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CORRESPONDENCE

Bananas and Grape Nuts

In banana republics rule of law is always accompanied by a knowing sneer and a hefty transfer of funds. If Clinton continues to operate under the premise that rule of law does not apply to him how, pray tell, is the United States of America any different from a banana republic? How can the United States ever again have the hope of being the moral exemplar to the rest of the world when, because of Clinton's actions, we now have no legitimate moral grounds from which to preach?

Nancy Morgan
Redondo Beach

Religious Mandates Unneeded

Just for the record, frankly, my vote (regarding "Conservatives Unfinished Mission" and "What Ails California Republicans?", *CPR*, November/December 1997 and January/February 1998) is for Tom McClintock and John C. Gardner. As for your well-intentioned focus on religion, we might recall that the founders were traditionally religious, so they didn't have to "address the fundamental question" so positively as to mandate "Judeo-Christian traditions." They adhered to them by custom. It should be for us, instead of posturing over taxes, family, and the like, to urge our representatives to retake the First Amendment from the Supreme Court. The literature on the subject is ample, and more helpful than calls to worship. The point is that, if we resurrect our system of ordered liberty, the freedom of worship will take care of itself. It is not for us to command it.

W. Edward Chynoweth
Sanger

John Kurzweil responds:

We also might profitably recall the original dispute: McClintock diagnosed the GOP's ailment as cowardice and lack of principle among its leaders and pre-

scribed devotion to liberty as the cure. I said the problem involved more than the leaders: that our people have lost the basis for principled behavior, which is faith in God. Nowhere did I say anything about mandates or commands, but so ingrained, apparently, has the ACLU/Enlightenment view that religion equals coercion become that any talk of it automatically translates: he wants to force it on us. Mr. Chynoweth writes that the founders were religious "traditionally" and "by custom" — another Enlightenment canard. No one can be pleasing to God through unthinking adherence to custom and tradition, as certain Pharisees demonstrated. It was not the founders, but we twentieth century Americans who have reduced our religion to mere custom, going through the motions, some of us, but as a practical matter, in our politics, in our work, in our daily lives, relying on ourselves, not God, and on human rather than divine power to achieve mostly worldly aims. Such faith in men is idiotically misplaced, a truth impossible for an honest man to miss if, that is, he widens his view to look for more than a few handy scapegoats among his "leaders." We can and must do everything possible to reform and improve ourselves — to save our own souls — but we cannot reform our fellow men if they refuse to reform themselves. The real source of tyranny is thinking otherwise, which is what communists do. The founders of our freedom, a category including many generations of the West before 1776, achieved it by means most today find paradoxical: by thinking first of the things of Heaven and of God and relying on Him to give them all the rest. My proposal is simple: first, that formula worked; second, its abandonment causes the failure of principle we lament; third, restoring it would solve the problem; and, fourth, if anyone wants to propose an alternative formula, fine, but they will have to defend it more convincingly than Messrs. McClintock, Gardner, or Chynoweth have done so far (if, indeed, they can be said to have defended it at all beyond merely asserting it) to displace the proven formula of Judeo-Christianity.

CPR

SACRAMENTO SPECTATOR

Just as prognosticated in your *Spectator's* last column, Cruz Bustamante beat a hasty retreat out of the Assembly speakership under heavy pressure from fellow Democrats not pleased with the prospect of him using that office as a springboard to run for lieutenant governor instead of looking after the interests of his Assembly flock.

His replacement, L.A. Democrat Antonio Villaraigosa, is far more stridently liberal than Bustamante. Villaraigosa won the office only by promising to strike a moderate course until the November election, presumably so as not to scare off moderate voters who might still be fooled into voting for ultra-liberals masquerading as mainstream candidates. This won't be easy for the ferociously liberal Villaraigosa, but his caucus is prepared to replace him if he breaks his promise.

Meanwhile, the Republicans are playing defense and quietly trying to recruit quality candidates for their competitive districts and raise gobs of campaign cash. They are doing much better at the latter than the former. Several long-time GOP districts lost to the Democrats in 1996 by razor-thin margins are without top-notch Republican challengers

to vulnerable Democrat freshmen. This is especially sad in the Glendale/Burbank-based 43rd district, which Democrat Scott Wildman won by fewer than 100 votes. Also weak is the GOP field in the southeast L.A. County 56th district of freshman Democrat Sally Havice.

If the Republicans ever *do* manage to find decent candidates, they *have* taken a giant first step toward funding them properly. None other than Mayor Willie



Brown of Babylon-by-the-Bay headlined Bill Leonard's first fund raiser.

The event broke all records for Assembly GOP Sacramento events, raising more than \$500,000. Brown's appearance was widely read as a sign he was unhappy with someone in the Democrat Capitol ranks. Willie is capable of exceptional pettiness, so the candidates for his pique were many. A tip of the *Spectator's* fedora to Bill Leonard and his fund-raising team of John Bovée and Ken Bell for seizing this golden opportunity.

The Senate GOP was disappointed as first-rank potential candidates fell by the wayside in the last minutes of filing. However, arithmetic still favors upper house Republicans — Democrats hold 13 of the 20 seats up in November. Early tea leaves make it hard to see a GOP pickup of more than two, but it is quite early to make any concrete predictions.

Your *Spectator* is much more conservative than Assemblyman Brooks Firestone, but always considered him a man of honor who would do the proper thing when it really mattered. Thus it was disappointing to see him decide not to run for re-election to the Assembly as a way of punishing the GOP for preferring Tom Bordonaro for the vacant central coast 22nd district congressional seat. Make no mistake, Firestone was in a huff and pouting after GOP voters resoundingly rejected his "passionate centrism." Brooks could easily have retaken his Assembly seat, but just to put a thumb in the eye of GOP loyalists he decided, at the last minute, not to run, making his district very vulnerable in November. Sad to see this class act end on a petty, selfish note.

There is *much* else to report, but it all must wait until next issue. Right now I must lock myself in my room for a 45-minute laugh at the news Pete Wilson plans yet another run for president in 2000

— A. P. C.