

tions at military bases. The freshmen refused to vote for either, and the leadership flew into a panic.

That's only a slight indication of things to come. The Congress is no longer so divided in partisan terms as by interest-group affiliation. There are people in both parties who side with the elites and some who do not. The leadership of the two political parties, and thus their ideological controls and think-tank mouthpieces, no longer have the hold on America that they once did. That's a fact worthy of celebration.

Real conservatives and libertarians, Congressional freshmen, and the masses of American voters are crying out for an end to the corrupt system that is destroying our liberty and prosperity. They are seeing through the antics of the Washington elites, and they are coming to see that the Congressional elites and their ideological controls are essentially no different from those that preceded them. Despite setbacks and betrayals, the paleos are winning the conservative wars where it counts. ■

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## Impressions of the Weekly Standard

Paul Gottfried

**A**fter several months of advertising their product, the *Weekly Standard's* editors have begun putting out issues. At last we can see the work of Fred Barnes, Bill Kristol, John Podhoretz, and the other nonphotogenic editors whose pictures have decorated the promo

material. As everybody now knows, the blitz campaign behind the new publication has been spectacular. In addition to the millions put up by publisher Rupert Murdoch, the neocon hive has gone all out on behalf of its younger generation. After all, minicon editors are not like other human beings. And if neocon columnist Richard Grenier described *Weekly Standard* as the most brilliant conservative news publication, thereby slighting his employers at the Washington Times Corporation, even before the first issue came out, what are friends for but to reach for superlatives in characterizing a creation unknown even to themselves?

One question that has occurred to me in waiting for the new publication is why has Murdoch pledged \$3 million a year, plus advertising funds, to a project that is not likely to go anywhere. By now there are dozens of magazines featuring neocon party lines, and most of them produce stacks of remaindered copies. Though some of the well publicized ones, such as *American Spectator* and *Commentary*, have respectable sales, other neocon publications, such as the *National Interest* and *Journal of Democracy*, typically turn up in large numbers on bargain racks in local bookstores. The problem is that a fixed number of ideologues with a well-defined agenda cannot go on funding and writing for a steadily expanding body of publications. To engage in such an undertaking, the said ideologues must do one of two things, vary their views to give their writing broader appeal, and/or hire additional *talented* writers who can

help them sustain greater publishing commitments.

The editors of *Weekly Standard* have done neither. The first two issues feature the usual crowd of neocon regulars and dependents and contain almost uniformly boring pieces. A review of *The End of Racism* in the second issue, by Glenn Loury, was unexpectedly and bracingly critical, but not typical of most of the contributions. The attack on Arafat in the same issue, by Daniel Pipes, for not showing equally effusive

enthusiasm for the peace process in addressing different audiences, was sadly typical of neocon blockheadedness. Though Pipes does not demonstrate that Arafat does not accept the permanence of an Israeli state, he seems to think that he has proved that Arafat is treacherous... and, by implication, that the Israeli hardliners are right.

One essay in the first issue, by Marshall Wittmann, made me blush with embarrassment for a klotzy fellow-Jew. A Washington jobseeker who found employment with the Christian Coalition, Wittmann notes his family's embarrassment when he went to work for Bible-thumping goyim: "My relatives, good, open-minded liberals, thought I was *meshugah*. To them a 'Christian coalition' evoked pogroms and worse." Still, Wittmann defends his "job-choice" (which undoubtedly resulted from lack of choice) on the grounds that "as one committed to the security of Israel, I felt Pat Robertson was good for the Jews."

Though this confessional piece has other noteworthy passages, I shall leave it to neocon puffers to quote them in syndicated columns. Perhaps they can

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also muster enthusiasm in the first issue for the "Casual" section by John Podhoretz on his father's new hobby, and for the rambling essay by Charles Krauthammer, on the theology of Newt Gingrich. With a steady diet of such prose, the *Weekly Standard* will not be long for this world, even with Murdoch's deep pockets.

The one interesting aspect of the first two issues is the attempt by the minicons, and presumably by their parents, to find a suitable presidential candidate. This quest is not an idle one for neocons. As political parasites they live on government patronage and revel in being associated with those elected to high places. In a widely-quoted observation four years ago, Pat Buchanan compared neocons to fleas that were attaching themselves to the movement conservative dog.

In point of fact, neocon fleas do not have to attach themselves to conservative organisms in order to sustain themselves. They can also swing back and forth across the political spectrum without losing media credibility, providing they find candidates they can control and use. Thus three years ago an impressively large contingent of neocon publicists went over to then Democratic presidential candidate Bill Clinton; and as early as 1972 the neocons consciously divided their forces between McGovern and Nixon, to guarantee leverage in the next administration.

A similar hedging process among them has already begun, and this can be seen by sorting out remarks about the various presidential contenders in *Weekly Stan-*

*dard*. Clearly the publisher, Murdoch, who has published Gingrich's book, has his own presidential preference, and the first issue includes numerous observations about Gingrich. Krauthammer depicts the Speaker as a flak and in remarks that could have been written (more felicitously) by Rockwell or Raimondo, makes fun of Gingrich's New Age pomposities. Though Krauthammer seemed the least favorable of the commentators on Gingrich, no one among them had any real praise for him. David Frum comments morosely on the contrast between Gingrich's rhetoric and the "incomplete and disturbingly fragile achievements of the 104th Congress."

One might have mistaken Frum's observation for that of a paleoconservative were it not for the usual, obligatory insults about Buchanan and conservative nationalists, whom Frum contrasts to the real conservative, Ronald Reagan. Another essay, on Gingrich's operation as a congressional negotiator, by David McClintick, resembles some kind of stream-of-consciousness dia-

logue, before it becomes utterly incoherent. So much for Murdoch's friend in the hands of his minicon clients!

More upbeat is the by-now publicized piece, by Bill Kristol, on Colin Powell. Kristol wants Powell to run for president and cites his popularity and respected status as a military leader. Though he never explicitly describes Powell as a man of the right, Kristol finesses this point by offering this opinion: a "huge victory by Powell running as a Republican would expand and solidify the emerging Republican

majority. So, the ideological opacity of a Powell presidency notwithstanding, it could be a useful way station on the road to a lasting conservative realignment."

Unfortunately for this argument, Powell is not ideologically opaque but has taken explicitly liberal positions on social issues, including affirmative action. It would not be unfair to conclude that Bill Kristol and his parents and their friends have personal reasons for supporting Powell—and that the transparently defective argument that he makes for his candidacy is only a signal. It is intended to indicate positive vibes, and the availability of neocons to guide the anticipated Powell campaign.

Note that nowhere in his praise does Kristol call Powell a "conservative." He is merely describing, or pretending to, the effect of a Powell prospective candidacy. Moreover, on Sunday, September 17, after Powell had publicly announced his liberal social positions, Kristol appeared on David Brinkley's program, wearing his new hat as *Weekly Standard* editor, and repeated the treacle about Powell he had written several weeks earlier. His friend, neocon columnist Tony Snow expressed his own surprise the next day that Bill was backing a socially liberal presidential candidate. In the second issue of the *Weekly Standard*, there is also an excerpt from Powell's memoirs that is intended to make him look good—or his colleagues during the Gulf War less impressive.

Allow me to express my own lack of surprise to find neocon princes behaving true to form. They support liberals for office without losing their conservative accreditation; and the reason for both are obvious. Neocons are hungry for funds and influence, and the respectable conservative movement—i.e., the Washington-

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authorized version—is a hollow shell. It follows neocons no matter what, because both its funding and media relations depend on enjoying neocon favor.

In 1991 the neocons who supported Clinton did not suffer ostracism on the Republican right; nor were they driven off the editorial boards of putatively conservative magazines. They held on to their patronage and status as conservatives, while conservative magazines deplored the unappealing nature of the Republican Party, which had led some good conservatives to back Clinton. The analog to this conservative movement is the American Communist Party, which learned to reconcile reality with Stalinist whims. Today's professional conservatives have developed the same lackey relation to the Kristol-Podhoretz empire.

Certainly, liberal journalists

and the liberal media would welcome both Powell's candidacy and Kristol's reaching out to the General. Powell as a president would be a useful front for the political

class and for the kind of social engineers who have been active in the current administration. But he could also be packaged as an upwardly mobile black "conservative," without the personal flaws that have dogged Bill Clinton. Mark Shields on several news programs has given a preview of this packaging effort by the media. He has presented Powell as a "moderately conserva-

tive black," whom "no one but a racist" would refuse to support.

The presence of the Kristols and their vassals on the Powell staff would help reinforce this impression. But the neocons will not join Powell inexpensively. They will undoubtedly demand concessions, particularly those favorable to the Israeli hardliners, and may even keep the General waiting, while they look over other candidates one last time. But in the end the neocon power brokers and capifamiglia will go where they want. They lead, unlike the movement conservative equivalents of Earl Browder and Gus Hall who are there to take orders.

One more prediction may be in order. If the minicons currently associated with the *Weekly Standard* leave to join a presidential campaign or presidential administration, look for the publication to fold. There is not much holding it together, and the loss of a substantial part of its editorial board may lead Murdoch into giving it up en-

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tirely. I also suspect that Krauthammer and Barnes have joined the enterprise after some arm-twisting. There is nothing in the publication that would indicate that either is putting much into it. *Entrenous* I would prefer getting my wisdom teeth pulled to having to read the third issue. Perhaps that is the way some of the better established neocons feel about contributing to the *Weekly Standard*.

*Professor Gottfried is author of the only true history of conservatism, The Conservative Movement, available from the Triple R for \$18 postpaid (800-325-7257).*

## Buchanan's Bad Idea

*L.H.R., Jr.*

Pat Buchanan is forcing all the Republican contenders to the right on a host of issues. Thanks to his outspoken opinions on Nafta and Gatt, Dole and Gramm haven't mentioned a word about them. When Buchanan came out for lowering the inheritance tax, Lugar followed suit. On immigration, foreign aid, and government intervention in education, every candidate is paying lip service to Buchanan's issues.

Because of his influence, we need to worry when Buchanan is wrong on an issue, especially if his error could make our long-run victory more difficult. The issue is campaign finance reform, a long-time project of good-government liberals and now some Perot voters. Not all the ideas of reform groups like Common Cause are bad, but they miss the point. Our trouble is not corrupt campaigns, but the entire structure of government.

As radicals standing outside the system, we have an interest in

**Rothbard-Rockwell Report** (ISSN 1080-4420) is published monthly by the Center for Libertarian Studies, 875 Mahler Rd., Suite 150, Burlingame, CA 94010. (800) 325-7257. Second-Class Postage paid at Burlingame, CA 94010 and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to Rothbard-Rockwell Report, P.O. Box 4091, Burlingame, CA 94011. *Editors:* Murray N. Rothbard (1926-1995) and Llewellyn H. Rockwell, Jr. *Contributing Editors:* Sarah Barton, David Gordon, Paul Gottfried, Michael Levin, and Justin Raimondo. *Publisher:* Burton S. Blumert. *Managing Editor:* Sybil Regan. Subscription: \$49 for 12 issues. Single issue: \$5. Copyright ©1995 by the Center for Libertarian Studies. All rights reserved. Unauthorized reproduction of this newsletter or its contents by xerography, facsimile, or any other means is illegal.