



Crossfire

In another edition of the Gong Show, Pat Buchanan, therapist, begins bringing Evan Thomas of *Newsweek* to terms with a mental disorder that, alas, has come to afflict so many post-Watergate Washington journalists:

PAT BUCHANAN: Evan Thomas, let me ask you about the Whitewater thing. You've got Webb Hubbell, it's sort of a shocker today, he's going to plead guilty. You've got D'Amato calling the special prosecutor to investigate Ickes and Stephanopoulos for alleged acts of perjury, you've got allegations that the special prosecutor is looking into Lindsey and Betsey Wright, both houses are going to go into Whitewater hearings. How serious is this?

EVAN THOMAS: Well, I'm sick of Whitewater. I wish it would go away. . .
[December 2, 1994]

Syracuse Post-Standard

The rise of a new superpower does not escape the eye of Harvey Pinyoun, writing on the op-ed page of the illustrious SPS and betraying all the learning and ratiocination of a member of the Clinton National Security Council:

The American people generally ignore Haiti because it is thought to have no resources of interest for us, except faceless labor. But when events force us to pay attention, Haiti frightens the American people, particularly the American government!

Haiti has a powerful spirit. It is a very holistic, integrated culture, with land, body and language touching each other.

Furthermore, the culture has been oppressed militarily and economically, which has empowered the grass-roots Haitian spirit even more.

With its history closely wrapped in experiences with the land, the animal world and the past, Haiti's particular and unique identity becomes inclusive and multi-dimensional.

[October 24, 1994]

CCC

(College Composition and Communication, a.k.a. The Journal of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, National Council of Teachers of English)

The interesting observations of Cynthia L. Selfe and her lovely husband, Richard, deposited in one of America's great learning holes and written for those who dwell in the nation's cemeteries or coma treatment centers or English faculties—wherever minds move slowly, if at all:

Built into computer interfaces are also a series of semiotic messages that support this alignment along the axes of class, race, and gender. The white pointer hand, for example, ubiquitous in the Macintosh primary interface, is one such gesture, as are the menu items of the AppleShare server tray and hand, calculator, the moving van (for the font DA mover), the suitcase, and the desk calendar. Other images—those included in the HyperCard interface commercial clip art collections, and in the Apple systems documentation—include a preponderance of white people and icons of middle- and upper-class white culture and professional, office-oriented computer use. These images signal—to users of color, to users who come from a non-English language background, to users from low socio-economic backgrounds—that entering the virtual worlds of interfaces also means, at least in part and at some level, entering a world constituted around the lives and values of white, male, middle- and upper-class professionals. Users of color, users from non-English language background, users from a low socio-economic class who view this map of reality, submit—if only partially and momentarily—to an interested version of reality represented in terms of both language and image.

[December 1994]

Rocky Mountain News

Evidence that *National Review* and *The American Spectator* still have room for improvement:

Watch out, Rush Limbaugh. The Newsstand Cafe has had it up to here with you and it's not going to take it anymore.

The trendy coffee house at Washington and East Sixth Avenue has posted this bulletin: "This just in. We will no longer serve Snapple products, as Rush Limbaugh is a company spokesman."

Explains Newsstand owner Trudi Ross: "Customers started to alert me that Snapple was very pro life. We can't verify that, but we can verify that Rush is a major sponsor."

But Trudi, Trudi, Trudi—isn't the newsstand, with 1,400 publications, the last bastion of the free exchange of ideas? You carry both liberal and conservative magazines, don't you?

"We carry the *National Review* and *The American Spectator*, about the most extreme right you get," Ross says. . .

But aren't you being too rough on Rush?

"I feel it's scary to help Rush make a living and stay on the air," Ross says. "I think he had the potential of becoming a '90s Hitler. He offends my customer base and he offends me. He hates women. He hates queers. I'm sure he hates Jews, but I don't know if he's come out with that yet. We're not trying to make a judgment. He's just too offensive."

[October 19, 1994]

University Alumni Report

(Alumni Association of the University of North Carolina)

Evidence that—ho, ho, ho—whilst at Averett College the winsome Mr. Thomas Everitt Wilson was not unanimously as winning as he might have thought:

I cannot tell you the sadness I felt when I learned from your August issue that I had died. On 23 February 1994, the date of my

reported demise, I was in Egypt as part of my sabbatical. I do not remember feeling poorly; in fact, I do not remember how good it felt to be alive. Since my return from the sabbatical, my appearances can be deceiving. I will miss me, as there is no one that I know and love better.

To update you, I am no longer in social work. I left Averett College in that black year that Ronald Reagan was elected. It was a bad decade for social workers. I went to Seminary at the University of the South, graduating in 1984, and was ordained to the Episcopal Church in Lynchburg, Va. I did return to Chapel Hill in the summer of 1982 to work at the Clinical Pastoral Education program at the University Hospital. Chapel Hill continues to change a great deal. I would like to return to the Hill again in this life, if the *Alumni Report* will not continue to exaggerate the reports of my death.

I enclose a check for the dues for the *Report* in the hopes that I will receive more news.

In good health, considering,
Thomas Everitt Wilson '68
[October 1994]

San Francisco Examiner

In reviewing the *oeuvre* of the late Christopher Lasch, columnist and problem child Gary Kamiya takes up an old theme made popular years ago by the late Nikita Khrushchev:

Lasch's attacks on Hollywood stars and Beltway blowhards are similarly ham-handed: What do these weird subgroups have to do with anything except themselves?

Similar myopia mars his cultural analysis. For one thing, the elite isn't PC anymore, if it ever was. Who bought all those copies of *The Closing of the American Mind* and *Culture of Complaint*? It wasn't Joe Sixpack.

As for the lower middle classes, Lasch's claim that they are upholding civilization must have *Revolt of the Masses* author Ortega y Gasset, and Friedrich Nietzsche, whose scorn for the flealike "last man" inspired the Spaniard's 1930 book, rolling in the Elysian aisles. The three strikes initiative? Anti-immigrant bashing? Ross Perot? The glorious Reagan-Bush years? (Now there's community spirit.) This year's mindless anti-government mania? Hello? Anybody home?

It's all well and good to trash American society, but you gotta get all of it. It's the whole damn thing that is revolting, not just the "elites." Lasch once seemed to realize that . . .

[October 27, 1994]

Marin Independent Journal

Mary L. Kelley writing in the correspondence section of a great daily with sufficient malice and dementia to suggest that she is a stalwart of the Christian left or perhaps even an atheist:

Hallelujah! A new day has dawned in America, and the Republicans are in control again! Initial reports indicate that the Christian evangelicals turned out almost 40 percent of the Republican vote.

We can finally put to rest that silly health plan—and now if we can just get rid of "Socialist Security" and all the poor people, it will truly be a bright day in America.

So, as I send my husband off to cut down the last remaining redwoods, I can plan a busy day ahead for myself with joy in my heart. I think I'll load my AK-47 in my pink Cadillac and give them a little wakeup call over at Planned Parenthood.

Then I can head over to the school to make sure there are no suspicious-looking illegal kindergarteners. And from there, I'll head over to Urgent Care to make sure that some grape picker getting off a 16-hour shift for menial wages didn't have the nerve to get sick and need medical treatment.

Those illegals surely do not earn their keep. After they clean our houses, mow our lawns and raise our kids, maybe we could train them to eat our garbage and we could solve the refuse problem all at the same time. Praise the Lord!

As for my gay neighbor, I'll set some prayer time aside that he gets AIDS, which he deserves. So much to do . . .

But it's all worth it, for on Sunday I can rest and attend church and receive God's blessing for doing His work and living in His image all week.

[November 16, 1994]

World AIDS Day (ECOSOC NGO)

The transcript of the historic exchange that blew up the most amusing surgeon general of all time:

DR. ROB CLARK (Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues): It seems to me the campaign against AIDS has already destroyed many taboos about discussion of sex in public. It seems to me that there still remains a taboo against the discussion of masturbation. And please forgive me for trying to do my tiny bit by

announcing that I masturbate and I do want to ask you what do you think are the prospects [for] a more explicit discussion and promotion of masturbation.

SURGEON GENERAL: I think you already know that I'm a very strong advocate of a comprehensive health education program, if you will, starting at a very early age. I feel that it should be age appropriate, it should be complete, and we need to teach our children the things that they need to know. And we know that many of our parents have difficulty teaching certain things and for that reason to make sure all of our children are informed I've always felt that we should make it a part of our school. I feel it's the only institution we have where all of the children go. And at present in our schools it's very incomplete and only 5 percent of schools have a comprehensive program. As per your specific question in regard to masturbation, I think that is something that is a part of human sexuality and it's a part of something that perhaps should be taught. But we've not even taught our children the very basics. And I feel that we have tried ignorance for a long time and it's time we try education.

[December 1, 1994]

A JOURNAL BRITING WHITEWATER

Confused by Whitewater? For the first time in one place, *Whitewater* collects the energetic, trenchant commentary from the editorial pages of *The Wall Street Journal* that focused national attention on this slowly unfolding scandal that clouds the Clinton presidency.

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Wish List

by David Frum

Republicans are happily interpreting the 1994 election as a mandate for smaller government. Splendid. Unfortunately, if past performance is any indicator, the new Republican majority will pronounce stirring speeches about the evils of Big Government—but shrink from enacting real cuts.

Suppose, though, that the Republicans *were* serious about shrinking the government and lowering taxes. What kinds of things would they be doing? With the Democrats ensconced in the White House, Republican power is of course limited. Still, the Republicans should be able to go far toward smaller government over the next two years.

Here's a checklist:

1. *Never more than in '94.* Republicans want to shrink government. At the very least, they should stop it from growing any fatter. Washington spent \$1.461 trillion in the 1994 fiscal year—roughly the size of the entire economy of united Germany. That's a big enough allowance for anyone. Republicans ought to pledge that—while they intend to do much, much more—in no case will Washington spend more than that \$1.461 trillion per year for however long the Republicans retain their congressional majority.

2. *Who goes a-borrowing goes a-rowing.* Yes, the balanced-budget amendment is sort of a dumb idea, because it can so easily be evaded by cunning congressional accounting. Never mind. Do it anyway.

3. *Easy on the House cleaning.* The worrisome truth about the Contract With America is that it was written by canny pollsters with an eye to attracting straying Perot voters back to the Republicans. That's why so many of its promises—six of the first eight items of business—address problems in the way Congress

does its business. Fine, most of them are good ideas. But the point of congressional reform is to improve the handling of the people's business. It's not an end in itself.

4. *Cut middle-class pork.* Think of them as fiscal cellulite, hard little globules of fiscal fat inside the federal body: student loans, rural electrification grants, the Small Business Administration, transportation demonstration projects, women's health programs, minority business development. And on and on. David Stockman used to say that the test of Republican integrity was the courage to attack weak claims rather than weak claimants. These are some of the weakest claims in the entire budget.

5. *Cut corporate pork, too.* What on earth is Congress doing shoveling money out the door to Archer Daniels Midland? Why is President Clinton handing over nearly \$150 million a year to General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler to build an electric car? It's time to close down: grants to agribusiness, subsidies to industry and utilities in the name of energy conservation, the Department of Commerce's grants for economic development, federal underwriting of corporate advertising overseas, contributions to public-sector pseudo-banks like the World Bank, and hi-tech pork barrel like the president's Advanced Technology Program—a program that allows the Department of Commerce to play “let's pretend we're venture capitalists.”

6. *Don't forget health care.* James Carville's 1992 motto needs to be adopted by the GOP. Republicans may be sick to death of the subject, but the brute fact remains: Medicaid is the fastest-growing program in the federal budget, metastasizing from just over \$20 billion a decade ago to nearly \$100 billion in 1994. Medicare follows close behind, up from \$60 billion in 1985 to nearly \$180 billion today. Like it or not, there is no controlling the federal budget without ending the growth in federal health-care spending. With their Medical IRAs, the Republicans have the beginnings

of an answer—but only the beginning. There's no avoiding the task of producing a real and detailed policy.

7. *Don't chicken out of the middle-class tax cut.* The Contract With America promises three distinct tax cuts: a cut in the capital-gains tax, easier corporate depreciation, and a boost in the per-child exemption. The latter is by far the most expensive. If the Republicans fail to cut spending, they will be tempted to skimp on it, or even abandon it altogether, and do capital gains alone. The reasons for succumbing to this temptation are understandable enough: Taken together, the 1986 tax reform's attack on deductions and exemptions combined with the 1990 and '93 increases in the top marginal rate have imposed excessive burdens on society's most productive citizens. However, the conservative position on taxes has to be: taxes are too high for everyone. It must never be: let the yokels pay.

8. *Rhetoric vs. reform.* For years, Republicans have been pummeling Democrats on values issues. In 1994, the pummeling finally took its toll. Crime, illegitimacy, illegal immigration, chronic idleness among the very poor, family breakdown, reverse discrimination: it's a grim roster. Now that the Republicans hold the Congress, two potentially embarrassing questions arise: Do the Republicans in fact have a values agenda that goes beyond rhetoric? And, if they do, is it truly different in more than its technical details from the Democrats'?

The best conservative ideas would transform welfare into straightforward grants to states, letting the states experiment any way they wanted to. They would enact a new civil rights law requiring color-blindness by the federal government and corporations engaged in interstate commerce. They would change jurisdictional rules to free states from endless appeals to the federal courts in death penalty cases. They would change the tax law so that married couples pay no more tax than unmarried couples do.

Above all: wise conservatives should recognize the growth of government as a values issue too. By taking more money from families, and doing more things for them, Big Government weakens and undercuts them. In other words, the most fundamental values issue of them all comes down to this one nervous question: Will a Republican Congress enact the spending cuts that two Republican presidents failed to achieve? □

David Frum is the author of *Dead Right* (New Republic/Basic Books).