day for its sexual prudery and obsessive concern with "family values," renowned for its national devotion to a frumpy, widowed queen, and marked by the reform and revitalization of its religious establishment. Victorian England does not represent a re-enactment of any previous historical time; it merely serves as a reminder that there is a pendulum at work in the manners and values of a society, and that it can swing when no one expects it to.

The year 1820 was separated by just three decades from the start of the French Revolution and the arrival of what was thought to be a permanent social transformation. In 1995, it is just three decades since the events of the mid-1960s, the social and moral equivalent of Bastille Day in our own lives. There is nothing farfetched about asking when the pendulum might begin to swing again.

One needs to be even more politically careful talking about the England of Queen Victoria than about the America of Ozzie and Harriet. Anybody who refers to it in anything but the most caustic terms risks being labeled an advocate of censorship and sexual repression. But it is nonetheless true, and revealing, that in the past few years a growing number of scholars have suggested that the Victorians have something to tell us about our situation.

"Contemplating our own society," the historian Gertrude Himmelfarb wrote in 1994, "we may be prepared to take a more appreciative view of Victorian moralism—of the 'Puritan ethic' of work, thrift, temperance, cleanliness; of the idea of 'respectability' that was as powerful among the working classes as among the middle classes."

Himmelfarb not only writes with approval of Victorian virtues; she comes close to suggesting that they will reappear sometime in the coming decades. "If in a period of rapid economic and social change, the Victorians showed a substantial improvement in their 'condition' and 'disposition,'" she argues, "it may be that economic and social change do not necessarily result in personal and public disarray. If they could retain and even strengthen an ethos that had its roots in religion and tradition, it may be that we are not as constrained by the material conditions of our time as we have thought."

As Himmelfarb points out, the Victorian era did not witness any national slowdown in the pace of societal change. Its cohort lived through a time of enormous technological upheaval marked by the appearance of the railroad, telegraph, and camera, and the expansion of the British Empire into a worldwide colossus that made immense fortunes and transformed the economy at home.

What can be said about the Victorians is not that they reversed the flow of social change but that they searched for anchors to help them cope with it, and that they found them in the familiar places: family, religion, and patriotism of the hokiest and most maudlin variety.

And that also seems a fair thing to say about the 1950s in America. They were not years of stasis but of rapid and bewildering change: nuclear tension, population explosion, the creation of a new world in the suburbs, the sudden emergence of a prosperity and materialism that scarcely anyone

had expected. The people who lived through this change looked for anchors to help them cope with it all, and found them, however imperfectly, where people normally look for such things: at home, in church, in the rituals and pieties of patriotic excess. They found them in "togetherness" and the basement family room, in the Holy Name Society and the Green Donkeys Social Club, in Bishop Sheen and Walt Disney. It required some pretending—some hypocrisy, if you insist—but it served its purpose.

We are never going to return to the 1950s in America, any more than we are going to return to Victorian standards of morality. And we should not want to return to them. What is past is past. What we badly need to do, once our rebellion against the 1950s has run its course, is to rebuild some anchors of stability to help us through times of equally unsettling change.

For that to happen anytime soon, the generation that launched the rebellion will have to force itself to rethink some of the unexamined "truths" with which it has lived its entire adult life. It will have to recognize that privacy, individuality, and choice are not free goods, and that the society that places no restrictions on them pays a high price for that decision. It will have to retrieve the idea of authority from the dustbin to which it was confined by the 1960s deluge. The middle-aged communitarian who yearns, in the words of Hillary Clinton, to "do what I used to be able to do when I was a little kid," has no alternative but to develop a realism about the natural limits of life that most of the baby boomers have yet to demonstrate.

There is a good chance that this will not happen. It is difficult enough for individuals to correct the misconceptions of their youth once they have reached middle age. For the largest single generation in American history to do this in the years remaining to it seems highly problematic.

In that case, what really matters is what the next generation grows up believing—those who are children now, who are being raised by the creators of the deluge. What will they think about community and authority, habit and choice, sin and virtue? This generation will come to adulthood in the early years of the next century with an entirely different set of childhood and adolescent memories from the ones their parents absorbed. They will remember being bombarded with choices, and the ideology of choice as a good in itself; living in transient neighborhoods and broken and recombinant families in which no arrangement could be treated as permanent; having parents who feared to impose rules because rules might stifle their freedom and individuality.

Will a generation raised that way be tempted to move, in its early adult years, toward a reimposition of order and stability, even at the risk of losing some of the choice and personal freedom its parents worshipped? To dismiss that idea out of hand is to show too little respect for the pendulum that operates in the values of any society, and the natural desire of any generation to use it to correct the errors and excesses of the one that went before.

The **Spirit**
of
Community

RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND
THE COMMUNITARIAN
AGENDA

Amitai Etzioni

America in the Early Nineties

From time to time there's a finding of social science that may by itself be of limited importance but illuminates a major conundrum: A study has shown that young Americans expect to be tried before a jury of their peers but are rather reluctant to serve on one. This paradox highlights a major aspect of contemporary American civic culture: a strong sense of entitlement—that is, a demand that the community provide more services and strongly uphold rights—coupled with a rather weak sense of obligation to the local and national community. Thus, most Americans applauded the show of force in Grenada, Panama, and in the Persian Gulf, but many were reluctant to serve in the armed forces or see their sons and daughters called up.

First prize for capturing this anticomunitarian outlook should be awarded to a member of a television audience who exclaimed during a show on the savings and loan mess, "The taxpayers should not have to pay for this; the government should," as if there really were an Uncle Sam who could pick up the tab for us all.

A 1989 study by People for the American Way notes:

Young people have learned only half of America's story. Consistent with the priority they place on personal happiness, young people reveal notions of America's unique character that emphasize freedom and license almost to the complete exclusion of service or participation. Although they clearly appreciate the democratic freedoms that, in their view, make theirs the "best country in the world to live in," they fail to perceive a need to reciprocate by exercising the duties and responsibilities of good citizenship.

Only one out of eight (12 percent) of the respondents felt that voting was part of what makes a good citizen. When asked what was special about the United States, young people responded: "In-

dividualism and the fact that it is a democracy and you can do whatever you want." And: "We really don't have any limits."

The imbalance between rights and responsibilities has existed for a long time. Indeed, some argue that it is a basic trait of the American character. However, America's leaders have exacerbated this tendency in recent years. In 1961 President John F. Kennedy could still stir the nation when he stated: "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country." But Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush, backed up by some Democrats in Congress, proposed a much less onerous course: they suggested that ever-increasing economic growth would pay for government services, and taxpayers would be expected to shell out less—implying that Americans could have their cake and eat it, too.

In many other areas, from public education to the war on illegal drugs, facile, nontaxing "solutions" have been offered. Thus it has been suggested that we can improve our education system without additional expenditures simply by increasing parental choices among schools. Choice, it is claimed, will "drive the bad schools out of business." And how should we deal with the demand for illicit drugs? "Just say no."

Harvard legal historian Lawrence Friedman points to a particularly troubling mismatch of rights and responsibilities: a tendency among Americans in recent years to claim rights for themselves and to leave responsibilities to the government. It is therefore necessary to reiterate that sooner or later the responsibilities we load on the government end up on our shoulders or become burdens we bequeath to our children.

A Four-Point Agenda on Rights and Responsibilities

Correcting the current imbalance between rights and responsibilities requires a four-point agenda: a moratorium on the minting of most, if not all, new rights; reestablishing the link between rights and responsibilities; recognizing that some responsibilities do not entail rights; and, most carefully, adjusting some rights to the changed circumstances. These pivotal points deserve some elaboration.

A Moratorium

We should, for a transition period of, say, the next decade, put a tight lid on the manufacturing of new rights. The incessant issuance of new rights, like the wholesale printing of currency, causes a massive inflation of rights that devalues their moral claims.

When asked whether certain things are "a privilege that a person should have to earn, or a right to which he is entitled as a citizen," most Americans (81 percent) considered health care a right (versus 16 percent who said it was a privilege). Two-thirds (66 percent) considered adequate housing a right (as opposed to 31 percent who called it a privilege). Indeed, why not? Until one asks, as there are no free lunches, who will pay for unlimited health care and adequate housing for all? The champions of rights are often quite mum on this question, which if left unanswered makes the claim for a right a rather empty gesture.

Tajel Shah, the president of the U.S. Student Association, claims that higher education "is a right, not a privilege." A fine sentiment indeed. It would, however, be more responsible if she at least hinted at how this right is to be paid for—in whose ledger the entailed obligation is to be entered.

In Santa Monica, California, men were found dealing drugs in public women's rooms on the beaches and in parks. To combat the abuse, the city council passed an ordinance that prohibited men and women from using the opposite sex's facilities unless they were in urgent need (which was defined as a line of three or more in front of them). This did not satisfy a local activist, Gloria Allred, who saw in the ordinance a violation of a woman's right to urinate in any public facility, at any time. Referring to a similar ordinance in Houston, Texas, she stated: "Little did I know that such a nightmare might soon be reenacted in this fair city." Ms. Allred warned: "This is the first step down a long dark road of restricting women's rights in the name of public safety."

Death-row inmates at San Quentin have sued to protect their reproductive "rights" through artificial insemination. An attorney in the case reports that "these inmates believe that they are being subjected to cruel and unusual punishment because not only are they being sentenced to die, but future generations of their family are being executed also. . . ."

Lisa Dangler, a mother in Yorktown, New York, sued the local

school district for not admitting her son into the high school honor society. She argued that his rejection reduced his chances of being accepted by a select college and medical school. She further claimed that he was being punished because the Dangers were outspoken critics of the school—and hence his rejection was actually a violation of the family's right of free speech. A jury rejected her suit. The presiding judge stated that if the jury had ruled in Ms. Danger's favor, he would have overturned the verdict. He added: "By attempting to elevate mere personal desires into constitutional rights and claiming denial of their civil rights whenever their desires are not realized, these persons are demeaning the essential rights and procedures that protect us all."

The American Bankers Association took out a full-page ad in *The Washington Post* (when Congress was considering putting a cap on the interest banks may charge credit-card holders) that bore the headline WILL CONGRESS DENY MILLIONS OF AMERICANS THE RIGHT TO KEEP THEIR CREDIT CARDS?

Once, rights were very solemn moral/legal claims, ensconced in the Constitution and treated with much reverence. We all lose if the publicity department of every special interest can claim that someone's rights are violated every time they don't get all they want. Suspending for a while the minting of new rights, unless there are unusually compelling reasons to proceed, will serve to restore the special moral standing and suasion of rights.

We need to remind one another that *each newly minted right generates a claim on someone*. In effect, new rights often arouse or play upon feelings of guilt in others. There is a limited amount of guilt, however, that one can lay upon other people before they balk. Unless we want to generate a universal backlash against rights, we need to curb rights inflation and protect the currency of rights from being further devalued.

Moreover, the expression of ever more wants, many quite legitimate, in the language of rights makes it difficult to achieve compromises and to reach consensus, processes that lie at the heart of democracy. A society that is studded with groups of true believers and special-interest groups, each brimming with rights, inevitably turns into a society overburdened with conflicts. Columnist John Leo of *U.S. News & World Report* declares: "Rights talk polarizes debate; it tends to suppress moral discussion and consensus

building. Once an agenda is introduced as a 'right,' sensible discussion and moderate positions tend to disappear."

Even if lawyers and judges realize among themselves that individual rights are limited by the rights of others and the needs of the community, as the language of rights penetrates into everyday discourse, the discourse becomes impoverished and confrontational. It is one thing to claim that you and I have different interests and see if we can work out a compromise; or, better yet, that we both recognize the merit or virtue of a common cause, say, a cleaner environment. The moment, however, that I claim a *right* to the same piece of land or property or public space as you, we start to view one another like the Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland or the Palestinians and Israelis in the Middle East.

A return to a language of social virtues, interests, and, above all, social responsibilities will reduce contentiousness and enhance social cooperation.

People treat rights-based arguments, unlike many others, as "trump cards" that neutralize all other positions. Cass R. Sunstein, professor of jurisprudence at the University of Chicago, put it well when he pointed out that rights can "be conclusions masquerading as reasons." For example, he writes, those who defend even the most extreme kinds of what he labels violent pornography state that it is a form of free speech, period. Sunstein suggests that perhaps a person is entitled to this particularly abusive form of speech. But, he argues, an individual's entitlement should be established in detailed argumentation that would weigh the right at issue against the rights of those who are hurt by the given act, rather than simply asserting that it is a right, as if its evocation closed off all debate.

Mary Ann Glendon, a Harvard Law professor and leading Communitarian, shows that we treat many rights the way we treat property, which we tend to view as intrinsically "ours" and which we are therefore free to do with as we wish. Actually, we readily accept that there are many things we may not do with things we own, such as burning leaves, which may endanger others, or playing the stereo loud enough to be heard five blocks away. To put it differently, we all know on one level that our liberties are limited by those of others and that we can do what we want only *as long as we do not harm others*. Rights talk, however, pushes us to disregard this crucial qualification, the concern for one another and for the com-

munity. Soon "I can do what I want as long as I do not hurt others" becomes "I can do what I want, because I have a right to do it."

A telling case in point is the opposition to seat belts and motorcycle helmets. Libertarians have long argued adamantly that the government should not require people to use these safety devices. They blocked the introduction of seat belt and motorcycle helmet laws in many jurisdictions and ensured the repeal of such regulations in several localities where they had been in place. The main libertarian argument is that people have a right to do with their lives what they wish, including endangering them. People are said to be the best judges of what is good for them, because they will have to live with the consequences of their acts. Therefore we should treat people as adults and not as children, without paternalism. (Some libertarians apply the same idea to the use of narcotics.)

Reckless individuals, however, do not absorb many of the consequences of their acts. Drivers without seat belts are more likely than those wearing belts to lose control of their cars in an accident and hurtle into others. They are also more likely to die and leave their children for society to attend to and pick up the pieces. And, of course, they draw on our community resources, from ambulance services to hospitals, when they are involved in accidents, for which they pay at best a fraction of the cost. To insist that people drive safely and responsibly is hence a concern for the needs of others and the community; there is no individual right that automatically trumps these considerations.

Aside from a temporary suspension in the minting of new rights, *there are several rights*, some recently generated and some of long standing, *that deserve reexamination*. It makes little sense, for example, to refer to rights of inanimate objects, as law professor Christopher Stone did some years back in an environmental flourish:

It is no answer to say that streams and forests . . . cannot speak. Corporations cannot speak either; nor can states, estates, infants, incompetents, municipalities or universities. . . . One ought, I think, to handle the legal problems of natural objects as one does the problem of legal incompetents—human beings who have become vegetable. . . . On a parity of reasoning, we should have a system in which, when a friend of a

natural object perceives it to be endangered, he can apply to a court for the creation of a guardianship.

Others have pointed out that many builders use sand from beaches, that cities cut into them to create new harbors, and that utilities use them for their power plants—all of them benefiting from beaches and contributing to their erosion. But instead of turning to the language of responsibility to protect beaches, legal scholars, among them a Los Angeles lawyer who specializes in the environment, have advanced the notion that sand has rights! It is difficult to imagine a way to trivialize rights more than to claim that they are as common as sand.

Stone is correct that one can find a way to appoint a lawyer not merely for everybody, but also for everything, and surely many objects—say, a majestic mountain—deserve some protection, even command some respect. (Corporations are different because they are combinations of humans and hence are more akin to communities than to animals or stones.) None of this, however, proves that we have to consider them as if they command rights. The difference between granting them some consideration versus rights is that to grant them rights puts them on the same plane as humans—and we should grant humans a higher moral standing than brooks and sand. Note that *consideration for the objects themselves is secondary*. The stunning mountain requires protection so that other humans may find it stunning, and not for its own sake. Therefore we have an *interest* in protecting it; but to accord it the higher status of commanding a right interferes with our dealing with it in a dispassionate way. We must and can find ways to recognize the value of things and to respect them without imbuing them with rights. Let's just say that they deserve our respect and command our care.

Rights Presume Responsibilities

Claiming rights without assuming responsibilities is unethical and illogical. Mary Ann Glendon puts it well: "Buried deep in our rights dialect," she writes, "is an unexpressed premise that we roam at large in a land of strangers, where we presumptively have no obligations toward others except to avoid the active infliction of harm." She notes in *Rights Talk*:

Try, for example, to find in the familiar language of our Declaration of Independence or Bill of Rights anything comparable to the statements in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that “everyone has duties to the community,” and that everyone’s rights and freedoms are subject to limitations “for the purposes of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.”

The Constitution, while not nearly as explicit on obligations to the community as the other documents cited, does open with the quest “to form a more perfect Union” and speaks of the need to “promote the general welfare” for that purpose.

To take and not to give is an amoral, self-centered predisposition that ultimately no society can tolerate. To revisit the finding that many try to evade serving on a jury, which, they claim, they have a right to be served by, is egotistical, indecent, and in the long run impractical. Hence, *those most concerned about rights ought to be the first ones to argue for the resumption of responsibilities*. One presumes the other. Much of the following discussion about the conditions under which moral commitments can be strengthened in the family, schools, and in communities speaks directly to the shoring up of our responsibilities. Indeed, many of our core values entail concern for others and the commons we share. As we restore the moral voice of communities (and the web of social bonds, the Communitarian nexus, that enables us to speak as a community), we shall see, we will also be more able to encourage one another to live up to our social responsibilities.

Responsibilities Without Rights

Although it is difficult to imagine rights without corollary responsibilities, we must recognize that we have some duties that lay moral claims on us from which we derive no immediate benefit or even long-term payoff. Our commitment to a shared future, especially our responsibility to the environment, is a case in point. We are to care for the environment not only or even mainly for our own sakes (although we may desire some assurance of potable water, breathable air, and protection from frying because the ozone

layer is thinning out). We have a moral commitment to leave for future generations a livable environment, even perhaps a better one than the one we inherited, certainly not one that has been further depleted. *The same observations hold true for our responsibility to our moral, social, and political environment.*

Careful Adjustments

Finally, some areas in which legal rights have been interpreted in ways that hobble public safety and health are to be reinterpreted. Thus, the Fourth Amendment outlaws *unreasonable* searches and seizures. The question of what is deemed reasonable versus unreasonable is subject to change over time. In several areas of public life, the times now call for a modest increase in what we can reasonably be asked to do for the sake of the community, for public safety and public health.

Radical Individualists, such as libertarians and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), have effectively blocked many steps to increase public safety and health. Among the measures they systematically oppose are sobriety checkpoints (which can play an important role in reducing slaughter on the highways), *all* drug testing (even of those who have the lives of others directly in their control), and limiting the flood of private money into the pockets, drawers, and war chests of local and national elected representatives.

Having presented this fourth part of the Communitarian agenda before scores of groups, my colleagues and I have learned that this element of balancing rights and responsibilities is the most controversial. Hence a special discussion (in part two of this book) is dedicated to showing that such adjustments can be made—if the set of principles spelled out is followed—without opening the floodgates to a police state or excessive intrusion by public health departments. On the contrary, *the best way to curb authoritarianism and right-wing tendencies is to stop the anarchic drift by introducing carefully calibrated responses to urgent and legitimate public concerns about safety and the control of epidemics.*

Moral Reconstruction

Social responsibility is but one of the core virtues that need reaffirmation. We require a general *shoring up of our moral foundations.*

Since the early sixties, many of our moral traditions, social values, and institutions have been challenged, often for valid reasons. The end result is that we live in a state of increasing moral confusion and social anarchy. Once we were quite clear about what young couples were supposed to do—and refrain from doing—even if many of them did not fully live up to these expectations. The trouble now is not that the traditional family was undermined; it did deserve a critical going-over. The trouble is that no new concept of the family—of responsibility to children, of intimacy, and of commitment to one another—has emerged to replace the traditional form. (The fate of two books by Betty Friedan illustrates the difference: *The Feminine Mystique*, which was critical of the traditional family, was all the rage in the 1960s and early 1970s. Her second book, *The Second Stage*, published in 1981, which advocated the restructuring of the family, fell on deaf ears.) Moral transitions often work this way: destruction comes quickly. A vacuum prevails. Reconstruction is slow. This is where we are now: it is time to reconstruct, in the full sense of the term—not to return to the traditional, but to return to a moral affirmation, reconstructed but firmly held.

Once schools transmitted the moral and social values of previous generations to the young. Granted, these values were complacent, a bit authoritarian, and rather discriminatory. Did we shake them up! But this was the easy part, as destruction often is. Now we are all too often left with educational rubble. Schools are so overwhelmed simply by maintaining order and passing on elementary knowledge and skills that they have neither the time nor the inclination to attend to their most important mission: transmitting a core of values to the next generation.

In the fifties we were quite clear what our attitude toward authority figures should be: a great deal of respect and only a modicum of questioning. Parents, ministers, doctors, labor leaders, presidents—all commanded a fair amount of unchallenged moral authority to tell right from wrong, to guide the young and perplexed. The silent generation may well have been too silent and too compliant. It was largely blind to racial and gender discrimination, and it seems to have been genuinely unaware that millions of Americans lived in abject poverty. (It would take the undeniable data in Michael Harrington's *The Other America*, which was heralded by President John F. Kennedy, for poverty in America to be discovered.)

Since the 1950s we have cut our authority figures down to size. In the mid-sixties still nearly one-half of Americans expressed high confidence in the leaders of most institutions, from the military to Congress and from the press to corporations. Over the past twenty-five years, however, the proportion of Americans who have confidence in their leaders has dropped significantly. Public officials are daily skewered in the press. Once a venerated figure, Christopher Columbus has been brought down from his pedestal to be tried in the court of public opinion. Is he a national hero or a conquering murderer? asked *The New York Times* on Columbus Day 1991. Others, from George Washington to Martin Luther King, Jr., are being treated less kindly. Public opinion polls show that a majority of Americans believe that those in power do not care about their constituents. We are bereft of clear leadership in most matters, especially moral matters.

Liberal friends, who read a draft version of this book, expressed concern about the use of the term *moral*. Americans don't like to be told about morals, said one, and it sounds like preaching. Another suggested that the term reminds him of the Moral Majority. I do not mean to preach, but to share a concern and perhaps an agenda. I am sorry if I remind people of the Moral Majority, because I believe that although they raised the right questions they provided the wrong, largely authoritarian and dogmatic, answers. However, one of the purposes of this book is to retrieve for the realm of democratic discourse good, basic terms that we have allowed to become the political slogans of archconservatives and the right wing. Just because a Pat Robertson talked about family values, community, and morality when he tried to keep social conservatives in the Bush camp during election campaigns should not mean that the rest of us should shy away from applying these pivotal social concepts. And just because some abuse these terms to foment divisiveness and hate, and to attack all intellectuals or liberals as if they were one "cultural elite," hostile to all that is good in America, should not lead us implicitly to accept this notion. Just as we should not give up on patriotism because some politicians wrap themselves with the flag when it suits their narrow purposes, so should we not give up on morality because some abuse it to skewer their fellow community members.

Now we need to concern ourselves with shoring up the social foundations of morality, so that communities can again raise their

moral voices, families can educate their youngsters, and schools can graduate individuals who will become upstanding members of their communities. We will attend to the question of whose values will prevail as the discussion unfolds. Here the emphasis is on the ability to articulate and sustain any set of values in a social world that has largely lost this capacity. This is the subject of the first part of the Communitarian agenda and of this book: shoring up the underpinnings of moral values.

As rights exploded and responsibilities receded, as the moral infrastructure crumbled, so did the public interest. True, special interests have always been with us. Moreover, pluralism—the rich fabric of various groupings, subcultures, and viewpoints—is a major foundation of the freedom that is the proud hallmark of this country, a country that was created by people fleeing enforced homogeneity.

But since the sixties, the forces that combined all the plurals into one mosaic—one society and one nation—have waned. The notion of a shared community or public interest, which balances but does not replace the plurality of particular interests, has been eroded. Political parties, vying over their conception of the public good, have been largely pushed aside; they have been replaced on center stage by myriad special interests and a Congress that is deeply indebted to them. Now all too often the dominant interests are not those of major segments of the population, such as consumers, workers, and industrialists. Instead they are those of groups that represent narrow, self-serving goals, such as parking lot owners seeking a special tax deduction, beehive owners in quest of a government subsidy, and organizations of sugar farmers, office equipment makers, and thousands of others. Their subsidies, tax concessions, special credits, and such consume large chunks of the public budget. Among them they are eating up the country's wealth and sapping its energy, leaving little for the projects that serve the commonweal—that is, all of us and our shared future. This is the subject of the third part of the Communitarian agenda and of this book: underwriting the public interest.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1995 A27

William Raspberry

Between Assimilation And Tribalism

My recent (limited) defense of separatism ["Dubiously Exclusive," op-ed, Nov. 24] managed to offend some readers and confuse others. What triggered the column was a strike by black students at the College of Holy Cross over the right to limit leadership of the Black Students' Union to students of African descent.

I thought two things: First, that a *black* Students' Union was not necessarily a bad thing (although I admitted that the idea of a *white* Students' Union would have struck me as wrong). Second, I thought that if there was to be a special organization for blacks on the Holy Cross campus, it made sense that its leaders be black. I objected only to the clause in the BSU constitution *requiring* blacks-only leadership.

I still believe what I said in that column: that the formation of separate groups along racial or other lines is legitimate as a defense against the tyranny of the majority or as a way to prepare the subgroups for full participation in the whole.

Amitai Etzioni, George Washington University professor and a leader of the communitarian movement, has said what I was trying to say, only he says it with far greater clarity, universality and, yes, intelligence.

Etzioni sees what I see: a worldwide trend toward tribalism and a tendency to dismiss as mere carping the claims of minorities. The one manifests itself in places as diverse as Bosnia, Rwanda and post-Simi Valley Los Angeles; the other in the growing impatience of the white majority with what they see as the hyphenation of America—as though, for example, if blacks would only stop focusing on

Creating a "community of communities."

their blackness, no one would notice it. Etzioni's call, powerful in its simplicity, is for "a community of communities."

"There is no reason," he writes in a Communitarian Network position paper, "for Greek Americans, Polish Americans, African Americans or any other groups to see themselves as plain Americans without any particular distinction, history, or subculture." On the other hand, he fears that seeing the subgroup as our overriding identity leads to the sort of tribalism that destroyed Yugoslavia.

For him, America is best thought of not as a melting pot (the assimilationist idea) or a rainbow (colors arrayed alongside each other) but as a mosaic.

"The mosaic depicts a society in which various communities maintain their religious, culinary, and cultural particularities; proud and knowledgeable about their specific traditions—while recognizing that they are integral parts of a more encompassing whole."

The mosaic idea involves not just the different shapes and colors but also "frame and glue." It is the frame and glue—the shared values and institutions—that tend to get lost as we focus on our tribal imperatives. Instead of addressing serious and solvable problems, we focus on enemies. Instead of taking pride in our history and achievements as elements of the whole, we set ourselves *against* the whole—whether as special contributors or as special victims.

When our political power derives from difference and grievance, we are not likely to emphasize similarity and resolution of grievance.

But ignoring the grievance is no solution either. There's no use denying, as many of my readers seem to urge, that many of America's minorities have special problems and concerns and insecurities that may be best addressed through a coming together—not to nurse the grievances but to deal effectively with them in order to return, strengthened, to the whole.

That is the point of Etzioni's "community of communities"—both as a pragmatic approach for dealing with group-specific issues and as a way of thinking about difference.

Etzioni has come up with what is, to my mind, an intellectually satisfying course between an impossible (and largely undesired) assimilation and a headlong plunge into tribalism. His is a layered answer to that fundamental human question: Who are you?

"The sociological trick," he says, "is to leave some room for the enriching particulars while sustaining the shared values, habits of the heart, institutions, and public policies that keep the various communities as members in the more encompassing community—the American society."

Why didn't I say that?