



# Spending Time With Pat

by David Frum

Concord, New Hampshire

**W**e're all Big Government conservatives now. Pat Buchanan and President Bush may disagree about many things, but they do agree on one thing: it's impossible to cut the federal budget.

That's not what they say, of course. The President told the New Hampshire state legislature on February 12 that "government is too big and costs too much." Buchanan proudly insisted that his principal difference with the President was his faith in small government. But when it came time for specifics, both these conservative Republicans succumbed to political laryngitis.

In his address to the New Hampshire legislature, as in his State of the Union message, the President claimed that he wanted to eliminate 246 separate federal programs. He didn't have the nerve to name a single one. And when he did come to specifics, Bush exulted in how much his administration was spending, and how much more it was planning to spend. He promised universal health insurance. He promised money for Head Start. And he bragged that federal spending on research and development had hit unprecedented highs.

The President told the legislators that he had decided to issue no more federal regulations until March 20, and that he would use the intervening time to do away with federal regulations that "do more harm than good." They applauded. Here too, though, he didn't mention any specifics. Bush has described himself, after all, as "the environmental President," and 58 percent of the avalanche of new regulations—as many issued in three years as Ronald Reagan eliminated in

eight—have come from the Environmental Protection Agency.

Disgruntled New Hampshirites seeking to cast an anti-big government ballot did not find much of an alternative in Pat Buchanan. Despite his abhorrence of "big government" in the abstract, and his fierce newspaper columns, Buchanan the candidate was willing to name only two specific programs he would eliminate: the National Endowment for the Arts (1993 budget, \$176 million) and foreign aid (1993 budget, defined broadly, \$13.5 billion). He also called for rolling back

to blot up about \$13.186 billion, or rather less than one percent.

**I**t's true that in his standard stump speech, Buchanan promised a "freeze" in federal spending, federal hiring, and federal salaries. But when asked at a press conference shortly before the New Hampshire primary vote whether that freeze would apply to Social Security—nearly 30 percent of the budget, after interest payments and the cost of the savings and loan bailout—Buchanan flinched: No, he said, it would not.

Buchanan hastily explained that since Social Security is financed by a separate tax, and since that tax now raises more revenue than is actually spent on Social Security payments, the program should be exempt from spending limits. By that reasoning, federal highway and airport construction—both financed by trust funds that are now in surplus—would also be exempt from Buchanan's freeze.

Buchanan would exempt unemployment insurance from the freeze, too. As he told the *New York Times's* Steven Holmes on February 15, "You can't go into those unemployment offices, see those guys about to lose their homes without saying, 'Well, we ought to go ahead with 12 more weeks of unemployment benefits.'" Holmes later sardonically observed, "In sports, going on the road makes you tough. In politics, it seems to have exactly the opposite effect." Congress's February 4 vote to extend unemployment benefits for an additional thirteen weeks, which followed a November vote to extend them for thirteen-to-twenty weeks more, cost \$2.7 billion—about fifteen times as much as would be saved by scrapping

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half the congressional pay raise, for a whopping savings of not quite \$9.6 million.

In the coming fiscal year, the United States government will spend more than \$1.5 trillion, a sum as large as the entire gross domestic product of unified Germany. From that vast ocean of money, fed by roaring rivers of unnecessary and destructive spending, greasy with floating blobs of waste, Buchanan is willing

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Most of Anthony Trollope's forty-seven novels were about marriage and money, but his life would have been worth the telling even if he had never written a word of fiction. He was born in London in 1815 to a barrister and a vicar's daughter. His father, Thomas, was to lose his custom and drive the family to ruin through an irascibility and unpleasantness bordering on insanity; his mother, Frances, took to writing slapdash travel books and novels to support the six surviving children. The family moved to Harrow, where Anthony was able to attend, virtually for free, the famous local public school. He was miserable, friendless, scruffy, ungainly, slow; by 19, he seemed hopeless. His mother nearly packed him off to join the Austrian cavalry, but at the last minute got him, through a family connection, a clerkship at the London General Post Office, where he was miserable, lonely, and poor, but found a flair for the postal business. His break, the key change of air and pace, came in 1841 with his successful application for the lowly job of clerk to the postal surveyor of central Ireland.

It proved the making of him. Ireland woke him up, gave him character, tone, flavor. He was soon darting about the countryside, doing the work of ten to bring efficiency, speed, and honesty to the rural Irish post, and developing that blustery, intimidating, fee-fi-fo-fum personality that was to mark him all his days. He actually liked the Irish, not only the Ascendancy but also "the working classes" and the Catholic clergy. He started hunting and keeping hounds—an avocation that was to obsess him for thirty-five years. He wed Rose, a Yorkshire girl he had met holidaying there with her family. Ireland also gave Trollope the initial impetus and subject for fiction; steeping himself in Irish life and fiction, he set his first two wild and uncharacteristic novels in Ireland: *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* (1847) and *The Kellys and*

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## TROLLOPE: A BIOGRAPHY

N. John Hall

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reviewed by DONALD LYONS

the *O'Kellys* (1848). Throughout his career, he was to return to the matter of Ireland, most memorably in his still-underrated novel of the famine, *Castle Richmond* (1860).

Energy and discipline characterized everything he did. In the 1850s he zigzagged all over Ireland and England on special assignments, homogenizing and modernizing the post; he was an early champion of the letterbox. He rose every morning, home or away, at 5:30 and wrote ten pages before 8:30. After the two unsuccessful Irish novels, he hit his commercial stride with six novels of (mainly) clerical life set in the imaginary county of Barsetshire. In the first, *The Warden* (1855), he groped, with some reliance on Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, toward his true vein, which he found in the next, *Barchester Towers* (1857), a comic masterpiece of ecclesiastical jostling. By the third Barset novel, *Framley Parsonage* (1860-61), Trollope was a hit with the public. The final entry of the series, *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1866-67), contains a full-length portrait of a tragic figure much like Trollope's misanthropic father. The American scholar N. John Hall, who gives Trollope's life its latest, fullest, and best recounting, delights in the minutiae of this amazing literary career: how and where he wrote; how much and how he got paid (always money down, never royalties); how he got along with an array of publishers; what the reviewers said; and how the books sold. On the business side Hall is definitive and refreshingly uncondescending. George Eliot, Trollope's highbrow chum, only wished she could write with his undeviating regularity. But Hall is less satisfying on the sources and strengths of Trollope the artist, remarking, for instance, that "a close observation of daily life, a naturally good ear for

dialogue, and the habit of day-dreaming" account for it. I think, rather, that those who love Trollope feel the ubiquitous presence of Jane Austen in his language. Q. D. Leavis supplies the necessary analysis:

His own equipment was the belief that *Pride and Prejudice* was the greatest of novels, and he

clearly formed his habits of composition, natural dialogue and use of the correct, refined and educated language of the speech coming down from the eighteenth century by his admiration for, and sympathy with, the objects and techniques of Jane Austen. . . . But he had a real equipment in his now mature experience of rural and educated England; and a professional life in public service (highly creditable to him in its execution, he was even a success in Ireland) gave him, one feels, his interest in organizations and professions, an interest that he turned on the Established Church, where he no doubt felt that the intrigues, clashes of personalities and wills, the tragedies and comedies, were translatable from those of the postal service he knew from the inside.

To this should be added the insight of his best (and by no means unvaryingly favorable) contemporary critic, Henry James: "Trollope settled down steadily to the English girl; he took possession of her, and turned her inside out . . . he bestowed upon her the most serious, the most patient, the most tender, the most copious consideration. He is evidently always more or less in love with her. . . . But, if he was a lover, he was a paternal lover, as competent as a father who has had fifty daughters." (James once shared a transatlantic crossing with Trollope and was amazed at the Englishman's matutinal scribbling in all weathers.)

Flame and money saw Trollope settled in a country home with wife and two sons, welcomed in London clubs such as the Garrick, of which he at once became a convivial pillar, and palling around with Thackeray and other lions. He loved to hunt and to entertain—