

LAURO CAVAZOS, secretary of education, is living down to our expectations. As we noted in our January issue, the warning signs were abundant as early as his confirmation hearings, where he pledged to repudiate the works of his predecessor, William Bennett, and basked in the encomiums of Senator Kennedy. If there were any doubts then that Cavazos would prove a pliant tool of the education establishment, his recent firing of Patricia Hines as head of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) has dispelled them.

Mrs. Hines, a recess appointment of President Reagan, enjoyed strong support from congressional Republicans, and both she and her supporters in the Senate had been assured by the Bush White House that she would be kept on in her job. There was, however, a problem: she is a solid conservative, an advocate of demonstrably sound teaching methods such as phonics and of measures to increase parental choice in education such as magnet schools and vouchers. Her presence as head of OERI, which dispenses millions of dollars in research grants, was therefore intolerable to "education research" groups accustomed to feeding at the federal trough. Mrs. Hines soon found herself the target of the educational establishment, and moreover of American liberalism in general. People for the American Way launched a campaign against her, and Senator Kennedy, off on a trip with Cavazos, personally urged that she be fired.

Cavazos, for his part, may not have needed much convincing. When Hines had a speech written for Cavazos endorsing parental choice, he refused to deliver it. In its place, he delivered one in which he accepted a poll showing 71 percent of the public agreeing that parents "should have the right to choose the local schools their children attend," but purporting to be "worried about that other 29 percent," who presumably do not wish to be given a choice. (If you can follow that logic, you too can be secretary of education.) He then fell to whining that parental choice should not be pushed because "we desperately need

peace" in the "educational community." It isn't hard to see that the group Cavazos worries about isn't some imaginary 29 percent of the populace, but the members of the National Education Association.

The ascendancy of the education professionals is evident in the remarkably open campaign they conducted against Mrs. Hines. They scarcely bothered concealing their motivations with the usual accusations ("ethical violations," etc.) that normally cover this sort of Washington power grab. The American Educational Research Association, in a memo enjoining its membership to write letters against her, found it sufficient to charge her with such crimes as association with Gary Bauer and the "justifiably much-maligned" National Council on Educational Research. (The latter tried to protect taxpayers from unwittingly subsidizing feminist and homosexual tracts disguised as "research" — how to eliminate "sex roles" and "gender identity" from public education, that sort of thing.) Other education lobbyists have openly called on the Bush administration to "sweep out" all the remaining conservatives in the Education Department.

The educationists may be emboldened not only by rising power but by a feeling of righteousness. Liberals regard the Education Department as rightfully theirs (they *did* create it), unjustly usurped from them by unbelievers, but now ready for reclamation. It is a far cry from a few years ago, when liberal Secretary of Education Terrel Bell felt compelled (as he admits in his book *The Thirteenth Man*) to at least *pretend* he favored President Reagan's agenda. But even Reagan's best appointees managed only to discomfit the education establishment, never to dislodge it. Now we have the "education president," and with Cavazos as his right hand it is increasingly clear what that means: what the establishment wants, it will get. (MK)

CHILDREN'S SUFFRAGE?
Minnesota State Rep. Phyllis Kahn (from Minneapolis) has introduced a

bill in the State Assembly to give 12-year-olds the vote. She is perfectly serious. The Harvard M.S. and Yale Ph.D. compared all arguments against her initiative to those once used against women and blacks. "It's kind of an adult supremacist attitude," she said.

Kahn selected the age of 12 arbitrarily. "I'd been told that the general instructions in government pamphlets and stories in newspapers are written to be understandable at the sixth grade level. That's how I came up with it." As one of the local newspapers remarked, it was important, too, to pick an age when kids are old enough and tall enough to pull the lever by themselves.



When asked if children would be able to understand complicated legislative issues on taxes and school aids, Kahn replied, "I don't think kids understand them any less than most adults. Why, there aren't more than a handful of legislators who understand the school aids issue and they're voting on it. Besides, people don't vote on issues anyway. They end up voting on gut issues. The general electorate usually votes on people. And I don't think kids' judgment of people is necessarily inferior to that of adults. In some ways it may be superior, because it hasn't been tainted by as much contact with the real world.

"We've had a lot of discussion about how the needs of children haven't been addressed in the political process. I think in the long run, children will fare much better in the political process if they have the chance to stand up for their rights."

Kahn means to work great mischief by a proposal whose main objective is to politicize children against their parents. But since kids would generally vote with mom and dad, the real (and ironic) effect would be to give additional votes to parents according to the number of children in the family — the greatest bad idea to come out of Minnesota since Gene McCarthy.

ELSEWHERE IN MINNESOTA, a 21-year-old retarded man is about to be treated for his compulsive self-injurious behavior to the tune of \$292,000—or more—annually. Michael Untinen has a tendency to strike himself, to try to gouge out his own eyes, and to induce himself to vomit, and is presently being treated with “faradic shock,” from a hand-held electrode. The proposed new \$800-a-day methods would exchange for the shock more sophisticated and expensive medical and behavioral treatments.

I have some sympathy for the state senator who labeled faradic shock devices “cattle prods,” and it is sad to see a case in which a man is so mentally retarded he is piece-by-piece destroying himself. But with estimates of the yearly cost of Untinen’s treatment in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, we must pause. A little over three years of treatment and the state is talking about spending a million dollars.

It is not pleasant to put a price tag on human life. Nor would I argue for a return to medieval methods, chaining Untinen up and leaving him to rot. But this is a case of showering perhaps millions of dollars on a man, and for what result? At best, he will only be rendered harmless to himself. We are not an infinitely rich country. We could not save everyone, even if we were. And as it is we cannot afford to tax and spend continually in the effort to try to save a stunted mind from the consequences of its own unhappy fate.

It is the unpleasant duty of a society to set priorities. Surely the somewhat sick must be placed before the hopeless. It seems unwise, with the number of relatively healthy young people who need care, and the number of older citizens who have contributed much to our society but who are now elderly and ill, to make so many of them take a backseat to the unfortunate Mr. Untinen. (KD)

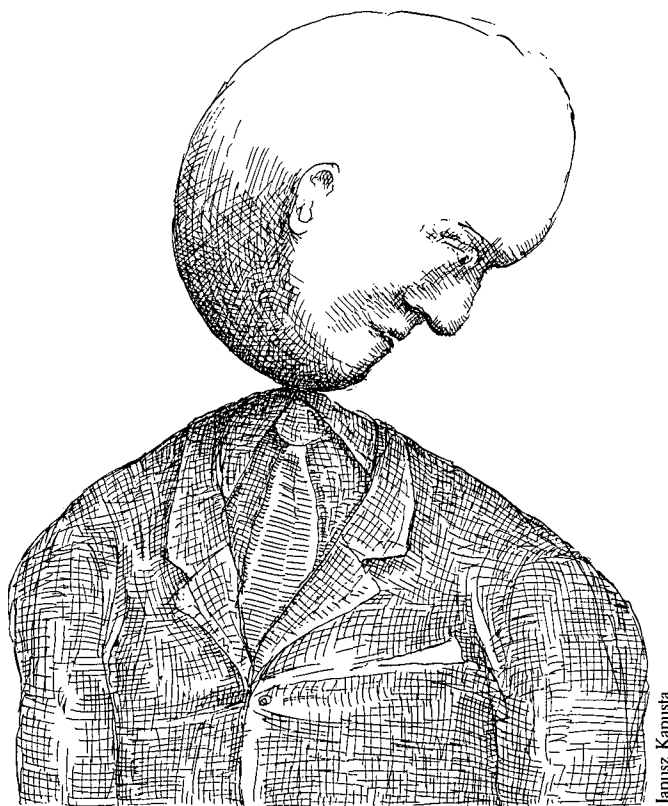
HOW DO THE FRENCH see their revolution today, two hundred years later? Confusedly, suggests a recent poll discussed by R.W. Johnson in the *London Review of Books*. Asked what they considered the most important events of the revolution were, a third answered “don’t know,” an answer almost as popular as the fall of the

Bastille (37 percent), and well ahead of such events as the Declaration of the Rights of Man (16 percent), the execution of the king and queen (13 percent), and the end of aristocratic privileges (10 percent). The revolution is strongly associated with liberty—“no doubt strengthened in the popular mind,” says Johnson, “by the fact that 14 July marks the beginning of the summer holiday season”—but it gets hazy after that. Only 30 percent knew the first article of the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Asked to name the three words most associated with the revolution, only 55 percent managed to get “liberty” and 48 percent “equality.” “Fraternity” brought up the rear at 43 percent, perhaps because to modern ears, so old-fashioned a word seems inconsistent with a progressive revolution. (Some respondents attributed female suffrage to the revolution. In France that did not come about until 1945.)

To be fair, Americans are scarcely stronger on history, our own or the

world’s: one thinks of the all-too-typical college student who asked his professor whether Julius Caesar resented his portrayal by Shakespeare. And the French seem to have retained an important lesson: asked who deserved the guillotine, the greatest number (albeit only 21 percent) named not King Louis XVI, but Robespierre. The implication, suggests Johnson, is that “the revolutionary Terror has made a far deeper impression on the popular imagination than the more humdrum, everyday cruelties of the Ancien Regime. The main reason for this is that nobody can imagine the monarchy ever coming back . . . but Robespierre seems a frighteningly contemporary figure.” (MK)

IT’S BEEN A YEAR and a half since Tom Wolfe published *The Bonfire of the Vanities*—doing for New York City what Tom Eliot did for June bugs: immortalizing them wriggling on a pin. I’m curious why a similar novel



Janusz Kapusta

SERIES OF SINS SIN OF PRECARIOUSNESS

hasn't been written about Washington.

By "similar," I mean a book that attempts to capture the dynamics of Washington life. There are dozens of "Washington novels" published each year, but most of these only deal with the political world. This is a single-mindedness particular to our era; authors in comparable periods of history did not restrict themselves to politics. In other periods everything *but* politics was fair game. Suetonius, full of court gossip, was a popular author in first-century Rome, but few Romans attempted to imitate him. In Edwardian England the politician was as absent from English novels as the businessman is in contemporary American fiction.

Why are "Washington novels" the dominant form of fiction about this city? The answer to this question requires another question, one first posed by Gavin Stamp in *The Spectator*. Take any large metropolitan area. Where in that area can you find residents whose families have lived in their homes for three generations?

In most large American cities, including New York, that question can be easily answered. In Baltimore, for example, the deepest-rooted families are in the working-class neighborhood of Hampden and the upper-crust Roland Park. In Philadelphia, the elites still live in the "Main Line" suburbs to the northwest.

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Washington has a few families who have been in town for generations, in the older suburbs of Alexandria and Kensington as well as in Georgetown and the "Gold Coast," a black neighborhood bordering Howard University. But these families are exceptions rather than the rule. In general, Washingtonians are mobile.

This is partly because Washington has grown dramatically since Franklin Roosevelt's taste for centralized government made the city a boom town for bureaucrats, partly because Washington has never had any major industry besides government. The ties that bind both workers and owners to a place are absent. Families may produce generations of bankers or factory workers, but I've never heard of a family that produced generations of civil servants.

So it is that the communities that do form in Washington are based on taste rather than tradition. Wealthy lobbyists, think-tank heads, and veteran journalists live in Cleveland Park. Young trendies—"Style" section writers, staffers for environmental groups, and public-interest lawyers—live in Adams-Morgan. Administrative assistants and policy analysts live on Capitol Hill.

Washington is rigidly segregated, despite being two-thirds black, and even though segregation is the result of custom rather than law. Not only are there relatively few blacks in the city's elite professions, but few whites visit the black regions of the city. Commuters can get to their offices without so much as passing through predominantly black areas. The incident that begins *Bonfire of the Vanities*—Sherman McCoy's missing a freeway exit and ending up in a black neighborhood—would not happen in Washington.

But I think the main reason why Washington has no *Bonfire* to call its own is because most Washington novelists, like most novelists, write about what they know. Given the sharp demarcations in the city of race and wealth, and given the lack of authentic community life, Washington novelists write about people largely like themselves—rootless consumers (or producers) of information. I may be wrong; the "Washington novel" could just be another market created by New York publishers. I don't believe, howev-

er, that editors on Park Avenue are so narrow-minded that they insist that Washington novelists never have characters standing in unemployment lines or dying of crack overdoses.

Will "Washington novels" ever expand their horizons to include the world in which most Washingtonians live and work? I predict that the first person to write a realistic novel about DC will be a mystery novelist, who will use our recent wave of drug-related killings as a vehicle for exploring the social dynamics of the city. Washington may never have its Tom Wolfe, but the city is ready for its Raymond Chandler.

—Martin Morse Wooster

EDWARD ABBEY, a novelist, essayist and sometime ranger and fire lookout with the National Park Service, died on March 14 at his home near Oracle, Arizona.

Born 62 years ago in Home, Pennsylvania, after World War II he discovered that there *is* life beyond the East Coast, and, since 1947, he had been residing in the Southwest.

Abbey, whose idols included Rabelais, Knut Hamsun, B. Traven, Celine, and Beethoven, wrote books on travel and adventure, peppered with philosophical commentary, that took issue with most of the "givens" cherished by unreconstructed liberals and neoconservatives alike (he was once described by a "liberal" reviewer as "puerile, arrogant, xenophobic and dopey" after he confessed, as an aside in one of his books, to believing "that mass immigration from the Latin South—or from any other source—is not a good thing for the working people and material well-being of the United States").

His books included *The Brave Cowboy* (1956), later made into a film by Dalton Trumbo, *Lonely Are the Brave*, starring Kirk Douglas, *Desert Solitaire* (1968), *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (1975), *The Journey Home* (1977), *Abbey's Road* (1979), *Good News* (1980), *One Life at a Time, Please* (1987), and *The Fool's Progress* (1988). He had completed the long-awaited sequel to *The Monkey Wrench Gang* shortly before his death. It is due to be published next winter.

—Wayne Lutton

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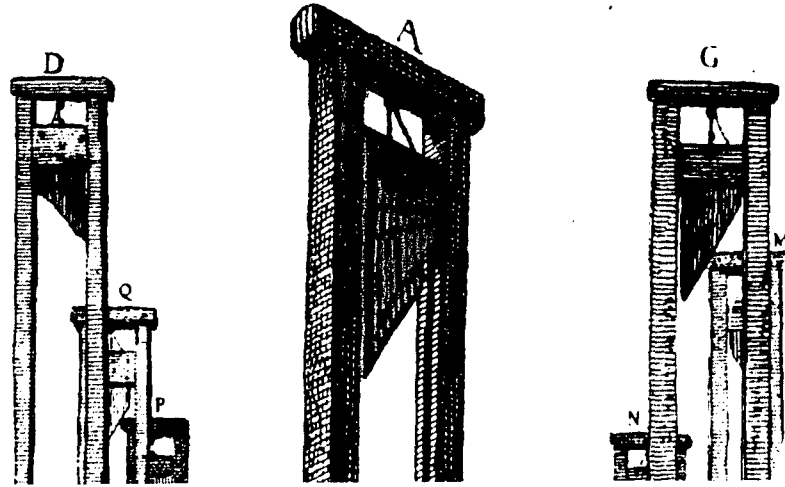
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The Legacy of 1789

by Thomas Fleming

One man, one vote. It seems such an obvious, such a simple principle. What can possibly hinder its implementation in South Africa, where blacks are barred from the exercise of citizenship rights, or Israel, where West Bank Palestinian children take to the streets demanding self-government and civil rights, or New York City, where the Board of Estimates (responsible for zoning, awarding contracts, and helping to draw up the city budget) is elected by a system that gives Staten Island's 377,600 people over six times the representation given to Brooklyn's 2,309,600? In declaring the Board of Estimates unconstitutional, the Supreme Court unanimously upheld a lower court decision that found the structure of representation "inconsistent with the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment."

It goes without saying that the Supreme Court has absolutely no constitutional right to involve itself in New York affairs, any more than it had when it interfered in the constitutions of states that gave added weight in their legislatures, by their districting plans, to rural areas. In the early 1960's the Supreme Court struck down any districting plan that was not based on population. As Allan Carlson comments in his recent book, *Family Questions*: "Freed from the rural yoke, state legislatures in the farm states and South began implementing a new set of values. They tossed out the Blue Laws, lifted restrictions on alcohol sales, loosened divorce and sodomy statutes. . . . Gone, for better or worse, were the last political barriers against modernity and secularity. . . . Gone too, in any instrumental sense, was a vision of the farm community as the reservoir of familism and virtue."

Progressive urbanites rejoiced in the downfall of rural America. Now it is New York's turn to feel the lash. If Ed Koch had even half the nerve he claims to have, he would tell the nine self-appointed tyrants on the Court exactly what they could do with their decision.

There is no chance of a mayor, even the mayor of New York, standing up to the unelected guardians of public order. However, some governors have, in recent years, made a stab at resisting the even greater power of the federal bureaucracy. Several states have enacted legislation banning treatment and disposal of toxic wastes within their borders, and some governors have taken emergency measures to prevent entry of hazardous materials into their states. In March, South Carolina Governor Carroll Campbell issued an executive order banning the shipment of toxic wastes from states that do not allow treatment or disposal on their own soil. *The New York Times* described the governor's action as "a clear challenge to the Federal Government's authority to regulate hazardous waste."

What the New York and South Carolina cases have in common is not simply a conflict with the authority of the national government. They once again raise the question of unitary democracy and its consequences, and in 1989 this brings us inevitably to reflections on the events of 1789.

The legacy of the French Revolution might be summed up in the phrase "democratic revolution." Under that title, all nondemocratic regimes—monarchist, oligarchic, military, etc.—are implicitly deprived of their legitimacy and become fair game for revolution. Edmund Burke was inspired to write his famous *Reflections on the Revolution in France* partly in response to a sermon delivered by the English democrat, the Rev. Richard Price.

Burke was outraged by Dr. Price's repudiation of all the complicated forms of social and political life that had evolved in Britain and France. Custom, tradition, and all the nice adjustments to local character and particular need—all of these were to be swept away and replaced by Lockean regimes based upon simple principles: kings and other rulers owed their position to the choice of the people; the people had the right to "cashier" their governors on any supposed