



Ben and Jerry

Tuesday

"Far between Sundown's finish and Midnight's broken toll, / We ducked inside the doorway as thunder went crashing...." I cannot possibly believe what is happening. Here it is, the day before the House of Representatives is to vote on the impeachment of Bill Clinton, and what is Bill Clinton doing? Suddenly, after years of near total inaction, without any particular provocation, without a United Nations command to do it at any specific time, with several big powers opposing the move, Clinton is bombing Iraq with cruise missiles and throwing thousands of tons of high explosives at various targets.

The transparency of this murderous fraud would be funny if it were not for innocent people getting killed. Now, I have no love at all for Saddam Hussein. He should be in prison for life, at the least. And I want a weakened, subdued Iraq. But Clinton is killing innocent men, women, and children in a vain attempt to delay his day of reckoning. This would not have happened to Saddam's Iraq, the ordinary Joe Mohammed in Iraq, if it were not for impeachment. Good for Trent Lott for saying the truth. The action is insupportable.

If I were a more active kind of guy, I would sue Clinton for wrongful death on the part of those Iraqis—and that poor guy in the Sudan who got blasted when Clinton bombed an aspirin factory after the Starr Report came out. How come Iraq doesn't take Clinton to the International Court of Justice? This Clinton guy is a cold-blooded murderer.

BENJAMIN J. STEIN is a writer, actor, economist, and lawyer living in Hollywood and Malibu.

Something Freudian is going on, as well. Clinton is symbolically murdering his critics here at home by his projected acts of killing in Iraq. I never thought I'd feel afraid of a U.S. president, but Clinton is out of control. I never really put any credence in all those stories about murders in Arkansas, and I always thought Vince Foster killed himself because of an adverse drug reaction (though it is odd that he killed himself right across the street from the CIA). But now that I see Clinton killing in cold blood in Iraq, I am not surprised at all that good people think he's a murderer.

I am convinced that if we did not have a Constitution and a citizenry who believe in law—at least a part of the citizenry that believes in law—Clinton would behave toward us about the way Saddam behaves toward his people.

Thursday

Tommy and I are at the Ritz-Carlton in Rancho Mirage, near Palm Springs. We're here because tomorrow I am going to interview Gerald Ford for a fine magazine called the *American Enterprise*. I had a car drive us down here because I felt so tired. We checked into our wonderful room. (Naturally, they originally had us in a horrible room but we switched—hotel policy generally is to put you in a bad room and then, if you holler, let you go to a better room.) Tommy discovered that the TV had video games attached, and I could not move him after that. I wandered through the hotel, stared at the immense, perfectly lit Christmas tree next to the pool overlooking the Coachella Valley, and then had room service with Tommy. Afterward, while he played intently and a maid cleaned the room, I went and had tea in the lobby overlooking that great Christmas tree. The waitress insisted

that I take it for free because she is such a fan of my show. I am not going to lie about it: LOVE BEING FAMOUS! It beats the heck out of being teased and tortured when I walked down the halls of Montgomery Hill Junior High School long ago.

Back to our lavish room. Tommy has put down his video game stick (or whatever it's called) and is now lying in bed reading one of his vast trove of cartoon books. This one is about an office worker named Dilbert who has a lot of real-life experiences in modern work land. I have to admit that Dilbert is amazingly funny. But shouldn't Tommy be reading Gibbon?

Tommy talks all the time about Dilbert. He reads to me from Dilbert. He reads them over and over again. I sure hope that when he grows up he can get a job reviewing or writing comics.

Friday

A glorious Palm Springs day. Dry, warm, clear, perfect winter desert weather. A light breeze rustling through the palms. Glorious. Fantastic. Thor, our driver, appeared in his battered old Lincoln. We chugged off to President Ford's office to interview him. It was a short ride through the desert to his digs in Rancho Mirage, then through a tiny gate, and there we are in a different time and place, a decent time and place.

To start with, the people who work for him are super polite. Lots of Secret Service at a condo and series of rooms at Thunderbird Country Club. Here in Jerry Ford's America—which is still not Clinton's America, thank heavens—there are no massive concrete barricades, no reroutes of traffic. Just a few smiling people with guns. There is a big difference between the paranoid and the normal style of living.

Jerry Ford was friendly. He posed for photos with my son and me. The Secret Service man showed Tommy his Uzi. Tommy was in ecstasy. Again, what a country, where the guards of the power elite take out their guns and let their photos be taken with little kids. What a fantastic country. Our driver, Thor, a Norwegian, was in tears thinking of how great America is. He had family murdered by the Nazis when they occupied Norway. "This is a great country," he said over and over again as we hung around Jerry Ford's office.

I really love Jerry Ford. The last vestige of an era when you could have some trust and admiration when you thought about your leaders. Somehow it is totally right that Jerry Ford is on the immense, serene golf course. I have always loved the desert outside Palm Springs, and now I love it even more. I suspect that there are many stand-up guys out there just like Jerry Ford, if not as famous.

I got a great feeling of peace just being near President Ford. God bless him and those like him.

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Then, back to L.A. listening to Thor's car radio about the impeachment. Amazing, but Clinton's gambits did not work. Nice try, killer. You got impeached anyway.

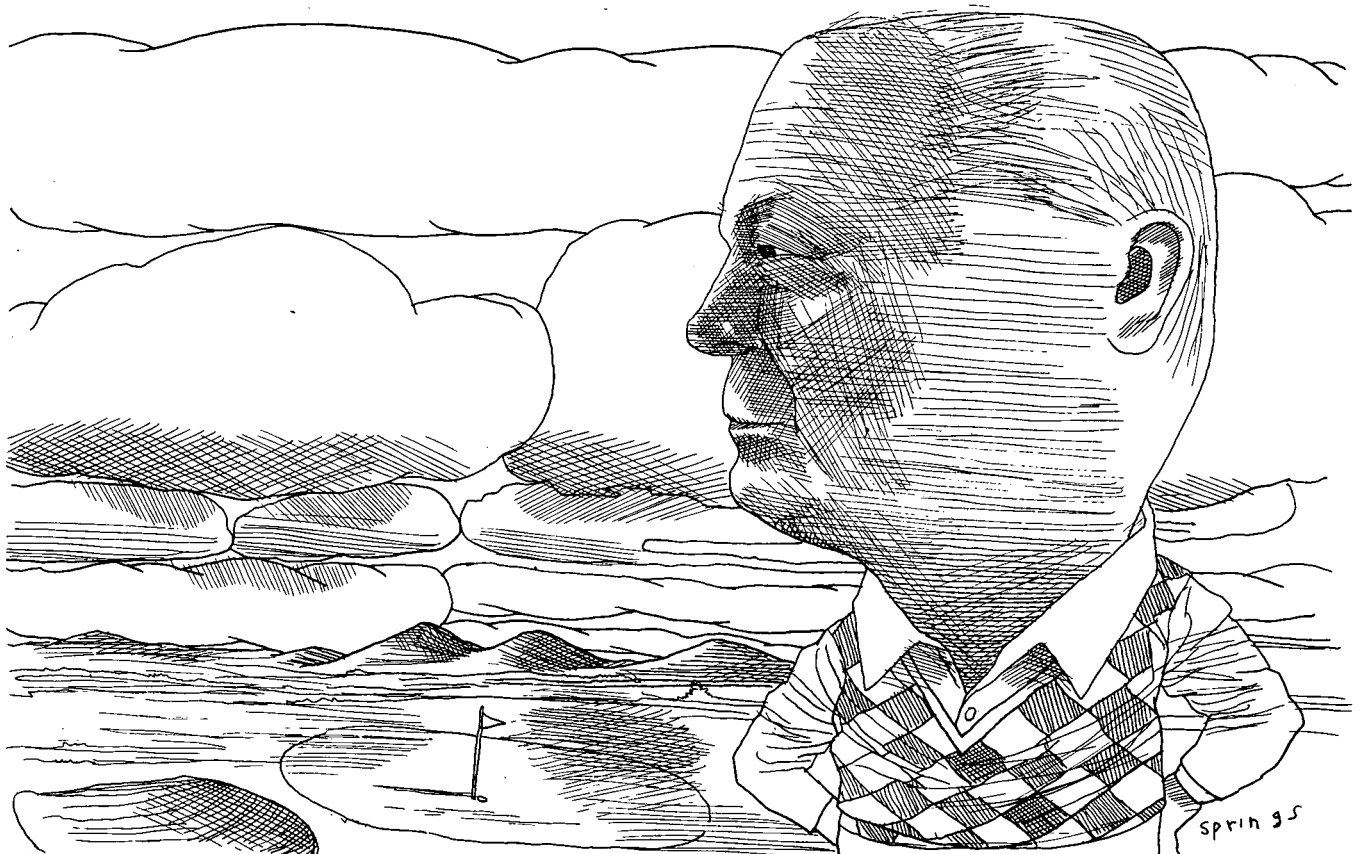
I will never think ill of the House Republicans again. They were brave. And often extremely articulate, especially Representative Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, surely destined for bigger things. Here, the media powers were yelling at them. Alec Baldwin, famous movie star, was threatening to murder Henry Hyde — lots of death in the "liberal" mind. But the GOP in Congress did what was right.

When Tommy and I got home, my wife was in a state of high excitement about the impeachment. We lifted our glasses of wine and orange juice to an America that still works. And I say again, without the enshrinement of the Constitution in our hearts, Clinton would be a very dangerous man.

Monday
Guess what! I, your humble servant, am trying to put together a talk show, starring little me, for Comedy Central. My partner is my dear pal, the redoubtable Al Burton. This is hard work, to be sure. On a shoestring budget, we are making a pilot, in fact three pilots. This week, we are doing run-throughs just to get me into gear. Today we interviewed Phil DeMuth, my very witty friend, and Steve Greene, another wit. They did a swell job.

Then they were joined by a former *Playboy* Playmate and some poor soul who does foot-fetish work for movies.

If I may say so, I am a natural at this. The problem is that not everyone gets my sense of humor. I think it will all work,



though, and it cannot be a minute too soon. My game show is far, far, far too hard on me. If I could segue to something a little easier, I would be very relieved indeed.

Thursday

Der Tag. Today I am actually doing the three pilots. All in one day. I told you we were doing it on a shoestring, and I was not kidding. I drove myself over to a tiny little studio usually used to make Korean language shows right next door to where I got my Cadillac. Al Burton was there, and so were my first two guests, Susan Estrich and Martin Mull.

Now here is a little bit of *la vie* as it really is. Susan Estrich is a big time liberal pooh-bah. She moves in the highest circles of liberal intelligentsia. She is always on TV and often used to argue with me. But when I asked her to come on my pilot—even though it is not for air and is not paid work—she agreed instantly. I assume it's because we have been friends for some long time. This shows amazing goodwill and kindness. Life is personal.

Martin Mull and Susan were fabulously funny. They talked about how awful politics have become and how great life is in Hollywood. The second show featured a Hollywood detective, and the third a woman named Heidi Swensen, a shapely blonde destined to be the most famous comedienne in America. Heidi's act is that she is a sex bomb, but mostly she is a master of comic timing and *le mot juste*. Mark these words; I'm going to say it again. Heidi Swensen will be a star. When she talked about her three roles for Cinemax as the "sassy, sexy girl next door," we all laughed out loud. We also had on my co-host, Jimmy Kimmel, but he was just a tad too wild for use on my air. He is getting his own show, and it'll be a scream. Bigger than "South Park."

Everything went fabulously well, but then I always think my shows are great. Unlike many actors, I have no doubt that the little tiny bit I do is fine.

And then my coach turned into a pumpkin and I went home. Actually, I went to my apartment, where my father had just arrived from Washington for one of his infrequent visits. We talked for a while, ate some cereal, and then he went

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to sleep there in my apartment with its wallpaper of life-size photos of Tommy. I went home to sleep under the same roof as Tommy, wife, Puppy-Wuppy, Susie, the kitties Peabo and Artemis, and the spirit of the dead fishes, dogs, and birds who have passed through.

I simply cannot get over Susan Estrich. She was so kind to me and did such a magnificent job. She's a testament to the truth that people are individuals and that attempts to place them in highly predictable stereotypes don't always work.

Christmas Day

Tommy did not get anywhere near as many presents as he wanted this year, and I did not get anything. Instead, we are giving a large gift to Friends of Animals, which is the group that got us Martha, Trixie, Susan, Ginger, Susie, Puppy-Wuppy, and Peabo. These are the finest people on earth. They work out of a little shelter on Sepulveda under dismal conditions. But they are unfailingly brave and devoted to their animals. I admire them to no end, especially their boss, Martha Wyss, who works tirelessly for the helpless and friendless until they get friends and help and love.

After opening presents, I'm off to take my father and Phil and Julia DeMuth to lunch at the Beverly Regent. It was packed with revelers. Prosperity is everywhere. Julia and Phil did their usual high quality conversing. I wonder if Phil has had a class in politesse, or if Julia has. They seem to operate at a level of gentility far above what I usually encounter. They ask questions, talk about subjects other than themselves, are well informed. Phil knew

who wrote a modern Christmas carol that a group of singers was singing. That's knowing quite a bit.

We had a fine dinner, but the desserts were strange. I can't recall them but they were something like raspberries covered with pineapple husks, or banana custard in champagne. I asked if we could just get chocolate ice cream. That required a trip to room service, but then the ice cream appeared. Soon we were exhausted, and after returning home went to sleep for the rest of the day.

Saturday

It started innocently enough and maybe everything evil does. Tommy Stein, 11 years old, a sixth grader, video game addict, was playing a video game online in some sort of AOL chat room where he could play and also have instant e-mails with the other players.

Our son's screen name is his first initial and then our name, Stein, and then a number. The game went on for a time, and then our son apparently won. "I won," he e-mailed to the other players.

One of them responded, "You dumb Jew."

Of course, we have no idea who this sick person is. We have his screen name and that's all. In fact, Tommy soon lost even that. Tommy, an aficionado of the Web, immediately reported the incident to AOL and then went to tell Alex, his mother, my wife.

Now, here's the interesting part. Tommy, our son, is blond, blue-eyed, a little poster boy for Norman Rockwell paintings. He has been going to a Jewish school all his school days. Because of his looks, perhaps, or because he lives in Los Angeles, or because of his Temple school, he has never been the butt of an anti-Semitic remark in his life before this one.

"Mommy," he asked, "how did they know I was Jewish?"

"Well," said my wife, "Stein is usually a Jewish name."

"Ohhh," Tommy said. "I didn't know that."

He went back to his computer, my wife reports, and worked at it for a few minutes and then came back to tell Mommy that he had now changed his screen name and had two cartoon characters for names.

When I heard the story at dinner that night, I was of course furious and edgy. I was sad for my son. But I was also thrown back from late December of 1998 to the spring of 1956. I was a sixth grader in a school in suburban Silver Spring, Maryland. In that day, my fellow students and even teachers routinely used racial epithets in our segregated school. (I particularly remember a teacher who—horrifying—called blacks “coons.”) I also knew that many neighborhoods in Washington were restricted against Jews, as were country clubs, elite private schools, and top-notch law firms and banks.

But anti-Semitism had never struck me personally until a boy named Alan Lester and I were having a tug of war with a rope and Alan Lester said, “Let it go, you f—king Jew.” I can still recall the shock—our teacher, the one who called blacks horrible names, did nothing—and Alan Lester and I were soon in an ineffectual fistfight. Then there was a boy in junior high named Gary who used to call me a “dirty Jew” until I began to lift weights and got strong and he stopped picking on me. Then there was a man in a car who shouted at me, “Get out of the way, kike,” when I was bike riding near him.

I hated those experiences, and many more like them, and they still haunt me at night. However, it never occurred to me to change my name—and my parents would not have let me do it in eighth grade anyway. America changed and became a truly open society. One of the great things about modern life—or so it seemed to me—was that incidents like the ones I had gone through, at least in a big city like L.A., were historical relics, not live wires waiting to shock my son.

Tommy is such a sweet child, so full of fun, always so ready to mingle and play, with such a sweet, open countenance, and he lives in such an accepting world, a world changed beyond recognition from 1956, that I really thought he might go his way without anyone baiting him because he is a Jew. I really thought the world had changed that much.

It never occurred to me that on the Internet no one can really get to know him and know what a great kid he is, totally unworthy of any criticism except that he resists doing his homework. On the Inter-

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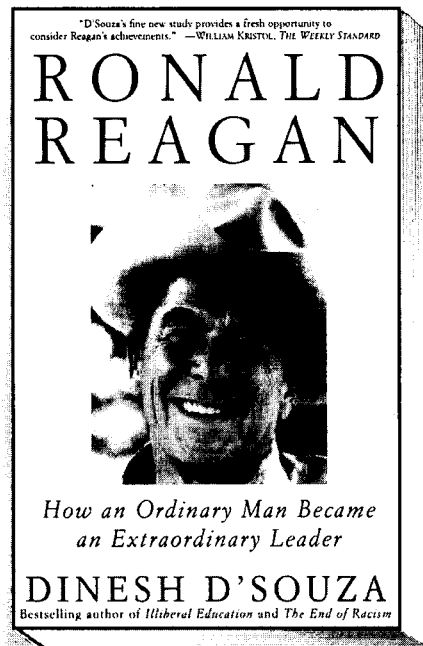
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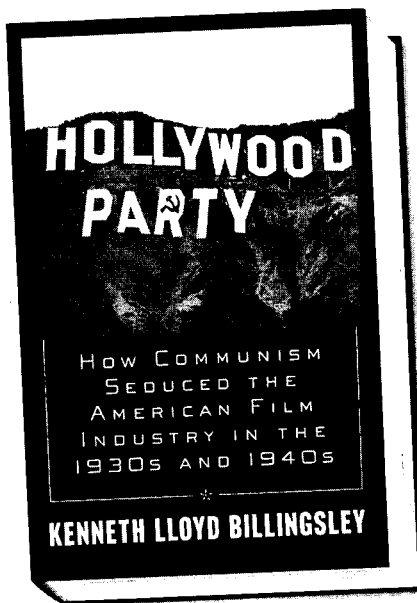
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net, all someone knew about him was that he won the game and that he had a Jewish name. For some sick, miserable SOB, that was enough—that, plus the protection of his cowardly online anonymity.

Tommy has never before shown the slightest reticence about being Jewish. In North Idaho, where we spend the summers, he cheerfully explains that he is a Jew to friends playing video games or fishing. They usually have never met a Jew, but they show no interest one way or the other and the Nintendo or the kokanee salmon fishing goes on. But when that creep called Tommy a “dumb Jew,” Tommy for some reason recoiled and changed his screen name. I hope to be able to persuade him to change it back to TStein. It’s a fine name, as good as any anywhere. But to Tommy, it’s now an invitation to get mocked and baited. He’s a good boy, but no one likes to attract trouble.

Over the Web, across the Internet, in digital ones and zeroes, now has come to Tommy Stein what he never had known before—hatred because of his religion. Out of the ether, out of the latest in technology has come the oldest of hates to strike at my little boy, my angel, my Tommy. He’s strong and resourceful and I think he will “work with it,” as we actors say, to learn about himself, his religion, and how to be fair in an unfair world.

But his first reaction was to change his screen name, and that makes me want to crawl through the Web and find the little jerk who sent that e-mail and choke him and whoever taught him that evil. I can’t do that, so I just have to stay up late chewing on my rage and encouraging Tommy to be who he is and not hide it and realizing that in the good ways and the bad, life goes on.

Tonight, I put Tommy to bed. He took his kitty, Artemis, and put him under his covers. Then he said, “Daddy, you have to tuck me in really tight, really tight around my toes.”

“All right,” I said, “and here we go.” I tucked him in tightly, especially around his toes.

“No, tighter,” he said.

I tucked him in tighter, and then he said, “That’s not tight enough.”

I tucked him again, and then kissed him. “Good night, my boy,” I said.

I went to the computer and opened

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”

up my e-mail. Tommy came out of his room, and appeared behind me. “BOO!” he cried.

“Tommy, go to sleep,” I said. “GO TO SLEEP!”

He put his face about an inch from mine and said, “If you don’t tuck me in right now, just the way I want you to, I’ll grow up to be bitter and unhappy and spend all the money you leave me on doctors.”

“What did you say?”

“I mean it,” he said. “I really mean it. Tuck me in or else you get an embittered, unhappy little boy, and I’ll be with psychiatrists all my life like your Doctor Paul.”

I tucked him in, made him chocolate cookies, gave him milk, and told him how much I loved him.

“You spoil him unbelievably,” my wife said as I left his room.

“It’s impossible not to,” I said. “He’s my little god. He is my angel. Pretty soon he’ll be grown up and not want to spend one minute with me. I’ll spoil him for as long as I can.”

“You’re right,” Alex said. “I think I’ll go in and tuck him in myself.” And she did.

Tuesday
Now, here is a question. Why isn’t Ken Starr indicting Larry Flynt for jury tampering? There are federal laws against tampering with a jury, attempting to influence the trier of fact or law, and also laws against extortion and blackmail. Larry Flynt has admitted that he is paying money to dig up dirt—and we all have dirt in our lives—to try to help Clinton in the Senate trial and before that in the House impeachment. The Senate trial is

exactly analogous to a trial in court. Why isn’t Flynt tampering with the trial when he blackmails the Senate or the House?

Of course, we all know he’s working with the White House. So why isn’t Clinton indicted for jury tampering? A defendant in a trial is not allowed to blackmail the jurors and the judge. But that’s exactly what Clinton is doing here, isn’t it?

Why does he not get a new referral or impeachment for that? How can the Democrats in Congress stand still for it? Don’t they know they’re next if this gets to be the way business is done in D.C.?

And speaking of law, why don’t we lawyers file a whistleblower lawsuit to collect back from Clinton the tens of millions of tax dollars he spent defending the lie that he did not have sex with “that woman, Miss Lewinsky”? Why is what Clinton did any different from what a bureaucrat does when he embezzles money or throws a contract to his girlfriend? Why has Clinton gotten away with this kind of theft?

And why not a suit to recover the billion he spent bombing Iraq—money that should have gone to military pay raises—just to distract Congress from his lies? That was waste and embezzlement, too.

I am telling you, law has a lot of applications that could help send Clinton back to the home for aging would-be dictators. Let’s use ’em.

Trial lawyers working for Paula Jones brought Clinton to this pass. Lawyers could do a lot more. Where are they when we need them?

Friday
Well, this is a little object lesson in *la vie de la media*. I got called yesterday to appear on “Nightline,” one of my favorite shows. The subject was Clinton and his impending Senate trial. The producers wanted a group of “ordinary people” to talk about the issue and by ordinary people meant “famous” people who were not within the Beltway.

A very pleasant two-man crew filmed and recorded me sitting by my condopool. I was required to write a two-minute speech on my feelings about Clinton. I spoke about how he was a perjurer, a killer, a bad president on foreign policy, and I did not like him, and

oped he “would soon be removed from the office he has disgraced.” Then I said I did not think he would be, but that my life would go on. In America now, life is no longer centered on the president, or on Washington, and that, I said, was a good thing.

So when the piece appeared, it had been neatly edited, so that it had no—silch—specific criticisms of Clinton. I only was shown saying I thought he was “a bad man and a bad president,” but that it would not affect me much if he were not removed from office.

Well, Saints Preserve Us! It did not surprise me. As I say, that’s the life of the media, which is not logic, but experience, and that is all life of every kind.

Wednesday

A heavenly night. I had been working in my little office and had an unexpected visit from the beautiful but totally wacky Dotty. Something about wanting my help getting her super-rich boyfriend to marry her and buy her a huge house. “Plus a million dollars in the bank, plus a big diamond, plus any car I want, and a live-in, and I never have to do another thing or my whole life.”

“Great attitude,” I told her. “With that kind of thinking, any man would want you.”

It’s positively amazing how the women who have no clue at all about human relationships wind up alone. All of the women I know who are single, all of the men I know who are single, every single one of them has a wildly inflated sense of entitlement combined with extremely low self-esteem, and absolutely no regard for doing a single unselfish thing for anyone else.

Anyway, that is not what this little anecdote is about. At about seven Tommy, my little angel, appeared at the door with the wan but still beautiful Dana. Off we went to a preview of a movie written and produced by my long-time friend John Mankiewicz and his partner, Dan Pyne. I have been a friend of John’s since 1972, when he was a student and I was a teacher at UC-Santa Cruz. In the theater were Larry Wilson and Elisha Shapiro, long-time pals from JC days. It was lovely seeing their hippie

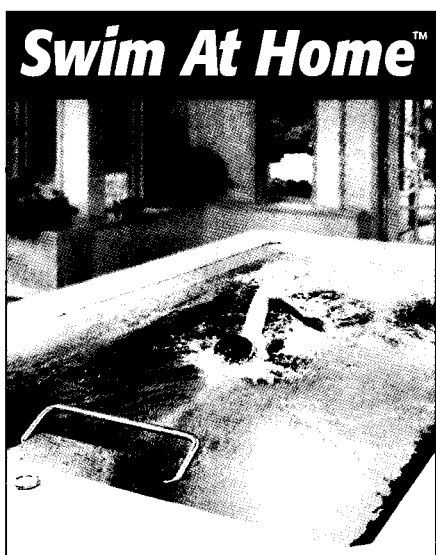
selves. Then we watched the movie, which was terribly clever and funny.

Tommy sat like an angel, not complaining, making funny comments under his breath. When it was over, we left and got sandwiches at Subway. Now here is the point. It was a gorgeous, balmy, liquid-sky evening in Los Angeles. The Santa Anas ruffled the palms. Tommy sat beside me reading truly hilarious panels from Dilbert. When I ordered half a meatball sub on white bread, Tommy said, “I’ll have the same as my Dad is having.”

I thought I would die then and there. He sat beside me eating and he said, “You know, this is really good. I think I’ll get this kind from now on.” NO ONE IN THE WORLD WAS HAPPIER THAN I WAS AT THAT MOMENT.

When we got home, he put on the West Point jacket my hero father-in-law gave him this Christmas. It was big on him, so he zipped Peabo, his cat, in there with him, with only her sweet little face sticking out. He went to sleep wearing jacket and cat, smiling in his sleep.

Tonight, I am the luckiest, happiest man on the planet. ☺



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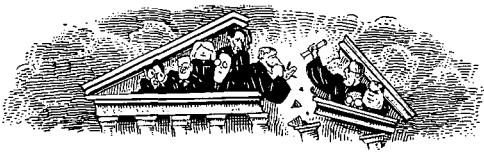
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by Jeremy Rabkin

Global Creep

No, not Bill, but his new calls to regulate world trade.

President Clinton's State of the Union address offered so many goodies to so many constituencies that some proposals escaped scrutiny. One deserving a closer look is the president's recommendation on world trade, which would commit the United States to a whole new venture in global governance.

Clinton's rhetoric was typically grandiose: "Now that the world economy is becoming more and more integrated, we have to do in the world what we spent the better part of this century doing here at home. We have got to put a human face on the global economy." Having claimed four years before that "the era of Big Government is over," he now called for Really Big Government: a global New Deal.

The analogy is apt. Earlier in the century, labor leaders and social reformers feared that states that adopted overly generous welfare measures would lose jobs to states with fewer restrictions. They demanded federal programs, binding on all states, to "level the playing field." The Constitution has always prohibited barriers to interstate trade. Now that international trade agreements are bringing down trade barriers between countries, labor leaders and environmentalists are demanding international regulations to prevent countries from "competing unfairly." Otherwise, they warn, if some countries are allowed to exploit their workers and despoil their environment to lower production costs, other countries will feel pressured to do the same to stay competitive.

The problem with this "race to the bottom" scenario is that it argues against any

trade with poor countries, which will always have lower labor costs. But the Clinton administration, along with most serious economists, supports international trade, even with low-wage countries like China and Mexico. After all, if they produce goods more cheaply, they offer lower prices to American consumers (and to American producers using imported components). In turn, as poor countries gain wealth through trade, they can offer better markets for American exports.

But Clinton is in a genuine political fix. He did persuade Congress to endorse NAFTA in 1993 and U.S. entry into the new World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1994. But votes in the House were very close, and Congress has since declined to authorize new trade negotiations. For the first time in a quarter century, a U.S. president has been denied "fast track" negotiating authority that commits Congress to an up-or-down vote on new trade agreements. As a result, other countries are reluctant to negotiate seriously with the U.S. on trade matters. When fast track came up again in the House last September, it was overwhelmingly defeated (180-243)—with only 29 Democrats voting in favor, and 171 opposed.

Most Democrats in Congress remain opposed to fast-track authorization because unions and most environmental groups want no new trade agreements. To bring these critics around, Clinton has been promising that new trade pacts will include special protections for labor and the environment. But then Republicans refuse to include them in fast-track negotiating authority. The president now seeks to persuade business groups that some provisions along these lines are the price

that must be paid to build adequate political support for new trade agreements.

It is a hard sell. Until now, global trade agreements have focused almost entirely on reducing barriers to the entry of goods and services, while prohibiting any import restrictions based on the way goods are produced, even if it is known that they are produced at low wages or under local laws that prohibit workers from organizing. Less-developed countries and many business groups fear that any relaxation of this score would open the way to endless trade disputes, in which protectionist industries in one country would cite poor labor conditions in others as a pretext for denying easy entry to their products.

So Clinton has proposed a classic Clintonian compromise. He has offered vague promises that future negotiations will integrate "environmental concerns" with trade rules, but the one specific proposal he has made is seemingly more limited. In the State of the Union speech (as in earlier speeches before select audiences last fall), he urged that the WTO work with the Geneva-based International Labor Organization (ILO) to extend respect for international standards on conditions of labor, without necessarily changing WTO rules.

The ILO is eager to help. In the absence of ILO safeguards, its director general argued in 1997, "public opinion will continue to believe...that globalization [of trade] inevitably implies a downward leveling of pay for jobs." Clinton made the same point in a speech to the WTO last May, in which he called for greater cooperation between the WTO and the ILO: "Without such a strategy, we cannot build the necessary public support for continued expansion of trade." To build support for this project, Clinton also proposed last May that the

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