

for economic growth, favored the welfare state in moderation—they tried to aid folks without indulging in social tinkering—and were enthusiastic internationalists, even hard-line anti-Communists? Maybe it will dawn on liberals, as dopey as many of them are these days, that something interesting happened when this was their ideology. They got elected. They were the majority. They ruled the country. They created change and prosperity, and they promoted freedom around the world. It was a dirty job, but somebody had to do it and liberals did. Conservatives, brushed aside by the voters, muttered about the need for a balanced budget.

There are two groups of liberals—I'm talking small bands of liberals, not masses—who have figured out what happened. One is the Henry Jackson wing, a pathetically small fringe group of liberals who have bravely resisted the newfangled ideas and crazed fads to which liberalism is always so susceptible. These liberals are tough on defense, want a restrained welfare state, and detest all the trendy enthusiasms like feminism, environmentalism, and isolationism. If the Jackson liberals were the dominant force in liberalism today, the dawn of conservative America would never have broken. And Ronald Reagan would be doing Lite beer commercials; he'd be arguing that it's great because it's less filling. The Jackson liberals are closer to matching American public opinion than Reagan is (he's more conservative than most people), but they lost out to the New Politics liberals. The other group with its ideological head screwed on right is the neoliberals. They've got problems, one being a tendency toward isolationist foreign-policy positions, but they have figured out that people want a booming economy one heck of a lot more than they want to preserve every last snail darter or guarantee the right of lesbians to adopt children. And they've latched on to the best way of achieving a strong economy—the free market. Some, not all, neoliberals have, at any rate. Well, what does this mean? It means that if either of these groups reached a critical mass where it was the moving force in American liberalism, conservative hegemony would be imperiled. Don't hold your breath, but don't rule out a liberal resurgence either. Stranger things have happened.

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ROBERT L. BARTLEY

Underestimating the regenerative power of American liberalism would be a mistake of the first order. The conservative tide in American politics derived its force from assimilating many of the ideals of New Deal

liberalism—growth, optimism, opportunity. Already we can see the liberal forces regrouping to reclaim their lost heritage.

In national politics, it would be astonishing if Walter Mondale failed to prove the last New Deal presidential candidate. In Congress, we are witnessing the swan song of Tip O'Neill; the coming figure in the House is Rep. Richard Gephardt, with Senator Bill Bradley co-sponsor of the Democratic version of the flat tax. In foreign affairs, American guilt remains the vocal force of the liberals, but chiefly because the Reagan Administration hesitates to challenge it frontally, despite the clear lesson of Grenada.

The Democratic political party, the vessel of American liberalism, remains predominant in state and local government, and its mayors and governors are quite free from the horse-blinders liberals wear inside the Capital Beltway. Even Gov. Mario Cuomo, fresh from castigating the Reagan Administration for heartlessness toward homeless mental cases, returns to Albany to cut the tax rates for his state's upper-income wage-earners. In the intellectual world the hot magazine of the last year, with due respect to *The American Spectator*, has been the *New Republic*; it is no accident that since the second Reagan landslide, its brightest stars have been hired wholesale by The Washington Post Co.

Over the next few years—four, probably—we will witness the liberals assimilating the lessons of the recent conservative surge. We will see lower marginal tax rates as the best way to advance the poor. We will see the liberals, and especially the blacks, embrace the virtues of the family. We will see liberals remember the virtues of the Truman foreign policy.

Of course, such people will no longer be liberals as we have known them the last generation. Indeed, many of today's conservatives, the editors of *The American Spectator* for example, are likely to find they have more in common with the world's Gephardts than the world's Falwells, not all of whom are as erudite and cosmopolitan as the Rev. Falwell himself.

It will be frustrating, of course, since the latter-day liberals will give no credit to their conservative forebears. Even while debating precisely what tax rate will maximize government revenues, they will ridicule Arthur Laffer. They will celebrate the *New Republic* for discovering that the Sandinistas did not have in mind Brook Farm. They will remember, correctly as it happens, that economic deregulation started under President Carter.

But no matter, this is progress, as it is counted off in the intellectual/political world. The Republic needs

such a resurgence of liberalism. It does not need a British Labour party flight into the hopeless left, and happily, American liberals are far too sturdy for that. They will rise to fight again, and maybe even win. Good for them. The only pity will be if today's conservatives fail to recognize what they themselves have achieved.

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RICHARD BROOKHISER

Politically, the condition of American liberalism is grim. The Mondale campaign was the terminal moraine of the common good. Mondale surely believed, as much as his mentor Hubert Humphrey before him, in the common good, and in the government's duty to provide it. The trouble with government provision is that if it is unlimited, it can no longer be common; some beneficiaries must be preferred, at the expense of others. Liberalism's remaining beneficiaries, and their sympathizers, add up to the Mondale vote. As the District goes, so goes Minnesota.

The Democrats acquiesced in this losing position because no better one was available. Both Glenn and Hart, it turned out, had nothing to offer; Jesse Jackson had something, but the Democrats are not yet willing to become a Third World party.

What of the future? Mario Cuomo seems determined to do Walter Mondale one more time, only as a good performer. Cuomo is good, but not *that* good. What Gary Hart was attempting may be achieved by Bill Bradley or some other fresh face—to make liberalism the rallying cry of yuppies with compassion. In this vision, the

poor would frankly become lesser breeds needing largesse, but apart from them, government would let the good times roll. This accurately reflects the mental impulses of today's well-off young liberals; as a political position, though, it strikes me as incoherent.

I've spent time on politics because that seems to be the arena in which liberals have the most hope. Conservatives have our own problems, and time and chance happeneth to us all. In the realm of ideas, the condition of liberals is far worse. They have not had a first-rate political idea since Woodrow Wilson, or a first-rate moral/aesthetic one since Swinburne, maybe Shelley. The efforts of such people as the editors of the *New Republic* to come up with some are interesting and honorable, but trivial: the intellectual equivalent of policing the area for butts and beer cans.

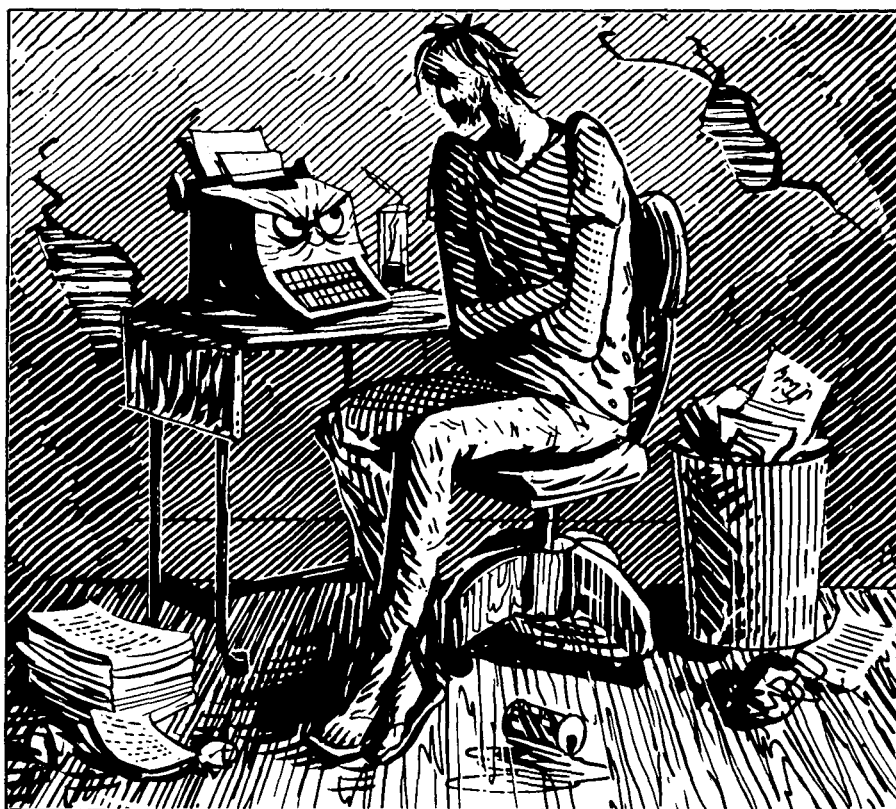
Richard Brookhiser, a senior editor of National Review, is writing a book about the 1984 elections to be published by Doubleday.

JOSEPH A. CALIFANO, JR.

Is there a Phoenix hidden in the ashes of American liberalism? That depends on the capacity of its self-appointed apostles to realize that theirs is a political philosophy, not a religious movement, and that politics in America is a pragmatic calling, not a search for doctrinaire angels on the head of an ideological pin.

To bounce back, liberals must build on their most conservative strength—their commitment to the dignity and freedom of the individual. They've got to exorcise their self-destructive urge to impose the culture of the fringe on the mainstream of the many.

Whether left-wing liberals are any



more likely to do this than right-wing conservatives is doubtful. At the edges, both movements are in the hands of leaders who get their jollies sparring on a set of issues better suited to parents and churches than politics and caucuses: God, abortion, homosexual rights, teenage sex. Such leaders seem to revel in Simple-Simon statements about the most intricate and confounding issues of our day: arms control, revolution and guerrilla war in Central and South America, trade imbalances, drug addiction and street crime.

Liberalism has got to come to terms with the harsh economic realities of post-industrial America. We live in a World more One than liberal Wendell Willkie ever dreamed of. Only the economically and militarily strong can lead, and the trick is to eliminate pockets of poverty amidst widespread affluence and bring the underdeveloped world along, without losing any of our own wealth or strength. In such a world our nation needs all the energy, creativity, persistence, genius, and guts a free enterprise system can muster. Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson understood this, which accounts for the success of much of the New Deal and Great Society, and explains why liberals so irritated both Presidents.

Fortunately for liberals, a strike force of young Turks like Tim Wirth, Dick Gephardt, and Bill Bradley is moving to save their cartilages from their worst instinctive kneejerks, just as Jack Kemp and his cohorts are moving to deliver the conservative right from itself. These young political warriors told the promise of a debate that will redefine liberalism and conservatism into the best each has to offer.

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MAURICE CRANSTON

What is most striking to the foreign observer about American liberalism today is its provincialism. In the eighteenth century, when America was still a series of colonies, American liberalism was something big, directed to great principles such as the rights of man and liberty and self-government. American liberalism today has narrow horizons, something you would expect to find in an oppressed people, concerned no longer with the rights of man, but the rights of minorities, no longer with universal ideals or principles, but with local grievances. American liberalism has become the ideology of protest: diffuse, ill-tempered, and often rather cynical. In Europe—even in Australia—

liberalism is clearly distinguishable from socialism, but American liberalism, obsessed with American "social problems," seems to have no enemies to the left, but rather to have assimilated any and every section of opinion that seeks to "change society." As what I take to be a reaction against the persecution of Communists in the McCarthy era, American liberals are curiously protective towards Communism. They also seem to recognize no danger to freedom in Soviet expansion in Africa and South America. This makes their provincialism doubly disturbing—not only has it given up the universal perspective of earlier liberalism; when it does look out into the world, it refuses to see what is there.

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ALONZO L. HAMBY

"Liberalism," as commonly understood at present, has reached a state of political and intellectual exhaustion. One must hope for its revival, if for no other reason than the need for a genuine mainstream political dialogue in this country.

In the time of Roosevelt, Truman, and Kennedy, liberalism generally meant public programs of assistance to those unable to assist themselves, advocacy of equal opportunity, and respect for productive enterprise. It recognized totalitarianism of all stripes for what it was and accepted it as an implacable enemy. Today, liberalism has confused equal opportunity with equality of condition, has little regard for productive enterprise, and seems to believe the Department of Defense a greater menace than the Soviet Union.

Intellectually, liberalism needs to

regain its earlier identity and to achieve a sense of limits. Until some time in the sixties, we all took it for granted that not every human problem could be solved and that the resources realistically available even to soothe the misery of the afflicted and infirm were barely adequate. Today, programs abound for every objective and interest group. (I write this after reading in my local newspaper that the city of Athens, Ohio, is requesting \$4.4 million in federal grants to facilitate the private construction of a retirement community, a shopping mall, and a chain drugstore.)

Abuses still exist in various welfare and poverty programs, but there is a need for such activities, if in a cleaned-up form. However, liberalism also has identified itself with an agenda of "social programs" that amount to uneconomic subsidies for the middle classes. Finally, and most sadly of all in this historically liberal nation, liberalism has become nearly synonymous with anti-Americanism.

Some of these figures who call themselves neoliberals may lead their movement back to the prominence it once had. (I am not certain, however, that I understand fully what distinguishes them from neoconservatives.) They will have to achieve not only an intellectual but also a political coup that will free them from the "activists" of the left, the anti-American intellectuals, the professional grievance mongers, and the manifold special interest groups that now control access to Democratic presidential nominations.

A liberalism that once again unhesitatingly advocated genuine liberal democracy and the American mission in this world, while understanding the practical limits on both,

would be a formidable force in our political life—one that all right-thinking conservatives should welcome.

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GARY HART

American liberalism is not dead. But it has been asleep.

In 1973, in *Right from the Start*, I argued that American liberalism was near bankruptcy: "In recent decades, progressive ideas and innovative proposals have sprung in large part from the liberal wing of the Democratic Party." But by the late sixties, "the traditional sources of invigorating, inspiring and creative ideas were dissipated." And in 1972, "the fields of liberalism failed to provide a crop." "The soil," I concluded, "is worn out."

Similarly, during my first Senate campaign, I maintained that liberalism had failed to move past the New Deal. "The pragmatism of the New Deal has become doctrine—if there is a problem, create an agency and throw money at the problem." Liberals had learned the wrong lesson from the New Deal, and embraced institutions rather than innovation; bureaucracy rather than buoyancy.

Unfortunately, that critique still holds true for too many liberal thinkers and leaders—and the consequences have been severe. In this time of dramatic social, economic, and global change, my party—and our nation—has failed to keep pace or move ahead. And as the creativity of American liberalism has worn out, the Republican right-wing has rushed in—with appeals to self-interest, and promises of ease and comfort, at least for today.

Too often in the past decade, the creative, pragmatic energies of liberalism have become co-opted by constituency agendas and special interests instead of directed toward creating a new economic order in an era of great change. As a result, many Americans now feel dissatisfied with both liberals and conservatives. They feel there must be, as I said in a recent speech, "a higher purpose for a great nation than outdated political arrangements on the one hand, or . . . materialism and selfishness on the other."

During the last two years, I have argued that liberals and the Democratic party must offer an innovative, cohesive vision for America's future. As I wrote in *A New Democracy*: "During the remainder of this century, America must recreate its revolutionary and pioneering spirit. Using old-fashioned common sense and American ingenuity, we must devise bold

