



Contract Extension

by Grover G. Norquist

Nine months ago, Republican candidates for the House stood on the steps of the Capitol and offered America a deal: if voters would give the GOP their first House majority since 1954, the Republicans would enact eight congressional reforms on the first day of Congress and hold votes in the next hundred days on ten major pieces of legislation ranging from the balanced-budget amendment to term limits and legal reform. On April 7, at another gathering on the same steps, House Republicans announced the Contract With America had been completed—with a week to spare.

Had House Republicans not made good on the bargain, the Contract would have gone down in American electoral history as little more than a successful campaign gimmick. Instead, it has changed the way government will function in the future. It is difficult to imagine a point when voters will not demand such a pledge from political candidates—or when the political party most in sync with voters does not offer one. The Republican party will run on another contract in 1996, one that will include any measures that the Democrats block or Clinton vetoes, as well as proposals—such as Rep. Dick Armey's flat tax—that were not ready in time for the 1994 election.

At the urging of Pete du Pont, the former governor of Delaware, state and legislative Republican candidates in more than a dozen states proposed their own contracts in the 1994 campaign; in 1996, GOP tickets will offer similar pledges in all fifty states. The contract idea has even begun to trick-

le down to local elections, as taxpayer groups have begun demanding that candidates for county and city office make pledges on property taxes and other reform issues.

The Contract's success also means that future congressional elections will link candidates to their party and pledge, turning the races into national contests rather than a free-for-all of individual races decided on local issues and personalities. This is welcome news for a Republican Party that has enjoyed majority support for its national policies while failing to win congressional majorities. When American voters cast a deliberate ballot for a candidate speaking on national issues, they reliably vote conservative by a 60-40 margin—as they did with Nixon and Wallace over Humphrey, Nixon over McGovern, Reagan over Carter and Mondale, Bush

over Dukakis, and Bush and Perot over Clinton.

Tip O'Neill's familiar adage—that "all politics is local"—was less an observation than a strategy for protecting the dozens of incumbent Democrats in conservative districts. These Democrats would mouth conservative rhetoric but cast their decisive votes with the left-wing Democratic leadership. The party touted the personal attributes of its candidates—the regional interests, the pork-barrel prowess—while avoiding discussion of the national issues. In the future, Democratic candidates will have to stand on their pledges.

The success of the Contract will thus change the way Congress governs. The Republican commitment to a balanced-budget amendment puts all spending interests in competition with one another, limiting the opportunities for pork-barrel spending. And the line-item veto, passed in both houses, will give the president the ability to strip out special interest spending. Control of one house of Congress or the presidency can now effectively wipe out pork. Meanwhile, the Contract has also undermined the seniority system by restricting the time any one congressman can serve as a committee chairman to three terms. Never again will a Dan Rostenkowski or John Dingell accumulate decades' worth of power.

Throughout the 1994 campaign, large majorities of the press predicted that the Contract would remind voters of Reaganism and thus repel them. After the elections, they took to arguing that there would be a schism between social and economic conservatives, freshmen and Old Bulls, reformers and



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newly minted committee chairmen. The predicted strife never developed. Republicans never lost more than 40 votes (nor did Democrats give fewer than 8 votes) on any Contract measure.

Now the press is presenting two scenarios for a Republican collapse. In the first, the Senate waters down or kills the Contract's measures. Presidential politics and constituent pressure lead a more "reasonable," "seasoned," and "independent" Senate to stop the House's momentum. But in fact, the most radical items in the Contract's agenda—the line-item veto and the virtual ban on unfunded mandates—have already passed in the Senate. And the balanced-budget amendment, which was defeated by one vote, will be brought up again this summer by a confident Bob Dole, who now claims he has the 67th vote needed to pass the amendment.

Furthermore, both Dole and Texas Senator Phil Gramm are running for president; and each is seeking to prove that he is the best man to guide the Contract's passage through the Senate. Gramm has already announced that if any part of the Contract does not get out of a Republican committee intact, he will introduce it on the Senate floor himself. Dole, meanwhile, has the ability to appoint members to conference committees, where differences between Senate and House versions of legislation are hammered out. Dole has a strong incentive to appoint solid conservatives who will favor the tougher House versions of the Contract items. He is even pushing for some toughening of the Contract, especially in the area of protecting property rights.

In the second scenario envisioned by the press, Republican unity will not last now that the Contract has passed the House and the heady first hundred days are over. Social conservatives will want immediate votes on divisive measures. Committee chairmen will want their pork and perks. Moderates will want to show their friends on the Georgetown cocktail party circuit that they are "independent." And the Republican momentum will be stalled. Hence the importance of the document Republican congressmen carried home with them over the April recess—a 111-page budget briefing entitled, "Where We Go From Here." It is the GOP blue-

print for the 1996 budget fight, as well as a seven-year strategy to bring the budget into balance by 2002.

The briefing—which is vintage Gingrich but was also greatly shaped by Republican committee chairmen—points out that in 1950 federal taxes took five percent of the median household's income. By 1970 this figure had increased to 16 percent; by 1990, 24 percent. If Americans were still paying taxes at the 1970 level, the average family would have \$4,000 more in take-home pay each year.

The document also points out that "Robert," born in 1959, will pay \$75,851 in interest on the federal debt over a lifetime of 75 years. "Mary," born in 1974, will pay \$115,724. "Sally," born in 1995, will pay \$187,150 during her life—all just in interest on the national debt. By 1997, the federal government will pay more for interest on the national debt (\$270 billion) than for national defense (\$257 billion).

Using Joint Economic Committee reports that estimate that a balanced budget would drop the interest rate by 2 percent, the briefing asserts that bringing the

budget into line would save a family \$37,440 in interest payments over the course of a 30-year mortgage on a \$75,000 home; \$720 on the purchase of a car; and \$20 million over seven years in the cost of developing a new drug.

The briefing also makes it clear that Republicans are changing their stance on welfare. In the past they have argued that, while welfare helps the poor, a dedication to good fiscal policy made them cut it. They now argue that welfare is destructive, and that the burden to prove otherwise rests with the Democratic leadership that has allowed this destruction to continue for thirty years.

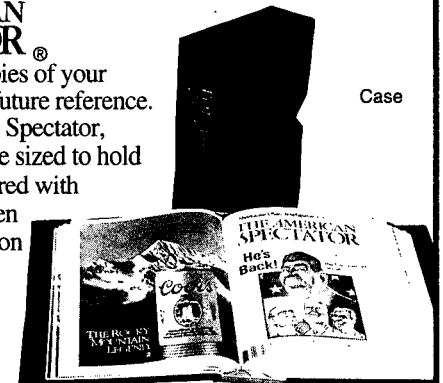
House Speaker Newt Gingrich personally briefed more than 200 Republican members of Congress about this document, and then spoke to their press secretaries and key committee staff in a series of two-hour sessions. Despite desperate hopes from the press that GOP consensus is crumbling, the House Republican team is virtually united behind this plan for the budget battle—a battle that Dick Armey says will "make the fight for the Contract look like spring training." □

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It's a Man's World

by James Bowman

When Charles Keating (yes, that Charles Keating) of the Citizens for Decent Literature said back in the 1960s that "more than anyone of his time, Russ Meyer is responsible for the decay of moral values in America," he may have been right in a way that he could hardly have intended at the time. It's not that Meyer, the director of the all-time camp classic *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* and a host of mildly titillating B-movies, was a pornographer. To watch today the reissued version of his 1966 film, *Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!*—which John Waters, the director of *Hairspray* and *Pink Flamingos*, calls the greatest movie ever made—is to be reminded of the innocence of what people thought of as dirty pictures back in those days.

No, it is not the awesomely cantilevered but always covered Tura Satana, who plays the killer go-go girl in *Pussycat*, nor the hilarious *double entendres* with which the dialogue is shot through ("Have a soft drink," says a hunky guy to one of the dancers. "We don't like nothing soft," she purrs menacingly) that was so subversive. It was, rather, the killer cynicism of the postmodern sensibility to which Waters, like many others, has made his own contributions since. Like zebra mussels in the Great Lakes, the knowing postmodern sneer chokes off all other life in our spiritual ecosystems, reducing both the heroic and the romantic to a joke.

It would be nice to think, as one sometimes almost does, that the heroic, in particular, might make a comeback. It has taken a double hit—

James Bowman, our movie critic, is American editor of the Times Literary Supplement.

from feminism as well as postmodernism (the misogynist old man in *Faster, Pussycat!* who came to hate women when he was paralyzed trying to save one from an onrushing train says: "They let 'em vote, smoke and drive and put 'em in pants and what do you have next? A Democrat for president")—so it becomes almost a shock when, in *Major Payne*, a sympathetic marine officer is allowed to punish his recalcitrant ROTC cadets by putting them in women's dresses and marching them around the campus chanting: "Got to earn my right to be called a man." Wow! Whatever next?

Of course, the eponymous Major, played by Damon Wayans, is also a comic figure. He is assigned to the ROTC because regular soldiering jobs seem temporarily to have dried up. "There's got to be someone who needs some killing," he pleads to his commanding officer.

"I'm sorry," says the general. "There aren't anymore. We've killed them all."

But for all his exaggerated blood-thirstiness and gung-ho qualities, there is still a serious side to him of a sort that is now, perhaps, only allowable in a black man. The old-fashioned movie morality tale about military discipline's molding a bunch of misfits into a team gets a new life here and is not merely sent up, although the context is comic. And when the major tells his trendily squishy love interest (Karyn Parsons) that her kind of "nurturing" can too easily turn into "neutering" or that he is glad that the boys hate him because "it will draw them close together and make them a team," we've got to wonder how such lines got past the Hollywood thought police.

There is a similar kind of male bonding going on in *Bad Boys* by Michael Bay, where the ghetto game of mutual

insult called "the dozens" (the Elizabethans called it "flyting") is played by two cool young black stars, Martin Lawrence and Will Smith, as the bullets fly around them. Unfortunately, the dialogue written by Michael Barrie, Jim Mulholland, and Doug Richardson is more remarkable for volume than for wit or subtlety. It is an illustration, if one were needed, of what your mother always told you about filthy language's only being for those without brains enough to lend force to their words any other way. But it is also characteristic of men in all-male fighting groups, and these we are still allowed to see, I guess, if they have an ethnic angle.

It seems that even Scotsmen will do—so long as they lived nearly 300 years ago and are up against the kind of pure evil that Tchecky Karyo supplies as the villain of *Bad Boys*. In *Rob Roy*, directed by Michael Caton-Jones from the classic novel by Sir Walter Scott, it is John Hurt and Tim Roth who conspire to get the better of the noble Robert (Liam Neeson). And though the film has its flaws, I was impressed that the latter's manly virtues and his concern with honor are taken seriously and not, amazingly enough, mocked. This may be why boy critics like Jack Kroll and Roger Ebert liked the picture, while girl critics like Janet Maslin and Rita Kempley, both of whom just couldn't get over (or perhaps under?) those kilts, were bored or impatient with it.

Miss Maslin even complains that the plot (treachery, robbery, murder, rape, a manhunt, flight and pursuit, escape from certain death at least twice, revenge, swordfights to the death, that sort of thing) is "too ponderous and uninteresting" and the domestic byplay of the charismatic Neeson and his attractive