

Principalities & Powers

by Samuel Francis

Two years after George Bush moved downtown to the White House, the suspicion is beginning to twinkle in the brains of his conservative followers that the President is not one of them after all. What tipped them off to this shattering truth was their leader's nonchalant decision last summer to support a tax increase. But for some months previously they had had ample warnings that the Duke of Kennebunkport was not in fact the Gipperite they had concocted in their heads.

The same week Mr. Bush broke his pledge not to raise taxes, he was wining and dining Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Mandela of the African National Congress. Mr. Mandela, sometime fellow of the penal colony on Robben Island, is most noted for a brutally conceived but incompetently executed plot to wage people's war against white South Africans in the 1960's. His consort, the incomparable Winnie, has more recently acquired fame in her own right as an apostle of "necklacing" as well as the object of an official investigation into the torture and murder of a young man in her household. Given the lies and propaganda that have enveloped the Mandela family since Nelson's emancipation last February, it is perhaps understandable that the President had to meet with him. But that he and Mrs. Bush greeted the gruesome twosome so gladly ought to have suggested something about the first family even more strongly than the President's new fiscal policy.

Indeed, the whole substance of the Bush era is suggestive in a way that ought not to please the right. You can tell a good deal about politicians from the social gatherings they attend and the symbols they play with. Last spring Mr. Bush invited to the White House representatives of the "gay community" to observe the presidential signing of what is now known as the "Hate Crimes Act." That too ought to have dropped a hint to social conservatives that the President and his closest advisers don't experience the kind of abdominal heaves that normal people, not to mention real conservatives, invariably feel when they contemplate the subject of sodomy. But though there was some

-muted grumbling about the incident, most right-wingers were silent.

Then, perhaps most substantively, there is the actual legislative record. The first two years of the Bush administration have witnessed an expansion of federal power on a scale probably not seen since the Great Society legislation of 1965. Not only the "Hate Crimes Act" itself, which requires the federal government to keep records of criminal assaults against ethnic and sexual "minorities"—for the ultimate purpose of showing that American society is pathologically hostile to such groups and that major therapeutic programs are needed to extirpate its sickness—but also half a dozen other noisome statutes have sailed through Congress this year with not much more than a whimper of opposition from Mr. Bush.

The Child Care Bill, the Disabilities Act, the Clean Air Act, and the Kennedy-Hawkins Civil Rights Act of 1990 all promise to embark the country on the shoreless seas of utopianism. Unlike most of the social and economic legislation of Lyndon Johnson's era, these laws threaten not merely to cost taxpayers more money, restrict freedom, and fatten the bureaucratic herds, but also to manage, manipulate, and generally reconstruct the cultural norms of American society. As enacted, some of them may seem a bit toothless, but the point is that almost all of them stick their toes in a door that the federal government had not until recently been able to force open. The common assumption of most of them is that there is something profoundly wrong with some of the characteristic norms of American life, that these norms are and ever have been racist, brutalizing, and unfair toward more or less supposedly helpless or victim categories of citizens—the handicapped, the young, the deviant, the nonwhite, and the simple souls who want merely to breathe pure oxygen and drink clear water—and that it is the duty of the state to cure mainstream America of its spiritual and behavioral affliction of being mean to such groups.

Yet what is surprising about their passage through Congress is not only the generally tepid resistance from the Bush White House but also the equally spineless response they received even from congressional conservatives.

Utah's Senator Orrin Hatch actually helped cosponsor (with Senator Ted Kennedy) the Hate Crimes Bill—"I feel very deeply about people's heartaches and problems, and I don't care what their sexual preferences are," Mr. Hatch told the *New York Times*. "That's their business and I'm not going to judge them by my standards or what I think is right."

The Clean Air Act, strenuously opposed by the journalistic myrmidons of the right, nevertheless galloped through the Senate with only six Republican nays. While Senator Jesse Helms, Idaho's Steve Symms and James McClure, Oklahoma's Don Nickles, Wyoming's Malcolm Wallop, and Mr. Hatch's colleague from Utah, Jake Garn, voted against it, other tory stalwarts clambered on board, including Mr. Hatch himself, Texas Senator Phil Gramm, known for his free marketism, and retiring solons William Armstrong of Colorado and Gordon Humphrey of New Hampshire, who can have no reason to fear the orchestrated votes of the earth-shoe lobby.

Of course, most of these gentlemen, including the President, have sought to redeem their conservative souls by strapping themselves to the pole of the flag amendment, thundering for more capital punishment, denouncing drugs, and polishing up periodic declamations on the greatness of America and the sanctity of the family. So far that has succeeded in persuading their constituents to keep them in office, but how much longer it will work is unknown. In any case, such issues are thin substitutes for the meatier dishes that the seemingly immortal left keeps serving up. To be fair to Mr. Bush, why should he call for stronger wine when the guests at his own table sip only Perrier?

In the last few years, much has been written (a bit of it by me) about the intellectual derailment of the American right and the transformation of its mind into a body of notions indistinguishable from New Deal-Great Society liberalism. A foreign policy that dotes on "global democracy" rather than the national interest as the defining object of the State's affairs, a domestic policy that celebrates the charms of the underclass and ponders how to improve its condition even

through government redistribution, and a cultural style that twitters at the feet of the cheap idol of "pluralism" in order to avoid confronting the programmatic challenges to American civilization are now the content of what some are still pleased to call "conservatism." The metamorphosis has occurred under a variety of labels—"neoconservatism," "cultural conservatism," "opportunity society Republicanism," "Big Government conservatism," the "New Paradigm," etc.—but upon scrutiny, all turn out to be plain old vanilla liberalism.

Although the metamorphosis has largely been intellectual and literary, its chickens now have finally found their political roost. Sooner or later, the intellectual disintegration of the right was certain to trickle down from the lofty corridors of think tanks and well-endowed chairs (most of which curiously seem to be named after the same man) to the plain little people who hold public office. Such gentlemen are never noted for their grasp of intellectual subtleties, and when their aides, speechwriters, campaign advisers, and other hired guns present them with books, articles, and lectures spawned by the eggheads of the right, they tend to swoon with the thought of how intelligent they must really be. It is always a mistake for sitting politicians to read and think very much, and usually there is little danger in it. But at least since the time of John F. Kennedy, public men have been expected to sport not only beehive mops of dry-blown hair but also "new ideas." Of course, the left knows perfectly well that the "new ideas" it boasts are merely the same stale premises of tyranny it has always harbored. Only the right actually falls for the slogan and earnestly tries to catch up with its rivals by emulating them.

The rout of the right in the last couple of years in Congress is the logical extension of the new ideas its officeholders have swallowed, but that won't preserve us, in the next two years, from having to endure from these same statesmen every known species of threat, cajolement, pledge, and hucksterism known to democratic politics and the conservative repertoire. There will be (and already is) much moaning about having to run for office under the burden of the President's

broken promise. There will be fretful prophecies of the price—political and economic—the President will have to pay for raising taxes. There will be mutterings about "not supporting George Bush anymore" and rumblings about founding a "third party"—which, should it ever come to pass, would merely be the rank-and-file of the Republican Party under a different label and without most of its nationally known leaders.

But in the end, Mr. Bush will sur-

vive, even as President Nixon survived similar disgruntlement in 1972 when he recognized Communist China and returned from Moscow with the SALT I agreement. The President may or may not survive a challenge from the Democrats in 1992, but one thing he doesn't have to worry about is anything serious from a conservative "movement" that ceased being meaningfully conservative, or a movement, or serious, some time ago.



LIBERAL ARTS



BEARD BANNING IS RACIST, OF COURSE

A July civil rights ruling in Maryland has called into question the legality of on-the-job grooming rules that require men to be clean-shaven. Dermatologists claim that nearly 90 percent of black men are afflicted in varying degrees with a skin condition called PFB, pseudofolliculitis barbae, which makes shaving painful. The banning of beards, therefore, is a racially discriminatory act.

The Maryland case involved one Donald Boyd, who was forced to resign from the University of Maryland police force in Baltimore after he refused to shave his beard. Mr. Boyd said he developed PFB in the Army in 1963, when he was forced to shave regularly for the first time. The problem continued after he was hired as a police officer by the university; co-workers reportedly noticed that he had developed red blotches and infected bumps on his face. He then gave up shaving and grew a quarter-inch beard. His supervisor told him to go on sick leave until the condition was cleared up. Upon exhausting his medical leave, Mr. Boyd was reportedly forced to resign because he refused to shave. "Consciously or unconsciously," he said, "the grooming policy amounts to racism." As of last July, a state hearing examiner had ordered the university to reinstate him with back pay.

This ruling is expected to reverberate throughout the country, affecting in particular municipal police forces. Maryland's Human Relations Commission, in fact, wasted no time in bringing a complaint against Domino's Pizza Corporation, asserting that the company's "no-beard" policy constitutes religious discrimination against a Sikh man named Prabhjot Kohli, whose religion dictates that he wear a beard. Kohli was turned down for a job as manager of a Domino's store in December 1987, when he refused to shave. The Human Relations Commission has asked Domino's to pay Kohli for two years of "lost earnings" and to hire him as a Domino's manager.



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

The Facts of Life

by Thomas Fleming

*"Birth, copulation, and death.
That's all the facts,
when you come to brass tacks."*

Eliot's three facts of natural life have always been circumscribed with such custom and ceremony as to become social and cultural facts. Birth, copulation, and death may be virtually the same everywhere, when you come to brass tacks, but being born, getting married, and dying are experiences that vary from culture to culture and more resemble forms of art than facts of life. There are some societies in which expectant fathers experience the pangs of birth and many more in which men regularly name their day of death.

The facts of life are everywhere regulated by custom and law, but the regulatory agency is typically the force of precedent and the pressure of shame rather than the policeman's club or the judge's gavel. Human societies have always taken an interest in marriage, but the paraphernalia of licenses and permits are an outgrowth of the church's moral authority, transmogrified by state bureaucracy. The medieval church specified within what degrees of kinship who could marry whom and gave or denied last rites and Christian burial. In the later Middle Ages the church went so far as to sanctify marriages that had been entered into without the consent of the parents of both parties. While at first sight this benevolent indulgence seems to extend the sphere of personal autonomy and individual liberty, the real effect was to strengthen the hand of the ecclesiastical hierarchy at the expense of families.

One of Martin Luther's first orders of business was to reestablish the family as the most honorable and privileged social institution. Luther not only compelled his clergy to undergo the rigors of marriage; he also attempted—without complete success—to restore the parental veto on their

children's marriages. But where the church was relaxing its power, secular authority was already picking up the slack, and although it is difficult not to agree with Luther's attack on the newly acquired privileges of the church, one of the long-term effects of the Reformation was to transfer social authority from clergymen to administrators.

In a unified Christian society, the moral and social authority of the church makes a great deal of sense, even when—as in the years preceding the Reformation—it is most subject to abuse. But in a secular and pluralist society of the sort imagined by American propagandists, such moral regulation becomes a powerful weapon of state despotism. The state's moral authority is all the more dangerous, because it is the most wholesome and religious elements that demand laws on divorce, abortion, and euthanasia. At the same time as churches are fighting off the government's concerted attack on religious freedom, religious people are campaigning for constitutional amendments on school prayer and the "right to life."

The ethical and political confusion surrounding these issues is nowhere more evident than in recent Supreme Court rulings on abortion and euthanasia. Upholding parental consent for abortion in Minnesota and Ohio, while at the same time upholding Missouri's refusal to allow a young woman to die, might seem to reflect a consistent states' rights outlook, but the Rehnquist court—any more than the Burger court or the Warren court—is not a supporter of states' rights except in cases where a decision strengthens the hand either of the Court itself or of government in general.

In both cases the best thing the Court could do is take