

Down to Size

Michael Fumento displays a profound misunderstanding when he says, in "Fetal Attraction" (*TAS*, July 1992), that we pro-lifers "believe that the more developed the fetus, the more heinous the act" of abortion. Exactly backwards! The entire logic of our position hangs precisely on the insight that the morality of killing does *not* depend on the age or size of the person being killed.

—John Woolley
Arlington, Virginia

A GAO Whistleblower

Bravo for Edward McFadden and his article on the General Accounting Office ("There's No Accounting for Congress," *TAS*, July 1992). He has them down cold, and it is only too bad this has not been said before and louder.

I was a 25-year employee of the Executive Branch and during most of my time, my duties included the preparation of answers to GAO reports. About twenty years ago, as McFadden says, this once-respected agency began to fall apart, and reports became obviously partisan and predictable. Sometime during the Carter Administration, I began betting with fellow employees: you tell me the title of the report and which congressman requested it and I will tell you the conclusions. I have yet to lose. I once tried my game on a fairly high-level GAO executive. He refused to play.

There are potentially much worse consequences than just partisanship. In the 1960s, GAO and other government auditors were respected and feared. When a report came in to an agency, staffers jumped through hoops to comply with the recommendations and write a reply showing problem areas had been corrected. By 1980 this attitude was gone. The disappearance coincided with a new GAO emphasis on "Performance Audits"—not audits so much as judgments on the effectiveness of programs. The reports soon skirted the facts so widely that if any real crunch came, they could easily be refuted. No one bothered with corrective measures. The same attitude began to be shown toward internal audits. So much for Jimmy Carter and his "Junkyard Dogs."

This state of affairs ought to scare the

public to death. In effect it means the system of checks and balances has been corrupted to the point of disappearing. I never thought I would say it, but: GAO, where are you when we need you?

McFadden also hits upon a large part of the cause of the problem: GAO only hires at the entrance level, new college grads with degrees in accounting who have no experience at all. They have no idea how an agency works and they are never put anywhere they can learn. The consequent judgments on "performance" are worthless even when they do not happen to be partisan.

—S. J. Park
Austin, Texas

Price is Right

Terry Eastland provided an excellent critique ("Hill's Rats," *TAS*, July 1992) of the news coverage of the "iron triangle" of liberal Senate staffers, interest groups, and reporters that tried to stop Justice Thomas's nomination. It seems to me that the media's lack of curiosity, as recounted by Eastland, was no less egregious on the subject of Professor Hill's polygraph test.

While a number of newspapers described the limitations of polygraph tests *in general*, only the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Washington Times* took note of the none-too-distinguished track record of the particular polygraph examiner hired by Professor Hill's team. Those papers were the only ones to mention that the examiner, Paul Minor, had previously bungled two other high-profile cases.

One case, in 1980, involved a U.S. attorney in California who had been accused of accepting a bribe. The man denied the allegations; Minor concluded the man was lying. Other polygraph experts later reviewed Minor's work and found his methodology to be seriously flawed and his results to be wrong. Minor conceded he had made errors and apologized. In 1989, Minor conducted a polygraph test on male prostitute Stephen Gobie, and concluded that Gobie was lying about his relationship with Rep. Barney Frank. Rep. Frank's later admissions made it clear that Gobie's statements were accurate.

At the press conference on October 13, 1991, when Professor Hill's lawyers announced the results of the polygraph

test, Minor was asked, "Have you had cases where you later found out that the polygraph did not accurately report?" Minor gave the amazing reply, "I've heard of such cases, but I don't know that I've ever had one. I don't think so."

—David Price
Washington, D. C.

Who's the Boss?

I read "Unheavenly Cities" (*TAS*, July 1992) with great interest. I think Bob Tyrrell is quite right to suggest that bureaucratic intercessions have worsened urban pathologies of poverty, crime, and dependency, and that our streets were safer, schools better, and families stronger under the aegis of machine politics. Compared to professional victims and droning welfare bureaucrats who would rather rationalize violence and hatred than act to curb lawlessness, political bosses of the late nineteenth-century were principled, pragmatic, and extravagantly responsive to their constituents. As Tammany stalwart George Washington Plunkitt once told a reporter: "If a family is burned out . . . I don't refer them to the Charity Organization Service . . . I just get quarters for them, buy clothes for them if their clothes were burned up, and fix them up 'til they get things running agin." No wonder that, as Thomas Sowell writes in *Ethnic America*, "the poor usually ended up preferring corrupt politicians, who understood them, to distant theorists, who did not." In this "60 Minutes" age, we can't go back to corrupt, albeit effective, patronage politics. But we also can't stay where we are. This status quo must not stand.

Tyrrell's shrewd, persuasive editorial will help re-invigorate debate on the subject.

—James P. Pinkerton
Washington, D. C.

Cuban Jim Crow

The mythology of Castroism is pervasive enough in the mainstream media and academia. Now we read it in your magazine—one of the few places intelligent people can seek solace. Patrick Symmes writes that "one of the worst sins of the Batista regime was that it allowed privileged enclaves where Cubans worked only as busboys and

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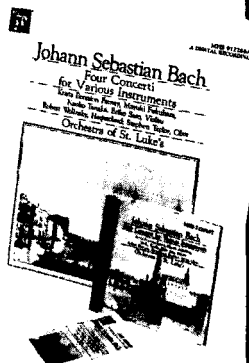
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Dramatic Democrats

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

New York

The Democrats have returned from the Big Apple! But they are scarcely the boisterous, ebullient bunch from days gone by. Fruit juice tipplers have replaced most of the beer guzzlers and dispelled the cigar smoke. The party of Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion is now the party of Yoghurt, Yoga, and Bumper Stickers.

Yet this is unquestionably a great political apparatus. True, the party is at odds with itself—"odd" being the *mot juste*—but the Democratic party contains the most prodigious collection of political dramatists ever assembled in a party, short of National Socialism's or Marxist-Leninism's spellbinders. For half a century the Democrats have given us practically all of our political myths, melodramas, epics, and even our barbaric political superstitions. They have come up with our catchiest slogans and prettiest lapel pins, and I, for one, am still touched by that little girl back in 1964 who picked the daisy that blew up the world.

The Republicans at their best are the party of scare tactics, mudslinging, and Willie Horton—we have this on the authority of our transcontinental corps of Democratic writers and pundits. The Democrats at their best are the party of *Camelot*, *Sunrise at Campobello*, and *Give 'em Hell, Harry*. In this century only one Republican has surpassed his

Democratic adversaries in the art of self-dramatization, and that was Ronald Reagan, an ex-Democrat.

In recent years, as the fragmentation and radicalization of the Democratic party has worsened, its idealists and tireless campaigners have actually sharpened their artistic skills, transforming themselves into legendary figures and their ideas into The American Credo. Consider Governor Clinton. He is Georgetown-schooled and Oxford-trimmed. He is a modern, progressive cosmopolitan who remains vulnerable to the hallelujah wails of that old-time religion. He is a policy whiz kid but with a special touch for the poor, the black, the

unlettered. Naturally, he is a jogger and widely read. He is Huck Finn and Holden Caulfield and almost any Kennedy. Consider Governor Cuomo. He is a ballplayer. He is a tough guy. He is large-souled. He can cry in public, but get mad too.

He also is a reader—all Democrats are readers!—partial to Teilhard de Chardin, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Garry Wills. He is a supra-Catholic, pious but superior to priests, nuns, and his local cardinal, with whom he is in a spectacular metaphysical row. He is a scholar of A. Lincoln and perhaps St. Augustine. He flays George Bush over the American economy, though the Hon. Cuomo's state and its largest city, the financial center of America, are practically in bankruptcy. No contradiction is too grotesque for his powder and mascara. He is numbered among the grandest orators of our age, along with the Rev. Jesse Jackson and someone by the name of Ann Richards.

Do you detect incongruities? Fear not, the Democrats' political dramatists will blend them all into compelling legends. They have done it so many times before. They turned an artless rube from Plains, Georgia, known for his mean streak, into a loving humanitarian, too good for Washington and too bright for politics (as though being bright and being ignorant are irreconcilable). They took a rich Harvard patrician from the 1900s and an equally rich Harvard playboy from the 1940s and turned both into statesmen with an uncommon empathy for poverty, suffering, being black—in sum, things they knew little about. Would not a rich

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R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr. is editor-in-chief of The American Spectator. This article is an adapted and expanded version of an essay that appeared in the Wall Street Journal.