

its policies suggests that it is not the decade of the eighties but the age group that the Carter administration has in mind. Apparently the administration senses that most of us were octogenarians, all bedridden and senile. Carter will keep us in our beds. His program would turn America into the largest poverty hospital ever heard of. He sees America as one vast geriatric ward.

Placed side by side, the economic programs of Ronald Reagan and

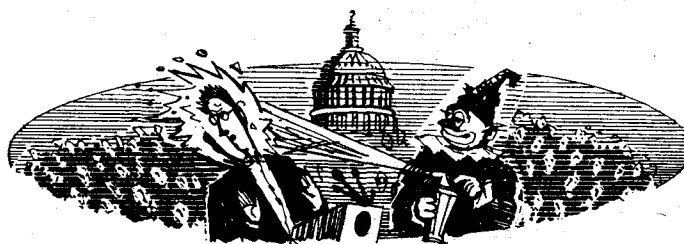
Jimmy Carter reveal antipodal views of mankind. Reagan is the optimist. Carter is the pessimist. Reagan sees us as capable. Carter sees us as inept and wobbling for Skid Row were it not for government's watchful eye. Reagan wants to free us to improve our condition. He believes we can do it, and he is unafraid of the outcome. Carter is not so sure we can do much more than pollute our environment, cheat one another, and line up for welfare. He stands with Kennedy and

views the citizens' income as government property to be returned to us only for socially useful purposes.

In sum, Reagan views the American people as a source of energy. He wants to use it. Carter wants to conserve it for pumping rocking chairs on the front porch, for roosting before the boob tube, and for other such dynamic purposes. Lewis Lehrman has described the difference

between Reagan's economics and Carter's as the difference between Prometheus and Malthus. Prometheus stole fire from the heavens and championed man against the gods. Malthus scowled, shook his old head, and figured that the human race would run off the edge of the earth instantaneously were it not for crime, disease, war, and vice. He was, naturally enough, opposed to the only one of these pastimes that is any fun. □

C A P I T O L I D E A S



EVOLUTION NOW

by Tom Bethell

Governor Reagan, bless his heart, remarked at a press conference recently that he had doubts about the theory of evolution, and supported the idea that creationism should be given separate but equal billing in school biology texts. This was immediately pronounced a gaffe by members of the news media, whose arrogance is exceeded only by their ignorance. As my friend Joe Sobran remarked, one begins to suspect that the news media simply define as a gaffe whatever they do not want discussed. In this instance they see it as their unwritten duty to defend what they perceive as the modern enlightenment against religious assault, much as a good many of the journalists in the 1850s saw it as their duty to defend the church against new-fangled science.

Actually, I've been looking for an opportunity to discuss this evolution business for some time now, so I'm grateful to the governor for giving me the necessary news peg. First of all, whether we like it or not, let us at least concede that there has been a certain amount of controversy surrounding the theory of evolution for

about 15 years now. (The theory peaked, seeming to have vanquished all rivals, roughly at the time of the Darwin Centennial in 1959, when that poor lost old humanist, Julian Hux-

ley, grandson of Thomas Henry, did his best to declare evolutionism a religion.)

Recent criticism of evolution has come from two very different direc-

tions. First of all, there has been a straightforward grassroots assault on materialism, the roughly 150-year-old ideological substratum or bedrock upon which almost all other intellectually certified ideas have since been constructed. Materialism posits a "dead" universe consisting solely of empty space and particles of matter forever seeking greater disorder and randomness (entropy). Roughly speaking, for the 20th-century intellectual the second law of thermodynamics thus replaces the Apostles' Creed. (Whether the second law really is a law in any meaningful and scientific sense of the term may legitimately be doubted. Interestingly enough, the theory of evolution itself contradicts the second law of thermodynamics, as does each and every instance of life.)

In the materialist scheme, mind is regarded either as less easily discerned matter, or a phenomenon somehow explicable in terms of behavior. See Gilbert Ryle's *The Concept of Mind* for a well-known, strenuously promoted but ultimately futile attempt by the modern academy to perform this latter act of reductionism. Mind refused to go away. Thought remained something other than silent speech.

Increasingly militant fundamental-



Tom Bethell is The American Spectator's Washington editor and a Washington editor of Harper's.

ist religious groups seem to have simply taken it upon themselves to declare materialism bosh; once their position is accepted, the theory of evolution is in an exposed position, because anyone who is prepared to believe that the universe includes nonmaterial components, invisible to telescopes or microscopes, is by the same token delivered of the necessity of believing in fluke chains of life, chance combinations of molecules, Darwinian reasoning, etc. He can simply believe in a creator, who occasionally intervenes in the material universe, disrupting the uniformity of nature.

Stephen Jay Gould, in one of his essays in *Natural History*, points out that Darwin no doubt lingered for years before coming out with his theory of evolution because he was patiently awaiting (although he might not quite have realized it himself) the full-fledged arrival of the climate of materialism in the Western intellectual air masses. Until it arrived, there was no chance whatever of his theory being accepted. The bishops would easily have swept it aside.

Is materialism now in retreat? One can't help wondering. Stranger things have happened. The resurgence of Islam suggests that something of the sort may be taking place. But the new religious fundamentalism in the United States must be judged only a very distant cloud on the horizon so far as respectable academic opinion is concerned, because it is so lacking in intellectual pretension, and has also, of course, been kept firmly extracurricular and "off-campus."

More interesting, therefore, has been the nervous, ever-so-tentative demurrer against Darwinism, raised within the academic compound itself. Oh, it hasn't amounted to much—an article or two in the *American Naturalist*, something recently in the *Journal of Theoretical Biology*, a few articles in the British journal *Philosophy*. (I'm sure Lyn Nofziger, Reagan's press secretary, would be only too happy to provide a fuller bibliography on request.) A few wisps and strands of criticism have appeared in the dense, uniform bamboo thickets of academic rumination that stand forever unread in the university library stacks. But it won't take much to undo Darwinism, I should imagine, because it is intellectually so feeble, and indeed precarious.

To digress for a minute, that there has not been more criticism of Darwinism to date tells us how vigilant yet subtle is the censorship imposed by peer review. Authors of academic

articles aren't really "censored," of course. They merely want to be published. They therefore tailor their views, if necessary, to avoid displeasing the high and the mighty on the editorial review boards. Precisely because these journals aren't really read by anyone at all, a purely authoritarian system of publication prevails, based on credentials and expertise. "Academic freedom," I guess, is nothing more than a slogan intended to divert attention from such base thoughts. On the other hand, journalism, which for the most part is a "market" system of periodical publication, is prepared to tolerate dissent so long as it enjoys sufficient buyers. The "validity" of that dissent is a secondary issue. Markets, in short, permit the circumvention of experts.

Getting back to Darwin, the main defect of his theory of evolution—by which I mean his theory as to *how* evolution supposedly occurred, namely by natural selection or "the survival of the fittest"—is that it is not a scientific theory at all. Genuinely scientific theories are susceptible of disproof, or falsification. So long as they remain unfalsified they retain their honorific title "scientific." Scientific theories, in short, must dwell permanently in the shadow of defeat. A fact always threatens to come tumbling down on top of the theory,

putting it permanently out of business. But Darwin's theory, that the *fittest* animals survive, so leaving more offspring than those that are *less* fit, is not susceptible of disproof in any way. The trouble is that Darwin omitted to provide us with a criterion of fitness that is independent of survival itself. And so his famous theory of natural selection turns out to be a tautology in disguise.

Look at it this way: What conceivable animal could come lumbering over the horizon, so strangely made that it forced the scientists to conclude that Darwin had finally been proved wrong? No one has ever been able to suggest any combination of features that would have this effect. This is because the mere existence of such a creature, however weird it might be, would always be sufficient to validate the lame claim that the fittest had once again survived. By contrast, when one thinks of the theories of Newton, Einstein, Kepler, et al., one can think of numerous outcomes in nature which, if observed, would destroy their theories immediately. Darwinism, however, is *logically* immune from falsification, thus useless.

The function of the theory of natural selection has been to provide evolutionists and scientists generally with an apparent "machinery" of

evolution. The great problem that Darwin and other early evolutionists had to explain was: How did life get from primitive blobs in the primeval soup to its present glorious state? Darwin furnished an (illusory) explanation, one that was couched in the language of progress. You had "fitter" models, and they naturally displaced those that were less fit. Unfortunately, no one has yet been able to tell us what is meant, objectively, by the notion of fitness. No independent criterion of fitness has been proposed. (Well, to be honest Stephen Jay Gould did have a shot at solving this problem in another of his *Natural History* articles but he didn't come near to a solution. He argued that an "engineer's criterion of good design" is somehow an independent criterion of fitness; but the Harvard professor seems to have forgotten that engineers' ideas as to what constitutes good design vary according to the function of what is being designed, whereas in evolutionary theory organisms have *no* function beyond leaving offspring.)

You may have noticed that if natural selection is not a scientific hypothesis, nor is creationism. It's useless to pretend otherwise. To say that life on earth conforms to God's plan, or some such thing, cannot possibly be falsified since we don't know what God's plan is. Moreover, no intervention, or disruption of the uniformity of nature has ever been observed. To that extent, then, I must disagree with Governor Reagan. Creationism is not a topic for biology books but rather for theological ones.

The human psyche seems to be constructed in such a way that old ideas are not discarded until new ones are ready to take their place. I personally don't object to the explanatory vacuum that is left when you throw out Darwin's evolutionary mechanism, but I find that most people do. "What do you put in its place?" they ask. "God knows," I tell them. But that doesn't satisfy them.

It seems to me quite possible that evolution in fact took place as a result of mechanisms that have never been elucidated at all. On the other hand, I think it is just as likely that the theory of evolution—the theory that all organisms throughout history (save the first) have had parents—is simply not true. Either way you look at the matter, there is a massive lack of evidence. And with that unaccustomed declaration of open-mindedness, I shall close. To sum up briefly: Reagan, as usual, was close to the mark; and the media, as usual, were wide of it. □





AMERICA ON WAR AND DIPLOMACY

Introduction by Stephen Rosen

Nations that have suffered military reverses require the same things that defeated soldiers require if they are to recover their self-confidence and spirit. For both, nothing is so demoralizing as incompetent leadership that squanders lives and money with no visible success. Before we can reasonably expect the revival of American morale, the United States must first choose new leaders who are able to make a convincing case that they will not repeat the mistakes of the past. Critics of the present administration should recognize, however, that although a change in leadership is possible and even likely, it is less clear that conservatives and anti-Communist liberals have actually come to terms with the failures of the containment policies of the late 1960s and early 1970s. America's foreign policy was in disarray long before Jimmy Carter became president, and recent efforts to create a policy of neo-containment have avoided explicit discussion of why old containment blew up in our faces under Presidents Johnson and Nixon. To the extent that a search for the roots of our failure in Vietnam would revive the ideological bad blood of that time, it might well be deferred.

But in many cases, the flaws in the old policy of containment stemmed from intellectual inadequacies in the theories of war and diplomacy that we developed in the first flush of our global power. Many of these theories, as they were implemented, revealed characteristic weaknesses.

To begin with, these theories were remarkably apolitical. Strategic nuclear policy was shaped in large part by scientists who believed that technology had created the nuclear problem and that appropriate technology would permit the solution of the problem. Certain technologies made for arms races and "instability" while others were more benign. To the extent that nuclear weapons policy was not made by scientists, it was made by economists who

looked at the problems of nuclear war and peace as if they could be solved by determining the cheapest way to deliver a given amount of equivalent megatonnage on target. Systems analysis played an analogous and equally pernicious role in shaping our conventional war capabilities by reducing battle requirements to issues of administration and resource allocation. Third World policy was understood as a matter of diverting the attention of Third World leaders away from "wasteful" military spending and foreign policy adventures toward international trade and economic growth. Once Third World leaders overcame their vainglorious political objectives, the economic attractiveness of the USA would give us unrivalled influence in Asia and Africa. In all of these areas the primary military and political questions—who would win wars and who would rule—were almost completely ignored by American analysts who, at bottom, wanted to create a world in which force was not a tool of state policy and in which economics would replace politics.

Beyond being apolitical, these theories were remarkably abstract. That is to say that they had a cheerful disregard for prudence and the intractability of reality. This abstraction was related to, but separate from, the apolitical nature of American policies: We were not indifferent to politics

when we asked the American Army to fight in Vietnam; we were hopelessly indifferent to the actual capabilities of our military. Similarly, we were not only inattentive to Soviet foreign policy objectives when we created our nuclear weapons policies, but were also blind to the fact that the Soviets thought about war in ways completely different from our own.

We were indifferent to politics and reality not because we were more stupid than most countries, but because the immense power of the United States in the period during which these theories were developed allowed the new American foreign policy elites to indulge their domestic ambitions and international pipe dreams. To a surprising extent, the attention of men like McNamara was fixed on seizing power within the American government, on reducing the influence of the traditional military elites. The new theories were levers with which to pry out the men who insisted that war was still the most important element of international politics.

If it is possible to isolate the errors of the first generation of liberal foreign policy analysis, that does not mean that we can find ready answers among the conservative political thinkers in the United States. Conservative foreign policy, as near as can be seen, rests on the development of American military power and on uncompromising hostility towards Communism. In its own way, it is just as unrealistic and apolitical as the liberal approach that it opposes. The logic of conservative foreign policy is to get ready for the big war with the Soviet Union, win it, and then come home. It does not really reconcile its legitimate hostility to the internal policies of the Soviet Union with the need to avoid the kind of major war that would be necessary to put an end to that regime.

The second generation of American foreign policy analysis would accept the

