

by definition in violation of the Constitution. Talk of impeachment ought to become routine. So should ridicule and humiliation. For if we care about liberty, the plebiscitary dictatorship must be reined in or tossed out.

John Randolph had only been a Senator for a few days, when he gave an extraordinary speech denouncing John Quincy Adams. "It is my duty," he said, "to leave nothing undone that I may lawfully do, to pull down this administration.... They who, from indifference, or with their eyes open, persist in hugging the traitor to their bosom, deserve to be insulted...deserve to be slaves, with no other music to sooth them but the clank of the chains which they have put on themselves and given to their offspring."

John Randolph said this in 1826. It was a time, writes Tocqueville, when the presidency was almost invisible. If we cannot say this and more today, when the presidency is dictator to the world, we are no Randolphians. Indeed, we are no free men.

Presented at the 7th annual meeting of the John Randolph Club near Washington, D.C., on October 5, 1996. ☒

A Nondebate

by Paul Gottfried

After watching the first presidential debate in Hartford, Conn., I find that my impressions of this event differ profoundly from those of the media. It is not just the usual neocon-Republican voices like George Will, Brent Bozell, and the *WSJ* that have been raised in defense of Dole's "credible" performance. The *Wall Street Journal* devoted a long tortured editorial to assuring us that "Dole did pretty well for himself." The same theme has come from official liberal news interpreters whom I listened to on the major

networks following the debate. Though a *Newsweek* poll taken immediately afterwards showed 21 percent more Americans gave the edge to Clinton than Dole, the TV talking heads and liberal academics interviewed by the Lancaster, Penn., newspapers had the contest too close to call. One recurrent statement in these analyses is that Dole and Clinton had represented "two opposing worldviews"; each had adequately defended his own "philosophy."

From what I heard Clinton had trounced his Republican opponent, who tried to sound as much like a Democrat as he could. Clinton had represented big government positions with apparent erudition and with a semblance of grace. Dole, by contrast, had alternated between sniping at Clinton's hippie past and assuring his listeners that he "really cared." What he claimed to care about are "the handicapped like myself," crack babies in the arms of welfare mothers, Older Americans on Medicare, and others who depend on entitlements. Dole expressed his wish to care for all of these groups, by maintaining or expanding government programs. When Clinton leveled the accusation that Dole had voted against the Department of Education, Dole did admit to being critical of the NEA, but then went on to list federal educational programs he had supported or would like to enact.

In addition to advocating big government at home, Dole took interventionist stands on foreign affairs that recalled the worst grandstanding of the Cold War era. He chided Clinton for not doing enough about Cuba and called for stronger measures against Castro. Through these ill-conceived and clumsy remarks Dole was groveling

for Cuban votes in Florida. The groveling was too plain to be missed and raises questions about Dole's capacity to deal with international relations independently of Cold War clichés and a never-ending quest for votes.

Worst of all, his delivery suggested the absence of oratorical and cognitive skills. Dole did not respond in the debate, except by falling back on set

speeches prepared in advance. Whatever his opponent said, Dole kept returning to the same predictable stances: pouncing on Clinton's lack of remorse about having inhaled marijuana, dramatizing his desire for a bigger national drug program, trying to elicit sympathy by pointing to his own handicap, and promising to deliver a tax reduction that seemed implausible in the light of his other promises. These were things that Dole intended to talk about, regardless of where the debate was supposed to go. Though a kindly moderator, Jim Lehrer, hoped to point him beyond this fixed script, Dole did not take the hint. Never did he address the juicy social issues, like illegal immigration, job quotas, and ninth-month abortions. These might have seemed "divisive" to the yuppie constituency that he was obviously courting; moreover, the mention of significant points of difference between him and Clinton might have made liberal journalists uncomfortable.

The question here is why should Dole care about the reaction of liberals to any hypothetical move on his part to the social right. What advantage is there for him in the face of Clinton's predictive landslide to impersonate a "moderate"? "Moderate" (a.k.a. liberal) votes are already in Clinton's camp and by now the Republican right is growing

Dole "cares" about the "handicapped like myself," crack babies in the arms of welfare mothers, and Older Americans on Medicare.

disgusted with its putative standard-bearer, who keeps running away from it. Last week when Dole addressed a gathering at my own college, most of the audience were self-identified conservatives. The only comments in his rambling speech for which I heard enthusiastic applause was a social stand that never came up in his presidential debate, his opposition to partial-birth abortions. The rest of the disjointed presentation, mostly about the arithmetic of his tax plan, was simply endured by those who attended.

The media undoubtedly have Dole worried that unless he "moderates" his social conservatism, he will surely be crushed on Election Day. Alas this will be his fate, as both the polls and Dole's debating performance indicate. Contrary to the media's interpretation, Dole is not driving away socially liberal but fiscally conservative *Republican* voters. If such a type exists there is no way of keeping it in the Republican Party, except by having that party embrace Bill Clinton. In any case these fiscally conservative social liberals whom journalists extol are no more reluctant to give the government economic power than they are about surrendering other powers to the state. They are yuppies who want to make money but do not challenge the welfare or therapeutic state, as long as their own taxes are not unduly raised. And their heroes William Weld and Christine Whitmann have not done particularly well even in that respect, though they have enacted gay-rights and hate-speech laws.

Dole has lost the most ground among core Republican voters, not problematic yuppie ones. The Christian right, which stupidly helped Dole get the nomination,

has now woken up and is angry about his avoidance of moral issues. At a recent gathering of Christian-right activists and ministers in central Pennsylvania which I attended,

the pervasive attitude toward Dole was contempt. One doubts that his debating style has changed that attitude.

As for the media sympathy shown toward him after the debate debacle, there may be several valid explanations. One,

the media does not want to see Dole fade weeks before the election. Unless the outcome of the race can be made to look uncertain, the public will lose interest in both election news and its bearers. It is therefore in the media's material interest to make the race appear to be narrowing rather than widening. Two, after having made abundantly clear where their political loyalties lie, the media may be bending backward to be nice to Dole. Particularly when the race has been all but officially decided, there can be no harm for their side if known liberal Democrats pat a collapsing Dole on the back. About the public verdict there can no longer be any doubt, so why should the media not cut Dole a break, while giving the appearance of being consistently even-handed?

Three, the media were rewarding Dole for not raising "insensitive" issues. This may be the most noteworthy reason for their concealment of his forensic ineptitude, that he paid them the tribute of not opening social questions which they had decided to close. In late September, they gave Dole a taste of what might be in store for him if he pursued illegal immigration as a campaign issue. For several days all the major networks blasted him as the enemy of inclusiveness and

"human rights." There might have been a second, extended round of the same treatment, if Dole had not dropped the social questions, but being Dole he did: he went back to snarling his concern about the maim and the halt and promising tax cuts while enlisting the entire nation to fight Castro and drugs.

And no longer does he reminisce about the old America in which he grew up. The media had railed against that kind of thinking, when he dared to reveal it in comments about Russell, Kansas, in his presidential acceptance speech. Talking about the good old times, as Russell Baker among dozens of journalists pointed out, indicates indifference toward homophobia, racism, sexism, and anti-Semitism. All of these evils had once abounded, until Americans were resocialized by a caring state. Dole has taken the scolding to heart and now joined Clinton in building bridges to an ever improving future.

Despite their having used him as a punching bag, the media may be relenting and treating Dole as a useful idiot. His job, from their perspective, was to pull national politics to back home, together with a rosy view of his debate, once the election is over.

**The good old times,
as Russell Baker
pointed out, indicates
indifference toward
homophobia, racism,
sexism, and anti-
Semitism.**

RRR The 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, and additional mailing offices. Postmasters: Send address changes to RRR, P.O. Box 4091, Burlingame, CA 94011. *Editors:* Murray N. Rothbard (1926-1995) and Llewellyn H. Rockwell, Jr. *Contributing Editors:* David Gordon, Paul Gottfried, Hans-Hermann Hoppe, Michael Levin, and Justin Raimondo. *Publisher:* Burton S. Blumert. *Managing Editor:* Sybil Regan. Subscription: \$49 for 12 issues. Single issue: \$5. Copyright © 1996 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.

In conclusion it should be noted that Dole has made the strategic mistake of choosing for himself the model of Christine Whitmann's winning over Jim Florio in the New Jersey gubernatorial race of 1992. This has remained for him and his staff the model to be followed even after the Hartford debate, according to the *WSJ*. Like Whitmann, Dole intends to focus on tax cuts, without frontally challenging liberal social stands or appearing to be an entitlement-cutter. But Dole, who has not had the stomach to take on the media, has picked a questionable role model. Whitmann, unlike Dole, ran against an extremely unpopular politician, who was hated by a majority of the inhabitants of his state. Whitmann should have been able to beat Florio without having to rely on a come-from-behind victory. That she did, and even used Ed Rollins to pay off blacks not to vote for her opponent, indicates the drawbacks of her liberal Republican persona. Whitmann barely won while running away from core Republican voters and picking up disgruntled Democrats. Dole cannot possibly win by doing the same. ■

The Crazy Theory Behind School Vouchers

by Michael Levin

Much soft-headed Republican talk about school choice raises the issue of what education in a free society might look like. Certainly school vouchers would be banished.

Giving parents money "to send their children where they please" sounds liberating and capable of imposing the discipline of competition on complacent public schools. Teachers unions hate the idea,

taken to be a good sign. But the Devil is in the details, which are Satanic indeed.

The two key questions are: who will get the vouchers, and how will they be financed? The voucher systems now in effect in Milwaukee and Cleveland, and in the plan outlined by Bob Dole during this presidential campaign, are reserved for low and "moderate" income families.

The funds, of course, are public, either from state treasuries or, in the Dole plan, from federal coffers as well. Advocates describe the \$2,500 given to each pupil annually in the Milwaukee plan as "Wisconsin's share of per-pupil spending," but Wisconsin has no money. Only its taxpayers do, and they have no choice about footing the bill.

Since a voucher for parents paying more than \$2,500 in taxes would simply be a tax refund along with rules about spending it, "choice" for them is better served simply by lowering taxes. But the basic aim of vouchers is not to let productive parents and their children invest their resources as they please; it is to transfer their resources to the poor.

Of course, the productive sector already subsidizes the education of the poor. There is little difference between giving the poor access to public schools supported by more affluent taxpayers, and giving them the money it takes to run those schools. But here is the really sinister bit: vouchers are to be honored not only by public schools, but also by private schools, including religious ones. Middle-class parents paying private school tuition to avoid the public schools they finance will awake to find that public schools can no longer be avoided. The very children the middle class is fleeing will turn up at the private school door, vouchers in hand, demanding admission.

Let's be honest. People (black and white) do not shun an abstraction called Public Education but its

present student body, in most large cities is more than 75 percent black and Hispanic. On average, these children perform two or more grades behind whites and Asians in all academic subjects, and are far more disruptive. There is no reason to think they will miraculously become apt, obedient pupils if moved from "bad" public schools to "good" private ones. After all, what makes a school good is not its physical location, but the quality of its students and teachers.

The crazy theory behind vouchers is that minority children fail because of concentrated "peer pressure"; let them escape their peers and they will flourish. But these nefarious peers are simply...other minority children. You might as well argue that criminals go bad because they are all put in prisons. And don't expect private schools to retain admission standards that exclude troublesome voucher-bearers, for any such standards would doubtless be found to violate civil rights laws. Every extant voucher plan forbids their use at "discriminatory" institutions.

The issue of choice is not whether the opinions held by many parents about minorities or admission standards are justified, but whether parents may choose to act on those opinions. By imposing what most parents consider the most nightmarish features of public schools on private ones, vouchers would effectively end private education and eliminate parental choice.

A free market in education—where no-one is forced to pay for anyone's education, even that of his own children—would resemble a market in any other commodity. People who wanted a certain sort of pedagogy would pay those willing to give it. When many people wanted one sort of pedagogy, which might happen quite frequently, it would probably be given in one large building, the familiar "school." Those who wanted tailor-made curricula would