

# CURRENT WISDOM

## Humanist

A poetic outburst in an otherwise unexceptional essay, "Beyond the Ten Commandments: Formulating a Humanistic Ethic to Supersede Christianity," by Lester Mondale:

Since the beginnings of recorded time, a few rare persons—the Buddhas, Tolstoys, Gandhis, Schweitzers—have reacted with gut, as well as ethical, revulsion to egos forever at it contesting and denigrating egos to the predominance of the individious. Profoundly injured, they have protested the idea that the jungle is the natural order of intermingling psyches. We humans were created, they have said, for a more healthful, secure, sustaining, joyously abundant mingling, one with another. We are better suited by head and heart and gut for a more finely sensitive order of coexistence.

[November/December 1988]

## Weekly Agenda

(Fairfax County, Virginia)

Another visionary role for government, devised this time by the Eleanor Roosevelt of booming Fairfax County:

The death of a pet is a special kind of loss, and pet owners can help themselves and others by sharing their feelings with those who are experiencing the same sorrow.

The County Department of Animal Control is sponsoring support group meetings for those people who are having a difficult time coping with the loss of a pet. These support groups will be managed by a professional grief and bereavement counselor. The support group meeting will be held at the County Animal Shelter, 4500 West Ox Road in Fairfax on Wednesday, September 21, beginning at 7:30 p.m.

[September 8, 1988]

## Mother Jones

Swiftian flights and Voltairian leaps from the literary Miss Barbara Ehrenreich, satirist:

Of course, our American electoral system isn't perfect—what is?—and there are all kinds of proposals for reform. Some people think we ought to restore the two-party system, meaning that Bentsen would have to run as a Republican and Dukakis would have to run as a L-----. There are even a few radicals who think we ought to extend the franchise to the poor, the tired, and so forth.

But the only thing that really bothers me is the millions of people whose very lives may depend on the outcome of the elections—but who aren't allowed to vote at all. I'm thinking, of course, of the three million Nicaraguans, and the endangered residents of various U.S. enemy and client states scattered throughout the world. So no matter how cretinous the candidates are, no matter how insulting the campaign, I grit my teeth and vote the way the Nicaraguans, etc., would if they were given a say. In the interest of fairness, and to save yourself excruciating thought, you might just want to do the same.

[November 1988]

## Village Voice

Campaign '88 as interpreted for the morons in *VV*'s vast audience by one of *VV*'s many practicing psychoanalysts:

In 1988, the Democrats have their image-making apparatus trained on the good ol' boy and his less sectarian counterpart, the white ethnic male. In order to lure him from the Republicans, with their implicit promise to keep women and minorities down, the Democrats are fielding a man called Duke, with its John Wayne vibe of entrenched male power.

Call it butch liberalism: progressive (in matters of race and class) but also patriotic and patriarchal. It speaks to a populist worldview the Democrats have often relied on to wrest power from the Republicans. In the party's scenario, Ronald Reagan did not win because the middle class began to see programs that benefitted the poor as a threat to its fragile economic status. Ron won because he knew how to play butch. Portraying Walter Mondale as a "San Francisco Democrat," with all that label connotes about a city that succumbed to queers, enabled Reagan to appeal to an America buffeted by sexual anxiety.

[August 23, 1988]

## In These Times

A glance at the epistolary page of a leading lunatic sheet turns up two future Democratic presidential nominees, to wit:

Robert of Carpinteria, at the end of his patience:

If you don't stop harassing Dukakis in every issue, we're going to end up with the CIA (Bush) in the White House for four more years. Your petty editorial (*ITT*, Aug. 17) about Dukakis' mental health indicates your perverse desire to get Bush elected so you'll have more to complain about. Even Jesse Jackson is trying to help Dukakis in spite of everything. So, come on. Help out a little more, please.

—Robert Dautch  
Carpinteria, Calif

And John of Edmonton, in a revelatory frame of mind:

In your September 7 issue a letter you published written by Lenni Brenner (Berkeley, Calif.) contains a reference to Mother Teresa, with the clear indication that she is some paragon of virtue, some saintly woman of peace.

This is not the case at all, and your readers should be aware of it. What she really is is a dangerous religious fanatic. She has been addressing anti-abortion meetings in Canada and holds the view that abortion should never be practiced even when the mother's life is in peril. She further is of the opinion that women who have abortions and the doctors performing them should be jailed.

—John G. Packer  
Edmonton, Alberta  
[October 19-25, 1988]

## Esquire

Studs Terkel, a leading proponent of anal history, still practicing his dreadful art:

We are winners, right? We are the most glorious people who ever lived, nobody like us, right? Well, in the Vietnam War, we didn't win against the little guys in black pajamas. We're the bully on the block, and we're walking down the block with a bloody nose. The world's laughing at us, so we've got to beat somebody. So bam, bam, bam. We kicked the shit out of Grenada. And we cheered because we beat somebody. We're old Muhammad Ali knocking the shit out of Woody Allen. That's what it comes to. We're accustomed to asking not what's right or wrong, but only, "Are we winning?" What lesson have we learned?

[June 1988]

## Ms.

The improbably named Letty Cottin Pogrebin unburdens herself of still more morbid ratiocinations:

As the presidential election campaign heats up for the home stretch, watch out for "the wimp factor" and its hidden agenda. Whether they mean to be or not, when someone calls a public man a "wimp" its effect is to delegitimize feminist-humanist values. "Wimp" suggests "sissy" or "fag-got," which arouses the mega-monster, homophobia, which in turn scares people away from caring behaviors they might otherwise practice and admire. . .

Wimpery is bad enough in show business, but in politics the accusation can be fatal. Beyond "wimp" lies the unspeakable—the possibility that a prospective world leader might be a lily-livered pansy. Thus, without being a literal accusation of homosexuality, wimp is heard as an attack on the candidate's manliness, his strength, his ability to tough it out against other countries, minority groups, women.

[September 1988]

## Mother Jones

Interviewed in probing, searching *Mother Jones*, the feminist gogue Miss Nancy Chodorow reveals how much she has learned about the Birds & Bees:

**MJ:** Your thesis is that "traditional" parenting isn't particularly good for daughter or son. Can you summarize why?

**NC:** For daughters, being taken care of by a mother nearly exclusively tends to give them a sense of self that is more connected to other people, more flexible ego boundaries. It creates in women a kind of psychological need for being in primary relationships. Boys who are raised primarily by a mother tend to define their sense of self as separate, as different, as distant. They are very preoccupied with a hyperindividualism, they are likely to be more fearful of intimacy and closeness, and they're liable to develop what I call a male psychology of male dominance—wanting to make themselves different from women and better than women.

[November 1988]

## Progressive

Still more reasons for Bush/Quayle in '88 from an inflamed editorialist at a leading regressive monthly:

George Bush wants to make the election a simple choice between Left and Right. And he has lived up to his share of the bargain: He has proved himself to be as scarily right-wing as his mentor, Ronald Reagan.

Wrapping himself like a mummy in the Stars and Stripes, he has shown an uncanny instinct for the ugly and the intolerant. In California, he intentionally eats boycotted grapes to show that he is squarely opposed to unions. At campaign stop after campaign stop, he brandishes his support of the death penalty—even as he proclaims "the sanctity of life" for unborn fetuses. He supports every weapons system Pentagon contractors have managed to concoct, and he shows no realization that the arms race can and must be halted. He promises no change from Reagan's interventionist policies in the Third World; indeed, with Bush's experience as head of the CIA and with the cast of former CIA characters surrounding him, U.S. meddling and manipulation abroad are likely to expand in a Bush Administration.

On most domestic issues, Bush has nothing useful to say. Except for his limited day-care proposal and his silly savings idea, he has ignored the bread-and-butter issues that confront Americans in their daily lives. He offers no solution to the lack of affordable housing, the scandal of health insurance or the decline of well-paying jobs for vast numbers of Americans.

Instead of addressing these urgent concerns, he is content simply to label Dukakis a liberal. Bush's first device was the painfully inane issue of the Pledge of Allegiance. Once that grew old, he played another 1950s card, branding Dukakis a "card-carrying member of the ACLU." One might have thought that thirty-five years after McCarthyism spilled its venom, this kind of attack would have no force. But Bush has made it a winner: Civil liberties are somehow un-American in George Bush's lexicon, and for reasons that can only be construed as frightening, the American people seem to be buying the slander.

[November 1988]

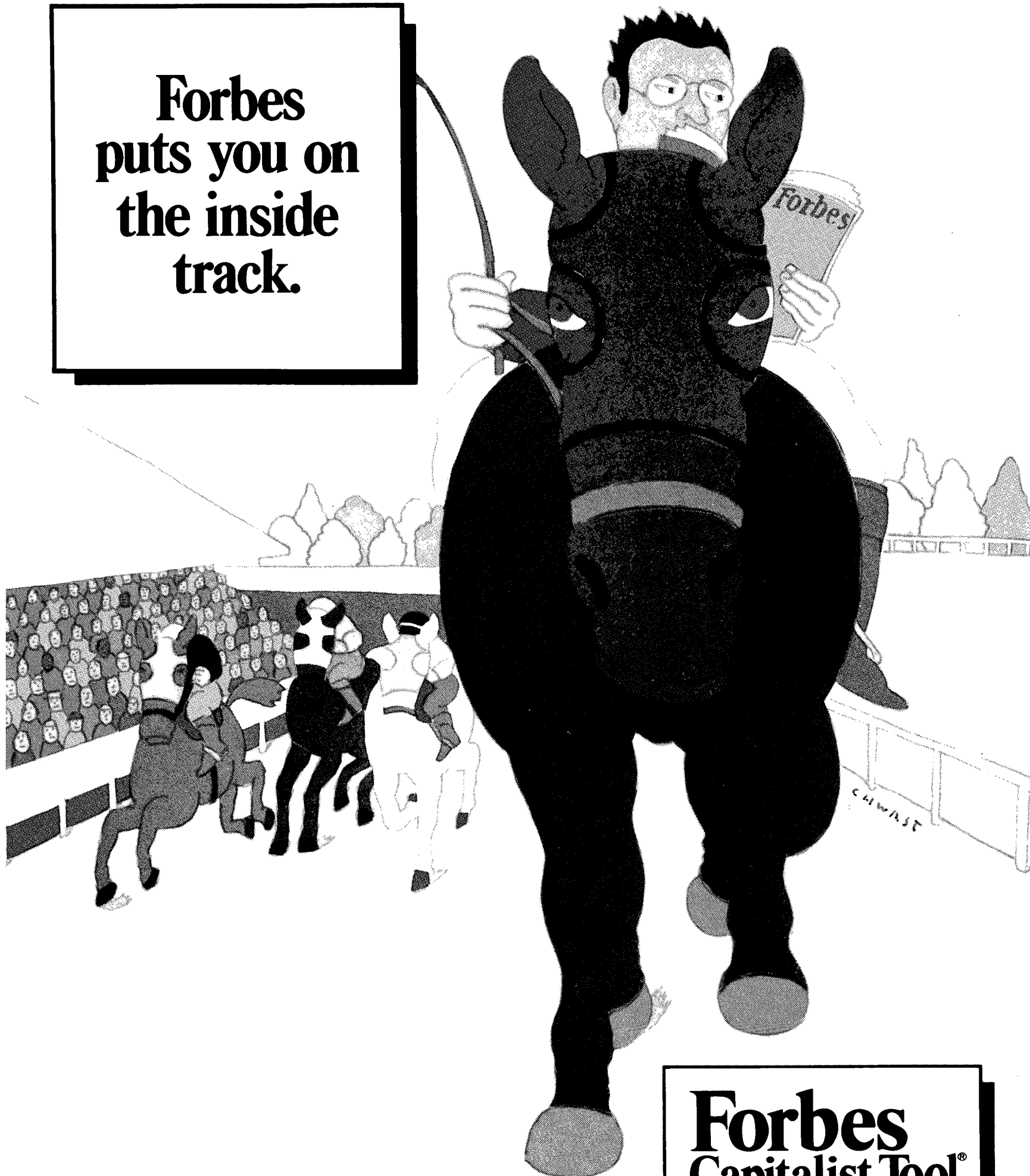
## In These Times

The venerable Dr. Alexander Crockburn lapses into a rare recognition of the sacred on the occasion of the death of a dangerous anti-Communist:

Appropriately enough, Bush took the opportunity in his introduction of Dan Quayle to the world to mourn the passage of his friend Mohammed Zia ul-Haq, president of Pakistan, whose life came blessedly to an end in an air crash in mid-August.

[August 31, 1988]

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# NOT FOR ROOKIES

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*Draft*

