

of churches, farms, market-days—now goes by the unwieldy term “communitarianism.” Back then, it was just called life.

But another popular relic, one of the most consistent applause lines of the 104th Congress and of the upcoming 1996 campaign, is the urge to return power to the states. (This is merely a respectable way of speechifying about the same forces that prompted the assault on Fort Sumter in 1861.) The problem with many of my fellow Southerners—I grew up in Chattanooga—is that they tend not to acknowledge that bad things can grow out of good impulses. Yes, concentrating power in Washington might not always be best. But as slavery and Jim Crow illustrate, concentrating power in local hands certainly doesn’t automatically produce the best results.

There is, then, much irony in the Southern example. Southerners have long, and laudably, been concerned

with manners, values, and patriotism; so, now, are most Americans. But Southerners, too, have long been hypocritical about Washington’s contribution to their lives; so, now, are most Americans. Without Washington—especially the Washington of Roosevelt, Kennedy and Johnson—the region would no doubt have languished in the dust. When FDR said he saw a third of the nation ill-clad and ill-fed, he was mostly talking about the South. Electricity, Social Security, good roads, military bases, and, later, airports and integration were all federally funded or inspired. Turning Mencken’s “Sahara of the Bozarts” into the prosperous Sunbelt is one of the federal government’s singular twentieth-century achievements.

Genovese, though, is most concerned about the future. His vision is, admittedly, lofty: He hopes for a “coalition across racial and inherited ideological lines to combat the moral

degeneracy that now runs rampant throughout both white and black America.” (There is a long tradition of sentimental thinking in the South. Many generations of Southerners have sat up late, bourbon in hand, wondering what if Braxton Bragg had held Missionary Ridge against the Union charge, preventing Sherman’s March to the Sea?) Yet it is true that the New Deal coalition was founded along just the lines Genovese imagines: A liberal faith in government, and a conservative adherence to traditional social and cultural mores.

Redemption—White House take note—is a possibility. Although Clinton’s character problems (Whitewater, Paula Jones, Troopergate) have embarrassed the South, the President has a gift for the evangelical and charismatic. He could repair some of the damage. Yet Southerners, too, must be willing to take a second look at their complicated native son, a man who understands in his bones that government turned a sluggish South into the Sunbelt. Until Bubba understands that Washington is not inherently bad, and that true manners mean more than holding open doors but also being generous of spirit—the culture wars will go on. And the losers will be all of us, North and South.

Jon Meacham, a contributing editor of The Washington Monthly, is national affairs editor of Newsweek.

The Selling of Supreme Court Nominees

JOHN ANTHONY MALTESE

Politics has always been at the heart of the Supreme Court selection process. According to John Anthony Maltese, the first “Borking” of a nominee came in 1795, with the defeat of John Rutledge’s nomination as chief justice. What is different about today’s appointment process, he argues, is not its politicization but the range of players involved and the political techniques that they use.

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“Maltese sets out to explain how the confirmation process of Supreme Court nominees has arrived at its present point—and he succeeds admirably by interweaving historical and contemporary materials. He demonstrates precisely when and how interest groups became involved in the process and when and how the White House became actively involved in, as he puts it, ‘selling’ the nominees.”

—**Sheldon Goldman**
University of Massachusetts,
Amherst

The Making of a Conservative Environmentalist

Gordon K. Durnil,
Indiana University Press

By Karl Hess, Jr.

Conservative environmentalists are an endangered species. I consider this odd given the conservative bent of environmentalists, their drive to preserve and restore, and the moral certitude that anchors their green cause. I consider it even odder given conservatives’ environmental turn—their deep concern for America’s moral climate being the best example. Yet conservatives and environmentalists mix about

as well as oil and water.

Gordon Durnil—Republican Party stalwart, Dan Quayle advisor, and former Bush appointee to the U.S.-Canada International Joint Commission—finds this odd as well. In his new book, *The Making of a Conservative Environmentalist*, he argues that conservatives are by nature and nurture environmentalists—or at least they should be. Careful to lay out his own conservative credentials, even belaboring them at times, Durnil dispels the notion that environmental values are the exclusive property of liberals and Democrats. Concern for our environment, he notes, should have nothing to do with left or right; ideology comes into play only when the talk turns to solutions.

Durnil's message is aimed in part at the Republican Right. Conservatives, he argues, could actually have an edge on liberals in the green elysian fields. "To conserve our natural resources," he writes, "is not a liberal philosophy; it is

a conservative philosophy. To protect the individual from assault on person and property also fits with a conservative philosophy."

Unfortunately, this vital message—a message I hope the Right hears, but fear it will ignore—is obscured by what follows.

For starters, his idea of what constitutes an environmentalist is baffling. For Durnil, true environmentalists are the legions of angry, working-class men and women victimized by air- and water-borne toxins. That's why he was disappointed with the past Congress: Instead of taking action on real environmental issues—like sun-setting chlorinated compounds—it just passed a bill "regarding a desert in California." He is right in part; many victims of toxic poisoning are indeed bonafide environmentalists. But what about the middle-class aesthetes that he dismisses—the legions of angry men and women who fought the Forest Service to save western forests and spotted

owls, and the grassroots greens who now struggle to save islands of biodiversity? No matter what Durnil may believe, American greens are firmly rooted in the spirit and symbol of wilderness—in what Henry David Thoreau called the "preservation of the world."

But Durnil's weakest point is his failure to give conservative solutions to environmental problems. Other than a moral stricture that people ought to do what is right, the heart of his policy menu is zero tolerance for toxic pollution. Chemicals, he adds, should be presumed harmful until proven harmless. The idea has its appeal—after all, why should the government allow the person or property of any American to be damaged, even by trace amounts of toxic chemicals? But in a real world of uncertainty and shades of gray, it's a recipe for disaster. Science is no better at proving chemical innocence than juries are at proving the innocence of the accused. "Not guilty" maybe, but never "innocent."

Conservatives reading Durnil will be struck by the probable consequence of the policies he advocates: bigger government. And environmentalists will be troubled by the narrowness of his policy interests: not a word on the hundreds of environmental issues that have little or nothing to do with persistent toxins—like the endangered salmon, the loss of topsoil on Midwestern farms, and the plight of several hundred million acres of public grazing lands.

Conservatives and environmentalists alike will be perplexed by Durnil's silence on the rising star of free-market environmentalism, a libertarian menu of market and private property solutions to land, wildlife, and air issues that entail minimal government. Why does he—indeed, why does the Republican Congress—defly avoid any discussion of the innovative ideas that could build a positive and caring conservative environmental agenda? *Karl Hess is an environmental writer and a senior fellow in environmental studies at the Cato Institute.*

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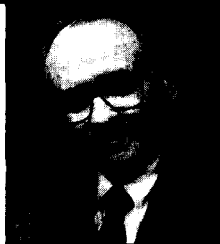


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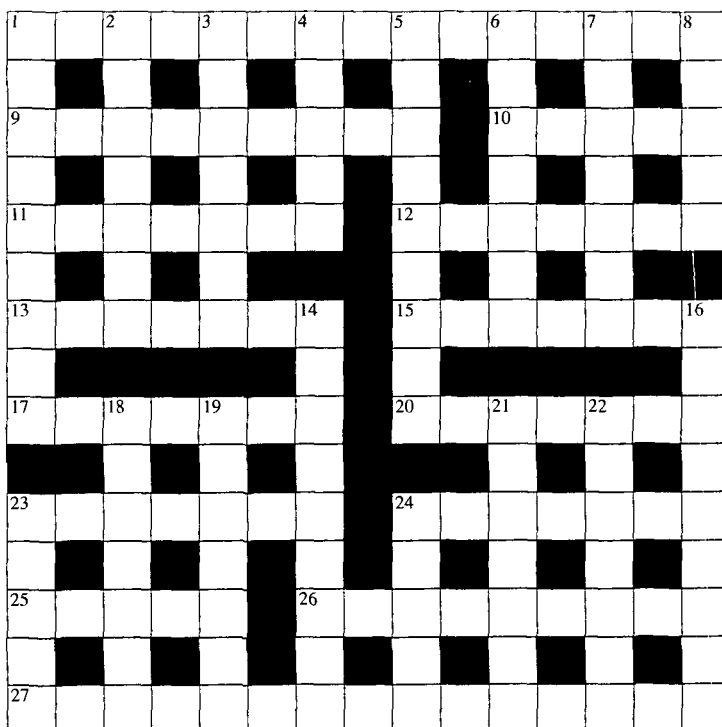
Political Puzzle

BY JOHN BARCLAY

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words—thus (2,3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, such as USA, are treated as one word.

ACROSS

1. Government officials misplaced beach in tax curve. (9,6)
9. Court's panel takes in 501 before Langley group. (9)
10. Prominent movie character on drugs? (5)
11. Junior audience precedes bad monarch. (7)
12. Payment for butter confection with a bit of ice. (7)
13. Relented and paused awkwardly after end of race. (5,2)
15. Disturb the late Lou Gehrig, for example. (7)
17. Oriental skillfully beat tin. (7)
20. Deletions sets irk assembly. (7)
23. Mark found in unavoidable mishaps. (7)
24. Seamen are rascals out of control. (7)
25. Features certain votes about sessions' ending. (5)
26. Free revolutionary shuffled deck after peacekeeper. (9)
27. Washington VIPs trash Senate's pet river. (15)



DOWN

1. Pleasure sent me to Jenny. (9)
2. Trained nurse about North Dakota plays. (3,4)
3. Chapel Hill institution senior citizens released. (7)
4. Cleans up Irani bomb burst site. (2,3)
5. North Africans' pet saying: "Nonsense!" (9)
6. Did hers pureed, like some tomatoes. (7)
7. Write up air god. (7)
8. Authority finds messy end in void. (5)
14. Apartment is open-and-shut case before lease ending. (9)
16. City districts' diseases controlled around first test. (4,5)
18. Strengthens barbecue dinner? (5,2)
19. Peculiar rite set for erstwhile free port. (7)

21. Most unplanned tree in planned interval. (7)
22. Motor trouble heard in Ukrainian city? (7)
23. *Faux pas* by African settler about noon. (5)
24. High around 101 is permitted. (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle:

