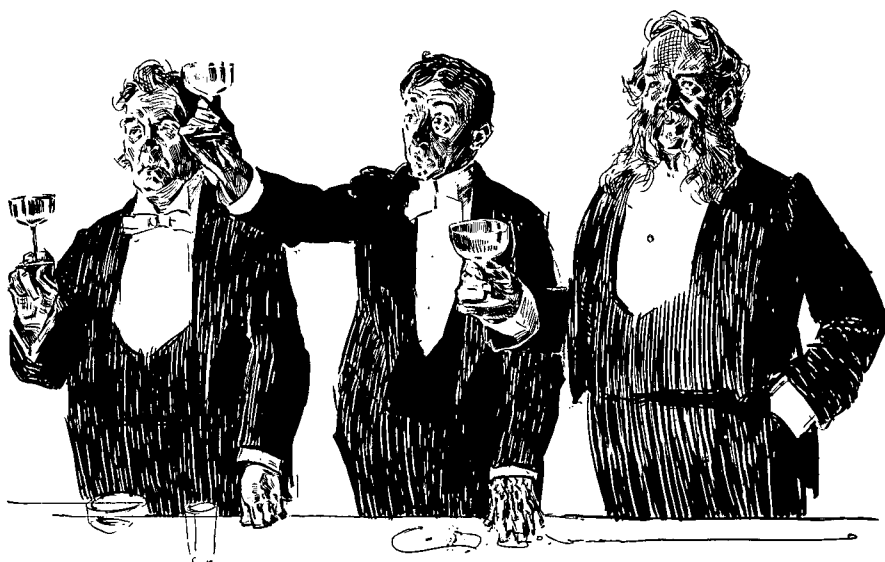


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# PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

by William E. Saracino

**I** THOUGHT ALL this “Y2K” computer business was hard to comprehend until I started thinking about the choices Republicans have among presidential candidates during the dreaded Y2K. We are presented with a crowded field. Yet it is a field I think contains candidates with fewer actual differences than any in my memory since 1968, when the effective choice was Richard Nixon or Nelson Rockefeller.

This is not necessarily a bad thing for either the conservative movement or the GOP itself. One of the reasons there are not the dramatic differences of a

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1964 or a 1976 is that functionally all the important arguments except abortion have been settled — basically by broad consensus within the Party.

Now I know that many of my conservative brethren will disagree strongly with that sentiment. Some of them have already chosen a one and only “true conservative” in the bunch. Others have created their “unacceptable under any circumstances” list. But a cool-headed review of the candidates’ *actual* positions — as opposed to where we wish them, for good or ill, to be — will reveal broad agreement among our contenders.

The media and the Democrats will encourage us to mistake candidates’ style for their substance, as that precipitates our internal bloodletting. We do not need to fall into that trap. Often in the heat of battle we forget that a different nuance on a position is not the same as a substantive disagreement. Even accounting

for substantial agreement among the candidates on most issues, there are still plenty of differences — even if mainly stylistic — on which to base our choice.

Using alphabetical order so as not to give away the deeply held secret of my own personal preference (*psst*, it is for the very wealthy publisher of a nationally-prominent business magazine), California Republicans are likely to face a ballot listing Lamar Alexander, Gary Bauer, George W. Bush, Elizabeth Dole, Steve Forbes, Alan Keyes, and Dan Quayle. Pete Wilson recently dropped out and, while Pat Buchanan has made no official announcement, he has done absolutely nothing to prepare for a run. Most of his infrastructure from '96 is already committed to other folks, mainly Bauer, with some spill-over to Keyes, Forbes, and even a couple for Alexander. "Conventional wisdom" is that Bauer would not have run without a clear signal from Buchanan that Pat would not also run. I'm still waiting word from the Draft Stassen Committee.

It is a formidable list actually, and one that puts the lie to any worry of the GOP being without a large field of quality candidates. But how to break this list down in a way easily understood by the average reader — let alone the average voter?

I could use a financial yardstick, observing that Bush and Forbes are the only ones guaranteed of competitive financing, so the nominee will be one of them and thereby end this article. But let's put finances aside at least for a moment and first address ideology.

**T**RYING TO be fair when writing about politics is somewhat alien to me, as I usually write about liberals and worse, toward whom "fairness" is simply not feasible or even called for. Being as judicious as possible however, I think it is fair to put Gary Bauer and Alan Keyes together in a "hard right" group. Keyes more than Bauer will be a "Johnny one-note" on abortion,

though Bauer will certainly make "life" a centerpiece of his campaign. Both will likely seek an identity as the "most conservative" of the candidates and will focus on social issues to cement that claim.

Next I would pair Dan Quayle and Steve Forbes as

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"hard right/mainstream conservative" entries. These two have "establishmentarian" credentials that Keyes and Bauer cannot match. They both have well-defined profiles on economic issues, but have also stressed strongly conservative social stands in their speeches.

Moving along, we would then come to the decidedly undynamic duo of Lamar Alexander and George W. Bush. Out of personal belief or political stratagem, these two will most likely attempt to be seen as the "broad appeal" conservative choice. Other than the L.L. Bean vote I truly don't understand what appeal Alexander might have. His politics are transparently opportunistic and his campaign style is, well, quoting that old Marxist, Groucho, "I thought my razor

was dull until I met this guy."

I am tempted to take Governor Bush out of this pairing and include him above with Dan Quayle and Steve Forbes. Based solely on his record, that is where he belongs. But still — still there is this nagging doubt. It might be a totally unfair hold-over of antipathy toward his father. It might be that I don't think our conservative philosophy has to be hyphenated, as George W. does when he describes himself as a "compassionate-conservative".

Or it might be that I don't want Phyllis Schlafly to come and personally take back my autographed copy of *A Choice, Not an Echo*. I just don't think Governor Bush has the same bedrock conservative core that Quayle, Forbes, Keyes, and Bauer do. That certainly doesn't mean he isn't a conservative in many ways — just that the doubts still linger. These doubts may in fact work for him in the long run with an electorate that, alas, does not always share my world view.

That leaves Elizabeth Dole as unclassified. It's a fair

thing to do for Dole, as I am frankly unfamiliar with her views on most of the great issues of the day, *viagra* excepted. I would expect her to position herself in the Alexander/Bush “broad appeal” conservative camp, but there really is no telling. I think Liz Dole deserves the conservative label at least until proven otherwise because that is where I think she probably is and is certainly where she will campaign, regardless of the true location of her political heart of hearts. Given lots of opportunities to follow the Betty Ford or Christie Whitman road, she has taken none of them.

AND SO, even with Pete Wilson removed from the field, we still have just about “one of everything” from the GOP spectrum, except, perhaps, a true pro-abortion zealot. Given this field, with the realistic choices all being various shades of conservative, it is possible that ideology will not be the deciding factor. If the philosophical tests become muddled or confused through “mass agreement” on issues, money and organization will emerge as decisive factors. Politics, especially at the presidential level, has long been a game of “show me the money” as a pre-requisite for candidates either to be competitive or to be taken seriously by the national media. That will be even more true in Y2K because of the states’ mad scramble to the front of the nominating process. Everyone wants to “have an impact.” What everyone really wants are the millions of dollars that a full-blown primary or caucus contest injects into the parochial economy. So many states, touched by this mania, have moved their primaries and caucuses to early in the year that the nomination will likely be decided in an all-out February 1 to March 15 wind-sprint.

This trend has really gotten out of hand and the RNC should step in to restore some order. The Party benefits from a more drawn-out nominating process. Candidates, like wine, sometimes change drastically after the bottle is opened and they are exposed to the

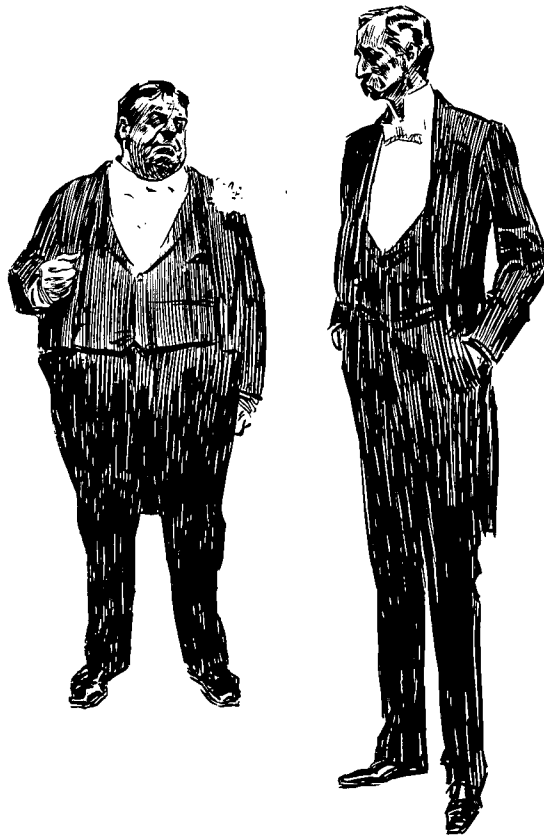
air. Sometimes they change for the better. Other times you thank your lucky stars that you only bought one bottle of the stuff instead of the whole case you were contemplating. A six-week nominating process — equivalent to giving a wine two seconds to breathe before judging its full qualities — allows candidates too little time to show their true strengths and weaknesses — too little time to be sure if we are buying a case of Silver Oak or Night Train. The RNC would do well to address this subject seriously before 2004 and impose a more drawn-out schedule.

But the Y2K six-week sprint is set. That means money will probably decide the finalists and eventual winner, which makes it highly likely the Republican nominee will be named either Bush or Forbes (both, by the way, much closer to a Silver Oak than a Night Train).

Certainly organization and ground troops will still count for a lot in the Iowa caucus and New Hampshire primary.

But the onrush of large state primaries in the four weeks *after* Iowa and New Hampshire remove much of their past ability to make or break candidates’ standings. 1996 had a primary and caucus calendar almost as “front loaded” as next year. A man in a red plaid shirt got the boost coming out of Iowa with his surprisingly close third place finish. A guy who preached trade protectionism while driving a Mercedes got the boost by winning the New Hampshire primary. Both of these candidacies collapsed within a month because they ran out of money.

IOWA AND NEW HAMPSHIRE will have about 65 to 70 convention delegates between them. California by itself will have 100 more delegates than those two combined. When the third Tuesday in March is over, close to 80 percent of all delegates will have been chosen. The candidate left standing in mid-March will be the one capable of continuing to finance a campaign in the large states in



the face of possibly disappointing results in the early small contests. That, it seems to me, brings us back to George W. or M. Steve standing on the podium in Philadelphia accepting our nomination.

**B**UT IF a surprise were to emerge, I would expect it to be Mrs. Dole. She is a forceful speaker who manages to be charming and convincing at the same time. She does not

have baggage from past political campaigns, so she has the freedom to tailor her image to fit whatever mold she pleases. Her husband, always a better "rain maker" than actual candidate, can use his skills and contacts to make her competitive financially through the early contests. Were she to win or place second in Iowa or New

Hampshire, the novelty of her gender might turn the race totally topsy-turvy. She will surprise voters by how strong her presence is on the hustings and during televised debates. The only real competition she has in the oratory department comes from Keyes and Bauer. Both of them however tend to give sermons instead of campaign speeches, which is fine unless you're running for public office. The phrase "silver tongued" will never be applied to any of the rest of the field.

California could be a wild card if it decides to have caucuses or a state convention instead of a statewide primary election. Either the caucus or convention option would put the premium on organization and volunteer strength and severely limit the advantages of the Bush and Forbes bottomless checkbooks. Because both caucuses and conventions are so open to manipulation by a small minority, I think either one would be a highly dangerous option for conservatives. We know how to win statewide primary elections in California. Changing to any other format would be taking a needless risk.

State Sen. Ray Haynes is proposing a "winner-take-all by congressional district" plan that is sort of a neutral. On one hand, it guarantees that even were Gary Bauer to carry the state, we could expect one or more

of the less conservative candidates to have 10 to 20 percent of the delegates. On the other hand, it also insures that conservatives would probably also have a noticeable minority presence even if, say, an openly liberal Libby Dole were to win the primary. Maybe it is just my sense of "neatness," or my fond memories of 1964, but I like the idea of a united delegation, with one voice and view, even if that means getting shut-out when we don't win statewide. Barry Gold-

water received 51.5 percent of the vote in the California primary. While it is doubtful that even a vengeful and disruptive pro-Rockefeller 48.5 percent of the California delegation would have endangered Goldwater's eventual nomination, it certainly would have made things inside that delegation much less



pleasant. Let's also remember 1976, when Ronald Reagan blasted Gerry Ford, receiving nearly 70 percent of the vote against the accident from Michigan. As a member of that delegation I know how deeply I would have resented having 30 percent of my fellow delegates be Ford-ites. I also know that the hostilities from such a split delegation would have lingered on for years, much longer, I think, than the actual Ford/Reagan chasm lasted. So do we openly admit our fear that we cannot carry the state for a unified conservative coalition behind one candidate next year? Do we go for the Ray Haynes "insurance policy," secure in the knowledge that any delegation would then have a hefty conservative minority? Or do we "double down," hoping for a 100 percent conservative delegation? It is a close call in my opinion.

**A** GOOD FRIEND of mine has observed that the history of the post-Reagan election years is one of conservatives indulging ourselves in internal feuds over relative trivialities, dividing among several candidates and allowing true "non-conservatives" like George Bush and Bob Dole to snatch the nomination. This is true, though I'm not sure how relevant to our current situa-



tion. As I said above, I think everyone except Pete Wilson among the candidates probably deserves the label “conservative” in some way. And also as stated previously, this is because, other than abortion, there is little in the way of substantive disagreement in the Party.

Let’s face it, we conservatives don’t have a bogey man this year. I got into politics in high school for Barry Goldwater. We had great bogey men in the old days. Whether it was Screwtape himself, Nelson Rockefeller, or one of the lesser Wormwoods — Kuchel, Scranton, Percy, Romney, Javits, or Ford — we had opponents truly worthy of our scorn, derision, and deserving of political extinction. Ah, those were the days. It made politics easy to understand and easy to compartmentalize the good guys from the bad. The dynamics simply have changed too much, at least for this coming presidential contest. Frankly, my conservative pals, none of the other possible choices are fearsome or worrisome enough to animate me to active opposition. As already indicated, my choice is Steve Forbes. I think he has delivered the most consistent and eloquent conservative message over the past three years. And I think there is absolutely no question that he would make the best president of any candidate in either Party. Whether he can overcome the “nerd” factor is another question.

Alan Keyes or Gary Bauer as the GOP nominee would probably make 1964 look like a cliff hanger, although the argument can be made that equally powerful “residuals” would come from their campaigns as came from 1964. I personally don’t buy that, but don’t think it is a totally unsupportable argument either.

Dan Quayle and Lamar Alexander strike me as unlikely to generate sparks among our electorate. So that brings us back to Mrs. Dole and George W. I yearn

for a domestic Margaret Thatcher. Unfortunately there is nothing in Libby Dole’s background or public statements that allows me to consider her a likely claimant to that title. However, neither is there anything in Mrs. Dole’s background or public statements that make it fair to label her as another Christy Whitman, as some in our movement have already done. We shall simply have to wait and see how she reveals herself on the campaign trail — and then ask ourselves if we believe it.

AND THUS to George W. I suspect that both Governor Bush and Mrs. Dole would be mixed blessings for conservatives if either made it to the Oval Office. Certainly we would have to fight for our positions more fiercely than with Keyes, Bauer, Quayle or Forbes sitting behind the “big desk.” But I am not willing to rule them out as worthy of my vote come November of Y2K, and here’s why. It is highly likely that whichever Party elects the next president will also control the next Congress. In spite of what I admit is strong evidence to the contrary, I believe that a Republican president *and* a Republican Congress would enact significant portions of our conservative agenda. *That*, I believe, is the key to a future of unbroken dominance for conservative ideas in the American body politic.

Let the American voter see that our ideas work. From tax cuts to vouchers, from missile defense to respect for life, a Republican president and Congress could present powerful evidence of the validity and practicality of our ideas. We in California — for once — likely will be significant players in the GOP nomination drama. By all means let’s go for it all next year, and try to nominate and elect a true conservative champion. May the best man (or woman) win. CPR

## Correspondence

*(Continued from page 2)*

a similar position, but for a real exercise in sound-bite debate, try to build something. The counter barrage of junk science, twisted logic, and blue sky statistics from self-proclaimed environmentalists will be astounding

Even so, conservatives has superb issues available to them.

A smaller, less intrusive government would be high on my list. Californians don’t need or want the state to become their surrogate mother. Adults are perfectly capable of being responsible for their own actions. We certainly don’t want our new “mother” reminding our children to wear their rub-

bers when they go out. A reduction in taxes would seem to be a no-brainer. In an era of surplus, Democrats insist on spending the extra and asking for more.

Education will continue to be a major item. While Governor Davis has directed some worthwhile education initiatives, they will likely fail. Fundamental structural changes have not occurred and the new directives will be implemented by the same people who drove our K-12 schools from first to last in the span of a single generation.

Affirmative action, originally designed to jump-start the black population into mainstream society, was a good idea because it worked. The challenge now is what to do with

*(Please turn to page 27)*

# Fixing Education in 1999

**It is Gray Davis's 'first, second, and third priority,'  
which means plenty of proposals for more spending.  
But true reform requires only a few basic steps.**

**Steve Baldwin**

**T**oday's number one issue in California is education. It was the single most talked about topic in last year's campaigns statewide. Our new governor, Gray Davis, has said that education is his "first, second, and third priority." While everyone seems to agree that something must be done about education in our state, there is heated debate over the many proposed solutions, reform plans, and increased spending proposals being discussed to solve our education problems. Unfortunately, until we agree what has caused the mess we're in, we'll never be able cure that which ails our schools.

During his campaign for governor, Gray Davis proposed forcing parents to sign a "contract" that would require them to participate in the education of their children. In his inaugural address Davis three times emphasized that students would have to work harder. Our schools are faced with many problems, but the

willingness of students to learn is not one of them. It may be convenient for Davis to blame students and parents while only making a cursory reference to the education establishment, but that, in fact, is where the problem lies. The education professionals and the education establishment have failed our children.

Blame may be shared equally by everyone who took a turn at the switch over the past 30 years; members of the Legislature, governors, school superintendents, administrators, and education bureaucrats. And while we are at it, we must not forget the educational theorists who thrust such "experiments" as whole-language reading, new-math, and *new new-math* on the minds of our children.

Because of the popularity of the issue, throughout the coming year the California Legislature will witness an onslaught of education "reform" proposals. We will see 10-point plans, and "specialized" teaching programs. We will see efforts to tinker with the curriculum, and all kinds of proposed compacts and contracts



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trict.*