

response to his package, which has such populist elements as a \$2,000 personal exemption and a top rate on individual income of 35 percent. But, in truth, the Reagan plan represents a serious tactical blunder, the fifth of the decisions that have destroyed the Reagan mandate.

By releasing the purist Treasury Department proposal for tax reform last November, the Administration created the standard by which all reform plans would be judged. It treated every special interest harshly—business, labor, everybody but individual taxpayers. Yet Reagan could argue that the bill was fair and populist and not a sellout. Then, Treasury

Secretary Baker decided to buy off a few of the interest groups. He gave in to the oil and gas industries on intangible drilling costs, which waved a red flag in the face of liberals. He speeded up depreciation of factories and machinery; it would have been slowed under the first Treasury proposal. And he lowered the rate on capital gains to 17.5 percent, abandoning the idea of treating them as normal income. This was eminently justifiable on economic grounds.

But it was bad politics, and it changed the nature of the tax reform battle, making Reagan appear as less of a white hat and more the champion of special interests. The time to accommodate the interests was not at the outset. It is when a reform bill reaches

the Senate, where Republicans are in charge. Whatever damage the Democratic House might do to a purist Reagan proposal, the Senate could rectify. It could aid the energy crowd, deal with depreciation, and meet the high-tech industry's need for special treatment of capital gains. And Reagan would get none of the political blame for this.

That's not the scenario the Reagan team pursued. And perhaps it matters little. Tax reform has never been quite the realigning issue it has been cracked up to be. More than the middle class, it helps the rich and the poor. The well-heeled are already Republicans, and those making less than \$12,000 a year will probably never be. It's a fresh chunk of the middle class that the GOP needs to overtake the Democrats

as the majority party. Tax reform, at least as it's been proposed by Reagan, isn't likely to draw this chunk to the Republican fold.

Oh, yes, there's a footnote to the tale of Reagan's lost mandate. It's that apologies are in order for Baker and his crowd. When they were at the White House, they were pilloried by conservatives for nudging Reagan to the center. With Reagan as chief of staff, that was to change. And besides, Reagan would be a free man at last, with no future election to worry him. The result is not a more conservative Reagan—quite the opposite. It is a Reagan, fresh from a landslide election, who is more accommodating than ever, even at the expense of his mandate. Who'd have guessed it? □

Dinesh D'Souza

## THINKING AHEAD CONSERVATIVELY

Is the Reagan coalition up to it?

Conservatives are generally strong on philosophy, but weak on strategy. For years, while in the minority, conservatives operated on the principle of Lord Salisbury, "Find out what annoys your enemy most, then do it as often as possible." This is a lot of fun, and sometimes it can be a very effective dissident ploy. The problem is, conservatives are no longer dissidents.

The White House has been occupied for the last five years by the most conservative U.S. President of the twentieth century. The GOP retains control of the Senate. The House remains predominantly Democratic, but its extreme leftists are now balanced by the members of the Conservative Opportunity Society. Since 1980 there has been a remarkable turnover of personnel in Washington, D.C.—the capital is now teeming with right-wingers. Conservatives control the most sophisticated fundraising and direct-mail operations in American politics. And control of the intellectual and policy agenda has fallen into the hands of the New Right and neoconservatives, as the left has conceded. All of

this means that what *National Review* half-jokingly wrote in November 1980, "We are the establishment," is now a (perhaps embarrassing) reality. Conservatives must face it and work on strategies to consolidate power and translate their ideas into policies that will have enduring impact.

It is fashionable for conservatives to be grandly pessimistic about the Reagan Administration, to the extent that

one perverse firebrand with College Republicans wanted his group to distribute posters saying, "Death to Reagan." But conservatives have to remember what a luxury it is to criticize the President for insufficient enthusiasm for policy ideas that only six years ago were regarded as outdated and comical. For all its weaknesses the Reagan Administration has, from the outset, had a keen sense of political strategy.

The President realizes the value of patience in politics. Thus Reagan has kept his sense of priorities, choosing the fights that are important and the fights he is likely to win. In a short time Reagan has turned the once-domineering Speaker of the House into a disgruntled orb who actually predicts his own defeats. Reagan has also shown his ability to seize issues like tax reform and force the Democrats, after a bit of futile posturing, to capitulate on the key points. Perhaps Reagan's greatest failing has been pre-emptive concession—requesting only \$14 million for the contras, not enough to win the war and thus not worth expending a lot of political capital over; calling for minor scale-back of programs like the Education Department and the National Endowment for the Arts which probably should be eliminated; and proposing a budget with no defense spending increase whatsoever, virtually guaranteeing that a budget compromise would involve a defense reduction.

Still, Reagan remains a popular leader who has, against the odds, effected real changes in policy and in the way Americans view government. He has also held together the unlikely coalition of libertarians, traditionalists,



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evangelicals, and blue-collar Catholics who swept him into power. Many of Reagan's supporters, though quick to berate him, could not possibly have accomplished what the President has. Nor do they have Reagan's instinct for strategy, even though they pose as experts and treat the President as a kindly bungler manipulated by malevolent aides.

Congressman Jack Kemp has noted that there is a discomfort about democratic politicking on the right. The old right and the neoconservatives are, by and large, good ideologues but bad politicians. They produce ideas that last, but candidates like Goldwater and Moynihan who are either too principled to win votes or too concerned with votes to retain their principles. For the old right and the neos politics pollutes ideology, because it fuses what should be with merely what can be. Also democratic politics defers to the judgment of such people as reside in Dubuque, Iowa; although conservative intellectuals are satisfied that Dubuque residents are pretty sturdy, morally if not mentally, they distrust the notion of yielding to their superior wisdom. For Eastern establishment Republicans, democracy is ochlocracy. It would be utterly disreputable if it were not a mechanism for distributing so much influence. Greenwich- and New Canaan-weaned Republicans would clearly rather swing golf clubs than elections, if it came down to that.

Conservatism does have the New Right and the Christian Right, which believe in organizing at the grassroots. But both groups, being relatively new to the transactions of politics, do not realize that it is the art of the possible: You have to give a little to gain a lot. Some New Right purists are determined to cling doggedly to a single ideological bone—all the way to the municipal van. And they prefer to alienate rather than co-opt: I recently attended some meetings of the Kingston Group, where Reagan appointees are invited to talk to sixty of Paul Weyrich's friends—these chats often disintegrate into rabid *ad hominem* attacks on the Administration spokesman. The Christian Right, with a few exceptions, has so far shown a reluctance to join coalitions, the clay and mortar of elections, because it seeks theological certainty in what is, after all, only politics.

All this suggests a general immaturity on the right about staying in power and governing effectively. William Rusher is right that many conservatives suffer from a "siege mentality—they can't stand success." After all, with success comes political responsibility. That means having to substitute for

lamentations about the abandonment of Taiwan a prudent policy toward China. It means having to administer programs well which were initially targeted for extermination. It means using a hostile media to get the message out, instead of merely alleging bias and Soviet sympathies. It means fulfilling the conservative agenda while maintaining, even increasing, popular support.

Fortunately, conservatives have learned some lessons from their five years in power. Patrick McGuigan, editor of *Initiative and Referendum Report*, says the right has recognized that it has got to be a "movement of the people." It has to eschew both the rhetoric and the policies of the old Republican elitists. Reagan has realized this from the beginning. He has articulated an inclusive conservative vision better than any major American

their respectable credentials and ideological determination; they are not, however, good at rousing the masses, as the Jewish vote in 1984 bore out.

The New Right and Christian Right are always discontented. In a sense this is useful because it puts pressure on the Administration to act. Perennially optimistic activists, such as Jerry Falwell, who endorse everything Reagan does and prematurely declare for Bush in 1988, greatly reduce their leverage. Yet too much caterwauling can also reduce leverage because it gets you written off. For most of the last two years Richard Viguerie, Howard Phillips, and others were denouncing Reagan as an apostate and planning to start a new populist party. Why should the Reagan Administration pay attention to these people? How can they expect to get political appointments to effect their agenda? Luckily the third party effort failed. The New Right strategists lost some of their hubris (especially after Viguerie

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politician in this century, McGuigan says. He has co-opted classical liberal principles and cast aside some of the old conservative rhetoric. Reagan is fond of quoting that eighteenth-century radical, Tom Paine, "We have it in our power to begin the world over again," a notion that would be anathema to Burke, Oakeshott, Herbert Hoover, George Will. In his policies Reagan is very much in the tradition of Democrats such as FDR, Truman, and Kennedy: sternly anti-Communist but practical in his dealings with the Russians, accepting of the Welfare State but keen to expand opportunity through growth, and believing that America is a country with a special moral purpose, what Reagan calls "our rendezvous with destiny."

Neoconservatives are probably closest to this centrist vision, although they are always pressuring Reagan for a more ferocious foreign policy approach to the Soviets. The neos are viewed as academics and intellectuals, not politicians, yet a number of them hold important posts in the Administration, in such diverse fields as labor, education, and civil rights; and some of the President's most effective bureaucrats (such as Linda Chavez, Kenneth Adelman, and William Bennett) come from this camp. The neos will probably continue to be a fertile source for appointments in future conservative administrations, because of

found he couldn't even get himself elected lieutenant governor of Virginia; now they are back on the team.

Pat McGuigan says, however, that the Republicans have been taking the New Right and Christian Right for granted, and there are limits to how long this can continue. He does have a point. Many of these people, especially the evangelicals, entered politics after a historical resistance to it, because they cherished a narrow agenda. If they lose hope that such issues as school prayer will ever be resolved their way, they will simply return to their small towns and Sunday schools, depriving the GOP of thousands of dedicated recruits.

But John Buckley, press secretary to Jack Kemp, warns that in order to appeal to young voters, the Republican party must continue to downplay divisive social issues like abortion and prayer, and focus on economic growth and foreign policy. There are 94 million people between 18 and 39 years old, Buckley says, only 70 million above 39. "This demographic bulge is where the battle for the majority party is going to be fought." And Yuppies are "pro-choice on everything," and don't want to associate with people they consider intolerant, Buckley says.

This provokes strong protest from Cal Thomas, vice president of Moral Majority. "A coalition built on the sacrifice of the unborn is immoral," he

says. But it's not so clear that the agenda of the Christian Right and young urbanites are mutually exclusive. Mildred Webber, congressional liaison for the Heritage Foundation, points to polls by Gallup and others showing a religious revival among the young. While she concedes that Yuppies tend to be pro-abortion, "Reagan was very forthright about his positions on abortion, prayer, and other social issues during the 1980 and 1984 elections. This didn't deter young people from voting for him in huge numbers." Like the gender gap, the supposed dichotomy between youth concerns and New Right concerns is largely a media concoction, Webber says.

Paul Weyrich agrees but argues that in any case social issues are crucial for conservatives to win elections. Although Republicans are divided on abortion, he says, they are not likely to abandon their party simply because they dissent on one issue, while anti-abortion Democrats (including blue-collar Catholics and Hispanics) will be tempted to break ranks with their party. The last few elections have borne this out. McGuigan says, "The Republicans, with the defense and domestic issue constituencies, always had around 40 percent of the popular vote. But how do you go from 40 to 51 percent? The difference is traditional values."

Traditional values are also the key for conservatives to recruit support among blacks, according to William Keyes, chairman of "Black Pac." "Crime and prayer in schools are two issues that touch the lives of black people just as much as any others." Yet the Republican party virtually ignores them when it goes after the black vote. Issues like enterprise zones are also important, Keyes says, but blacks are not as enthusiastic about these as, say, controlling crime in inner cities. "Conservatives have to learn to appeal to blacks based on what is important to them rather than what they think should be important to them."

Even if conservatives reconcile their differences over the social issues, Buckley believes that GOP chances of becoming the majority party will depend on whether Republicans can avoid falling back into their traditional pattern of nagging about deficits, pandering to big corporations, and trying to cut Social Security. These are the conventional weaknesses of both the old right and the "austerity wing" of the Republican party. But big business often bankrolls the Democratic party and seeks to restrict, instead of expand, free trade at home and abroad. Social Security, however inefficient, is not a handout but an earned benefit; it would be cruel, not to say politically unpopular, for government to renege on its promise to the elderly at the urg-



ing of the Republicans. Finally, as Michael Kinsley has written, the issue of ballooning deficits has in a way helped the Republicans, because it converted them, almost instantaneously, into the party of growth and opportunity, as Democrats suddenly found themselves warning about "fiscal irresponsibility" while the American people yawned.

What does all this mean for the 1986 and 1988 elections? Are conservatives formulating an agenda that will animate their activist groups and build on the popular support that swept Ronald Reagan into office? David Smick, a political consultant who advises Lewis Lehrman, offers this sobering view. "We are now in the mood of 1957," Smick says. "There is a popular man in the White House, the economy is prosperous and we are at peace." And the GOP is complacent, as in 1957. "The temptation for conservatives is to think that if the American people were pleased with the last six years, they'll want to give us another four." But voters are always restless for change, Smick says, and not always grateful. They forget easily—by the 1984 election, the recession of 1982 that Mondale kept alluding to was a distant memory. In 1986 and 1988, as in 1958 and 1960, it will be the party of charisma, fresh thinking, and a vision for the future that will win the voters.

Smick doesn't think that the Democrats will take the Senate in 1986—they are "behind in technology and money" and they "haven't dealt with the problem of identity." Half the

Democrats, he says, still think that if they only had a good TV candidate with communication skills, they would recapture the American voter. On the issues, he adds, "the Democrats are in the position of the Republicans in the 1930s. They don't have ideas of their own. They are the party of negation and grouching. All their hopes are pinned on a Reagan screw-up." But by 1988, Smick thinks, the Democrats will have moved toward the center: "Both parties will be growth parties and tough on the Russians," he predicts. So we will be in the position of 1960, when Nixon and Kennedy were remarkably agreed on domestic issues and foreign policy.

If this is true, it means the Republicans will need a strong candidate who will inspire the various subsets of the conservative coalition and at the same time appeal to young people and independent middle-of-the-roads. Norman Ornstein, a Catholic University political science professor and fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, says the events of 1986 could influence the GOP nominee in 1988. He expects the Republicans to lose a few congressional seats next year, but if the party can hold the Senate, "it will move toward 1988 with ebullience," he says.

But if history is any indication, the party in power will not fare well in the mid-term elections. Pat McGuigan worries that "the Lou Cannons of this world" will blame "the normal six-year downturn" for the GOP on the New Right, hoping to see a moderate Republican candidate in 1988. That would be either Howard Baker, Robert Dole, or George Bush. The Vice President is clearly the front runner among these three. Baker and Dole have no constituency, Smick says, though he sees Dole making a move to the right, to compete for the support of hardline conservatives who have so much influence in the party. Bush's strengths, the strategists say, are his unwavering loyalty to Reagan and his experience in the White House. An implicit Reagan endorsement in 1988 plus Republican National Committee support and a few hardline endorsements—perhaps Bush's fellow Yalie, Bill Buckley, and Jerry Falwell—might make him unstoppable.

But Ornstein says that Bush's backing is predominantly the Republican establishment: He doesn't have a strong base among conservative voters who dominate the GOP primaries, and he would have trouble attracting the broad coalition the party needs for victory in 1988. Christopher Matthews, a savvy Democratic strategist who is press secretary to House Speaker Tip O'Neill, says it will be virtually impossible for Bush to win the New

Hampshire primary, because his moderate positions and quirky style won't appeal to the state whose motto is: Live Free or Die. "Bush is antiseptically acceptable to everybody," Matthews argues, "but he doesn't stand for anything. All he stands for is Office. He wants the job. Our guy, Mondale, wanted the job too. He told the people: I am ready. Who cares? People want to vote and work for someone who represents something larger than their own ambition."

That someone, of course, may be Jack Kemp. "Kemp has the hearts and minds of people who are likely to vote in the primaries and be at the convention," Ornstein says, noting that he also has a very inclusive vision which could make him the natural heir to Reagan. This is apparent in Kemp's rhetoric, which brings him 75 percent margins and majority support from every group, including labor and minorities, in his home district of Buffalo, New York. "I don't let liberals monopolize the issue of caring," Kemp says. "Most conservatives talk about numbers. I talk about jobs. I talk about incentive. I don't want to help the rich get richer. I want a tax structure that will help the poor get rich. I want a safety net through which no one will fall, and an opportunity ladder up which everyone can climb." Matthews realizes that whatever candidate his party can come up with will have a difficult time against this. But Kemp does have a weakness, he says: He may not be able to weather the personal attacks and microscopic scrutiny that are part of a national campaign. "He's never been exposed to anything like it, and I don't know if he's tough enough to take it," Matthews says. This is a well-worn allegation against Kemp whose validity, as they say, only time will determine.

If Kemp falters, the strategists wonder whether there is any strong candidate to pick up the baton and represent his wing of the GOP. McGuigan says in that event the toughest challenge to Bush may come from a dark horse—Senator Phil Gramm of Texas or Governor Pierre du Pont of Virginia. Aides to Kemp and Lehrman say that there is a friendly agreement between the two that they won't run against each other. But Ornstein says Lehrman is hampered by the fact that he hasn't held elective office and the "uncertainty" raised by his conversion to Catholicism. Smick naturally disagrees. "Lehrman proved his appeal by the number of votes he got even with a hardline platform in a liberal state. And his conversion was a manifestly personal decision. It wasn't some gimmicky prayer breakfast. I think it may even help him because it indicates sincerity and conviction,

which are rare traits in politicians."

Whether Bush or Kemp is in a stronger position for the GOP nod in 1988 may depend on the state of the economy. This factor will be more important in a recession than in a boom. Bush is closely identified with Reagan, and unless he distances himself from the President soon, a politically risky move in itself, he may be saddled with all of Reagan's second-term economic decisions. Smick and Buckley are positioning their candidates (Lehrman and Kemp) in a way to leave them invulnerable no matter what happens to the economy. If Reagan's programs succeed, they expect that the supply-siders will get credit and Bush will be viewed as someone who just went along; if it fails, Bush will be too closely identified with the Administration to escape responsibility, while the supply-siders will be able to point to numerous critical statements of budget compromises and exonerate themselves. Kemp is going through some tortuous machinations to establish his position on the current budget package—he wants to be identified with tax reform, while warning that the rates are still too high.

There is only one candidate frequently mentioned for the Republican vice-presidential nomination—Jeane Kirkpatrick. The fact that she is a woman seems, for some reason, to electrify the people at the Republican National Committee. The fact that she is out of the neoconservative mold and an erstwhile Democrat titillates the neos and Scoop Jacksonites. Joshua Muravchik, a Democratic strategist, says Kirkpatrick's defection to the GOP was very damaging to his party because it accentuated its anti-defense image. Irving Kristol says his ideal ticket is Kemp-Kirkpatrick. If the Democrats nominate Bill Bradley, their most attractive candidate, Kristol says, "we would have the excitement of watching a former basketball star go up against a former football star to replace a former actor."

Ultimately, as political analyst William Schneider points out, what party retains long-term power depends, quite simply, on which keeps its core constituency, appeals to the "marginal voter," and whose programs work. As long as Republican economic policy continues to succeed, as long as the nation is at peace, as long as conservatives continue to echo those quintessentially American themes of strength, opportunity, and traditional values, then (short term vicissitudes aside) the right will remain dominant. We are in the process of what Richard Wirthlin calls "rolling realignment," in which the forces unleashed by conservatism are being tested for confirmation. □



John Train

## STAR WARS UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Perspectives on strategic defense.

When I worked in the Pentagon thirty years ago, people were worried, perhaps even more than they are today, about the risk of being blown up in an atomic war. Once I was asked to prepare a speech on the air defense of the United States for my boss, Assistant Secretary of the Army Roderick, to deliver in Grand Rapids, his home town. Naturally I assumed that the citizens of Grand Rapids would want to know first what danger they were in. How good were our defenses? How successful would a Soviet attack probably be? So I asked the Chief of Staff's office for some background material. I was delighted to learn that in the best opinion of the service chiefs, the Russians would probably not be able to get even one bomber through our defenses over a major target (this was in the pre-ICBM era). To do so they would have had to operate beyond their bombers' extreme range, meaning aerial refueling, which they weren't good at. Then, as their bombers lumbered unescorted across Alaska and Canada, they would be hit repeatedly by waves of our interceptors. Dense swarms of interceptors would tear at the thinning ranks of the survivors as they approached their targets. The handful that made it close to our cities would encounter our Nike and Bomarc batteries, deadly against bombers. In other words, we possessed a highly effective strategic defense.

Furthermore, even if the Soviets could indeed score a hit or two it would mean national hara-kiri, since all around Russia's periphery lay American bases, from which our bombers, with fighter escorts, could smash most of the targets in the Soviet Union. So in reality an attack was inconceivable.

Well! These would be comfortable tidings indeed for the citizens of Grand

Rapids—and elsewhere. So I got to work on the speech with enthusiasm.

But surprise, surprise: Utterances of this sort have to be cleared by Defense, and the censor was immovable. Not a word could we say about our confidence in America's defenses against air attack. This was not to keep our overwhelming superiority secret from the Russians, who knew it better than anybody; rather, from the American public, for fear of complacency—and budget cuts.

But that was long ago.

When I recently visited the North American Aerospace Defense command, in Colorado Springs, I got a very different message from that of thirty years back. After being checked out by armed security men, my escort and I entered NORAD's nerve center inside Cheyenne Mountain. You may have seen one like it in the movie *WarGames*. A huge tunnel goes through the mountain. Sets of immense steel blast-proof doors lead off the tunnel to the working areas on the side. This arrangement is to permit the blast of an explosion at one mouth of the tunnel

to pass through it and out the other side; if there were a dead end inside the mountain, a bomb at the mouth would shatter everything within, like popping an eardrum. Of course, today's technology should permit simultaneous blasts at both ends of the tunnel, which would wreck everything within; indeed, even one multimegaton nuclear missile blast near the entrance would in all likelihood put the mountain out of action. It was built to withstand a lower level of attack, and has not been upgraded. (The Soviets, on the contrary, have concealed and invulnerable command centers; the one under the Kremlin is a mile underground compared to thirty feet down—almost the same as being on the surface—for the SAC command center outside Omaha.)

Other than that little problem, the NORAD center inside Cheyenne Mountain is an impressive piece of work. It consists of a series of large buildings within hollowed-out rock caverns. They stand clear of the rock walls and are mounted on enormous springs, so that a bombing attack that rocked the mountain would not necessarily shatter the buildings.

Inside, banks of computer and

display screens tell you what's going on out in space. There have been 15,000 manmade objects hurled into space, including debris, of which all but 5,500 or so have decayed or returned to earth. (Nothing stays in orbit forever.) If a U.S. space shuttle is going to pass within twenty kilometers or so of some object, NORAD, like an airport tower, tells NASA, and the shuttle can be rerouted. (It has been reported that this equipment is in fact obsolete, and I understand it's being upgraded.)

If the Soviet Union, or whoever, sends up a satellite or fires a missile, it is spotted by our satellites, which relay the information to some dozens of ground sensor stations. Computers compare its data to profiles of known missiles. In a few seconds a report is displayed in the command post, which consists of two three-story computer screens observed from balconies on various levels by the officers and officials in charge. The same information is fed to a similar command post at SAC headquarters in Omaha, to the Pentagon, other U.S. and Canadian command centers, and the White House. Near the top of the screen sits a display with three illuminated indicators: NO, MED, HI. That's NORAD's judgment as to the likelihood that an attack is actually under way. There are about 600 reportable events a year, and so far, once the people running the sensors have been queried, there has never been a MED or HI. Years ago in the pre-satellite era our radars up on the Distant Early Warning line sometimes picked up migrating birds and the like, which caused moments of excitement, but since the present set-up has been in operation there has been only one flurry of that sort. Once, a test program was mistakenly displayed on the main screen, just as in *WarGames*, and relayed to SAC and Washington. Simultaneously, however, the word was passed that it was only a test display.

All this is quite fine, except that if there were a war the Cheyenne Moun-



John Train's most recent book is *Famous Financial Fiascos* (Clarkson N. Potter/Crown).