

Tilting at Windmills



Practically everyone in Washington has been criticizing Bill Clinton's foreign policy. My favorite is Christopher Hitchens' comment on the Clinton approach to Bosnia: "Like a fleshy man caught in a fight outside a sordid bar, he sometimes bellows for aides to hold his coat and let him at them but often looks grateful for the arms that are restraining him from the fray."

But when you think about it, haven't most of the rest of us been just like Clinton, at one moment wanting to bomb the Serbs or Croats and at another overwhelmed by the complexity of the problem and the difficulty of finding anything clearly effective that we could do? Haiti and Somalia are similar problems. One desperately wants to do something, but just how to do it without getting American soldiers killed is not immediately obvious. So I pray for a little less easy indignation and a little more patience as we all put our minds to figuring out a sensible way to deal with the gnarly problems created by tribal warfare as in Somalia and Bosnia and by intolerable national leaders like the Haitian military and Saddam Hussein. . . .

"The lesson of the Florio campaign is not that you can't raise

taxes, but rather that you can't raise taxes and then not own up to it in your campaign," writes our New Jersey correspondent, who says what Florio should have done was to run an ad that said, "I'm your governor, Jim Florio, and three years ago I bit the bullet and put my career on the line and raised some taxes in order to. . ." and then showed the schools and other programs the taxes had paid for. This is advice Bill Clinton's re-election managers ought to think hard about. . . .

Eleven car salesmen and managers from Rosenthal dealerships in the Washington area have been indicted on charges of money laundering. They were caught by a sting operation in which F.B.I. agents posed as drug dealers who wanted to launder their illicit profits by exchanging dirty cash for nice, clean Jaguars, Maximas, and Pathfinders. In effect, the F.B.I. agents said, "Hey guys, we're crooks. Will you help us by being crooks yourselves?" The Rosenthal salesmen and managers eagerly accepted, according to the indictment. A problem for the accused has emerged during jury selection. "U.S. District Judge Stanley S. Harris dismissed several prospective jurors," reports *The Washington Post*, "who said on their questionnaires that they were inherently suspicious of car salesmen." . . .

There's a new ad out for Germany's most famous export—the Volkswagen. It lists FDR's Lend-Lease program to aid the Russians during World War II as one of the great bad deals of history. The announcer says, "In 1941, FDR lent a zillion dollars to Russia. He called it Lend-Lease. We never got the money back. It was a bad lease." You can see why the Germans feel that way, since it was their army that got demolished by the planes and tanks and other equipment we gave the Russians. . . .

The District of Columbia has adopted Jerry Brown's \$100 limit on individual contributions to candidates in city elections. The result in a recent campaign for city council chairman—the first to be held with the limit in place—was that candidates were forced, according to *The Washington Post*, "to rely more heavily on personal contact with voters and grassroots organizing and relying on volunteers rather than a paid staff." That's the way democracy should work.

As for campaign reform at the federal level, at the beginning of the year both the president and congressional leaders were promising a genuine overhaul of campaign financing. But an October 29 *Post* headline told

another story: "Campaign Finance Legislation Called 'High Priority'—For Next Year." A bill is still possible in this session, but it is almost certain to be emasculated. . . .

We now pay United States senators \$133,600 a year. We also help pay for their meals. The General Accounting Office reports that since 1989, \$1.25 million has been spent on subsidies for the Senate dining rooms. . . .

The DC Lottery is running a TV commercial that features sleek black entertainers singing "Day or Night, Night or Day" to advertise the fact that the citizens of the District can now play the numbers twice a day and to encourage them to take advantage of this marvelous opportunity. I can understand why revenue-starved local governments have been tempted to get into the gambling business. But there is a difference between accepting bets from people who will bet anyway and trying to entice people into gambling or into gambling more than they already do, which definitely does not seem to be a proper function of government. . . .

A few months ago, Bell Atlantic told the FCC that cable television operators exercised "undue market power to the detriment of consumers," and that cable TV rates should be lowered by as much as 28 percent. Then Bell Atlantic acquired T.C.I., one of the largest cable operations.

Paul Farhi of *The Washington Post* called Bell Atlantic chairman Raymond W. Smith and asked him if Bell Atlantic still felt the same way about lowering those rates. Smith's reply: "We might be reconsidering some of our earlier positions."

A few days later, Farhi embarrassed the industry again when he uncovered a memo from a senior

TCI executive urging local cable managers to raise rates at the time new federal regulations were going into effect. "We can blame it on re-regulation and the government now," he wrote. "Let's take advantage of it!" . . .

A movie called "Medical Doctor" has been playing on the Encore cable network recently. Although it was made for television on an obviously modest budget back in 1975, it rivals Paddy Chayevsky's "Hospital" in the savage accuracy with which it lays bare the scandals of American medicine. Already—this was 18 years ago, remember—"everyone is a specialist," and no one is criticizing the work of his peers. Indeed, the surest way to get into trouble is to question a colleague's judgement. Of course, this is a general truth of human nature. Few of us enjoy having our errors pointed out. Take the baseball umpires who are in an uproar about the overhead cameras that reveal beyond any doubt that the strike they called was inside or outside and definitely did not cross the plate. But umpires don't have your life in their hands whereas doctors do, which is why in reforming

health care we must make sure that doctors' decisions are subject to genuine scrutiny. . . .

All this talk about calling up the National Guard for dealing with the District's crime problem reminds me that several years ago, in our April 1988 issue, we proposed a better way to deal with Washington's crime wave. It is to transfer the Uniformed Division of the Secret Service to the District's police force. There are roughly 1,000 well-trained cops in the uniformed division who spend most of their time sitting in their police cars or standing with their arms folded outside foreign embassies that don't need their protection. Their jobs were created when John Mitchell, Nixon's attorney general, thought the embassies were in danger from rioters. The danger has not proved to be real, so good cops are being wasted. Why not use them to meet an urgent problem? . . .

Speaking of John Mitchell, whom you may recall did time for his Watergate offenses, the recent trial and conviction of Deborah Gore Dean revealed that Mitchell had been part of her conspiracy to loot the Department

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of Housing and Urban Development where she was employed during the Reagan administration. It should not come as a surprise to regular readers of this column that Mitchell was a municipal bond lawyer when Nixon found him morally fit to be his attorney general. . . .

The death penalty is rarely justified, but I think it is for the crime of murdering a witness. Criminals should not be allowed to assume that they can escape punishment simply by eliminating those who might testify against them. In Florida, at least five potential witnesses in the trial of drug kingpins Augusto "Willie" Falcon and Salvador Magluta have been shot.

An example of another kind of murder that belongs in the same class as killing a witness occurred recently in Gaza when Assad

Saftawi, a moderate PLO leader, was shot to death. Just as the murder of the witness is designed to prevent justice from happening, killing moderates keeps peace from happening. Other witnesses and other moderates are silenced because they don't want to die. . . .

Those high-tech weapons seemed to work so well in Iraq, but we may have gone too far in our dependence on tomorrow's technology. One reason we couldn't find General Aideed, according to *The Wall Street Journal*, is that he "communicated with his forces on simple walkie-talkies difficult to monitor with high technology American listening gear." . . .

There is good news about the non-polluting car, which has been a cause of this magazine's since our first issue in 1969: GM is going to

distribute electric cars to 1,000 drivers around the country for two to four week tryouts during the next two years. And Ford promises to have natural gas powered cars on the market for the 1995 model year. Compared to gasoline, natural gas costs only 70 cents a gallon. . . .

In this issue David Segal recommends a no-fault approach to auto accident liability (see page 28). We recommend a similar approach to medical malpractice: Automatic compensation for the victim's medical costs and lost wages but nothing for the infinitely inflatable pain and suffering damages that drive the cost of malpractice insurance out of sight. How then could a guilty physician be punished? By suspending or revoking his license. But how can we trust licensing boards controlled by self-protective doctors to discipline a culpable colleague? In return for getting their malpractice problem solved, doctors would have to surrender their monopoly on licensing so that it would be controlled by laymen with no interest in protecting guilty physicians but with enough doctors on the board to supply the necessary expertise. . . .

"The American Success Story" is the headline of an ad run by the American University School of Communications that depicts a briskly efficient looking young woman holding a microphone as a cameraman films her interviewing a distinguished-looking man in front of the Capitol. This "success" is one of the most gloriously useless staples of television, the pro and con interviews with congressmen on the Capitol steps. These interviews rarely tell you anything new. The main purpose seems to be to provide publicity for the politician and air time for the reporter. . . .

I'm working on a game called Safe Answers. For example, who

Moral conscience demands that the truth be brought to light



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VOLUME 2



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built that London church? S.A.: Christopher Wren. Who built that French chateau? S.A.: Francis I. My interest in this developed in grade school, where I discovered that when asked to name the agricultural products of a foreign country, sugar beets was a reliable S.A., as was beet sugar for a manufactured product. Later, when I came to Washington, I found that there is nothing more highly prized here than an answer (like recommending "appropriate action" or "further study") that won't land you in trouble. I've got more, but I'd like to hear yours. Please send them in. . . .

Among the "ranchers" who have benefited from the absurdly low fees charged by the government for grazing on federal land are a Japanese company, (the Zenchiku Corporation with 40,000 acres), the Metropolitan Life Insurance company (whose permits cover 800,000 acres), and William R. Hewlett (one of the richest men in the United States). . . .

Nobody seems to believe government can do anything anymore. The comment going around Washington about the administration's health plan is, "If you like the efficiency of the Post Office and the compassion of the Internal Revenue Service, you'll love Rodham-Clinton."

The fact is that the Post Office and the Internal Revenue Service are improving from the lows they hit during the seventies and eighties. And in fact, for many years before that, their performance was outstanding. Private institutions have similar histories. Consider the auto companies, which were great through much of their history, became dismal in the seventies, and are now showing dramatic improvement. The point is that you should never assume that any institution, public or private, will automatically perform well. Constant attention must be paid to maintaining its vitality. Public education is an excellent example. Some communi-

ties, through continuing effort, have kept their schools in the top rank while many others have allowed theirs to sink into mediocrity with marginal teachers and oversized and undertalented bureaucracies.

Perhaps the best example of all is the American military, whose performance through the years has ranged from ineffective to highly efficient and indeed has attained these extremes on several different occasions. Most recently, its improvement between Grenada and

the Gulf was dramatic. . . .

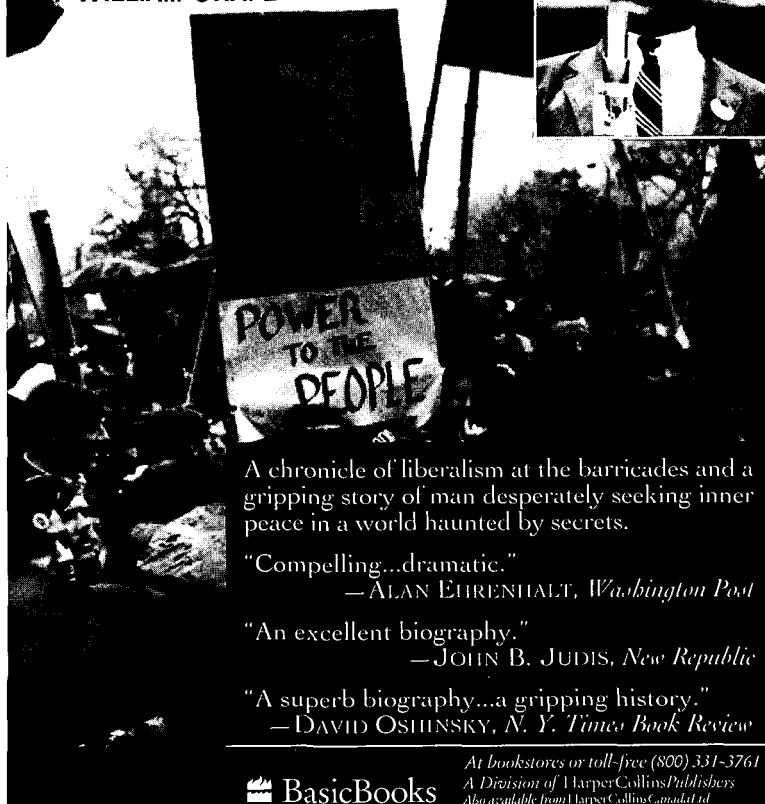
Mayor Dena Bonnell of Mountain View, California, has won the Monthly's Award for Political Acumen. Having pulled her car into a parking place reserved for the handicapped, she then instructed the police not to give her a ticket. She apparently assumed that these actions would not attract the attention of the press or of her opponents. This assumption proved to be erroneous. . . .

—Charles Peters

Never Stop Running

ALLARD LOWENSTEIN AND
THE STRUGGLE TO SAVE
AMERICAN LIBERALISM

BY WILLIAM CHAFE



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BY JON MEACHAM

*We are climbing higher and higher; yes, I’ll make it home someday;
I know I’ll make it. . .
Yes, I’ll make it home someday,
With the Lord as my leader and the Lord as my keeper,
I’ll make it home. . . home someday . . . Yes, Lord, I’ll make it home*

The choir’s voices slow to a stop, but there is no silence at Washington’s First Baptist Church on this autumn Sunday. Amid cries of “Amen,” Pastor Frank D. Tucker, his bald head framed by graying temples, steps to the pulpit. The overhead lights dim, and the beam trained on the pulpit subtly accentuates Tucker’s stocky frame. Peering out over the congregation, his eyeglasses refract tiny flecks of light. Behind him, still swaying, is a choir, the women dressed in white blouses and black skirts, the men in dark suits.

“We can come to church and still not know God,” Tucker thunders, his cadence stressing “God,” which he majestically gives two syllables. “We can come to church and still not know the spirit.” Shouts of “Amen.” “We’re not going to straighten up this mess in our world and we’re not going to fix our families until we confront and accept the power of God in our daily lives.” Tucker paces, his voice rising and falling. One instant he’s pleading—“We’ve got to stand up against these evils out here in our streets, to protect our children and our homes”—and the next prescribing, in a shout, the way to a better day—“If you walk with Him, stay with Him, live in Him, *He* will deliver you.”

Tucker pauses: one beat, two beats. He smiles broadly, a patriarchal, consummately charming grin, and he takes out a handkerchief to wipe his brow. Another beat. More shouts. “Be cool, and know God is on His way.” Still more shouts. “Be calm: The storm is passing over.” A woman in the choir begins to shudder violently. Tucker continues: “Ohhhh, thank God almighty. . . . And soon,” (women weep out loud; dozens of hands wave in