

Back to Basics

by Alfred S. Regnery

THE AGE OF REAGAN, WE ARE TOLD, IS OVER. Conservatives have had their day, have been rejected and replaced with liberalism the likes of which has not been in power since the New Deal. From the breathtaking victories of the Reagan Revolution, the fall of the Soviet Union, and the Gingrich takeover of Congress we have come to this, an Obama presidency and the most liberal Congress since the days of LBJ and his Great Society. What in the world went wrong?

In a word, what went wrong was the abandonment of first principles. It was conservatives becoming more interested in power and the accompanying glory than in their core beliefs. It was conservatives being willingly co-opted by the moderate Republicans to whom winning was the only thing, whatever the cost. It was conservatives supporting things like the Medicare prescription drug benefit, giveaway farm bills, No Child Left Behind, and bank bailouts in return for a Christmas card or an invitation to the White House. Lord Acton famously said that power corrupts and that absolute power corrupts absolutely. Longshoreman philosopher Eric Hoffer put it another way when he said that every great cause becomes a movement, the movement a business, and eventually the whole thing degenerates into a racket. For some, that corruption blossomed in the Reagan years and came to full bloom over the last eight. Now we will all pay the price.

I may have missed it, but I don't recall having heard about individual liberty in the 2008 campaign, or constitutional government, or traditional values, or the rule of law. Those, along with a few others, were the foundation of the conservative movement, and it was the dedication of devoted men and women to develop those principles into policies, and to stick to them, that eventually beat back the predominant liberalism of the 1950s, '60s, and '70s. Conservatism in those days offered few opportunities, with the result that there weren't many opportunists looking for ways to enhance their résumés or

their pocketbooks. If one did not really believe in the principles, there wasn't much reason to hook up with the movement.

There will be much soul-searching over the coming months, and no small number of attempts to rejuvenate the right into a cohesive and effective force. The philosophical foundations of the conservative cause are as sound as ever, and the movement has the resources to assert those principles and a receptive audience as well. According to a *Newsweek* poll, reported in late October, people calling themselves conservatives outnumber liberals by two to one. As the new administration and Congress overreach, which they are certain to do, opportunities to clearly enunciate those principles will abound.

As for *The American Spectator*, our readers can count on the fact that, as we have always done before, we will report what the mainstream media will not. To keep up to date with what will be happening on a day-to-day basis, we urge our readers to visit our website, www.spectator.org, every day—in fact, several times a day. Philip Klein, who covered the Obama campaign from the beginning, will report on the Obama White House and administration, while W. James Antle III, another of our able reporters, will keep track of and analyze what Congress is up to. In addition to the fast-paced reporting that will appear on our expanded website, the magazine will continue to provide deeper analysis of what is going on in the political arena, while keeping our finger on the rebuilding of the conservative movement. And, of course, in the process we will try to maintain our sharp sense of humor. What more fun can there be, after all, than to skewer a self-important liberal from time to time? What a target-rich environment it will be! ❧

Alfred S. Regnery is publisher of *The American Spectator* and author of the new book *Upstream: The Ascendancy of American Conservatism (Threshold/Simon & Schuster)*.

THE RIGHT OF SELF-DEFENSE
IS THE FIRST LAW OF NATURE ...
**WHEN THE RIGHT
OF THE PEOPLE**
TO KEEP AND BEAR ARMS IS,
UNDER ANY COLOR OR PRETEXT
WHATSOEVER, PROHIBITED, LIBERTY,
IF NOT ALREADY ANNIHILATED,
**IS ON THE BRINK
OF DESTRUCTION.**

HENRY ST. GEORGE TUCKER, *BLACKSTONE'S COMMENTARIES ON THE LAWS OF ENGLAND* (1803)

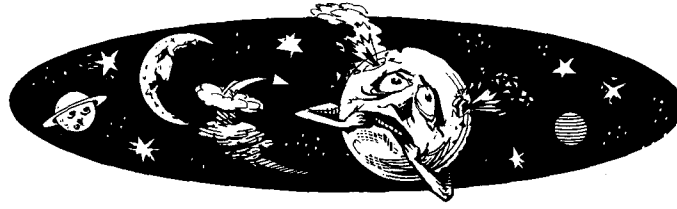
Compliments of the National Rifle Association of America.



NRA

THE CONTINUING CRISIS

R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

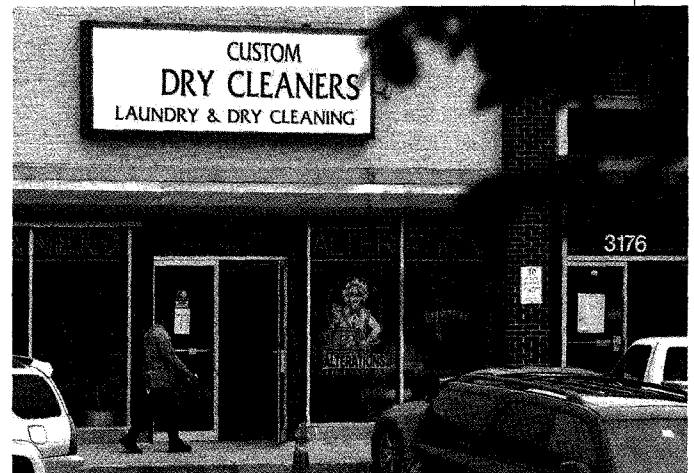


October gave way to November and the presidential polls were right! So was Mr. John Radima, the West Kenyan witchdoctor who on November 1 scattered the prescribed number of bones, shells, and stones at his shoeless feet and pronounced Senator Barack H. Obama the likely winner of the 2008 presidential race in faraway America. Senator Obama's election three days later was almost anticlimactic, at least in West Kenya and certainly in the newsrooms of America's mainstream moron media. In Kogelo, Kenya, home of Senator Obama's father, the victory set off a vast slaughter of bulls, chickens, and goats. Said Mr. Abongo Malik Obama, the president-elect's oldest half-brother, "We are Africans, so our plan is to slaughter a bull...." In Hollywood and Manhattan, the celebrations were more restrained, though MSNBC's Mr. Chris Matthews presumably spent the immediate post-election hours under the thumbs, fingers, and feet of his chiropractor in hopes of ameliorating Mr. Matthews's famously tingling leg. On *The Charlie Rose Show*, the mesmerized likes of Messrs. Tom Brokaw and Evan Thomas murmured, "There is much about this man that we don't know." So perhaps the witchdoctor Radima will be transported to Manhattan to jiggle his bones, shells, and stones before the assembled and inform them of what the fabled junior senator from Illinois is like. In the president-elect's first press conference he made vague stabs at humor, calling himself a "mutt" and joking that the frail 87-year-old Mrs. Nancy Reagan held "séances" in the White House. Actually it was First Lady Mrs. Hillary Rodham Clinton who "channeled" Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt in the White House. Mrs. Reagan merely conferred with an astrologer. No bones, shells, or stones were used.

This is going to be a truly weird presidency, made all the weirder by the presence of the gaffe-prone Senator Joe Biden but a heartbeat away from the Prophet Obama. During the election, Republicans objected when Senator Biden's freshly released medical records contained no brain scans. What was there to scan? Had the critics not heard the air-

head's flumdiddle? Though I am no West Kenyan witchdoctor, let me make a bone-free vaticination. The election of this novice to the presidency will prove to be as reckless as the election in 1992 of a recognized draft-dodging, ithyphallic, perpetual adolescent. The only remaining question is, will he be as amusing?

On the cutting edge of jurisprudence, former District of Columbia administrative law judge Mr. Roy L. Pearson continued to pursue a lower court's award of \$54 million to him for his lost pants. The pants were lost by his dry cleaner, Mr. Jin Nam Chung, proprietor of the now-defunct Custom Cleaners. Yet Mr. Pearson's anticipated \$54 million payday was scotched by a D.C. Superior Court judge who apparently found merit in the testimony of Mr. Chung's lawyer, who asseverated under oath that "My clients have his [the Hon. Pearson's] pants, and



they're ready to be picked up." Instead, the intrepid ex-judge Pearson has taken his case to the District of Columbia's Court of Appeals, where he appeared in still another pair of pants to demand his \$54 million. Doubtless there will be updates as this case makes its way ever upward in the judicial system. American health care providers may have found a new way to treat obesity in light of an October 22 report pub-