

political change. But one sees in his vision, and in Harkin's, a more general fear of change. And that is where the contradiction arises.

Harkin, and his less-populist fellow Democrats, would like a larger pie, if only to give them more to redistribute. They talk much of getting America moving again. But they dislike the sources of wealth—the uncontrolled and uncontrollable search for new ways of doing things, the contracts between consenting adults, the risk taking, and, yes, the quest for profit. They dislike the unpredictable and the undirected. The Democratic impulse is to plan, to regulate, to divvy up the subsidies and bring in the lawyers.

Buchanan, by contrast, professes

seemingly real ardor for free markets and economic growth. But their results make him nervous, especially when they lure brown people into his neighborhood, his America. He, too, is tempted to meddle. Supporting growth but fearing change, he can't muster the tolerance that permits the very freedoms of which he is so fond.

In that, he is a true populist. We are all tempted to meddle. Other people's choices so often seem so wrong, so foolish, so risky. It is hard to say hands off.

But one exception leads to another and another and another. With a thousand cuts, one may slice a pie. But one may also kill the goose that lays golden eggs. And having done so, one will soon have nothing but the cry, "They get more." ■

GEORGE BUSH, MEANIE

RICK HENDERSON

When Pat Buchanan launched his presidential campaign, he called George Bush "a man of graciousness, honor, and integrity...." Perhaps without realizing it, Buchanan identified the reason the Bush administration is in trouble.

Pundits see Bush lurch from one position to another and say the man has no principles. Actually, a deeply felt set of beliefs guides his presidency. To put it simply, George Bush is driven and motivated by niceness. He believes federal policies should be guided by the same rules that govern personal conduct.

It's easy to see Bush making the personal political in foreign policy. He led us into the Gulf War because you stand up to bullies. He stuck by Mikhail Gorbachev because you don't abandon your friends. He has given a cold shoulder to Israel—leaving aside any merits of the Arab demands—because Yitzhak Shamir is a rude, unpleasant fellow.

This highly personal foreign policy sometimes works. But nice domestic policies often cause unintended results that are downright mean.

Consider wetlands regulations. During the 1988 campaign, Bush made a nice

pledge: "no net loss" of the nation's wetlands base. An avid hunter and fisherman, Bush recognized how nice it was to have plenty of duck ponds and cattail marshes.

But federal regulators considered "wetlands" any property that was under water for seven consecutive days a year. The government banned development on millions of acres—80 percent of them private property. Farmers, truck mechanics, and average homeowners saw the government seize their land without providing any compensation. They complained to Washington because taking away somebody's farm is very mean.

So Dan Quayle and other policy makers sympathetic to property owners tried to redefine wetlands so that they were indeed wet. Then outraged environmentalists took up the cause of swamp critters and cried "meanie." To placate environmentalists, the administration may revert to a wetlands definition that's nearly as expansive as the one that angered property owners in the first place. Whoever screams loudest—and last—seems to win the policy prize.

Similarly, the president zigzagged on

civil rights because he couldn't decide which was nicer: redressing past discrimination with affirmative action or relieving current discrimination by ending quotas. He was torn between his sense of noblesse oblige and his gut feeling that everybody ought to play fair.

Likewise, the Americans with Disabilities Act requires lots of nice things—making apartments and offices more accessible to handicapped persons, for example. But suppose you operate an office in a townhouse, and federal law says you must spend \$100,000 to add an elevator just in case a client or employee is wheelchair-bound. If you can't afford the elevator, you have to shut down your business. It's nice to have an elevator. But it's very mean when the feds force you to close your doors and put your employees on the street.

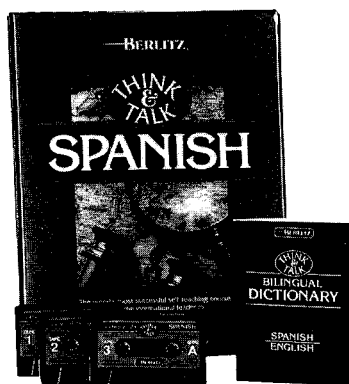
Or if you want to build apartments, it costs about \$4,000 more per unit to make a building handicapped accessible. These costs force up the rent you charge. Very mean indeed.

Unless the president alters his principles—or abandons them completely—we'll see more niceness in a second Bush term. Because the Clarence Thomas nomination offended so many people, Bush won't appoint other thoughtful conservatives to the Supreme Court; only pleasant moderates need apply. No substantive education reforms, because they require nasty fights with teachers' unions. No tax relief or spending cuts, because either would hurt the feelings of George Mitchell and Dick Darman.

The president should realize he can't be nice to everybody. Leaders have to make tough choices. And when you consider throwing government power around, often the nicest thing to do is nothing at all. ■

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REASON is published by the Reason Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational foundation. Contributions to the Reason Foundation are tax-deductible. Signed articles in REASON reflect the views of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the editors, the Reason Foundation, or its trustees.



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LETTERS

Secret Agency?

In "Giving 'Til It Hurts" (Oct.), Barry Chamish exposes, with devastating effect, the scam that the UJA has become—a scam especially painful to watch as the peoples of Eastern Europe cast off the socialist tyrannies that destroyed their economies. How long will it be until Israel is forced to follow the Polish model of shock therapy?

*Arnon Siegel
Washington, DC*

THERE IS NO RESEMBLANCE between the organization described in Barry Chamish's article and the Jewish Agency.

Mr. Chamish asserts that "rarely does anyone take a close look at what happens once [UJA money] gets to Israel." The Jewish Agency budget is open to public audit and controlled by a staff of nonpaid laymen and professionals from throughout the world, as well as by the Jewish Agency comptroller. Jewish Agency policy and practice is to have balanced budgets.

Mr. Chamish's allegations regarding "high personnel costs" are inaccurate. In the current fiscal year, \$49 million of the \$877 million budget was for salaries—less than 6 percent. Jewish Agency salaries are far from "generous" or even "good."

Mr. Chamish writes that the Jewish Agency employs "more than 700 emissaries sent to cities around the world to convince Jews to immigrate to Israel" who are paid by "American donors to the UJA and other organizations." The World Zionist Organization (not the Jewish Agency) maintains a total of 540 emissaries (*shlichim*) throughout the Western world, but over 90 percent of these are teachers in formal and informal Jewish education. None is paid by American money. Most Jewish Agency immigra-

tion emissaries are in the Soviet Union, Ethiopia, and transit stations in Eastern Europe, and the vast majority of the Jewish Agency's immigration budget is invested in Soviet immigrants.

We challenge Mr. Chamish to substantiate his claim regarding an emissary in Glasgow "who dealt with no more than 12 immigrants and was making spare cash on the side through speaking engagements."

We know of no war-hero general kept at an unwanted post with a secretary because of labor laws. There is a general who occupies an essential position as head of the WZO Information Department. Surely Mr. Chamish cannot be referring to this individual. Likewise, there is no editor in the Jewish Agency who earns a salary for a journal that has ceased publication. There is a full-time editor employed for the Jewish house publication who formerly edited another Jewish Agency publication.

There is no truth to the claim that the Israel government borrows aid money from the UJA in order to cover its debts.

Mr. Chamish asserts that "not one penny [of the \$1.2 billion collected by the UJA] will be used to create jobs....A lot of the money will be used to build homes for immigrants. This work will be supervised by Housing Minister Ariel Sharon." No money which the Jewish Agency receives is spent by the government or on government functions. It is a grave misrepresentation to suggest that UJA or Jewish Agency money ends up in government coffers or projects.

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