

R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.



Back to the Wilderness

On December 3, 2008, The American Spectator held its 2008 Robert L. Bartley Annual Dinner, a gala banquet held for Washington Club members who have supported the magazine over the years. During the event, Justice Samuel Alito spoke with great wit and Robert D. Novak was honored with the prestigious Barbara Olson Award. Editor in Chief R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr. delivered the remarks below during the dinner.

AND SO THE LAMENTABLE November 4 presidential election is entombed in history...and in keeping with the benevolent wishes of the mainstream moron media the American conservative movement once again enters the wilderness. In the wilderness, all we shall have to comfort us is the L.L. Bean catalogue. As you might have noted, we have distributed several versions of the renowned Bean catalogue on your tables. My personal favorite is the fishing catalogue. Regnery prefers the hunting catalogue. Pleszczynski is waiting for his very own Polish-language edition. I urge you all to take your L.L. Bean catalogues home with you tonight. Study them assiduously. Learn the bird calls.

Winston Churchill, during his wilderness years, was comforted by Pol Roger and a fistful of Havanas. Unfortunately, Champagne has become very pricey, and nowadays smoking is *malum prohibitum* almost everywhere. Even in the wilderness a lit cigar would be highly controversial. Thus we American conservatives are left with L.L. Bean as our solace and our guide. In my fishing catalogue there are many varieties of warm and sturdy boots, colorful parkas, and a product that I am particularly curious about, "breathable rainwear." I ask myself, "Am I to breathe it or will it breathe me?"—all very exciting. So perhaps the wilderness will not be so bad—especially for those of us who drive Hummers.

Of course, to hear some conservatives, for instance David Brooks, David Frum—both being members of the conservative movement's Davidian Branch—the rest of us are going to be out there with the flora and the fauna for many, many years.

Personally, I hope to get a tent not far from Sarah Palin. She is very cute and can handle a firearm. Shortly after the November 4 election, David Brooks, writing from his sofa at the *New York Times*, predicted that the Republican Party will veer to the right and suffer still more defeats. That means that we shall be out there in the poison ivy with the wolves and the coyotes for a long time. I pray that Alaska's curvaceous governor will keep her shootin' iron handy.

Now, as I look around this grand and distinguished audience I can see the worried looks on your faces. Probably it has occurred to you that as the Prophet Obama surrounds himself with Clintonistas many of you will be forced to become virtual Boat People. Well, relax. I have arranged the boat. Our friend Taki Theodoracopulos has promised that he will have his yacht, *Bushido II*, at anchor off Nantucket. And if you cannot make it to Nantucket, try Cape Cod. Perhaps the Kennedys will supply a boat. They have been trying to get us out of the country for years.

Of course, we conservatives have been thrust into the wilderness before: in 1964, in 1976, and in 1992. Every time the experience has proved to be highly amusing: recall, if you will, LBJ (we called him Old Beagle Ears), Jimmy Carter (we called him the Wonder Boy), and Bill Clinton (we called him many things: the Boy President, Boy Clinton, and our Ithyphallic President). Who needs Pol Roger or the accoutrements advertised in the L.L. Bean catalogue when the Democratic Party provides entertainment like that?

Incidentally, after every stay in the wilderness we conservatives have come back stronger. The reason we keep coming back is that we are not a party of prophets or messiahs but a party of principles. Our principles have been preferable to the dreams and fantasies of the likes of LBJ and Jimmy Carter.

Now Boy Clinton was a different kettle of fish. He was the one who said "the era of big government is over." Well, that seemed to be true, until this autumn when the bell tolled for government-ordered sub-prime mortgages and the social engineering of

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Now we have big government as America has never had it before, and it is going to be up to conservatives to sound the alarm when the Democrats are negligent about returning to the prosperous America of the late 20th century created as it was by tax cuts and free markets.

Our belief in free markets is one of the reasons that our critics think that we are going to be shivering in the wilderness. They seem to agree with the heralds of the incoming administration that the time is now for a new New Deal. Yet as the best recent scholarship has made clear, the old New Deal presided over nearly a decade of a no-growth economy with double-digit unemployment—at times 25 percent of the workforce was unemployed. In today's looming intellectual struggles to return America to free markets and to growth economics, we conservatives are going to emerge from the wilderness sooner than the Davidian conservatives anticipate. As the distinguished economist Henry Manne recently observed in *Forbes* magazine, today, unlike the 1930s, we have think tanks and publications that will be at the center of the public debate, arguing for a return to Reaganite prosperity with Reaganite economic therapies.

Nor are we going to be alone in this debate. The majority of the American people side with us. In an October 2 Rasmussen survey, fully 59 percent of those polled agreed with Ronald Reagan's pronouncement enunciated in his first inaugural address a quarter of a century ago: "Government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem." Moreover, even after the congressional Republicans tarnished the brand of conservatism, more Americans claim to be conservative than liberal and by a lot. In both the elections of 2006 and 2008 a solid 34 percent of Americans claimed to be conservatives. Liberalism's number increased from 2006 to 2008 by but one percentage point, from 21 to 22 percent.

So let us not panic. We libertarian conservatives are the people whose ideas have spread throughout the world, to India, to China. Even Sen. Obama seems to be picking them up. This September, as he slipped behind Sen. John McCain in the polls, Sen. Obama finally identified himself as a tax cutter. Today he is an advocate of growth. Possibly in the months ahead he will keep the lights on at the Pentagon.

Also, he is somewhat of a traditionalist. When it came to choosing a vehicle for his political ascent he chose not the guerrilla band of Bill Ayers and

Bernardine Dohrn but the highly thought of Daley Machine of old Chicago. Al Regnery and I, as you might know, originally hailed from Chicagoland. As ex-Chicagoans we know what Sen. Obama had in mind when, during the campaign, he repeated over and over again that he was going to "fix Washington's broken government." In Chicago the word "fix" is pregnant with meaning. In fact, when President Obama is in the White House there will undoubtedly be a special office where parking tickets can be fixed and property taxes fixed. Your recently deceased relatives will be able to vote again. When the president-elect announced his jobs program for 2.5 million Americans, we ex-Chicagoans knew what he meant: hundreds of thousands of Americans are about to become sewer inspectors, parking lot commissioners, co-pilots on garbage trucks. All that is required of them is that they vote and vote often.

IF YOU WILL ALLOW ME A MOMENT of self-satisfaction, I saw it all coming. As early as 2006, in finishing up my book on the Clintons' post-White House extravaganzas, *The Clinton Crack-Up*, I prophesied that a new generation of Democrats was emerging to challenge Hillary—at the time, the so-called "inevitable" Democratic nominee. I made the point very publicly. Check the transcript of Brian Lamb's May 2007 interview with me on C-Span. There I predicted, "Hillary's going to have real problems getting the nomination. A new generation's come up...." I suppose that went down with the mainstream moron media as but another extravagant canard from another tiresome Clinton Hater.

Truth be known, I hate no one. *The American Spectator* hates no one. We greet the challenges ahead with cheerful anticipation. Our aim is to be the rallying point for a revitalized conservative movement. At the beginning of the conservative movement, Henry Regnery was one of the movement's founding fathers. He was also his son, Al's, predecessor on *The American Spectator's* Board of Directors. Conservatives such as Henry Regnery laid down the principles of a movement that has moved from obscurity to capturing the White House, spreading the message of individual liberty throughout the world, even into lands once crushed under Communist tyranny, lands liberated by our message of freedom and our military resolve. We shall fight on for personal liberty. And if this president will lead us we shall follow him. Either that or we shall find another defender of liberty. ❀



Congratulations to Paul Krugman

For, as a Longtime Contributor to this Page, Winning

The 2008 Nobel Prize for Economics

We Look Forward with Relish to Publishing
Years More of His Delightful Garbagespiel

Meet the Press

Ted Turner, a historical illiterate in action:

We have an FBI, and we're not prejudiced against somebody who's worked at the FBI. It's an honorable place to work. And the KGB, I think, was an honorable place to work. It gave people in the former Soviet Union, a communist country, an opportunity to do something important and worthwhile.

(November 30, 2008)

Columbia Spectator (online edition)

One of the Republic's great universities is again the victim of an apparent prankster online. Cut the comedy, fellows!

This week, the QuAm will celebrate the end of its annual Queer Awareness Month. The month-long series of events is devoted to raising awareness of sexual diversity on campus and has become a symbol of the University's openness towards differences in sexual preference. Still, QuAm's organizers would better cater to students of all comfort levels by advertising the month's educational programming as much as it does the more explicit revelry of Queer Awareness Month.

Over the past several years, QuAM has grown more visible and active on campus and its Queer Awareness Month has grown in popularity.

Indeed, many of the lectures and workshops that they hosted this month were great successes. Academics and scientists addressed students about the details of gay history, more worldly students chose to attend sex-toy workshops, and the rainbow-colored arch of balloons over Low Library was a palpable indicator of the University's commitment to tolerance. That said, the organization largely focused on promoting events that emphasized sex over awareness. The Genderfuck party—where attendees donned only underwear—bore more of a resemblance to a raucous First Friday Dance than a laid-back affair where people could casually discuss sexuality.

(October 29, 2008)

New York Observer

Jason Horowitz, an obvious patriot, retails some asseverations confided by Dr. Erica Jong, the celebrated Master Baiter, to an Italian daily during the last weeks of the late presidential campaign. Miss Jong did not agree to a urine test:

"The record shows that voting machines in America are rigged....My friends Ken Follett and Susan Cheever are extremely worried. Naomi Wolf calls me every day. Yesterday, Jane Fonda sent me an email to tell me that she cried all night and can't cure her ailing back for all the stress that has reduced her to a bundle of nerves....

My back is also suffering from spasms, so much so that I had to see an acupuncturist and get prescriptions for Valium....After having stolen the last two elections, the Republican Mafia.... If Obama loses it will spark the second American Civil War. Blood will run in the streets, believe me. And it's not a coincidence that President Bush recalled soldiers from Iraq for Dick Cheney to lead against American citizens in the streets....Bush has transformed America into a police state, from torture to the imprisonment of reporters, to the Patriot Act.

(October 30, 2008)

The Progressive

Glad tidings as reported in the journal of the professional malcontents:

To be sure, Obama's victory spells neither the end of racism nor the realization of full equality. Prepare for a backlash. Prepare for a generalized sentiment in the white population that there no longer is a need for affirmative action or other civil rights protections once a black man sits in the Oval Office. Prepare for blaming the victims of lingering and institutional racism for not being able to get ahead.

(December 2008)

New York Times

Another episode in the ongoing soap opera that is the National Football League, wherein middle linebackers can still be "victimized" without apparent embarrassment:

The Giants' first home defeat ended a seven-game winning streak and followed a tumultuous week in which their star receiver, Plaxico Burress, was suspended, arrested, handcuffed, briefly jailed and charged with two firearms offenses after accidentally shooting