

by Samuel Francis

### A Banner With a Strange Device

As the House of Representatives slithered toward its vote on the North American Free Trade Agreement last November, the regiments of lobbyists who were peddling the pact set up their tents in what the *New York Times* described as “a stately conference room on the first floor of the Capitol, barely an elevator ride away from the action in the House chamber.” There, amidst the high-tech opulence in which the public interest is bought and sold, the real rulers of the United States bargained and bickered over the economic future and national sovereignty of the country. According to the *Times’* account of the scene, the “stately conference room” was plastered with banners that proclaimed the ethic of the New World hog trough into which the lobbyists were bartering the nation and that were intended to inspire those who required inspiration with a firm moral grounding for the bribery and lies by which they earn their bread. One of the banners tells us all we need to know about both NAFTA and the larger issues that stood on the auction block that week. “We defend,” it blared, “and we build a way of life not for America alone, but for all mankind.” There was a time not too long ago when such banalities of humanitarian universalism were left to gather cosmic dust on the surface of the moon, but today they are taken seriously as formulas by which the managed evanescence of the United States is rationalized.

But for all the banality of the banner, the device it bore communicated an important truth about NAFTA and the forces that pushed it. Strangely enough, it was NAFTA opponent Jesse Jackson who perhaps encapsulated those forces most succinctly in a statement uttered soon after the vote. “President Clinton,” the country’s most voluble Professional Negro proclaimed, “leads the Reagan-Bush-Limbaugh-Iacocca-Kissinger-Rostenkowski-major publishers-Wall Street-Republicans victory team.” While this, of course, is not a precise analysis, the

Reverend Jackson’s proclamations are never noticeable for their precision or their analytic clarity (although at least this one doesn’t rhyme). Nevertheless, his description does accurately suggest that it was the nation’s elite that offered the most fervent apologetic for NAFTA, and not merely the corporate elite but also our political and cultural oligarchs. That is why Mr. Clinton could trot out every living ex-President in support of the treaty as well as the recently retired chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and most of the country’s governors, and that is why NAFTA lobbyists enjoyed such posh headquarters in the U.S. Capitol, while their opponents had to make do with rather less up-scale offices considerably farther from the elevators.

What binds these different elites together, however, is not merely their commitment to NAFTA but their larger investment in the emergent transnational regime—variously known as the “New World Order,” the “Global Economy,” the “First Universal Nation,” etc.—toward the construction of which, as Henry Kissinger announced, NAFTA is the first vital step. Probably more than any other political issue for years, NAFTA shows clearly the immense gulf that separates the interests of these elites from the interests and aspirations of Middle Americans. In an analysis of the NAFTA conflict soon after the vote, *Washington Post* reporter Thomas Edsall made it clear that the real source of the struggle over the trade agreement was not simply “left” versus “right” or “free trade” versus “protection,” but rather a social conflict between the elite as characterized by Mr. Jackson and what Mr. Edsall described as “men and women without college degrees for whom the work ethic no longer is paying off.” “For the past 20 years, for men especially,” Mr. Edsall added, “inflation-adjusted wages have been eroding, and the likelihood of permanent layoff has grown.”

Democratic Whip David Bonior, one of the leading opponents of the trade agreement in the House, was even more specific about the Middle American opposition to the treaty. “When jobs are lost,” he said in the debate on the House

floor, “these are the people who have to sell their homes, pull their kids out of school and look for new work. The working people who stand against this treaty don’t have degrees from Harvard. They don’t study economic models. And most of them never heard of Adam Smith. But they know when the deck is stacked against them.” It will be recalled, and Mr. Edsall did recall it, that it was precisely this stratum of the American population to whom Mr. Clinton pledged his troth in his acceptance speech at the Democratic Convention in 1992, “the people who work hard, pay their taxes, [and] play by the rules,” and of course, as with every other successful presidential candidate who has gulled Middle Americans into supporting him, Mr. Clinton’s practice in office has been to betray them at every opportunity and to ally himself with the elite and its interests.

The conflict between, on the one hand, the Middle American core of the nation and, on the other, an elite lodged in the bureaucratized, technocratic, and increasingly global mass organizations of the state, economy, and culture is of course not new and has underlain and informed most of the social and political conflicts in the United States since the 1960’s. Yet with the NAFTA debate, the conflict reached a new level, turned a corner, and took a giant step toward an explicitly nationalist (and, on the other side, an explicitly anti-nationalist and globalist) consciousness. While earlier stages of the conflict have settled on cultural, racial, and social issues, what the NAFTA battle accomplished for the first time was to bind and synthesize the economic complaints of the Middle American core with the issue of nationhood itself.

The opposition to NAFTA generally emphasized two major flaws of the agreement. One was its effect on American jobs and the “giant sucking sound” the agreement would cause the economy to emit as American jobs gurgled across the Rio Grande. The other was its erosive effect on national sovereignty through the trilateral panels that the agreement empowers to rule on which local and

state laws remain valid under its terms: the degree to which Americans may make, enforce, or repeal the laws under which they live and work. Both are essentially nationalist issues, the latter obviously so, but the former no less so. It was the unique accomplishment of the best known opponent of the agreement, Ross Perot, to muffle his implicit grasp of these nationalist issues in his disastrous debate with Vice President Gore just before the vote. By his useless chatter about the environmental depredations of American corporations in Mexico, Mr. Perot dropped the nationalist ball and succeeded only in showing that he didn't understand his own argument, which originally spoke to the effects of the agreement on his own country and its people.

Yet despite Mr. Perot's fumbling, NAFTA remained for most of its opponents a nationalist issue, and the conjunction of the Middle American economic crisis with the matter of sovereignty for the first time raises the level of the Middle American conflict by a notch or two. Sovereignty, of course, has been an issue at the heart of American foreign involvement in the Gulf War, the Balkans, and Somalia under United Nations authority, although for most Americans it has been a rather abstract and elusive concern. Only when President Clinton actually transferred military command of American troops to foreign officers under U.N. authority last year and only when body bags began to come back to the United States from Somalia was the issue of national sovereignty in the continuing adventures of New World globalism rendered concrete. The NAFTA debate not only rendered sovereignty concrete but also made it a matter of dollars and cents, because it at once became clear that the managed erosion and violation of national sovereignty that NAFTA enshrines were closely linked to the loss of American jobs and the economic ruination of the middle class. It suddenly dawned on millions of Middle Americans that the diminution of national sovereignty would march in step with the decline of their own economic position. Finally, NAFTA also made clear that if the material interests of Middle Americans were linked to national sovereignty, they were at odds with the interests of the transnational managerial elite, just as the interests of the elite are closely linked to the abandonment of sovereignty.

What NAFTA showed, then, was that two sociopolitical blocs have now emerged in American politics. On the one hand, there is a Middle American core that not only remains culturally and emotionally loyal to the institutions of American nationality but also is materially interested in a strong, independent, and sovereign nation and accurately sees its material interests in conflict with those of the dominant elites in the American economy, state, and culture. On the other hand, there is an elite driven by its multinational corporate and commercial interests to dilute, erode, and compromise the sovereignty of the American nation and at the same time and for the same material reasons to weaken the economic position of Middle America.

The latter is not merely a side-effect but a deliberate strategy on behalf of the corporate structures the elite controls. In a previous *Chronicles* column, I quoted the remark of Donald V. Fites, chairman of Caterpillar Inc., to the effect that "there is a narrowing of the gap between the average American's income and that of the Mexicans. As a human being, I think what is going on is positive. I don't think it is realistic for 250 million Americans to control so much of the world's GNP." The jury may still be out as to whether Mr. Fites is really a human being, though it's pretty clear he's not much of an American, but his view is not exceptional among other "American" corporate leaders. "For the first time," the *New York Times* reported as long ago as 1987, "American manufacturers are talking openly about a new and startling

wage goal: They want to greatly narrow the gap between what they pay their factory workers and the earnings of workers in South Korea, Brazil, and a handful of other third world countries." Robert E. Mercer, chairman of Goodyear, echoes this sentiment. "In one way or another," he vows, "the gap will have to close."

The reason the gap will have to close is intimately connected to the economic logic of world trade. American firms cannot afford to pass up the bonanza of foreign markets, but they find themselves priced out of those markets by goods produced by the cheap labor of the Third World. They cannot swallow the rock of trade protectionism, by which the wage level of their American employees could be salvaged, since that would provoke retaliations by foreign nations that could close off access to world markets; but neither can they keep sitting in the uncompetitive hard place where the payment of high American wages puts them. Hence, something has to give, and of course what the corporate elite is eager to give is the economic position of Middle America, which the corporate managers have decided to convert into a Third World work force.

Hence NAFTA, which will achieve this goal in part by simply moving jobs to the Third World and in part by using the threat of movement as a club with which to hammer wage negotiations into acceptable shape. Hence also mass immigration, which imports a cheap work force in competition with American workers as well as a new urban underclass with which the governmental managerial elite can play its social-therapeutic

## LIBERAL ARTS

### PATRIOTISM AND MANHOOD

"In order to be a respectable man one must be a good son, good husband, and good father; in other words, one must combine all the public and private virtues. . . . Therein lies the true definition of the word patriotism."

—*The French Republican to the citizen of Philadelphia as quoted by Patrice Higonnet in "Sans-culottes," from Fouret and Ozouf's Dictionnaire critique.*

games for a generation or more. As long as the interests of the managerial elites of corporate capitalism and the megastate are placed ahead of those of the core of the American nation, this conflict between the interests of the elite and those of the Middle American core will persist, and only the displacement of the elite in both the corporate economy and the megastate and of its structural interests in the organizations of Leviathan Capitalism and the Leviathan State can resolve the conflict in favor of Middle Americans.

Decades ago, Joseph Schumpeter showed how modern managerial capitalism subverts the very cultural fabric that produces it, and last August, in an article in *Harper's*, David Rieff showed how the real engine of the much-lamented "multiculturalism" that now subverts Western and American civilization in the nation's schools and universities is driven by what he called "Multiculturalism's Silent Partner," the "Global Economy":

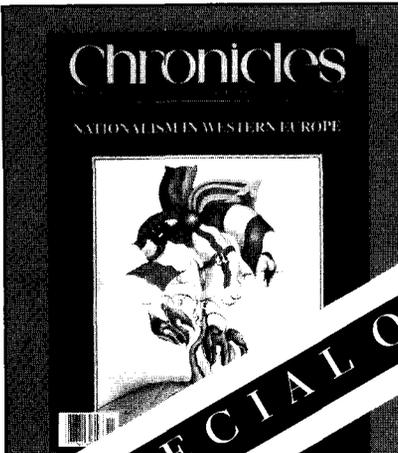
The more one reads in academic multiculturalist journals and in

business publications, and the more one contrasts the speeches of CEOs and the speeches of noted multiculturalist academics, the more one is struck by the similarities in the way they view the world. Far from standing in implacable intellectual opposition to each other, both groups see the same racial and gender transformations in the demographic makeup of the United States and of the American workforce. That non-white workers will be the key to the 21st century American labor market is a given in most sensible long-range corporate plans.

Mr. Rieff's article and the remarks of American corporate leaders quoted above point toward another social and political convergence that parallels that of the Middle Americans of the anti-NAFTA movement last fall. So far from constituting a culturally conservative force that works for the preservation of the nation and its demographic cultural core, the managerial regime and its elite in state, economy, and culture are the

enemies of the nation and its people; managerial capitalism works to undermine, weaken, and destroy them, and therefore an alliance of managerial capitalism with the multicultural and anti-national left is natural and logical.

If that alliance includes the Clinton administration as well as the globalist conservatism of Newt Gingrich, Jack Kemp, Ronald Reagan, Bob Dole, and Phil Gramm, it makes equal sense for the Middle American foci of NAFTA to make their bed with a nationalist right that places little faith in the Republican Party and its tepid ideologies but constructs a new political force founded on putting the interests of the American nation and the American people first. Last fall, these new alliances began to emerge and to engage in the struggle for the nation that their interests and aspirations compel. If the banners they waved then seemed to bear strange devices, it may not be too long before the armies that march under them reshape American politics on the explicitly nationalist lines that the rest of the world now finds familiar.



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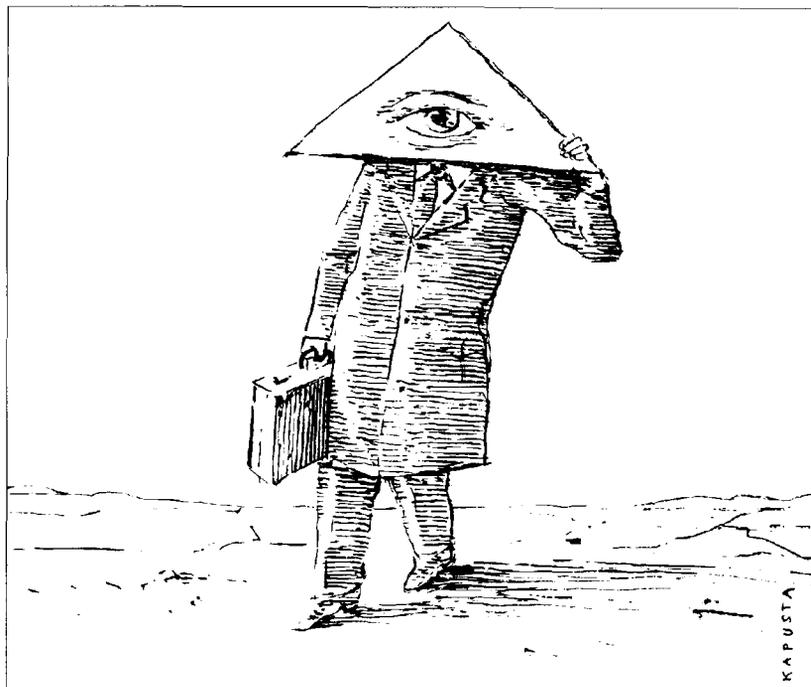
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## Men Unlimited

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

The comic, as Flannery O'Connor said, is the reverse side of the terrible. I suppose the spectacle of 50 to 100 men from 20 to 70 years of age disguised in Wild Man and Coyote masks as they prance in a forest glade, beat drums, eat buffalo chili, and exorcise the demon spirits of their fathers through poetry and the contemplation of Jungian archetypes could be either, depending upon your point of view as well as your sense of humor. Betty Freidan finds it "sick," but she doesn't need a mask.

Until recently my idea of a men's movement was the Commissary Commandos, an association of males from my hometown of Kemmerer, Wyoming, that spends the long third weekend of August annually on four-wheel-drive safari in the mountains, camping, eating, drinking Jack Daniel's through a bugle, playing cards and horse shoes, firing guns, and initiating new members by an agonizing ritual with which every range cow is intimately familiar. Since then I have realized that for my fellow Commandos and me to aspire to kinship with so enlightened a brotherhood would be presumptuous. While Jack Daniel's, Jim Beam, Fleischmann's, Boone's Farm, Coors, Anheuser-Busch, and Cutty Sark guarantee absolutely to make everyone a King, Warrior, and Wild Man for at least 72 hours, none of us is all that familiar with the Jungian reality underlying these archetypal characters. Also our many father-and-son pairs show no particular interest in exorcising one another. Confronted by the Commissary Commandos in the raw, Robert Bly, father of the so-called mythopoetic men's movement, would surely murmur, echoing T.S. Eliot, "That is not

what I meant—that is not what I meant, at all."

Nor is the men's movement—with the exception of small and unimportant contingents—what feminists of both sexes assume it to be, either a force for counterattacking the political and judicial tyranny of organized feminism or a neo-Neanderthal conspiracy to round up nubile American females, hit them on the head with a club, and drag them by their hair back to home and hearth. In fact, it is a transparent ploy aimed at denying the necessity for such actions, which the men's movement, as merely another program of consciousness-raising in Native American drag, is not manly enough to perform.

In a sane and healthy society, consciousness-raising, rather than elevate consciousness, would raise hackles; in a supersane and disgustingly healthy one, it would raise leveled pistols as well. Healthy societies are unified communities, and unified communities produce individuals who are also persons whose psyches are intact because their view of the universe and of the reality behind it is predisposed by the ability to comprehend existence in the round. But ours is an insane and sick society that not only refuses to recognize ontological wholeness but denies the possibility of such a thing. Naturally this refusal makes people desperate and miserable, causing them to shop for therapists and support groups chosen according to whatever self-identity is uppermost in their minds: gay, straight, black, white, son, daughter, vegetarian, meat-eater, victim, oppressor, man, woman. In these matters, the conviction is that self-fulfillment—the secular equivalent of personal salvation—comes in selecting a dominant or simply preferred aspect of oneself and subjecting it to a single-minded course of rigorous development such as might be designed for an Olympic athlete in training to raise the Parthenon with his left foot. In physi-

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