

## The Conservative Calm

George W. Bush campaigned as a Reagan conservative and has now signed the liberal campaign finance legislation that assaults our First Amendment, enacted a budget-busting farm subsidy bill, created 20,000 new federal employees by federalizing airport security, and placed stiff tariffs on imported steel. Nonetheless, Bush remains popular with conservative voters and has strong support from conservative leaders. Why?

Three reasons. First, like Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush understands the nature and structure of the modern conservative movement. The Reagan Republican Party is a coalition of groups and citizens that want government to leave them alone. Taxpayers, for example, do not want their taxes raised; property owners, likewise, do not want to be told Al Gore now has dominion over their backyards because it turned into a wetland in last night's rain; homeschoolers and people of faith wish to be left alone to raise their children as they see fit.

The President has kept faith with the primary concerns of each of these groups. Yes, the National Rifle Association, the Right to Life Committee, and nearly all national taxpayers groups opposed the campaign finance bill he signed. But these constituencies vote primarily on their main issues of guns, abortion, and taxes, not campaign finance.

The Bush administration, in other words, has disappointed his base on secondary and tertiary topics of concern, while holding true on the primary issues. Our current President's father, by contrast, alienated nearly every part of the

Reagan coalition on its primary issues. Bush the Elder raised taxes, undermined property rights, signed a ban on so-called "assault weapons," and poured regulatory burdens on the business community to please environmental and disability activists. Ultimately, he kept faith only with the pro-life groups.

When coalition members are crossed on a secondary issue, they are disappointed. But they generally remain loyal. Crossed on a primary issue, they drift away.

The second reason that the current Bush administration's deviations from ideological purity have not led to open revolt is that the conservative movement and its leaders are more mature, patient, and competent than they once were. In 1980, Ronald Reagan did what many thought impossible and won the Presidency as a strong conservative. Many conservatives consequently expected all their wishes to be granted—despite Reagan's reasonably narrow margin of victory, a Democrat-controlled House of Representatives, and a not-very-conservative Senate. In a 1983 symposium published in *Policy Review*, ten of 12 writers—prominent conservatives all—attacked the Reagan administration as a failure.

In 1994, Newt Gingrich also did what many thought impossible and won Republicans a majority in the House of Representatives. He met with similarly unrealistic expectations on the Right as to what could be accomplished in an era when Republicans held only a tenuous grasp on the Senate, while facing a Democratic President in the White House.

George W. Bush and Dennis Hastert,



on the other hand, were not swept into office as heroic conservative revolutionaries. Neither members of Congress nor activists had unrealistic expectations of either man. The normal political disappointments, therefore, have not been seen as gross failures or betrayals. The conservative movement understands that the Democrats have a majority in the Senate, and that not every conservative wish can become reality. It's not that conservatives have low expectations of Bush and Hastert—they have realistic ones.

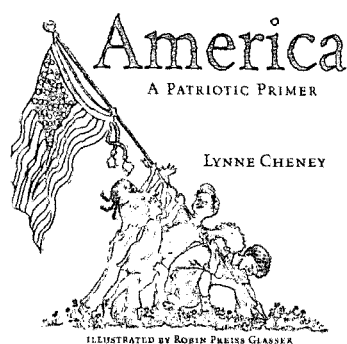
The third reason for conservative calm is the lack of alternatives to George W. Bush. There is no governor, House member, or senator who stands as a viable challenger or even point of reference. The one prominent Republican left standing after the 2000 primaries was John McCain. The Arizona senator, however, has destroyed his relationship with the Republican and conservative base through his ceaseless and irrational attacks on President Bush, and his loud assaults on conservative issues. On taxes, guns, religion, even exploring for oil in Alaska, McCain is on the wrong side. Only left-wing magazines now relish the possibility that he might run for President.

George W. Bush has pleased every key Republican constituency on its central issues. The movement has applied realistic expectations to his Presidency. There is no alternative to his leadership. No wonder conservatives seem comparatively content.

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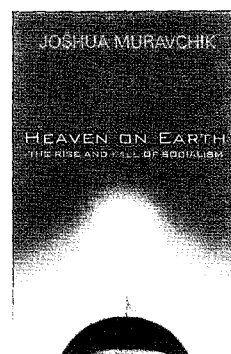
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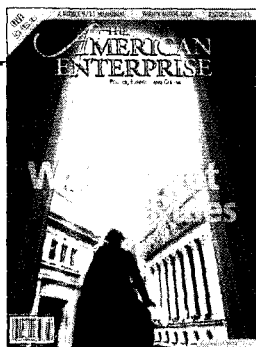
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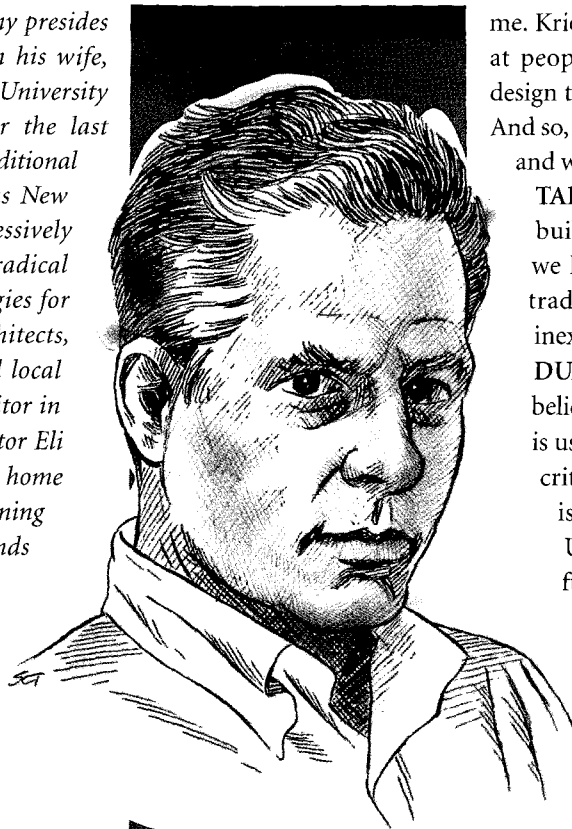
## Andres Duany

*Yale-educated architect Andres Duany presides over Miami's DPZ design firm with his wife, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, dean of the University of Miami architecture school. Over the last decade, they have built a school of Traditional Neighborhood Design (also known as New Urbanism) that now competes aggressively with modernism, post-modernism, radical environmentalism, and other ideologies for the hearts and minds of leading architects, planners, real estate developers, and local politicians. Duany welcomed TAE editor in chief Karl Zinsmeister and senior editor Eli Lehrer into his charming Coral Gables home for a wide-ranging interview at the dining room table, with the family dachshunds curled at their feet.*

**TAE:** Could you describe your conversion from a fairly conventional modern architect and urban designer to something not very conventional?

**DUANY:** Well, that took place in about 1980. We were having great success as young architects building high-rises in Miami Beach, including the famous one with the big hole in it that was shown on *Miami Vice*. Then one day I went to a lecture by a fellow called Leon Krier, the man who designed the English model town of Poundbury for the Prince of Wales. Krier gave a powerful talk about traditional urbanism, and after a couple of weeks of real agony and crisis I realized I couldn't go on designing these fashionable tall buildings, which were fascinating visually, but didn't produce any healthy urban effect. They wouldn't affect society in a positive way.

The prospect of instead creating traditional communities where our plans could actually make someone's daily life better really excited



**I believe  
that humans  
have rights to  
habitats that  
are paved over.**

me. Krier introduced me to the idea of looking at people first, and to the power of physical design to change the social life of a community. And so, in a year or so my wife and I left the firm and went off to do something very different.

**TAE:** You have written, “where the users of buildings, or even passersby, have a voice, we know that the strong preference is for traditional architecture. Democracy leads inexorably to traditional styles.”

**DUANY:** That's right. That's a reality. I do believe there's one aspect to modernism that is useful, though, and that is the fact that it's critical of existing conditions. Modernism isn't content with things as they are.

Unfortunately, it's an alienated criticism, full of distance and emotional separation—in contrast to earlier movements that aimed for constructive change.

Where older varieties of reformism wanted to take what exists and try to improve it, modernism just wants to throw away the past—lock, stock, and barrel.

**TAE:** If the strength of modernism is its critical approach, then why aren't we seeing any progress in the evolution of buildings? You yourself have written: “Travel to a city and ask any host to help you find a bad building erected prior to 1930, and you may well spend all day driving around in a vain search. Now look for a bad building erected after 1960. You will probably find one just by turning your head.” Why have we gone backwards in this area?

**DUANY:** The real problem is the impulse to be avant-garde, which severs our ties with the past. Avant-garde buildings can occasionally be quite beautiful. But the win-loss ratio is horrible; unacceptable. To get those very, very few suc-