

# Populist Professor

Daniel Patrick Moynihan's courage often failed, but by the end of his career he had come to oppose imperial ventures and cherish localism.

By Bill Kauffman

HAS THERE BEEN an American politician as complex and contradictory as Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan? He was an Irish Catholic yet a foppish Anglophile. He had the head of a reformist intellectual and the heart of a working-class regular. Certainly he was the only Harvard social scientist who could be greeted with backslapping beer-buying bonhomie in a Buffalo bar. The product of a broken home, Moynihan was courageous and far-sighted in analyzing the disastrous consequences of illegitimacy and the fracturing of the two-parent family.

A New Deal/Fair Deal Democrat who seldom voted against a government appropriation, Moynihan was a gimlet-eyed critic of the welfare state and, in his creative dotage, a practical decentralist of the kind no longer found in the democracy. He believed in international law, magnificent public architecture, and labor unions. He delivered ramblingly learned extemporaneous speeches on recondite subjects while running shrewdly effective campaigns. He detested platitudes yet read the *New York Times*. He was a superb pork-barrel pol disguised as the absent-minded professor. He voted with the liberals but provided talking points to the conservatives. He trimmed, he temporized, he compromised, he was cowardly when the times (if never the *Times*) demanded valor. He left no legislative mark. He is irreplaceable.

Not only was Moynihan a deft dipper

in the pork barrel, he was also among the savviest pols of his age. Consider 1982, the only year in which the Republicans did not write off the race against incumbent Moynihan as unwinnable before it even started.

By far the weakest candidate in the Republican field—Assemblywoman Florence Sullivan—was nominated over her wealthy opponents, Muriel Siebert and Whitney North Seymour. The primary results were a shocker. How did the pathetically underfunded Sullivan come up with the funds to pay for a last-minute mail blitz that was generally credited with putting her over the top against her deep-pocketed foes? One might almost suspect the invisible hand of Moynihan—but no, a Mugwump would never do such a thing.

Moynihan trounced Sullivan, winning two-thirds of the vote—despite being targeted by the New York branch of the Moral Majority, as the senator pointed out in a stupendously silly observation. He'd have whipped the early Republican frontrunner by an even handier margin: former Congressman Bruce Caputo, the presumptive GOP nominee, dropped out of the race after newspaper reports—fed by Moynihan staff leaks—revealed that he had manufactured a military record for himself. Caputo was lucky: more, ah, personal revelations were forthcoming had he received the nomination. The professor played hardball. Or at least he hired men who knew how to play.

So much nonsense has been written about Moynihan over the years. He was the absent-minded professor, lost in lofty cerebration, neglecting grubby politicking, blah blah. In fact, most of the books he published during his Senate years were ghostwritten by staffers. (Every biennium I enjoyed the line in Michael Barone's *Almanac of American Politics* in which Barone cluelessly confided, "He is one senator who reads widely and—his ornate style leaves no doubt—writes his own speeches and articles.") Moynihan's courage failed him at critical moments, not only in his refusal to stop the Senate candidacy of non-New Yorker Hillary Clinton but in his last-minute retreat from what would have been a headline-making—perhaps even career-breaking—act of conscience on the matter of abortion. From Pat Moynihan I learned, among other things, the soul-corroding effect of cowardice.

\* \* \*

Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the most prominent politician-professor since Woodrow Wilson, was born not in a fire-trap tenement to a shanty colleen but in Tulsa, Oklahoma, to a father who was a jaunty drunk and newspaper reporter (or do I repeat myself?) and a mother from one of the most prominent families in Jeffersonville, Indiana. Father John took a job as an advertising copywriter at RKO and moved the family to the Stygian nothingness of the New York

suburbs. His drinking and whoring and erratic behavior spun out of control until finally he fled to San Jose, leaving his emotionally unstable wife Margaret and the kids to a transient life in a series of coldwater flats in the upper 80s and lower 90s of Manhattan.

Choked in the interstices between the precarious middle class and the downwardly mobile working class, the Moynihans bounced from Queens to Manhattan to suburban New Jersey. The senator's myth-makers, himself included, liked to say that he came of age in Hell's Kitchen, though Ed Koch amended that to "Hell's Condominium."

In lurches and purposeful staggers, young Moynihan made his way, as well as his myth. Stevedore. City College scholar. Bohemian sailor who loved jazz and was nicknamed ... Jellyroll? Two-fisted Tufts grad student. Chatty aide to Gov. Averell Harriman. Convivial wit in a series of administrations, Democrat and Republican, until in 1976 he stabbed that main chance good and hard, winning a crowded U.S. Senate Democratic primary and then trouncing incumbent James Buckley.

Moynihan was a young man of the Left, a reader of Erskine Caldwell, with a pugnacious populist streak. His prep school friends, he announced, needed "a good swift kick in their blue blood asses. They need to get hurt once in a while. They need to get some feeling in them."

He was a Tertium Quid in the New York politics of the 1950s and early '60s: his head agreed with the reformers, but his heart belonged to Tammany, to the ass-kicked and ass-kicking ethnic Catholics who had not gone to college, who had never read Sartre, and whom "the liberals, almost exclusively a middle- and upper-class group," held in contempt.

Pat Moynihan had the rare talent to blend Mugwumpery, with its commitment to honest and open government

and its perhaps naïve faith in meritocracy, to a distinctly anti-Mugwump disposition. He would write trenchant position papers for the blue bloods whose asses he had just kicked. Alas, rare is the flower that can reach its fullest efflorescence in the soot and stink of Gotham.

The great tragedy of Pat Moynihan's life was that his toper dad dragged the family out of Oklahoma. Had the Moynihans remained in Tulsa, young Pat could have matured in a healthy American environment, far from the Trotskyist miasma settled over the CUNY cafeteria. In retrospect, there is a depressing inevitability in his evolution toward standard-issue Cold War liberalism. He had a visceral hatred of parlor pinks, so he was a reflexive anticommunist, mistaking—as did some of the others with whom he briefly pitched the tent of neo-conservatism—unconditional support for the projection of U.S. military might for authentic patriotism. Domestically, he seems to have viewed the New Deal–Fair Deal regulatory state as the only feasible alternative to outright socialism—but then on the grimy streets and in the feculent air of his youthful haunts, those were the only choices presented to a boy not clad in silk stockings.

Had he been raised an Oklahoman, Pat Moynihan might have become a towering populist leader, a William Jennings Bryan of our very own. Imagine a Moynihan weaned on Alfalfa Bill Murray, far from the Harrimans and Kristols. A Moynihan whose temperament would have led him, naturally, to a Jeffersonian populism with deep roots in even the most desiccated tumbleweed acre. Yet a Moynihan sophisticated enough to avoid the snares that claim the cruder populists—a sinful racism, in particular.

Alack, we will have to be satisfied, or not, with the Moynihan we got. I have written elsewhere of his martinet qualities. He was a wretched boss, as I

learned in my two-and-a-half-year stint (1981–83) as a research assistant and then legislative assistant to a man every bit as worthy as Webster had been of bearing the sobriquets "the Godlike Daniel" and "Black Dan." By the time my comet streaked across the Moyniverse, the Senate's only dairy farmer, as he absurdly called himself, was down to his last few drops of the milk of human kindness. He was the drunkenly petulant verification of Henry Adams's aphorism that "No man, however strong, can serve ten years as schoolmaster, priest, or Senator, and remain fit for anything else." And Henry should know.

One of the oldest practices in the political burlesque is exaggerating one's closeness to Powerful Men. The classic example is Sinclair Lewis's *The Man Who Knew Coolidge*, in which a blowhard on a train bores his seatmates with intimate tales about a president whom he bumped into on a college green decades ago. I am not quite so bumptious a fool—almost, but not quite.

I had not expected my own Moynihan Story to have a touching ending. But it did. Our reunion was over a weirdly delightful and drunken three-hour lunch in Syracuse just months before the deathdew lay cold on his brow.

My friend Karl Zinsmeister and I had not seen the old browbeater in 19 years. We expected him to mistake us for the bellboys, since one servant is pretty much the same as the next to a Senate lifer, but he was downright avuncular. "Lads, how a-bout a drink!?" he chirped as we shook hands in the lobby of the downtown Syracuse Sheraton. The bar was dark, as bars usually are at 10:45 a.m., but the tapster's meek protest of "we're not open till noon" was no match for Pat Moynihan in full thirst. The bar opened early.

Karl is a teetotaler, so I did my Irish-quadron best to keep up with the senator, though I dropped out at four glasses

of pinot grigio (his matutinal nectar). We spoke of many things that day, from the dream of an independent Brooklyn to the obduracy of New Yorkers who support a leviathan that means his state harm to his somewhat befuddled pride in the Moynihan alumni (Tim Russert and a cast of dozens) made good, or at least semi-famous. It's as if dear old Dad, after 20 years of bummin' and slummin' and an absence that made no hearts grow fonder, wakes to find his child delivering the high school valedictory address. How in hell did that happen?

As the glasses of wine emptied, the speech slurred, the eloquence dimmed. References to 9-11 became "7-11," as if bin Laden had declared jihad against Slurpees. And yet even in the wine-darkened noontide of a Syracuse hotel bar, the past was present. Our rambling chat was interrupted by a middle-aged black man who with a hybrid French-Irish accent represented himself as a former Black Panther. "Patrick Moynihan!" he boomed in a patois brogue, and after a hearty handshake and cordialities about the '60s, "when I was way over there, on the other side," he took his leave, with a theatrically whispered and mischievous farewell: "Benign Neglect, Patrick. Benign Neglect!"

Moynihan never could outrun that artless expression. It had been three decades since he had used the phrase in a confidential memo to President Nixon in which he proposed a moratorium on new racial initiatives; torn out of context, "benign neglect" was used to suggest that Moynihan was anti-black. The libel never died. In fact, it would cripple him in largely unseen ways. Moynihan had been so shaken by the reaction to the Nixon memo, and his earlier 1965 report to President Johnson on the instability of the black family, that he swore off race matters, spending his Senate career uttering the sort of numbing platitudes that, however unworthy

of a serious man, do keep Democratic primary challengers at bay. Moynihan, unlike Eugene McCarthy, took to heart Gore Vidal's puckish maxim: "The price of freedom is eternal discretion."

And yet, in the bibulous twilight of his career, his insights grew keen. He toyed with a radical decentralism, wondering aloud—though no one listened—whether or not most functions of the federal government ought to be turned back to the states and cities. He called for the abolition of the CIA, the return of American troops from Europe, and a foreign policy redolent of Oklahoma rather than Manhattan. (Moynihan would have been greatly amused a while back, when New York drivers received

itary establishments" and "permanent alliances with any portion of the world" and "excessive partiality for one foreign nation," the last of which, Washington warned, leads to a black-is-white inversion wherein "real patriots who may resist the intrigues of the favorite are liable to become suspected and odious." After this perfunctory nod, the Senate spends the next 364 days of the year repudiating the Father of Our Country. But it's the thought that counts, right?

In his dotage, Moynihan strayed from the pack and started flying with the Byrd—if not eight miles high, then at least far enough above the ground to see dimly the outlines of the wreckage of the Old Republic.

BY 1993 HE WAS CALLING FOR A **COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. TROOPS FROM EUROPE. THE COLD WAR, HE INSISTED, WAS HISTORY.**

letters from the Department of Motor Vehicles advising us that our "Liberty plates" were to be replaced by "Empire plates." Symbolism weighs heavy, even from the bumper of an automobile.)

One of the strangest rituals in the U.S. Senate is the annual reading of President Washington's Farewell Address. The chore of recitation usually falls to a freshman nonentity eager to curry favor by performing what is regarded as a drudge task. The chamber is empty, save for the sole classical relict: West Virginia Democrat Robert Byrd, the pomaded knight from the mountaineer state, who with his florid defenses of the U.S. Constitution against the PATRIOT Act, the Iraq War, the line-item veto, and the effluvium of Big Government Republicanism has earned himself a place in Valhalla.

Pat Moynihan used to be there, too, taking in the bizarre sight of some junior Honorable stumbling through Washington's injunctions against "overgrown mil-

He began to use pejoratives like "national security state" and "military-industrial complex." True to Washington's dictum about avoiding permanent alliances, by 1993 he was calling for a complete withdrawal of U.S. troops from Europe. The Cold War, he insisted, was history. "It's over! It's over!" he thumped to *Newsweek*.

He and Pat Buchanan are the only two American politicians who seem to have rethought matters in the wake of the Soviet Union's dissolution. Both well-read Catholics, distinctive literary stylists ... well, the kinship only goes so far. But it's there. Like Buchanan, Moynihan took a deep breath and a long look and came up radical and reactionary. In 1991 he proposed to abolish the Central Intelligence Agency, which had been "repeatedly wrong about the major political and economic questions entrusted to its analysis." (He would transfer intelligence gathering to the Department of State.) His "End of the Cold War Act of

1991” sought to shine light on the intelligence budget and sharply curtail the ability of the executive to bar visitors on ideological grounds—proposals unthinkable a decade later, in the age of Homeland Security.

Like Buchanan, Moynihan eloquently opposed the first Gulf War, and in Gene McCarthyite language he mused, “I find it extraordinary ... that the President should so personalize the encounter with this particular thug in Baghdad: the most recent thug in Baghdad, not the last by any means. There will be others.” He warned of a “permanent crisis,” of what the revisionist historian Harry Elmer Barnes and Gore Vidal have called “perpetual war for perpetual peace.”

The enemy “used to be totalitarian, Leninist, communism. Without a moment’s pause almost, we shifted the enemy to this person at the head of this insignificant, flawed country whose boundaries were drawn in 1925 in a tent by an English colonial official ...”

By his last decade, not only had he gone anti-imperialist, he had also lost his New Deal faith in centralization, consolidation, and bigness. Since 1977, his first year in the Senate, Moynihan had published a report on “New York State and the Federal Fisc,” in which he documented New York’s balance of payments with the federal government. The exercise had its pork-barrelish aspect—we used its annual finding that New York is shortchanged to argue for altered formulae, special grants, and other means of raining alms on the Empire State. But by 1991, in the 15th edition of the Fisc, Moynihan had recanted. The senator asked if it might be

time we began to ask just how much a bargain Federal programs are for a state such as New York? I know. This is heresy. Since the time of Theodore Roosevelt, at very the least, New Yorkers have consis-

tently supported an expansion of the programs of the Federal government. As, for example, the first Roosevelt’s Bureau of Reclamation, which has brought such bounty to 17 Western states. Decade after decade, New Yorkers have been thinking up new Federal programs. The Interstate Highway System, for example, a concept of the second Roosevelt. In the beginning these were often inspired and hugely successful programs. Rarely, however, did we look to our particular interest. The Interstate system is the perfect example. New York built its own principal segment of the system as a toll road; then paid gas taxes to build the same toll-free road all over the rest of the country. The years since have seen one such instance after another, even if there have been no New York Presidents. New Yorkers can be counted on to support Federal programs that redistribute resources away from New York. We manage to get back a share of Federal outlays proportionate to our population. But with a higher nominal income we continuously, systematically send resources elsewhere. Worse yet, what money does come back more and more comes back loaded with restrictions and strictures that New Yorkers would never adopt on their own. Call it the Jesse Helms effect, named for my good friend, the senior Senator from North Carolina.

Moynihan goes on to examine the case of education, federal aid to which has long been a cornerstone of New York’s suffocating bipartisan consensus: “[A]fter a generation of Federal aid, and Federal preachment about education, New York hasn’t got a lot to show. Is it wrong to ask whether we would have done better to

have kept our money and energy at home?” To ask the question is to answer it. Pat Moynihan had placed himself, by 1992, far to the decentralist right of his party on domestic issues and just as far to its antiwar left on foreign policy.

But no one paid any mind. A year and a half later, Bill Clinton, a neoliberal Democrat whom Moynihan despised, was president. The senator, who by 1992 was calling himself a “Mugwump,” would go into fitful opposition, especially to Clinton’s Rube Goldberg health-care proposal. Like maverick California Democrat Jerry Brown, Moynihan floated a cut in the regressive Social Security payroll tax. But he prized too much the headpats and medals of the Establishment to follow Al Smith’s path of Democratic dissent.

Like Moynihan, Smith had a genuine feeling for life, and tenderness, on the block. Yet the modern nepenthe has erased any national memory of this progressive Democrat who despised FDR as callow and shallow and spent his declining years as smiling front man for the pointless Empire State Building.

Smith’s womb had been St. James parish and Manhattan’s Fourth Ward, close-knit communities whence he derived a politics of subsidiarity. Like Moynihan, Smith’s staff was Jewish-Catholic, an eclectic mix ranging from the Alabama-born Jewish states-rights liberal Joseph Proskauer to the pestiferous Robert Moses, who would later raze the neighborhoods Smith eulogized.

The parallels with Moynihan go a respectable ways. Smith was wet in theory (he signed the repeal of the mechanism by which New York enforced prohibition), Moynihan was wet in, ah, practice. Despite their liberalism, neither was ever trusted by feminists, Smith for especially good reason: he, like many Catholics, was lukewarm at best toward women’s suffrage. He belittled the Equal Rights Amendment, remarking, “I



believe in equality, but I cannot nurse a baby." To the extent such a thing can be measured by terrene observers, Smith was the more devout Catholic, and his papistry was a factor—but just a factor, for 64 of his 87 electoral votes came from the allegedly anti-Roman South—in his landslide loss to Herbert Hoover in 1928. (As the gag went, the night of the election the pope received a one-word telegram: "Unpack.")

No one ever accused Pat Moynihan of taking orders from the Vatican. He broke with the church when it was politically expedient for him to do so, and he never found the moxie to reverse course. In the late 1980s, Moynihan prepared a declaration of what would have been a stunning volte-face on the most undiscussable of subjects: abortion. It was in the form of a letter to the cardinal apologizing for his pusillanimity, his previous inability to break ranks with Democratic orthodoxy and cast the pro-life votes impelled by his church and his own belief. The letter was never sent; he was talked out of it by an adjutant for

the debate was one of those sound-and-fury distractions over largely factitious "issues" that have not a blessed thing to do with how we live now. Breaking ranks over a gruesome sideshow: this is what passes for iconoclasm in a conformist age.

In our chat shortly before his death, I asked the senator if there was "a place today for pro-life Irish Catholics in the Democratic Party." He was pretty well plastered by this time, but through the wine-dark haze he murmured, "I have not gotten over the denial of Governor [Robert] Casey [to speak before the Democratic Convention] in 1992. I thought that was shameless. It almost made me start voting differently." Almost. And Scott Norwood's right leg almost won the Super Bowl for Buffalo. When Pat Moynihan might have changed the terms of debate, he was silent.

The habit of caution so necessary to a sustained political career breeds, ineluctably, gutlessness, even among those who cultivate a reputation for straight shooting. I once interviewed

even in his pasturage, far removed from the corridors of power, in a station in which absolutely no one gave a damn what he thought, he was incapable of supporting an old friend if that friend had crossed the GOP authorities.

Lyn the Niddering, meet Pat the Caitiff. Like most Democrats who had come of age with postwar internationalism, Moynihan was a convinced free trader. Yet he voted protectionist. He once told me, "This must never become law"—fine, but he was speaking of a domestic-content bill that he had cosponsored. In the early 1980s, he voted a straight ADA liberal line, a record that can be explained, in part, by Moynihan's nettling fear that he was going to wake up in 1944 and have to contend with a spirited challenge from Vito Marcantonio and the American Labor Party.

Similarly, Pat Moynihan detested the Clintons, but once Hillary declared her candidacy for his seat never was heard a discouraging word about that paragon of placelessness. He kept quiet, and the press kept gushing.

And what does a lifetime of sedulously kissing up to Sulzbergers get you? Two days before Hillary Clinton was elected U.S. senator from New York despite never having resided in the Empire State, the *New York Times Magazine*, which Gore Vidal once called "that graveyard of prose," but which had been theretofore a reliable producer of Moynihan-the-lovable-drunk-professor boilerplate profiles, published "For the Sake of Argument," in which Jacob Weisberg tore into the superannuated DPM as a "magnificent failure," a maundering blowhard lost in "irrelevance and self-regard" who "lacked the largeness of spirit necessary to transcend his animosities." His once charmingly idiosyncratic prose style had degenerated into "self-absorbed baroque." (Or could it simply be that Moynihan wrote better Moynihanese than did his staff ghosts?)

## MOYNIHAN PREPARED A DECLARATION OF WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN A STUNNING VOLTE-FACE ON THE MOST UNDISCUSSABLE OF SUBJECTS: ABORTION.

the obvious political reasons. I believe only two or three persons ever saw what would have been among the most reviled or admired epistles in recent political history. The man who told me this story contemporaneously—an absolutely impeccable source—remains active in liberal Democratic politics. He would deny it if you asked him about it. But it happened.

The closest Moynihan ever got to repudiating the NARAL line was when he described partial-birth abortion as "infanticide." The choicers looked at him askance, but only for the nonce, for

Lyn Nofziger, one of those true-believing Reaganauts who followed their Ron from Sacramento eastward. After I turned the tape recorder off, he told me that while he was publicly supporting publishing heir Steve Forbes for president, privately he was pulling for Pat Buchanan. I felt an immense surge of pity mixed with contempt. The habit of circumspection, of cowardice masquerading as caution, of dissimulation, had become so much a part of Nofziger—the alleged wild man of the Reagan administration, the straight shooter, the bulwark of candor—that

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By Richard Huemer, M.D.

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Moynihan was out of power, out of luck, even out of favor. Still, he parried all of our questions about Hillary, the faithful party man till the end. He was willing to pop off on matters far removed from party lines, however, and in fact from out of left field came the single headline resulting from our talk.

I asked Moynihan, "Would Brooklyn have been better off remaining an independent city?" and he blurted, "Yes. Like Minneapolis-St. Paul."

Brooklyn, the erstwhile "city of homes and churches," fourth-largest city in the union, dissolved itself into the Blob via the pivotal 1894 referendum, its citizens voting to join the City of New York by a vote of 64,744 to 64,467. But testing Daniel Webster's dictum that "[b]ecause a thing has been wrongly done, it does not follow that it can be undone," dreamy secessionist sons of Brooklyn from Pete Hamill to Norman Mailer have sought to divorce their beloved mother from that foul old lech across the river. Moynihan, it seems, had joined them.

Upon its publication in *The American Enterprise*, his answer stirred a brief controversy: East Harlem City Councilman Charles Barron raged to the *New York Sun*, "I just hope the author of 'benign neglect' is not once again coming up with some plan based on the changing demographics" of largely non-white Brooklyn. His colleague Simcha Felder said that it didn't matter if an independent Brooklyn was poorer on its own: "Brooklyn would have to live with the fact that it was just richer in people and culture." Now that's a patriot.

Felder is echoed by Jane Jacobs, the vastly influential urban writer: "Brooklyn and the other boroughs would all be better off on their own. ... Big bureaucracies can't allow for the diversity and the experimentation that are essential to cities." Who but the most obdurate imperialist can possibly take exception to that?

And who but the most humorless ideologue could be unmoved by Pat Moynihan, if only for the magnificence of his failure? I am—no, a piece of me is—one of those ethnic Catholic Democrats whose tribune Moynihan sometimes wished to be but was not. But I laugh still at the thought of the roistering drunken Irishman who secretly wishes to take tea with the Queen. Sure, he mythicized his labor as a stevedore on the waterfront, but I composted my own toil as a factory janitor cleaning the most fetid men's rooms imaginable. His staff was overwhelmingly Ivy League yet he declared that "a party of the working class cannot be dominated by former editors of the *Harvard Crim-*

son." And hell, he hired me. As a Western New York localist, I admire him as the only statewide politician within my lifetime to have a sympathetic understanding of Upstate New York. Moynihan could descant, off the cuff and on the bottle, on the history of the Erie Canal or the significance of Seneca Falls. And he could be bluntly funny. In a 1961 essay in *Commentary*, he called Buffalo a "big, ugly, turbulent city." I asked him if that un-Chamber of Commerce-ish description ever caused him problems in his campaigns. He looked at me incredulously, then asked, "How many people in Buffalo do you think read *Commentary*?"

## AT THE END OF HIS JOURNEY, PAT MOYNIHAN HAD ARRIVED AT THE JUNCTURE OF CATHOLIC SUBSIDIARITY AND ANTI-IMPERIALIST REALISM.

My two-and-a-half years in the employ of Senator Moynihan were an anarchist-making experience. I came to Washington a memorizer of senatorial facts, a skeptically cheerful liberal, a first-time voter in the year past for Ted Kennedy and John Anderson for president, an awestruck walker through

august halls of state; I left quoting the mid-century anarchist Frank Chodorov: "A government building you regard as a charnel house, which in fact it is; you enter it always under duress, and you never demean yourself by curtsying to its living or dead statuary. The stars on the general's shoulders merely signify that the man might have been a useful member of society; you pity the boy whose military garb identifies his servility. The dais on which the judge sits elevates the body but lowers the man, and the jury box is a place where three-dollar-a-day slaves enforce the law of slavery. You honor the tax dodger. You do not vote because you put too high a value on your vote."

Mind you, my profuse and sentimental localism keeps me from being half as radical as Chodorov. I have friends who are judges, legislators, even soldiers. I vote often, if futilely. I pay town, village, and county taxes without grumbling. (I've a mild objection to state taxes, and I loathe, execrate, and abominate—but pay—federal taxes, which are put to purposes nefarious and even homicidally sinister.) My politics are a blend of Dorothy Day and Henry Thoreau, far from the Cold War liberalism that made Moynihan's reputation, but I can't shake the feeling that at the end of his journey, Pat Moynihan had arrived at the juncture of Catholic subsidiarity and anti-imperialist realism—a place both radical and reactionary, and thus wholly misunderstood. ■

*Bill Kauffman's most recent book is Look Homeward, America (ISI Books 2006), from which this essay is adapted.*

# Looking Out for Numero Uno

While the country's poor flee, Mexico's elite take care of themselves.

By George W. Grayson

MEXICO CITY—A watchword of Mexican politics is “Show me a politician who is poor and I will show you a poor politician.” In accord with this adage, many Mexican officials enjoy generous salaries and lavish fringe benefits. Even as they live princely lifestyles, they and their fellow elites pay little in taxes and refuse to spend sufficient money on education and health care to create opportunities in Mexico—a country that abounds in oil, natural gas, gold, beaches, fish, water, historic treasures, museums, industrial centers, and hard-working people. Rather than mobilizing these bountiful resources to uplift the poor, Mexico's privileged class noisily demands that Uncle Sam open his border wider for the nation's “have nots.”

Consequently, the power brokers have excoriated President George W. Bush's October 2005 proposal to admit temporary workers for up to six years. Deputy Antonio Guajardo Anzaldúa, a member of the left-wing Workers Party and chairman of Chamber of Deputies' Committee on Population, Borders, and Migration Affairs, savaged the initiative as “linking workers with employers without offering them a route toward legalization.” He also criticized “the heavy fine” that would be levied on participants who would be ineligible for American citizenship.

Guajardo's colleague Eliana García Laguna, a stalwart of the leftist-nationalist Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD), shrieked that the threat posed by Bush “hurts and injures the interests of Mexicans who for various reasons must

leave our country.” And Heliodoro Díaz Escárrega, leader of the Chamber of Deputies and a member of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), stated that it “is totally anachronistic to impose penalties on our migrants or erect walls as if we were in the Cold War.” Meanwhile, the legislature's bicameral Permanent Commission lambasted U.S. immigration policy as “racist, xenophobic and a profound violation of human rights.”

Members of President Vicente Fox's National Action Party (PAN) have joined the chorus of self-righteous criticism. They applauded an early January 2006 joint declaration by Mexico, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and six Central American countries pledging their opposition to treating migrants who illegally cross into the United States as law-breakers.

This statement neglected to recognize the mounting support of American citizens for curbs on unlawful entries. A Fox News poll conducted in April 2005 found that an overwhelming majority of Americans believe that undocumented immigration is a “very serious” (63 percent) or “somewhat serious” (28 percent) problem for the United States. Sixty percent of respondents to an ABC News/*Washington Post* survey favored erecting a barrier at the border; only 26 percent disapproved. In addition, Mexico's nomenclatura never mentions the 1 million legal immigrants whom the United States admits each year.

Mexico's establishment also keeps quiet about the salaries and benefits that its members receive. Private-sector

executives are especially secretive. Thanks to *Forbes* magazine, however, we know that Mexico leads Latin America with ten billionaires, including telecom mogul Carlos Slim Helú, the world's third richest person with \$30 billion. And an increasing amount of data is available on the earnings of public officials. The numbers show that Mexico's governing class is enriching itself at the country's expense, with exorbitant salaries and bountiful perks. Remember, these are “official” figures. Most politicians have ingenious ways of fattening their bank accounts.

The salaries of top Mexican government officials match or exceed those of comparable figures in Europe and much of the rest of the world. President Vicente Fox (\$236,693), for example, makes more than the leaders of the U.K. (\$211,434), France (\$95,658), Canada (\$75,582), and most other industrialized countries (POTUS earns \$400,000).

The 500 members of Mexico's notoriously irresponsible Chamber of Deputies, which is in session only a few months a year, each made \$148,000 last year in salary and bonuses—roughly on a par with Italian and Canadian legislators and substantially more than their counterparts in Germany (\$105,000), France (\$78,000), and Spain (\$32,311), where living costs are markedly higher. Other legislators in Latin America receive substantially less; for example, those in Bolivia earn \$28,000 for a four-month session. Legislators in the Dominican Republic take home \$68,500 for six months of service.