

critical of the Ayatollah and of the quality of life now being experienced in Iran. An animal lover in Nairobi, Kenya, who was being tried for allegedly taking sexual liberties with an unidentified cow, evoked laughter from jurors and magistrates alike when he averred that he "could not seek sexual intercourse with a girl because I was

scared of contracting AIDS." The Dow Jones Index dropped by four-and-a-half percent in early September, and former President Gerald Ford hosted a conference on "Humor and the Presidency." A more exigent conference might have been held on "Exhaustion and the Presidency." Throughout the month rumors reverberated through

Washington to the effect that the President's men are tuckered out. They bungle the arrest of an American journalist in Moscow, they pant for summits and arms control accords with an increasingly belligerent Soviet Union. On September 23 they whooped it up when their negotiators turned out a sausage entitled "Final Document of

the Stockholm Conference of Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe." If all goes well, just hours before the Soviet Union launches World War III, Moscow will by treaty have to notify us. Not even Jimmy Carter made that kind of a gentlemen's agreement. The White House tires you. —RET

CORRESPONDENCE

A Note from the Publisher

Knowing that a few *American Spectator* subscribers have experienced some delay in the processing of their subscriptions, we have fired our computer—or more specifically, our computer service center. *TAS* has returned to Creative Processing Systems Data Center, a firm that provided our 40,000 subscribers with excellent service from 1975 to 1984. We will continue to provide you with the high quality service you deserve and have paid for.

—Ronald E. Burr
Publisher

Bad Bradley

I trust Fred Barnes merely was being provocative in suggesting Bill Bradley (1985 ADA rating: 85) as a presidential choice for conservatives in 1988 ("Conservatives and the Democratic 10," *TAS*, September 1986). The crafty Mr. Barnes surely realizes that the election of any Democrat would be an unhappy experience for most of the *Spectator's* readers, in that it would lead to the filling of countless mid- to upper-level posts with appointees drawn from the Democratic party's bank of political operatives. The differences in ideology between the two parties, which are sometimes masked at the top, are quite pronounced at this drone level. Just compare the congressional staffs (or the votes of House members, for that matter). This is why the election of any Republican would be preferable from the *Spectator's* perspective, in terms of nuts-and-bolts government. The only basis for arguing otherwise would lie in the belief that the defeat of a milque-toast Republican would be salutary for that party's, and the country's, future.

Obvious as all this may be, there is a powerful longing in some quarters to make the Democratic party what it once was, or how nostalgia would have us remember it. This may explain the enshrining of patriot Henry Jackson, a labor collectivist and energy socialist, or the frequent recitation of John F. Kennedy's stirring words before and after the setbacks in Berlin, Cuba, and elsewhere.

These references might score debat-

ing points, but they obscure history. As a matter of fact, the record of Kennedy's administration (yes, including the Heller tax cut) serves to illustrate what we could expect from one of the tough new Democrats.

—Tim W. Ferguson
New York, New York

Poor Fred Barnes. Here is one of America's most brilliant political observers reduced by his optimism to reading hopeful signs in the fulminations of the Democratic party's current gaggle of presidential candidates. Surely Mr. Barnes knows that what a politician says has little relation to what he believes and still less to how he would run the country.

I'm not saying that all politicians are liars, but many have an unusual definition of the truth, and it is not just my Republican prejudices which lead me to suggest that Democrats are more creative in those definitions than Republicans. Remember FDR and the balanced budget issue of 1932? How about JFK and the missile gap, or LBJ, the peace candidate?

Except in the odd case of a Ronald Reagan, candidates will say what will get them elected. We elect a party to the White House more than a man these days and the Democratic party shows no willingness to move rightward. Its candidates may create a smoke screen but that's only to confuse the yokels. The party members who will write the platform, fill the cabinet, and set the agenda show no sign of becoming enlightened.

The Democrats currently believe that the Reagan eighties are like the Eisenhower fifties: a breathing space between liberal onslaughts. Walter Mondale in 1984, like Adlai Stevenson in 1956, made one of those last stands liberals love so much. Neither of them made any real attempt to move to the center because they knew they were doomed, so they went down with all flags flying to inspire the troops next time around. The Democratic candidate in 1988, like John Kennedy in 1960, will sound like a centrist. But rest assured, if the Democrats gain the

White House in 1988, they will pursue the liberal agenda as if 1980 and 1984 never occurred.

It will take the loss of at least one or two more presidential elections before the Democrats even begin to reexamine their assumptions.

Get Cyrus Vance, Theodore Sorensen, and Robert McNamara to endorse Star Wars in a special issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Mr. Barnes, and then we'll talk.

—Thomas F. Berner
New York, New York

Vernon Young 1912-1986

The passing of Vernon Young this August left numerous publications, including this one, the poorer. He died at the age of 73 in Philadelphia.

For almost all of his adult life Vernon Young worked for a living as a free-lance critic. He was able to survive—barely—by bringing to the trade tremendous scope. He wrote perceptively and with authority on film, art, and literature (showing a particular feel for poetry and travel writing). When any of these forms dealt at all with nature he was especially attuned. The markets for his writings included quarterlies (he was the *Hudson Review's* contributing editor for film for over thirty years), magazines, and newspapers, and though he depended critically on this work for his livelihood, he was never opportunistic in it. If a book had no merit he preferred to return it to the editor rather than to compose a negative and, as it surely would have been, amusing review. His essays, written in an elaborate and witty style, lost none of their thoroughness from subject to subject, nor from year to year.

In his last years he had a rather antiquated appearance—tall, gaunt, formal in dress and often displeased in temper. Yet, while frequently disappointed in life, he found much cause for pleasure in art and nature, and—as a critic—spent his days alerting us to it.

—Thomas Swick

Fred Barnes replies:

Sorry, Tim, but I wasn't just being provocative, though your point is certainly a good one. One only has to recall the experience of the Carter presidency to understand how sub-cabinet officials can set a liberal course for a Democratic administration, even if the guy in the White House isn't a liberal. But that doesn't always have to be the case. There is another basis, besides defeating a wimp Republican, for preferring a Democrat. It's possible, after all, for a Democratic President to embrace a new crowd that's not dominated by the parasitic liberal crew in Washington, and usher them into his administration. Okay, I'm not holding my breath. Anyway, most voters don't make their presidential preference based on who's going to be assistant secretary of transportation for road repairs. They vote on what they see and hear. That's why some conservatives—not activists, but ordinary folks—might pick a Bill Bradley over a George Bush. There's a recent precedent for this, the 1976 election. I know a number of conservatives who voted for Carter. Later they regretted it.

As for you, Mr. Berner, flattery won't get me to say uncle. I'd like to clear up one of your misconceptions: Reagan is not God. (Neither is Mario Cuomo. When Cuomo declared recently that he isn't God, Mark Russell noted that this was the first flip-flop of the 1988 presidential race.) Now, I think Reagan is a great leader, but he's also a politician. He, like FDR, promised a balanced budget, but hasn't delivered. Do you think he should, if that means raising taxes? I don't. Look, I didn't say the Democratic party was veering madly to the right. I said there had been a few encouraging signs, and that conservatives ought to take a look at several potential Democratic presidential candidates. Trouble is, the candidates that conservatives might like either aren't inclined to run, or don't stand much of a chance of winning. I said that, too.

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EDITORIALS



HOODWINKED

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

Across the Great Republic our noble politicians have now auspicated their off-year elections, and on one matter both sides agree: this election lacks a national theme. In 1982 the Democrats made the economy the national theme, and the Republicans lost twenty-six seats. Now there is no theme, and according to Mr. Joseph Gaylord, executive director of the National Republican Congressional Committee, "that helps." He and many of his colleagues are relieved that only a dozen or so Republican members of the House of Representatives are expected to perish in the voting booths. In comparable off-year elections as many as forty-eight representatives from the President's party have bitten the dust. Thus this themeless election pleases many Republicans. They are apparently unaware that the comparable off-year elections of 1966 and 1974 were dominated by war and Watergate. By contrast, Ronald Reagan's six years in office have been a success. His opponents are bankrupt;

Adapted from RET's weekly Washington Post column syndicated by King Features.

they offer no plausible alternatives.

Once again Republicans have been hoodwinked by their crafty opposition. There are two themes available this election. The first is the success of Reagan conservatism. The second is the Democrats' disunity and lack of alternatives. If, owing to their timidity, the Republicans do not capitalize on their success and lose the Senate, their President will be forced to battle both houses on the budget, foreign policy, and judicial appointments. Suddenly the Democrats' amazing truculence—displayed most recently over the Rehnquist appointment—will confuse and envenom every presidential initiative. Dozens of false issues will destroy the relative tranquillity of the present. The new political era that Ronald Reagan's conservatism and the liberals' futile radicalism have ushered in will be endangered.

In the art of politics, misstatement is an essential skill. Over the years the masters of misstatement have with admirable regularity been Democrats. Six years into the most successful presidency of modern times the Demo-

crats preemptively declare that no national theme exists, and the credulous Republicans acquiesce. The Democrats attribute the success of Ronald Reagan, whom they scorned as a has-been and a clod as recently as 1979, to a sudden burst of charm acquired at age 70, and the Republicans agree. They even agree with the dubious Democratic claim that though Ronald Reagan is admired his policies are loathed. How often has a politician been elected by ever larger margins though his policies be loathed? Do the Republicans agree with the Democrats that what the American people really want are higher taxes, more inflation, more government regulation, a feeble defense—in fine, all the miseries bequeathed them by that Carter Administration of unwelcome memory?

By and large, Democrats are simply better campaigners than the Republicans, not only because of their mastery of misstatement but also because, unlike the Republicans, the Democrats relish a campaign. Their campaigns never end. They are always in search of some new babies to kiss, some new constituency to embrace. In recent years they have actually dreamed up a few constituencies, for instance the handicapped and homosexuals.

Even at their national conventions, with all the diverse and embittered special pleaders assembled, the Democrats transform what could be a gruesome session into a grand old time. Even behind such fated candidates as 1972's McGovern and 1984's Mondale they depart the convention full of fire and vows to slay the dastardly Republicans. Given their futile policies and the number of cranks among them, the Democrats do surprisingly well. By contrast, Republican campaigns are tedious, their conventions soporific. At the Republicans' last national convention the only speaker who evoked memorable whoops was Jeane Kirkpatrick, a lapsed Democrat.

And so once again the Republicans are unhappily out there on the campaign trail, the Democrats having hoodwinked them into believing that they have nothing to say. If they lose the Senate, however, it will not be because the Democrats had more attractive alternatives but because the Republicans did not stir up the electorate. Republicans will not be defeated by superior policies but by Democratic cleverness and by voter indifference. Then what could have been an era of Republican dominance will end with Ronald Reagan. □



THE FALL SEASON

Henceforth the American Broadcasting Corporation, or ABC, as it is called, shall be known as the Network of Conscience. This fall it joins with the Public Broadcasting Service, or PBS, in a vast campaign to smite illiteracy, particularly adult illiteracy, in America, a nation whose benightedness has increased with each additional educational dollar that the government spends. The campaign has been named Project Literacy U.S., or PLUS, and its pollens blow even now through ABC's "World News Tonight," "This Week With David Brinkley," "20/20," "Nightline," "Good Morning America," and more.

It does seem curious for a network

suddenly to manifest such solicitude for the printed word. Most viewers need hardly any language skills to roost gleefully in ABC's audience. In fact, the more literate one is the less likely he is to be in ABC's audience, save to throw an occasional spitball or to have a rude laugh. Television's defenders boast of how, with its high tech wizardry, television is an enormous advance over those gray pages that bring information so slowly and arduously to readers. Scholars, of course, have harvested fields of data proving television's unwelcome influence on the national mind. It misinforms, lowers artistic standards, and diverts viewers from reading things they really ought