

[WAR]

VACATION FROM REALITY

While antiwar protestors encircle his Crawford ranch, President Bush is still gulping that cocktail of groundless optimism and hallmark stubbornness that allows him to believe Baghdad will burst forth into democracy any day now. If he read newspapers, the Great Liberator would find that the numbers have turned against him: 57 percent say the war has made the U.S. less safe from terrorism, 54 percent think the invasion was a mistake, and just 34 percent approve of the president's handling of the situation. Undaunted, Bush digs in deeper, reaffirming last week that withdrawal would "send a terrible signal" and would be "a mistake for the security of this country."

But he can only vacation from reality for so long. In the *New York Daily News*, Reagan Assistant Secretary of Defense Lawrence Korb writes, "[E]ven if we wanted to keep about 140,000 ground troops in Iraq through 2006, we cannot do so without breaking the all-volunteer Army." (Tell it to John McCain who, having delusions for breakfast on "Fox News Sunday," said, "We don't need to withdraw—we need more troops there.") According to Korb, by the end of the year, nearly every active-duty American soldier will have spent at least two tours in Iraq. Sending soldiers back for a third round of occupation duty will wreck recruiting and retention—not to mention violating the law that forbids reservists from serving on active duty for more than two years.

Sensing that the Pentagon might be awakening to this hard truth, *The Weekly Standard* unleashed an editorial condemning "the inescapable whiff of weakness and defeatism," urging, "What the president needs to do now is tell the Pentagon to stop talking about (and planning for) withdrawal ..." At the expense of our Army's health and in defi-

ance of the democratic will? No victory is worth that price, and though it seems that no one has told Texas, Iraq remains far from the winning side.

[IMMIGRATION]

DEAN SCREAMS BIGOT

In a moment of dizzy editorial whimsy in the summer of 2003, *TAC*'s current editor suggested that Howard Dean might lead his party out of the wilderness, and win the presidency, by embracing the commonsense immigration-reform policies put forth most notably by the late congresswoman Barbara Jordan. (She chaired a Clinton-appointed panel in the mid-1990s, recommending tighter border enforcement, limiting the number of legal visas, and an overall reduction of immigration rates.) Other figures on the immigration-realist Right—John O'Sullivan for one—seconded the emotion. Dean ignored our advice.

As if to demonstrate how misplaced our thoughts were, Dean last month went on his Summer Multiculti Demagoguery Tour, claiming that Republicans are going to "scapegoat immigrants" in their 2006 campaign. Speaking at a La Raza convention, he called Congressman Tom Tancredo (R-Colo.), chair of the House Immigration Reform Caucus, a "bigot."

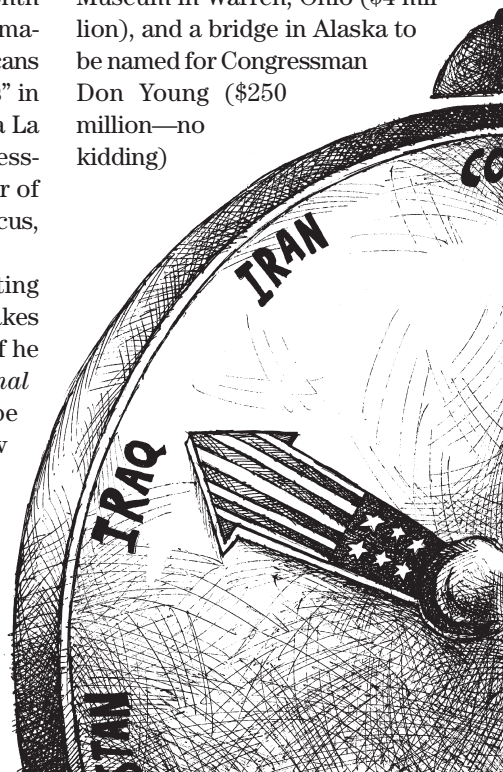
If Dean thinks that advocating enforcement of the nation's laws makes one a bigot, he should say so, and if he believes, like the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page, that there should be open borders and no immigration law enforcement, he ought to make that position clear. If, as we suspect, he is finding that his current role as chief party fundraiser means that he can no longer speak out forcefully against the Iraq War but must concentrate instead on defaming immigration reformers, that tells us much about the current state of the Democratic Party.

[SPENDING]

THE ROAD TO RED INK

"Highways just don't happen," President Bush said as he signed this year's 1,000-page, \$286.4 billion, pork-laden transportation bill into law. "People have got to show up and do the work to refit a highway or build a bridge," he continued, "and they need new equipment to do so. So the bill I'm signing is going to help give hundreds of thousands of Americans good-paying jobs." Say what you will about the president's grasp of the English language—schoolchildren might get the impression from him that "just don't" and "don't just" mean the same thing—he at least seems to have his Keynesian economics down pat.

Bush had earlier said he wouldn't sign the bill if it went beyond \$284 billion, but evidently he just couldn't bear to see such vital national interests as the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan (\$2.4 million), the National Packard Museum in Warren, Ohio (\$4 million), and a bridge in Alaska to be named for Congressman Don Young (\$250 million—no kidding)



deprived of precious funding. "Our economy depends on us having the most efficient, reliable transportation system in the world," Bush said at the signing, demonstrating that in addition to Keynesianism, he knows a thing or two about irony as well.

[CULTURE]

BORKING BACKFIRES

Baseless smears of Robert Bork—attacking him as a supporter of segregated lunch counters for blacks, back-alley abortions for women, and midnight knocks at the door for anyone who was feeling left out—were key to defeating his nomination to the Supreme Court. NARAL Pro-Choice America, in its notorious (and rightly withdrawn) advertisement trying to tie John Roberts to antiabortion violence, had clearly hoped for a reprise.

That NARAL instead was widely condemned shows how much things have changed since borking was invented. Voters have grown accustomed to the histrionics of the professional Left and no longer take its wilder charges seriously. The desperation of the anti-Roberts fusillade is also a sign that NARAL-style absolutists are losing the abortion debate. Rather than being forced into line behind the abortion-rights lobby, staunchly pro-choice politicians like Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Arlen Specter and ranking Democrat Patrick Leahy seemed embarrassed. It is uncertain how Roberts would vote on *Roe v. Wade*, but it is clearly a distortion to suggest his record demonstrates sympathy for abortion-clinic bombers.

A new political reality has taken hold: the type of slurs that sank Bork no longer move public opinion. And few Americans confuse NARAL's quasi-religious devotion to unfettered abortion on demand with the dictates of the Constitution.

[N.B.]

SUMMER READING

Paul Weyrich calls it "The Next Conservatism." But his series of 12 short essays on the Right after Bush looks as much to the past as to the future—exactly as a conservative should. The cultural traditionalism of Russell Kirk and the noninterventionist foreign policy of Robert A. Taft inform these essays (available at www.freecongress.org), which *TAC* readers will find well worth their time.

"The Next Conservatism" revisits several themes that Weyrich's colleague Bill Lind has treated in our pages: a proper conservative concern with community, the danger of decaying states abroad and a growing national-security state at home, and the primacy of culture over politics. Where Weyrich's essays touch upon the political process directly, he proposes major reforms: simplifying the tax code, term limits for Congress, greater use of ballot initiatives and referenda, and "a level playing field for third parties." The merits of some of these measures are debatable, but all have the virtue of making the political class—Republican and Democrat alike—intensely uncomfortable.

[NEXT]

A WAR PRESIDENT'S WORK IS NEVER DONE

On Iran:

"As I say, all options are on the table. The use of force is the last option for any president."

—George W. Bush
Interview, Israel's Channel One
Aug. 12, 2005

On Iraq:

"I will keep all options on the table. ... We want to resolve all issues peacefully."

—George W. Bush
News Conference, Tokyo
Feb. 18, 2002

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Creating a Nation Out of Paper

The drafters of the Iraqi constitution have been granted one more week to complete the document in which the administration has invested our hopes for a united and

democratic Iraq. So then we can come home with "Mission Accomplished."

Pardon my pessimism, but failure seems assured. For a constitution does not create a nation. A nation creates a constitution. And a nation of Iraq, to which those 25 million people give primary allegiance, love, and loyalty, does not exist. The Iraqis are Shia, Kurds, Sunnis, Turkmen, and their primordial bonds are blood and soil, mosque and "the mystic chords of memory."

No constitution can create a nation where a nation does not already exist. It will fall apart as the Czechoslovakia created at the Paris peace conference of 1919 fell apart in 1939, and, recreated after World War II, fell apart again after 1989. Ethnicity and faith tore asunder an arranged marriage of the nation-builders Wilson and Lloyd George.

While our Constitution created the government of the United States, America already existed in the hearts of her people before Hamilton and Madison went to Philadelphia. Even before our Constitution was ratified, John Jay had written in *Federalist* 2, "Providence has been pleased to give this one connected country to one united people ... descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs, and who ... fighting side by side throughout a long and bloody war, have nobly established their general liberty and independence."

Do such bonds exist today among Iraqis whose country was held together,

before March 2003, by a Sunni-dominated Baath Party and the secret police of Saddam Hussein?

From Ottoman days, the Iraqis have been held together by force and fear. Now that the Americans have smashed the state, party, and police who held them together, why should they stay together? Do Kurds in Kirkuk have more in common with Shi'ites in Najaf than their cousins in Turkey? Do Ayatollah Sistani's Shias have more in common with Turkmen and Tikritis than their fellow Shia in Iran?

To see the future of Iraq, look at our own history. Though a common ancestry, language, faith, manners, customs, memories, and institutions united us in 1787, again and again we sought to dissolve our Union. New England sought to secede during Madison's War of 1812, South Carolina over the "Tariff of Abominations," and old John Quincy Adams urged disunion rather than bring the slave-holding Texans in. After November 1860, seven Southern states seceded rather than be ruled by a high-tariff abolitionist Republican Party headed by a railroad lawyer who represented the money power of the North.

It was the neoconservatives who planned this war for years and seized on 9/11 to persuade an untutored president to launch it. George W. Bush was assured it would be "a cakewalk," that we would be welcomed as the liberators of Baghdad, that democracy would take root and spread to Damascus, Tehran, Riyadh, and across the Islamic world. He would be the Churchill of his

generation. They were all going to make history.

And they have certainly done that.

That Bush came to believe in a world democratic revolution seems evident. His is the zeal of the convert. As testimony to his sincerity, he has made democracy the altarpiece of his presidency. As Iraq and the world democratic revolution go, so goes the Bush presidency. The only question remaining is: will he be remembered as a Reagan or a Carter?

But did the neocons ever believe in such utopianism? Or were they cynically manipulating Wilsonian ideals—with their appeal to liberals—to mask a hidden agenda: their own power and its endless exercise?

Kevin Phillips once famously said, "a neoconservative is more likely to be a magazine editor than a bricklayer." Another friend, Jon Utley, notes that, as so few of the neocons are businessmen or military men, they rarely consider the consequences should their ideas prove wrong. Editors seldom pay the cost in destroyed careers, lost fortunes, ruined reputations, long casualty lists, and lost wars for the failed policies they promote.

Prediction: even if the new constitution finesses the issues of the Koran as the source of law and sovereignty for Kurds and Shias, even if the provinces embrace it and its passes in October, it will not unite this disparate people. For it is but a contract, a piece of paper, and Islamic men are not people of parchment. When the commands of that constitution collide with what is best for Shia, Sunni, or Kurd, they will cast it aside and stand for family, faith, and clan.

You cannot create a nation out of paper. ■