

Ex-contra convert counteracts neo-con con job

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Authors David Horowitz and Peter Collier extracted \$450,000 from right-wing foundations to stage a conference about their conversions from left-wing opponents of the Vietnam War to ardent Reaganites. The highlight of the Second Thoughts Conference, held in mid-October at Washington's Hyatt Regency Hotel, was to be a sit-down dinner at which neo-conservative movement elders Irving Kristol, Norman Podhoretz, William Phillips and Hilton Kramer bestowed grace upon the converts from the '60s. But the script went awry when panelist Bruce Cameron expressed his "third thoughts" on the contras and the Reagan administration.

Cameron, a University of Michigan grad, had worked for Tom Hayden and Jane Fonda's Indochina Peace Campaign. He then went to Washington as a human-rights lobbyist for Americans for Democratic Action. But in 1985 he became a contra supporter. Cameron, disillusioned with the Sandinistas, was convinced by contra leaders Arturo Cruz and Alfonso Robelo and by Lt. Col. Oliver North that the rebels could be part of a negotiated and

democratic solution in Nicaragua. Cameron worked closely with North to win contra funding from Congress.

But he became disillusioned by both the Iran-contra scandal and Cruz' resignation from the contra directorate. At an afternoon panel on "revolutionary chic" that was intended to lambaste the left for its opposition to the contras, Cameron wreaked havoc. "I now believe that I was fundamentally in error both in my assessment of the contras and of the Reagan administration," Cameron told several hundred people at the Hyatt Regency. "We were guilty of the error of voluntarism. We believed that by sheer force of political will we could overcome recalcitrant realities. We believed that if we called a movement freedom fighters they would be them, and they would win."

Cameron rejected the theory of democratic counterrevolution propagated by Robert Leiken and by neo-conservatives in the National Endowment for Democracy. "I have grave doubts that there can be a genuinely democratic counterrevolution," Cameron said. "And I have grave doubts that we could sustain it. We do not have the culture in the CIA to animate a democratic movement."

Cameron endorsed the Central American peace plan as a means

of preventing Sandinista interference in its neighbor's affairs and of providing a political opening in Nicaragua. "What goals are achievable by continued military pressure are achievable now by the Guatemala City accords," he said.

Cameron's remarks were greeted by loud boos. During the question-and-answer period, he was vilified. One contra supporter ripped Cameron for his current job as a lobbyist for the leftist Mozambican government. Contra leader Javier Arguello attributed Cameron's change of heart to cowardice. "We all know how hard it is to be a contra," he said. "You need guts to be a contra because it is so unfashionable. I know why Bruce couldn't take it any more."

David Horowitz, former acolyte to Black Panther leader Huey Newton, reminded the audience that Cameron, working with Hayden and Fonda, had "pulled the plug on the people of Vietnam."

But Cameron had won the day. "I think he is going to get all the press attention," lamented Accuracy in Media Chairman Reed Irvine. He was right. Both the *Washington Post* and the *Washington Times* devoted more space to Cameron than to the attempts by Horowitz, Collier and the other contra enthusiasts to clothe themselves in a new political identity.

—John Judis

Dying with dollars: how your taxes help the contras

Witness For Peace (WFP) is a non-denominational religious group of Americans living in Nicaragua that investigates and documents murder, abduction, torture and destruction committed by the U.S.-backed contras. The group's latest report, "Civilian Victims of the Contra War," shows the bloody ways in which contras used the \$100 million in congressional aid.

The report, which covers February to July 1987, describes ambushes, attacks, assassinations, landmine explosions and abductions which claimed more than 350 victims, many of them children. The reported cases, however, are probably only a fraction of the actual contra atrocities, since WFP covered only cases that it could substantiate quickly and accurately.

Using the U.S. State Department's definition of "terrorism"—"premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets," the WFP report details 14 attacks on rural communities and cooperatives that left 84 people dead or wounded. It also documents 12 contra ambushes of civilian vehicles that killed or wounded 39 people, as well as nine assassinations and more than 200 kidnappings.

For example, in a contra attack on La Esperanza in Zelaya province, "one contra soldier found Isadora Solano Marin, 55, hiding in a trench,

unarmed, with her five-month-old granddaughter.... The contra pulled the child from Isadora's arms, then shot the grandmother once in the forehead."

When unarmed cooperatives were targets, destruction of the schools, warehouses, farm animals, crops and food often accompanied the attacks. Consequently, as an Americas Watch report explained, farmers are "left with the harsh choice of being killed in an illegitimate attack or legitimizing it by arming themselves." Most victims of the at-

tacks were also survivors of previous contra terror; all co-ops attacked were "home to people already displaced by the war," according to the WFP report.

Political leaders, social service personnel and young men who completed military service are constant targets. Summary executions of ambushed civilians, especially those associated with the government, are not uncommon. Such ambushes occur in every region where the contras operate.

On July 3 a land mine exploded under a vehicle that Salvadoran Franciscan Brother Tomas Zavaleta was riding in, killing him and seriously wounded a parish priest and another passenger. Such mining of roads continues to claim civilian lives. The U.S. Embassy says the CIA no longer supplies contras with mines. But evidence—including photos by Reuters showing contras unpacking and planting mines—suggests the contras are behind the minings.

The report further says that "a well-documented pattern of contra mutilation of bodies and torture of selected victims" persists, especially in eastern Matagalpa province. The incidents range from outright torture—like slashing the breasts and thighs of one woman during interrogation—to expressions of "a random violence akin to sadism." One man, after being forced to carry wounded contras following an attack on the Matagalpa town of La Reforma, was found dead, his body "horribly mutilated."

—Anthony St. John

Contra victims: A mother and child get embalmed after being killed in a July contra attack on a village in Matagalpa.



Tom Louden

day after tomorrow. So I have never seriously warned and said we must plan for Armageddon." Andrew Lang, whose book *The Politics of Armageddon* will come out in 1988, told *In These Times* that the assembled evidence is "compelling" that Reagan, although not willing to fix a date, believes the destruction of the Soviet Union is inevitable. "Reagan has talked consistently about Armageddon, using the same arguments, from about 1967 to 1984," said Lang. "The buildup of nuclear arms early in the administration was designed to 'prevail' in a nuclear war. At the same time administration personalities were talking recklessly about the survivability of nuclear war. Since then those administration officials have been silent and the word 'prevail' has been dropped, but the weapons systems and the strategies remain the same." As for the soon-to-be-signed Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty with the Soviet Union, Lang said such a treaty is "politically necessary for Reagan if he is to persuade Congress to continue funding Star Wars."

Ready and waiting

For those wishing a respite from all this gloom and boom, the October *Esquire* offers no relief. Martin Amis' haunting essay "Nuke City—Wake up, America, to another sunny doomsday in Washington, District of Catastrophe" is a narrative journey around Washington's nuclear establishment. At one stop Amis has a "nuke chat" with William Arkin, the nuclear issues expert at Washington's left think-tank, the Institute for Policy Studies. Amis wrote of his conversation with Arkin: "There is a kind of nuke chat that sounds like masochism—amused, collusive, cheerfully scandalized. You talk about government policies as if you were talking about your children, their pointless delinquencies, their cute inanities (You know what they did? Have you heard what they're doing now?). For a while Arkin and I did this kind of nuke chat. He told me about the \$6,000 nuclear-hardened coffeepot.... Then his manner changed, and I sensed what I was to sense many times in Washington: a desire to escape complexity, to escape detail and the proliferation of detail, a desire to change the language, to edge back toward first principles. [Arkin said.] 'What you have to understand, what you have to make clear, is that the nuclear arsenal is a living organism, constantly adjusted, refined, altered, programmed, mobilized. Under Reagan we have shifted from prevention to preparation. They're not interested in World War III. They're interested in World War IV. The nuclear war plan spans 180 days. It's a confession of inevitability—it can't not happen—though it's so fucking complicated that they can't even see it.... Nuclear war is not just an idea. The whole planet is wired up for it.'"

Baa...baaa...baaaa

Three days after 500,000 people marched for lesbian and gay rights in Washington, the Senate approved an amendment to an appropriations bill that would ban the use of federal funds for AIDS education projects that "promote or encourage, directly or indirectly, homosexual sexual activity." The amendment was sponsored by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC). When arguing his case before the Senate, Helms pulled out a safe-sex comic book produced by New York City's Gay Men's Health Crisis. "I will not consume the Senate's time reading the details of this revolting project," he said. "But, Mr. President, you know those little bags they have on airlines when it gets bumpy, if I were to read the sickening details to you—you would need one. We have got to call a spade a spade and a perverted human being a perverted human being—not in anger, but in realism." Helms then went on to say that "every AIDS case can be traced back to a homosexual act." In the end, 94 sheep in the Senate agreed with Helms. Only two senators voted against the amendment, Sen. Lowell Weicker (R-CT) and Sen. Daniel Moynihan (D-NY).

Not-so-green Switzerland

The landslide of the Green parties that had been predicted in Switzerland did not materialize in last week's national election (*In These Times*, June 24). Swiss journalist Reto Pieth reports that the country's two Green parties, one moderate and the other left, did pick up eight seats in the Swiss house of representatives, giving them a total of 16. But the Social Democrats lost seven seats, so the balance of power still rests with the 118 representatives of the "bourgeois block," the three right-of-center parties. The elections did see a new group make its debut on the Swiss political scene. Created by car owners intent on counteracting the Greens' anti-car policies, the Auto Party elected its first representative.

By John B. Judis

WASHINGTON

IN THE CURRENT PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY SYSTEM, how a candidate appears on television is more important than his grasp of the issues or the competence he has displayed as a public official. A case in point is the presidential candidacy of former Arizona Gov. Bruce Babbitt. He was an outstanding governor, and as a presidential candidate he is offering genuinely "new ideas."

But Babbitt is a disaster on television—he comes across as WKRP's earnest but dull newsman, Les Nessman—and he therefore stands little chance of attracting public notice. He will probably be the next candidate to drop out of the race.

David Osborne, author of *The Next Agenda*, a forthcoming study of the nation's governors, draws a stark contrast between Babbitt and Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis, presently a favorite to win the Democratic nomination. "Babbitt is the smart one who has got the substantive policy proposals and has had the courage to come out with some controversial positions dealing with the deficit and who really understands the need to fundamentally restructure the international economy," Osborne says. "Dukakis is the one who has headlines and media image and the money and the favorable press coverage. It is a sad commentary on the American political system."

Changing Arizona: Like Gary Hart, Joe Biden and Dukakis, Babbitt is a Kennedy-generation liberal who acquired his political convictions during the early '60s. The scion of a wealthy northern Arizona family, Babbitt went to Notre Dame and after graduation studied geology on a Marshall grant in England. Struck by the poverty he witnessed while doing field work in Bolivia in 1962, he abandoned geology and entered Harvard Law School. After he graduated he joined a War on Poverty program in Austin, Texas. In 1967 Babbitt went to Washington to work for VISTA.

But he decided to return to Phoenix after only a year in Washington. He set up a successful law practice, became active in Arizona's small Democratic Party and in 1974 successfully ran for attorney general. In that office Babbitt gained renown for prosecuting the mob killers of *Arizona Republic* newsman, Don Bolles. (During this time Babbitt's name was discovered on a Mafia "hit list.") He planned to run for Senate in 1980, but in 1977 Gov. Raul Castro resigned to become ambassador to Argentina, and the secretary of state who succeeded him died, leaving Babbitt governor. That November he was elected governor with 52 percent of the vote.

Babbitt faced formidable obstacles as governor. Arizona was—and remains—one of the most Republican and conservative states in the nation. It has voted Republican in every presidential election since 1952. In 1965 it was the only state not to participate in the Medicaid program. Arizonans reject any intrusion of government into private affairs, whether to help the poor or to regulate business. Before Babbitt, Arizona's governor was a figurehead who presided at ceremonies but played little role in formulating legislation. The state legislature overshadowed the governor, and its chief officers were the state's main public officials.

But in two terms (Babbitt was re-elected with 62 percent of the vote in 1982) he created a new model of an activist governor and gov-



Bruce Babbitt's anonymity is "a sad comment" on U.S. politics, says one observer.

POLITICS

Meet Bruce Babbitt of Arizona, the Democrats' invisible man

ernment. In his first full year of dealing with the legislature, Babbitt vetoed 21 bills, more than most of his predecessors had vetoed during their entire terms of office. He also made himself the key player in the all-important negotiations over ground-water rights.

Rainfall is infrequent in Arizona; indeed, much of the state is desert; and the state's farms, mines and cities had to exist off the water table that lay underneath the earth's surface. By the '70s, however, Arizonans were extracting twice as much water as was being replaced, causing huge cracks in the earth. Arizona's salvation was the \$2 billion Central Arizona Project built on the Colorado River and designed to ferry water to the state. But the federal government made funding for CAP contingent upon Arizona adopting

His creative ideas and solid record as Arizona governor qualify Babbitt for serious consideration. But he doesn't play well on TV.

legislation that would reduce the state's consumption of ground water.

On a special commission, representatives of Arizona's farmers, miners and city dwellers had been trying unsuccessfully to work out a bill since 1976. In marathon sessions during the summer of 1980, Babbitt forced through a water bill that committed Arizona to stringent five-year plans, overseen by a new Department of Water Resources. He also forced Arizona businesses and mines to

agree to a tough law regulating toxic wastes in water. Arizona went "from the state with the least environmental regulation to the state with the most," Osborne writes.

Babbitt also improved social services. He got the legislature to accept Medicaid funding, and when a private scheme of distribution set up by Republicans led to massive corruption, Babbitt stepped in and ran it out of the state government. When the legislature balked at spending funds for expanding day care—one of Babbitt's abiding concerns—he helped organize more than 100 non-profit groups to accomplish these ends. In New York or Massachusetts, these kinds of initiatives would have been taken for granted. But in Arizona they represented a radical reorientation of state politics.

Babbitt's most questionable act as governor was his calling in the National Guard in 1983 to permit scabs to enter the Phelps-Dodge copper mine. After the daughter of a miner who had crossed the United Steelworker picket line was shot by a sniper, Babbitt shut the mine for 10 days to permit negotiations. When the company and the union could not reach an agreement, and when strikers were threatening to storm the mine gates, Babbitt called in the National Guard. The strike was broken.

But in Arizona—one of the first states to pass right-to-work law prohibiting unions from requiring dues from new company employees—anti-union forces continued to view Babbitt as a labor ally because he had vetoed bills preventing public employees from striking and lowering workers' compensation. In 1984 the *Arizona Republic* criticized him for being "unflaggingly faithful to the interests of organized labor." And state labor leaders forgave Babbitt when two years

later he mediated a bitter dispute between Kennecott Copper and the United Steelworkers.

Workplace democracy: In his presidential campaign Babbitt has not tried to run on his record in Arizona, but instead on a platform that addresses the underlying weakness of the American economy. He has insisted that the deficit cannot be significantly reduced either by cutting military spending (Rev. Jesse Jackson and Sen. Paul Simon's answer) or by a combination of military spending cuts and vigorous tax collection, Dukakis' alternative. Babbitt is undoubtedly correct about this. Eliminating the MX, Midgetman and a few aircraft carriers will barely dent the present budget deficits.

Babbitt does endorse these measures, but he also wants to reduce government spending by imposing a means test on its expenditures, from Social Security to farm subsidies. This entails making the amount of Social Security an individual gets or subsidy a farm receives contingent upon income.

"I don't think we need to pay subsidies to corporate mega farms," Babbitt told the National Press Club in July. "I don't think we need grants to finance parking lots for big-city hotels. I don't think we need three new kinds of nuclear missiles all at once. And I don't think the Vanderbilts and the Mellons need exactly the same tax-free Social Security as a widow in a cold-water flat."

He also wants to increase revenues by imposing a progressive national sales tax from which necessities would be exempted. Such a tax would be fairer than the income tax, Babbitt argues, because the wealthy could not find ways to evade it.

His solution for industrial decline is what he calls the "democratic workplace." Babbitt wants to see profit-sharing, worker-management, the substitution of team work for assembly-line production. "We must turn away from hierarchical and highly centralized models of management and toward models that disperse decision-making power much more widely," he said at the National Press Club.

He has proposed making government loans and loan guarantees to corporations contingent upon a "restructuring which creates partial ownership, and partial control, by the company's employees." He also favors tax credits for worker education, a national voucher system for employee child care and legislation to prohibit executive "golden parachutes" except where a company is "prepared to offer equivalent multiples of salary to every departing employee."

But Babbitt's economic programs are not without serious flaws. He hasn't thought through a position on trade—he claims to be against Rep. Richard Gephardt's "protectionism," but he wants an international agreement that would prevent any country from running a trade surplus. Babbitt also does not appear to understand that if worker self-management is going to lead to increased productivity, it has to be tied to some kind of employment guarantee. But these programs are eminently worth discussing.

Also, Babbitt may not make as good a president as Dukakis or Gephardt. His role in Phelps-Dodge still rankles, and his inability to communicate on television could make it harder for him to govern. But Babbitt deserves far more serious consideration from voters than he is presently getting. □