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White House spokesman Tony Snow stokes the ties between economic and social conservatives with a visit to a Christian Right voter rally in September. For more on the conference, see story on p. 3.

Tearing Down the Towers

The Right's Vision of an America Without Cities

By Jeremy Adam Smith

One Nation, Two Futures?

The formula that emerged from the 2000 and 2004 Presidential elections was provocative: the less dense the population, the more likely it was to vote Republican. Republicans appeared to have lost the cities and inner suburbs, positioning themselves as the party of country roads, small towns, and traditional values. Though Bush was often mocked for the time he spent on his ranch, sleeves rolled up, gun in hand, the image was widely promoted and served as a cornerstone of his identity among Republican voters.

Conversely, it looked like Democrats had lost the country¹—that is, until November 2006. That's when Democrats won decisive victories in the Midwest

Tearing Down the Towers continues on page 15

Tax Revolt as a Family Value

How the Christian Right Is Becoming A Free Market Champion

By Richard J. Meagher

“Death Should Not Be a Taxable Event.” In August of 2005, this headline appeared on the website of the conservative evangelical Christian organization Focus on the Family. The accompanying article asked Focus members to persuade their Senators to repeal a federal tax on inherited estates.¹

Focus on the Family is not the only Christian Right organization to add this tax

to its hit list. The Christian Coalition, the Family Research Council (FRC), and other conservative Christian groups condemn the estate tax in radio broadcasts and in newsletter updates; they include it on voter scorecards; and they ask members to encourage their federal representatives, as FRC head Tony Perkins puts it, to “give this onerous tax a proper burial.”²

But the estate tax only affects the wealthiest of Americans, and seems to have noth-

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— FROM THE EDITOR —

More than half of America probably breathed a sigh of relief after the November elections. Extremism had become commonplace in George W. Bush's administration, and a spread of seven million voters handed victory to his opponents.

Whether Congressional oversight will trim the sails of the Bush Administration remains to be seen. What we do know is that after years of organizing together, the coalition of economic and social conservatives is more than an alliance of convenience that will shatter with a single electoral defeat. Over time, they have been exchanging ideas, not just coordinating votes.

Rich Meagher's article reveals one such example of how economic conservatives and the Christian Right have been building ideology together — in the world of taxes. Now a sizable number of Christian Right leaders support low estate taxes for the wealthy as a family value. In his article, Jeremy Smith underscores how a deep mythology about the dangers of urban life weaves together various parts of the Right. Turning to the election, Pam Chamberlain and Chip Berlet find that conservative evangelicals embraced the war on terror as a family value.

As a growing, changing movement, the Christian Right's politics are far from static; indeed, its leaders are quite nimble in absorbing and reinterpreting the politics of the moment. So the conservative alliance may be more durable than we'd expect from the post-election finger-pointing blaming each other for their defeat. — Abby Scher

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ISSUE 54

Whither the Christian Right?

How Religious Conservatives Succeeded and Failed in the 2006 Elections

By Pam Chamberlain and Chip Berlet

It was a scant five weeks until the 2006 midterm elections, and photogenic Christian Right leader Tony Perkins gripped the podium and smiled confidently at the

1700 activists gathered at the Values Voters Summit. Perkins predicted that his new coalition of Christian Right stalwarts would tip the scales for the Republicans in the upcoming midterm elections. He was, of

course, wrong.

The Christian Right did turn out and vote for Republicans, as it has in the past, but in this election slightly more Christian evangelicals voted Democrat, perhaps to send a message to Republicans that they were tired of the war in Iraq, offended by corruption, distressed by scandals, and seeking change. The Christian Right, however, remains a large and powerful social movement, and it is already retooling for the 2008 elections.

Post-election analyses of voter demographics revealed that while American voters do sometimes vote in blocs, the specific mobilization of these groups is more complicated, and an informed understanding more nuanced, than conventional wisdom might suggest. What Perkins and his colleagues tried to mobilize is a subset of Christian voters, the core group of politically active, conservative, white evangelicals who respond to electoral campaigns that focus on a narrow definition of “family values,” a frame that has proved successful for getting out the vote since the late 1970s.

Reviewing how the new Christian Right mobilized its base in 2006 will help us understand and anticipate what they might do in the next two years.

Family, Faith, & Freedom: To Protect the Children

Attending the late September Values Voters Washington Briefing were a mix of heartland cultural warriors, grassroots Republican political activists, and local church staff, including ministers and lay ministry workers. The crowd was a typical



Brendan Smialowski/Getty Images

Worshippers at the pre-election Values Voter Summit in Washington, DC

Pam Chamberlain and Chip Berlet are senior research analysts with Political Research Associates and members of The Public Eye editorial board.

The rising or falling fortunes of the Republican Party in any election cycle do not determine the size and vibrancy of the Christian Right as a social movement.

representation of the predominantly white and Protestant evangelical Right today. Predicting “Washington will never be the same!” Perkins then introduced the conference speakers, politicians and pundits alike, some of whom, like Republican candidates George Allen and Rick Santorum, (who appeared by video) turned out to lose their races a few weeks later.

Tony Perkins established the main frame of the event when he said, “we are facing threats from within and from without.”

The threat from within came from liberals, same sex marriage, and abortion. The threat from without was terrorism. By focusing on the terrorist attacks of September 11th, the speakers tried to leap over criticism of the war in Iraq, other specific military interventions, the economy, and other issues.

The ultimate goal for many in this aggressive effort is to “restore” America as a Christian nation—a politicized, theologically-based worldview dubbed by critics of the Christian Right as “dominionism.”¹ The tendency toward dominionism has clearly influenced public policy in both the domestic and foreign policy arenas, as seen in the domestic gay marriage and the international abstinence-until-marriage debates.²

This type of Christian Right pre-election voter mobilization conference used to be hosted by the Christian Coalition, with the title “Road to Victory.” Now that the Christian Coalition has unraveled as a national group, a new coalition has stepped in to fill the void. The conference was coordinated by FRC Action, the political action arm of the Family Research Council, with Tony Perkins at the helm. Co-

sponsors included the political action arms of three other Christian Right groups: Focus on the Family Action (Dr. James Dobson), Americans United to Preserve Marriage (Gary Bauer), and American Family Association Action (Donald Wildmon). Most of these groups have close historical ties. Dobson’s Focus on the Family created the FRC to lobby Congress before it was spun off as a separate entity. Gary Bauer ran the FRC from 1988 to 1999. The wild card in this coalition is Wildmon, known for his inflammatory anti-gay rhetoric and occasional detours into veiled anti-Semitism. His American Family Association pulls this coalition further to the right.³

The polite and attentive crowd was treated to one speech after another in the hotel ballroom, in a didactic style and hierarchical format typical of Religious Right rallies—tightly orchestrated logistically, skillfully crafted in framing and messaging. The visual aesthetic was slick, modern, and high tech, clearly reflecting how the coalition sank considerable resources into this event. The coalition partners also sponsored other pre-election regional events, like the anti-gay marriage “Liberty Sunday.” The four cosponsors were positioning themselves as the unified national voice of the Christian Right. How successful have they been?

Success and Failure: What the 2006 Election Results Show

The Christian Right mobilization of voters was not able, on its own, to counter an unpopular war or an unpopular party, the incumbent Republicans. Even before the election, Professor Mark

Rozell pointed out that in 2006 both the Republicans and the Democrats realized that moral values and religion help shape how elections turn out:

We have motivated groups, both on the right and the left, trying to mobilize their constituencies, in large part because they believe values matter but they also understand that the two political parties are very closely competitive in Congress right now.

He correctly forecast that, “Affecting a few electoral outcomes could be the difference between Democratic and Republican party control.”⁴

According to the National Election Pool exit polls commissioned by major media outlets, white evangelicals did turn out to vote and comprised 24% of the electorate, the same proportion as in 2004 when mobilizing these voters in certain key states helped reelect George W. Bush.⁵

This figure can easily be misleading, since not all white evangelicals are conservative, and not all white conservative evangelicals consistently identify with the Christian Right. When successful, the Christian Right can consistently mobilize a core group of about 15% of American voters. They are joined by roughly 10% more of white conservative evangelicals who generally align with the Christian Right and vote Republican, but who sometimes shift their allegiance or sit out elections.

“It looks like the white evangelical base of the Republican Party pretty much held firm,” reports John C. Green, expert on religious Americans’ voting trends, from the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life.⁶ Yet he notes there were small and ultimately significant shifts teased out in exit polls. In 2004, white evangelicals voted 74% for Republicans and 25% for Democrats. In 2006, white evangelicals voted 70% for Republicans and 28% for Democrats. This slight shift alone is enough to shape the outcome in tight elections.⁷

This reminds us that despite the visibility of their leadership, especially on the Christian airwaves, the Christian Right core voting block is not consistently large enough to secure a GOP win in key states

with tight races. The usual Christian Right allies among the broader white evangelical electorate sometimes shift and vote Democratic. The white evangelical voter base includes Republicans, Independents, and Democrats. They do not vote as a monolithic bloc. Along with Democratic Party and progressive voter mobilization efforts, targeting women, people of color, organized labor, immigrants, and other constituencies, the Christian Right can be outvoted.

And while a small number of white Christian evangelicals shifted away from the Republicans, a significant number of Catholics and mainline Protestants also shifted. More information is needed to tease out the influence of the Catholic vote, 26% of all voters, a group comparable in size to the white Protestant evangelical electorate. And not enough information is currently available to determine exactly

which segments of Latina/Latino and Spanish-speaking voters are shifting, and whether or not that is correlated with being Catholic, Protestant, or secular.

After the election, conservatives bemoaned their losses but tried to say that not much had changed. Americans for Tax Reform, Grover Norquist's group, described the election as "Democrats Dressing up as Republicans," referring to the relative conservatism of some Democratic winners.

Tony Perkins acknowledged that Americans had spoken but insisted that there was no new direction despite the shift in party support. Distancing himself from the losers and referring to his followers as "integrity voters," he said, "Democrats won mainly because they seized on a platform largely forsaken by the GOP—social values. When 'integrity voters' saw the Republicans had abandoned their princi-

The Christian Right mobilization of voters was not able, on its own, to counter an unpopular war or an unpopular party, the incumbent Republicans.

ples, they ultimately abandoned the GOP."⁸ "This should be a clear message to both Parties that values voters vote values, not party. Their focus is not on party politics,

SWIMMING IN SUBTEXT

The Values Voter Summit in September 2006 was overripe with subtle messages designed to direct, motivate, and reassure the audience. Here is a sample:

- Godly Christians must be involved in politics to take back America from the Godless secularists and liberals. Godly Christians must vote, and vote for candidates who win our approval and these candidates must come to us; we do not go to them begging. We may not always agree with the Republican leadership, but we need them on our side to win our cause. Aware of being criticized for being too partisan toward Republicans, Tony Perkins issued a statement claiming that, "The Washington Briefing... was not an opportunity for us to endorse candidates but rather an opportunity for candidates to endorse us and our values."
- Our version of Christianity is correct, dominant, triumphant, defines the political center, and is politically powerful. Every other worldview is wrong, and unconnected to the real God. This is a struggle between good and evil. Our opponents are witting or unwitting agents of Satan. Former Florida Secretary of State Katherine Harris—famous for her role in the 2000 Florida Presidential election fiasco and now an elected U.S. Representative running for the Senate¹⁶—planted herself firmly in the dominionist wing of the Christian Right.¹⁷ At the final banquet of the conference, Harris emphasized the importance of the proper candidates winning in November, and suggested it was a battle against "principalities and powers." Many in the audience surely recognized this as a Biblical reference to "spiritual warfare"—in their view a struggle with the demonic agents of Satan.¹⁸ Just in case they missed the

point, the emcee closed the banquet by reminding the audience that they were engaged in "spiritual warfare."

- Our faith, our moral superiority, and the fact we are persecuted by our opponents justify hatred of the enemy, and even violent resistance. Our God may be merciful, compassionate, and the God of justice; but our God is a zealous and vengeful God, and we are his agents on earth. Sin invokes punishment. This worldview emerged from several speakers. Colin Hanna, President of Let Freedom Ring, a 501 (c) (4) anti-immigration group, reinforced his interpretation of this dual nature of a Christian God when he said that mercy and justice must be blended in public policy. He described amnesty for undocumented immigrants as "sin without consequences" and that "Amnesty is therefore not Christian."
- We need a Christian counter-culture to overcome the depravity of secularized modern life. One of the most secularized arenas for evangelicals has been Hollywood. For instance, Donald Wildmon's AFA was founded to address immorality in the entertainment industry. At the Summit, an especially high energy panel, "Hollywood in the Heartland," introduced the audience to the work being done by Christian film producers and the alternate infrastructure that will support this counter-culture. Ted Baehr, who runs the Biblically based film review service, MovieGuide, highlighted the work he and others have undertaken to steer Christians towards more acceptable, family friendly popular culture. Rev. Tommy Tenney previewed his new film, a reworking of the story of Esther, "One Night with the King," and the audience learned that Hollywood has specific Christian movie studios, like FoxFaith.
- We will win, because God is on our side.

but rather on government guided by core values.”⁹

The day after the election, conservative columnist Michael Medved recognized that,

The numbers from every corner of the country make it clear that the American people meant to send a message to their leaders, and the future of the conservative movement depends on an accurate reading of the substance they meant to communicate, and a realistic reassessment of the current state of our politics.¹⁰

But it remains to be seen if these analysts are correctly reading their constituency. Medved interpreted the figure that 59% of voters disapproved of the war in Iraq as an indication that “many (if not most) of those voters dislike Bush’s policy because they feel it’s not aggressive enough.”¹¹ This seems a dubious contention.

Democratic Party leaders are now debating how to handle the issue of religion and people of faith—sometimes constructively and sometimes opportunistically. In Ohio and Pennsylvania, Democratic candidates actively referred to their faiths. Ted Strickland, the new Ohio governor is a Methodist minister, and Bob Casey, Rick Santorum’s successful opponent for the Senate in Pennsylvania, is a Catholic. More targeted analysis needs to happen in selected states to learn the details of religious voters’ influence. For instance, conservatives and liberals alike will study the data on same sex marriage bans, which passed with considerably smaller point spreads than in 2004, to see if their presence on the ballot made a difference in the candidates’ results. The same scrutiny will apply to the minimum wage ballot measures that pro-labor groups designed with a frame of economic justice aimed at enticing people of faith to consider other values than those stressed by the Christian Right.

What's the Matter with “What's the Matter with Kansas”?

Demographic election analyses notwithstanding, it’s not so easy to describe

white evangelicals accurately. Thomas Frank, in his book *What's the Matter with Kansas*, nimbly navigated the conservative scene on the ground in Kansas, but slipped when he implied that people in the white working class who vote against their apparent economic self interest did so because they didn’t really understand the complex issues, or were easily swayed by fundamentalist preachers and opportunistic politicians. Some, we are led to believe, are simply addled.¹²

**There is no evidence
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Large groups of white evangelicals are mobilized through the rhetorical style of right-wing populism, which suggests that liberal elites and welfare queens are eroding conservative American values.¹³ Jean Hardisty refers to this process as mobilizing resentment.¹⁴

Many white working class voters and white middle class voters can be persuaded at times to vote against their apparent immediate economic interests through appeals to their sense of morality that cast “traditional family values” and “moral values” in terms of societal struggles over issues such as gay rights, same sex marriage,

abortion, stem cell research, and pornography. In elections, sometimes economic issues trump social issues, and sometimes social issues trump economic issues—and how Republicans and Democrats are perceived by Christian evangelical voters weighing the pull of those sets of issues can determine the outcome of an election.¹⁵

Whither the Christian Right?

The rising or falling fortunes of the Republican Party in any election cycle do not determine the size and vibrancy of the Christian Right as a social movement. Members of the Christian Right are more committed to their issues as they define them than they are to any political party. Like any social movement, they align with political entities that they believe will bring about the changes they seek.

Black, Hispanic, and Asian evangelical voters and Roman Catholics of all kinds have responded to various campaign strategies aimed at religious voters, most notably around abortion and gay issues. On occasion, Christian Right and Republican efforts can erode the historic preferences among these groups to vote Democratic as happened in 2004. While some in these groups shifted back to vote Democratic in 2006, it remains to be seen how well subsequent mobilizations will fare in specific races. State-based analysis is key.

Every few years—following an electoral defeat of Republicans, the collapse of a Christian Right organization, or an expose of a leader’s shady past—the death of the Christian Right is announced in the media. Reports of its death are, as they say, greatly exaggerated, and complacency would be a mistake. The Christian Right will survive, and remains a powerful factor in the social, cultural, and political life of the United States.

Keep an eye out for the next hot button issue coming to your state. ■

For more extended analysis of the Christian Right and Election 2006, See *Running Against Sodom and Osama: The Christian Right, Values Voters, and the Culture War in 2006*, HTML: http://www.publiceye.org/christian_right/values-voters/vv-toc.html;

PDF: http://www.publiceye.org/pdfs/Running_Against_Sodom_and_Osama.pdf.

End Notes

- ¹ Dominionism is a tendency within the Christian Right to assert that Christians are mandated by God to take control of secular political institutions. See: Frederick Clarkson, "The Rise of Dominionism: Remaking America as a Christian Nation," *The Public Eye Magazine*, Winter 2005; Michelle Goldberg, *Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006); Chip Berlet, "The Christian Right, Dominionism, and Theocracy," *The Public Eye* online, http://www.publiceye.org/christian_right/dominionism.htm. While Christian Reconstructionism is the most militant form of dominionism, it is a common error to imply that all dominionists are Reconstructionists or desire a full-blown totalitarian theocracy.
- ² Kaplan, Esther, 2004, *With God on Their Side: How Christian Fundamentalists Trampled Science, Policy, and Democracy in George W. Bush's White House* (New York: The New Press); Geoffrey C. Layman and John C. Green, "Wars and Rumors of Wars: The Contexts of Cultural Conflict in American Political Behavior," *British Journal of Political Science* (36)1, (January 2006), pp 61-89; Herman, Didi, *The Antigay Agenda: Orthodox Vision and the Christian Right* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Katha Pollitt, "Earthly Rewards for the Christian Voter," Subject to Debate column, *The Nation*, December 6, 2004, <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20041206/pollitt>; William Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996); Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York: Guilford Press, 1998).

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- ⁹ "Integrity Voters Reveal Values Gap," Press release Family Research Council, November 8, 2006, at <http://www.frc.org/get.cfm?i=PR06K02>.
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- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² For examples, see Frank, Thomas, *What's the Matter with Kansas?: How Conservatives Won the Heart of America* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004), pp. 160-161, 205, 213, 226, 238-251.
- ¹³ Berlet, Chip, and Matthew N. Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America* (New York: Guilford, 2000), pp. 1-18. See also Margaret Canovan, *Populism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981); Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).
- ¹⁴ Hardisty, Jean V., *Mobilizing Resentment: Conservative Resurgence from the John Birch Society to the Promise Keepers* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999).
- ¹⁵ We discuss this at greater length in *Running Against Sodom and Osama: The Christian Right, Values Voters, and the Culture War in 2006*, HTML: http://www.publiceye.org/christian_right/values-voters/vv-toc.html; PDF: http://www.publiceye.org/pdfs/Running_Against_Sodom_and_Osama.pdf.
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TAX REVOLT *continued from page 1*

ing to do with the social issues, such as abortion or sex education, that normally concern the Christian Right. What would make them lobby for a lower tax rate on the wealthy, especially since almost all estates are exempt from the tax anyway?

The answer is simple. Over the course of the 1990s, the economic conservatives successfully recast the estate tax as a “family” issue, using language that appealed more directly to conservative evangelicals. And the Christian Right, primed by years of describing themselves as a “pro-family movement,” and spurred on by a group of intellectuals who put forth a Christian economics of the family, jumped at the bait, becoming staunch supporters of repeal. Once Bush signed a temporary estate tax repeal in 2001, the Christian Right groups joined the fight in earnest to make the repeal of the so-called “death tax” permanent.

The result: closer ties between economic conservatives in the Republican Party and the religious conservatives who make up the Party’s voting base. In fact, some conservative activists feel that economic issues like the estate tax may be the key to maintaining a conservative electoral majority in the years to come.

The Economic Conservatives Get Creative

The government levies an estate tax on the value of a person’s assets at death, before they are passed on to heirs. A federal tax of this kind has been in force since the early 20th Century. While the tax was originally supposed to target the richest Americans, by the 1990s, thanks to inflation, even families with estates of \$600,000 had to consider the tax in their financial planning. Still, few were actually affected. For example, Americans filed only 81,000 estate tax returns in 1995, and only 85% of these estate returns involved a payment.³ Indeed,

Richard J. Meagher, a doctoral student at the Graduate Center, City University of New York, is researching the alliance between economic and religious conservatives.

according to Internal Revenue Service data, the number of taxable estates in each year of the 1990s represented less than 2% of all adult deaths.⁴

With the estate tax affecting such a small number of Americans, even conservatives did not see outright repeal a viable political option in the 1990s. The Republican Party’s 1994 Contract with America only proposed increasing the size of estates eligible to be taxed. When, in 1997, the Republicans backed raising the exemption level to \$1 million in assets by 2006, estate tax foes were not happy. Right-wing critics felt it only complicated the tax code for inheritances. The

The Christian Right revived the idea that the poor could benefit from the “bracing moral discipline” of the market.

Heritage Foundation argued that the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997 which proposed the reform “belongs to a class of legislation that warms only the hearts of lobbyists and specialists who must deal with the growing tax labyrinth.”⁵

The criticism of the 1997 reform attempt opened the door for repeal efforts. A number of anti-estate tax groups, led mostly by conservative outsiders and funded by some of the country’s wealthiest families, joined with sympathetic members of Congress in an attempt to repeal the tax.⁶ The biggest players were Patricia Soldano, an estate planner from Orange County, California, who, in the early 1990s, created the Center for the Study of Taxation and the Policy and Taxation Group to lobby against the estate tax; Alabama estate planner Harold Apolinsky, who formed the American Family Business

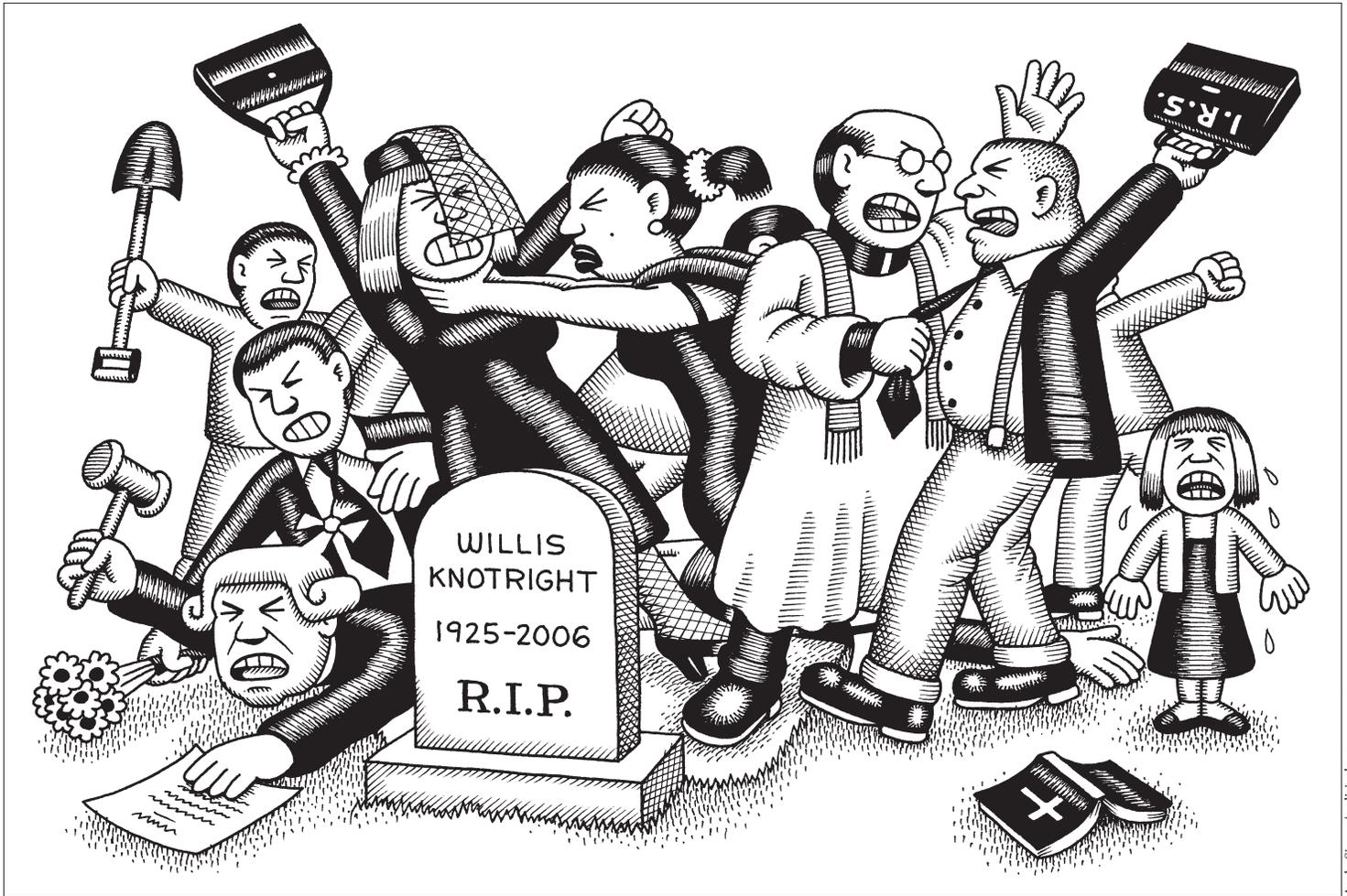
Institute (AFBI) in 1992 for similar lobbying purposes; and Jim Martin, head of the conservative seniors group, the 60Plus Association. It was Martin who made the “death tax” label stick, while Soldano’s and Apolinsky’s groups met with Washington insiders and directed wealthy constituents to lobby their representatives directly.

Over the course of the 1990s, these conservative anti-tax groups tried to neutralize support for the “death tax” by carefully crafting anecdotes about middle class Americans suffering under its burdens, according to scholars Michael Graetz and Ian Shapiro, authors of a 2005 book on the repeal battle.⁷ “Stories trumped science,” these authors argue, because the statistics used by supporters never matched the power and salience of their opponents’ tales of estate tax woe.

The economic conservatives finally tasted success with the election of George W. Bush, who included repeal in his tax proposal. The resulting Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001 not only gradually increases the exemption level, to \$3.5 million in 2009, but reduces and eventually eliminates the tax entirely by the year 2010. However, due to a sunset clause included to avoid Senate rules against expanding the federal deficit, estate tax rates will return in 2011 to their 2000 levels. So while repeal advocates achieved a major victory with the 2001 law, the issue remains very much alive politically.

Washington Insiders and the Appeal to the Christian Right Base

Washington insiders can take as much credit for the 2001 victory as the insurgents from the hinterlands of Orange County and Alabama. A big player in the repeal movement was Grover Norquist, head of the conservative anti-tax lobbying group, Americans for Tax Reform. Norquist holds infamous “Wednesday meetings” where Congressional and Administration officials meet representatives of conservative advocacy groups and think tanks to coordinate policy efforts. Equally significant was the influential conservative think tank,



Andy Singer/politicalcartoons.com

the Heritage Foundation, which jump-started research against the estate tax in the mid-90s with about \$200,000 in grants from Apolinsky's AFBI.⁸

Other secular conservative groups eventually joining in the repeal effort include the libertarian Cato Institute, the 527 association Club for Growth, and the free market advocacy groups Americans for Prosperity and Citizens for a Sound Economy (now named Freedom Works). By early 2001, even Eagle Forum founder and anti-government crusader Phyllis Schlafly was warning readers in her newsletter to "Look Out for Death Tax Deception."

While these groups' focus on economic issues or decreased government management of the economy made them obvious candidates to join the repeal struggle, they had a limited reach among voters. For repeal to become permanent, the economic conservatives would need the sup-

port of the religious conservatives' base.

It should not be surprising that anti-tax advocates sought out the Christian Right's support on an economic issue. Conservatives have built their power in the United States by developing issues in ways that both economic and religious conservatives find compelling. For over a decade, Norquist has labored to build a "Leave Us Alone Coalition" of disgruntled taxpayers, business owners, gun owners, and Western ranchers. In a 1996 speech¹⁰ outlining this coalition, Norquist argues that all of these Americans share one goal: "they all want to be left alone by the government." For Norquist, a friend and ally of Ralph Reed when he headed the Christian Coalition, the Christian Right is also part of the mix; Christian conservatives "fight against government interference and spending (financed by their own tax dollars) that insults and attacks their values and their

faith." Norquist sees taxes and, to a lesser extent, government regulation as the key issues that can unite conservatives.

Norquist is in hot water for laundering money to Christian Right groups from the scofflaw lobbyist Jack Abramoff.¹¹ But he is likely on to something in his focus on tax policy as a means of recruiting the Christian Right. He tapped into a tiny group of hyperconservative Protestant thinkers whose arguments that economic policies deserve as much attention as social ones have an outsized influence on American evangelicals. Originally led by the late R.J. Rushdoony, Christian Reconstructionists believe that Biblical law can and should be brought into the modern context, and that it provides a basis not just for ethical and private life, but for public life and policy as well. In this view, all governmental policies—laws, court decisions, regulations, etc.—should be directly based upon

Biblical law.¹² In their effort to broadly apply Biblical principles to civil government, Reconstructionist writers like Gary North also emphasize the importance of private property and free-market capitalism for ensuring the freedom and responsibility of the individual before God. At the same time, they reject government price controls, welfare and other entitlement programs, and any kind of wealth redistribution. According to Reconstructionists, taxation should only be as high as necessary for the maintenance of a libertarian state that allows individuals to act freely, although in accordance with God's moral law.

Whether acknowledged or not, many Christian Right organizations increasingly echo the Reconstructionists in that economic policy matters to them often as much as issues of sexuality. They are probably especially receptive to their influence given the old-time evangelical conviction, rooted in the 19th century, that "laws of God reign over society, their real character beyond appearance...confounding state rational control."¹³ Some go so far as to revive the idea that the poor could benefit from the "bracing moral discipline" of the market.

With this moralistic bent, Christian Right groups typically focus on those tax issues with a clear moral dimension. In the 1980s, Christian groups often protested the use of tax funds for welfare programs,

insisting that these programs created a culture of dependency among the poor. For example, an early mission statement for the Religious Roundtable, an influential evangelical organization of the 1980s, notes that "the Bible nowhere justifies the use of coercive government power to plunder some elements of society and dole out to others."¹⁴ But it takes no position on specific taxation. Later, the Christian Coalition made tax issues an important part of

The "family values" imagery spread like wildfire across conservative networks.

its agenda by focusing on family-related policies like the so-called "marriage penalty." And then, after 2001, the Christian Right picked up on the economic conservatives' arguments that the "death tax" was a threat to families.

Let's Talk Family

The economic conservatives began shifting their language in the mid-1990s. You hear it in the work of law professor Edward McCaffery, who called the estate tax a "virtue tax" as early as 1994.¹⁵ Since it appears to promote consumption rather than savings, McCaffery argues in a 1999 Cato Institute report, the estate tax discourages hard work. Why work harder if the government simply takes away your extra earnings when you die? As McCaffery notes, the whole of society is affected:

The biggest problem with the death tax is a moral one. The death tax rewards a "die-broke" ethic, whereby the wealthy spend down their wealth on lavish consumption, and discourages economically and socially beneficial intergenerational saving.¹⁶

So the estate tax is more an issue of morality than economics.

Even more than Cato, the Heritage Foundation can be thanked for much of this shift in opposing the estate tax on moral instead of economic grounds. The change can be seen in the work of Heritage analyst Bill Beach. His first report on the estate tax in 1996 presents almost entirely economic-based reasons for repeal, arguing that taxation interferes with economic liberty and growth.¹⁷ Yet his second report on the estate tax, published two years later, has a very different tone. While he offers the same economic arguments, Beach focuses more directly on the effects of the tax upon small business owners and farmers with exemplary values, noting the "great threat" to their enterprises.

The burden of the estate tax, Beach argues here, falls upon "hardworking men and women whose thrift and entrepreneurial spirit expose them to confiscatory tax rates."¹⁸ Indeed, repeal champions repeatedly tell anecdotes about small enterprises forced into early sale, bankruptcy and foreclosure, although their claims are often exaggerated.¹⁹ The strategic use of this language is not difficult to see; the image of the yeoman farmer and small business entrepreneur are central to American myth-making and tug at the heartstrings of many Americans, not just conservatives. Yet Beach also stresses, however subtly, the strong moral values of thrift and hard work that supposedly motivate these entrepreneurs. This moral vision deepens in the next phase of argument which indelibly links small enterprises with the term "family" — as in "family farms and businesses." The powerful imagery of business and farm is thus united with the equally powerful symbolism of values, morality, and especially the family, that is so important to the Christian Right.

This "family values" imagery spread like wildfire across conservative networks. Presidential candidate John Kerry was "anti-family" for opposing the tax's repeal, charged a 2004 press release from the secular American Conservative Union. The next year a similar ACU release charged that the "widely despised and onerous" estate tax "destroys small family businesses, farms

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and ranches.” Its burden falls on those “who have worked hard all their lives” to pass on their family business.

Other organizations with fewer resources than the ACU simply reprinted another group’s press release or interviewed the other group’s staff, echoing their language. Thus the small conservative advocacy group, America’s Future, simply posted on its website the claims of United Seniors Association’s Mary Mahoney who says, “the middle-class farmer or small business owner” shoulders the burden of estate taxes. Republican officials began to use this language as well. Senator George Allen (R-Va.) argued in 2005 that the estate tax hurts “modest Americans who worked hard throughout their lives to save for their families.”²⁰ More recently, in a blog entry on Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist’s VOL-PAC website, Frist noted that the tax attacks virtue because it “punishes hard

work and savings.” He then underlined the danger to families by recounting a (possibly apocryphal) tale of a Tennessee clan that had to sell land to pay their estate tax.²¹

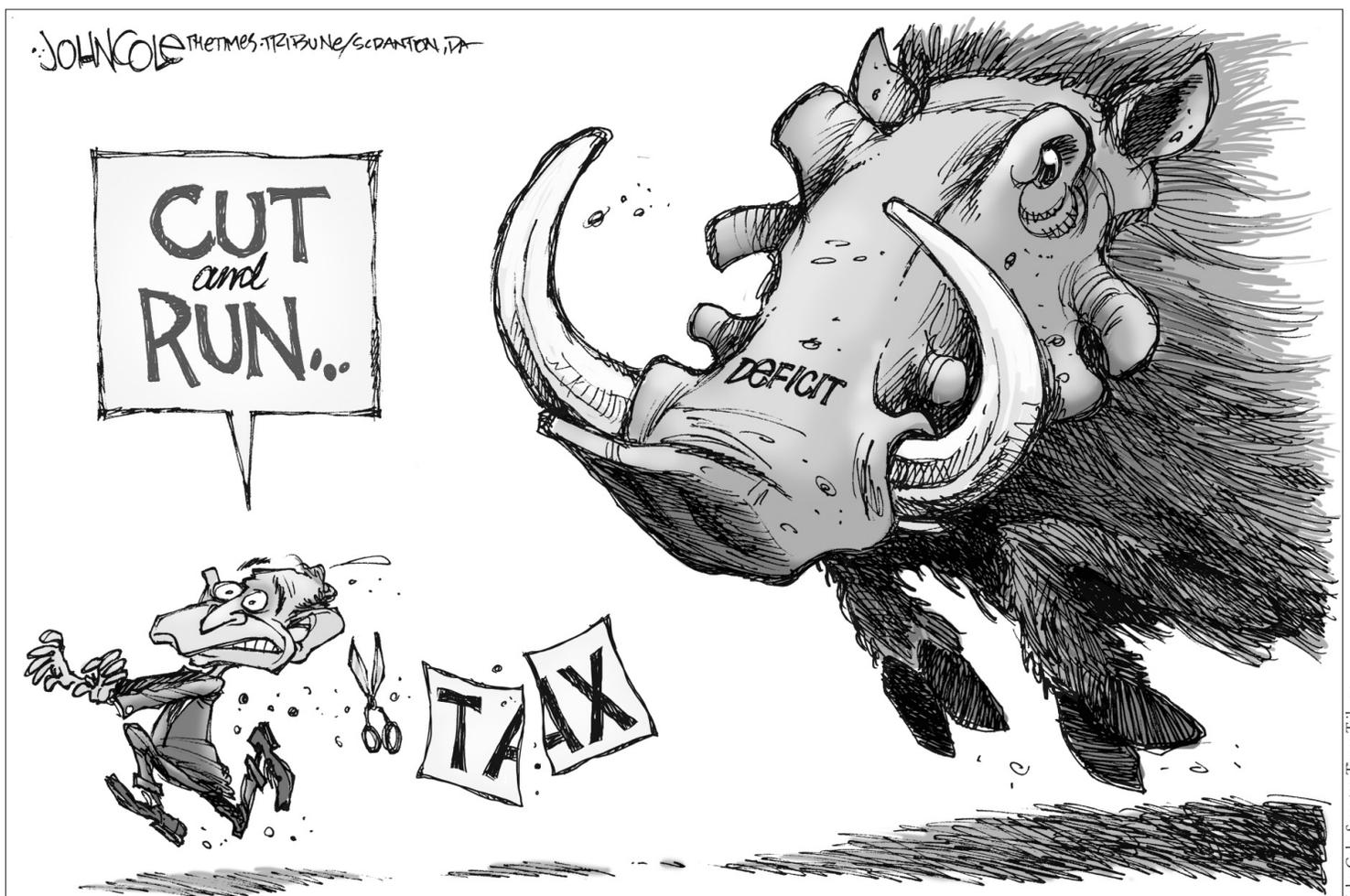
So marrying “small business” with “pro-family” arguments keeps economic conservatives in the fold even while stirring the support of the Christian Right.

Whence Family Values?

The “pro-family” language of the Christian Right only began emerging in the 1970s. That’s when evangelical church leaders such as Tim LaHaye, Pat Robertson, and Jerry Falwell became part of a self-identified “pro-family network.”²² Still, it wasn’t until the 1990s, when Ralph Reed began steering the Christian Coalition towards mainstream political power, that Christian Right leaders began to more explicitly describe themselves as a “pro-family movement.” Indeed, today’s most influential

Christian political groups such as the Family Research Council and Concerned Women for America, occasionally, and subtly, downplay their Christian affiliation in hopes of making broad appeals to “family values.” Even the names of the dominant Christian political organizations of the early 1990s and today, the *Christian Coalition* and the *Family Research Council*, respectively, reflect this shift. Today more than ever, appeals to “family” can be aimed towards religious conservatives, though couched in language that does not necessarily offend or discriminate.

By the time the newly installed, supposedly pro-family Bush Administration brought the estate tax to the attention of the Christian Right in 2001, it wholeheartedly climbed on board with the “pro-family” reform. Within months, major groups began using pro-family arguments to support estate tax repeal. In a June 2001



Is Paying Taxes Un-Christian?

Before today's Christians grumble about paying their taxes, perhaps they should ask a familiar question: what would Jesus do?

There are a number of references to taxation in the Bible. Some examples:

- In Exodus 30, God orders Moses to collect a tax for the tent-like sanctuary, or tabernacle, that the Israelites use for worship.
- In 2 Chronicles 24, the Israelites gladly pay taxes to help rebuild the Jerusalem temple (although King Joash is later punished by God for abandoning the project).
- In Matthew 17, Jesus asks Peter to pay a temple tax for the two of them, using an unusual method: Peter is to catch a fish with a coin in its mouth.
- In Luke 3, when tax collectors ask him how to live, Jesus tells them only this: "Don't collect any more than you are required to" (Lk 3:13 NIV).

But Jesus' most famous statement on taxation is found in Matthew (and reprised in Mark 12 and Luke 20). The Pharisees, in an attempt to trap Jesus into denouncing the Roman government, ask him, "Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" Noting that the Roman ruler is depicted on the coins used to pay the tax, Jesus suggests that people "give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (Mt 22:17-21 NIV). According to Craig S. Keener, Professor of New Testament at Palmer Theological Seminary, Jesus argues here that allegiance to God "is not an excuse to avoid our other responsibilities that do not conflict with it."²⁹

Paul agrees in his letter to the Romans: "This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes." (Rom 13:6-7 NIV) The Bible, therefore, seems to provide clear guidelines for what Christians should do on April 15.

article, the Christian magazine *World* told its readers that social conservatives are happy with the "family-friendly" Bush tax program, referring to both reducing the so-called "marriage penalty" and repealing the death tax. In familiar language, it says that the tax "sometimes forced children to sell the family-owned farms and businesses their parents had spent a lifetime building." Similarly, a 2001 paper by the conservative Catholic group, the American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property, argued that repealing the estate tax would help grant "material stability to the family." A March 2001 press release from Concerned Women for America notes that Bush's 2002 budget included estate tax repeal among other "pro-family tax cuts." A few months later, a brief report by Focus on the Family celebrated the "good news for families" in the 2001 tax cuts, includ-

ing the end of the "death tax."²³

While the authors rarely linger to explain why estate tax repeal would be "pro-family," it is noteworthy that the Focus article quotes Heritage's Bill Beach in support. The merger of market and religious fundamentalist language was complete.

The most striking example of the Christian embrace of the estate tax as a family issue is a slick, 29-page pamphlet issued by the Family Research Council in the fall of 2001. The report, written by FRC's then-Director of Family Tax Policy Leslie Carbone, is entitled "Death and Taxes: How Divorcing the Two Benefits the Family."²⁴ Carbone goes all out in her use of the work of economic conservatives, drawing on Bill Beach, the Institute for Policy Innovation, Congress' Joint Economic Committee, the libertarian National Center for Policy Analysis, and even *Fortune* mag-

azine. Still, she largely adopts their family values rather than economic arguments.

Carbone draws on every argument starting with McCaffery's "virtue tax:" "anything that undermines virtue weakens the family; the estate tax is no exception." The tax discourages hard work, discipline, courage and dependability, and even worse, she argues, by disrupting inheritance, the tax upsets the kinship bonds so essential to families:

By interfering directly with the natural or family order, the death tax works against the family to a greater extent than other forms of taxation. By artificially separating the family along generational lines, it disrupts the extended family... The death tax considerably weakens the role and status of families in American life.

By undermining the family, the estate tax attacks the very structure of society itself, Carbone writes. By arguing that taxation interferes with the "natural" order of the family, Carbone sounds the themes put forth by a group of Christian intellectuals based at the Rockford, Illinois, think-tank, the Howard Center for Family, Religion and Society.

Two years after Cardone's report, the FRC's short-lived "academic" journal, *Family Policy Review*, recruited an article from the Center's president Allan Carlson that intriguingly supports tax giveaways on the basis of family values.²⁵ To Carlson, offering direct government support to poor families with children, "tend[s] to draw governments deeply into the family economy and to substitute state largesse, and intrusion, for parental earnings." Credits and exemptions, on the other hand, "allow the family to keep more of what it earns.... Children properly see their parents, rather than the state, as their providers." Thus the government strengthens the natural order of families and marriage in the least intrusive way possible.

The influential FRC draws upon this notion that the natural order of the family is the primary starting point for government policy in both its beltway lobbying and in its education of its conservative

Christian base about estate taxes. In taking such a seemingly large portion of a person's estate, the tax implies that the government is more important than the individual. Estates would then exist more for the purposes of government than for the people who own them. For Carbone, the government's only appropriate role is to safeguard the natural order of the family. She argues that,

In order to buffet rather than undermine the natural order, civil government should take pains to "do no harm" to the natural state of society or the natural family order. This principle applies especially to taxation... If through taxation it disrupts the natural economy by creating all sorts of perverse incentives and penalties that favor certain people or punish others, the government becomes part of the problem—a contributor to social and family breakdown—rather than part of the solution—an instrument of justice.

Other groups may not be as directly influenced by this line of argument as the

FRC, but the estate tax issue eventually becomes absorbed as an essentially unquestioned part of the larger Christian Right agenda. Certainly, the Family Research Council remains a leader. It lists permanent estate tax repeal as one of three policy priorities in the area of "Economics and Taxes"; promotes tax repeal as a "pro-fam-

So far, Senate Democrats have managed to stall Republican efforts to repeal the estate tax.

ily issue" on its voter scorecards; and reports on the issue in its updates to members.²⁶ The greatly weakened Christian Coalition has followed suit, promoting the estate tax repeal in its list of priorities and on its 2004 Presidential voter scorecard. Far from being a *pro forma* nod to the agenda of its economically conservative allies, the Christian's Right's intellectuals, at least, seem to be sincerely promoting the convergence of their two movements on this economic issue.

One Big Happy (Conservative) Family

Despite this broad right-wing coalition, it is not clear whether they will succeed in permanently repealing the estate tax. So far Senate Democrats have managed to stall their efforts in the halls of Congress. Still, even if they fail, conservatives have won an even larger victory by building greater ties and coordination among the Christian Right and market conservatives, as well as the GOP. Notwithstanding the tensions that emerged in the fall 2006 elections, these powerful conservative sectors are forging common ground. The catchy title of Focus on the Family's 2005 web article—"Death Should Not Be a Taxable Event"—is often used as a rallying cry by Republican politi-

cians, including Senators John Thune, Bill Frist, and George Allen.²⁷ And recently the Family Research Council featured AFBI's Dick Patten on its weekly radio program to discuss repeal legislation. Neither Rep. Mike Pence—the show's guest host—nor Patten explicitly talked about religion; instead, they used the language of family and morality to speak to religious listeners about an economic issue. It's "morally wrong" to take the "after-tax resources of American families" when a family member dies, said Pence.

The movement's grassroots may not all embrace the idea of tax cuts as a family issue, or entirely see government regulation of the economy as interrupting the natural order within which individuals commune with God. But their education continues, as Christian Right organizations are now connected in a kind of feedback loop with other conservative groups and GOP officials.

And issues like the estate tax will continue to help bind these groups together. As Stephen Moore, former head of the Club for Growth notes, "Low taxes are the central linchpin of conservatism.... It's possible to disagree about abortion, gay rights or the proper level of military spending, but we can't disagree about our one unifying message as conservatives."²⁸ By re-casting tax and economic issues as family matters, conservatives are making this agreement easier to find. ■

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TEARING DOWN TOWERS *continued from page 1*

and Great Plains, often by leveraging their candidates' rural identities against a national Democratic Party that local voters saw as being overly urban, secular, and affluent. By November 8, the electoral map looked a whole lot bluer—yet Democrats could not have won without appealing to libertarian, anti-urban sensibilities.

“Millions of rural people have come to reject the larger framework of urban life,” writes public radio reporter Brian Mann in his compelling new book *Welcome to the Homeland* (SteerForth Press, 2006). “They despise the liberal modernism that shaped metro culture in the twentieth century and see it as an ideology that is every bit as foreign and threatening as communism.”

Voting is just the tip of the iceberg. Antagonism towards cities goes beyond any one election. It is an under-recognized, under-analyzed factor in right-wing organizing, but now more and more writers are struggling to understand the rural/urban divide, how it has shaped national politics, and what it means for progressive organizing.

Mann coins the term “homelander” to describe largely white, anti-urban conservatives, including those whose country life exists only in their imagination. According to Mann, the homeland is a state of mind, helping fuse alliances between the conservatives who are *bona fide* rural and exurban dwellers, and their powerful allies in the center of power.

It's a useful concept, which reveals an important link between ideology and the structures of American life. You hear the homeland ethos not only in George W. Bush's acquired Texas twang, but in the voices documented in recent books from Mann, Steve Macek, and Juan Enriquez. “Urban America breeds things that will probably never be here [in Perryton, Texas], but it scares people,” Jim Hudson, publisher of *Perryton Herald*, tells Mann. What kinds of things? asks Mann. “Gay culture,” he replies. “HIV sure wasn't bred in rural America.”

Most urbanites (and decent people everywhere) see such statements as offensive and ignorant. Yet Mann urges urban people to see their own arrogance and hostility to everything sacred and traditional, and to take many homelander claims at face value so that we can begin negotiating a national synthesis. It's a lesson that some Democrats appear to have taken to heart in the most recent election, pushing forward Democrats like newly elected Senator Jon Tester of Montana, who boasted to voters of his backwoods origins and traditionalist politics. “Isn't it time we make the

Thomas Jefferson described ‘great cities as pestilential to the morals, the health and the liberties of man’; Henry David Thoreau preferred his cabin in the woods to ‘the desperate city.’

Senate look a little bit more like Montana?” asked Tester in one of his campaign commercials, appealing to rural pride.

“It's important to understand that we metros are the ones who have changed—and with remarkable speed,” Mann writes, referring to egalitarian families, gay and lesbian relationships, and other practices that are a part of everyday urban life. “On a wide range of social questions, homelanders have simply stayed put... And now they've come to believe that their way of life and their set of values offer a real alternative for the future.”

Macek, Enriquez, and Mann, each in different ways, tries to explain the Right's skill in polarizing city and country, calling on history, a political structure favoring less populated states, economics, and new patterns of government redistribution guided by

homelander ideology. Each seems to have a piece of the puzzle. Put them together and we may stimulate new thinking on how to build a new progressive majority.

The City and the Tower

Homelander ideologues of all stripes, from religious to libertarian to neo-conservative, agree that cities, like governments, should be small enough to drown in the bathtub. Their hostility has deep cultural roots.

The homelander vision of the city starts with a story in Genesis 11:1-9. When God saw the first city of humankind and the tower its residents had built, He destroyed the tower and confused their language, “so that one will not understand the language of his companion” and “scattered them from there upon the face of the entire earth, and they ceased building the city.”

Later in Genesis, God destroys the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah for gross immorality, interpreted as homosexuality. (Classical Jewish texts specify economic greed, not sexuality, as the cause of God's wrath.) Thus begins the Christian history of urban life.

Now let's skip ahead several thousand years, to the birth of the American Republic. “Enthusiasm for the American city has not been typical or predominant in our intellectual history,” writes Morton and Lucia White in their 1962 study, *Intellectuals Against the City*. “Fear has been the more common reaction.” Thomas Jefferson described “great cities as pestilential to the morals, the health and the liberties of man”; Henry David Thoreau preferred his cabin in the woods to “the desperate city”; in 1907, the Rev. Josiah Strong called the modern city “a Menace to State and Nation.”

This is not to say rural politics was (or is) always conservative, or even anti-urban. From the Rocky Mountains to the Midwestern prairies to the Mississippi delta to the Appalachian Mountains, rural progressives built a great, creative tradition of civil disobedience, multiracial organizing, and cultural dissent. Yet in recent political

history, that heritage was obscured by conservative organizing, which proved adept at harnessing anti-urban hostility in the service of its political agenda.

In *Urban Nightmares: The Media, the Right, and Moral Panic Over the City* (University of Minnesota Press, 2006), Steve Macek brings the anti-urban history up to date and demonstrates how recent economic, demographic, and technological trends have distorted the image of the city and played into the hands of its enemies. Synthesizing a vast amount of history and information, Macek traces the birth of the Right's contemporary fight against the city and its evils. He expertly sketches the black migration and European immigration that shaped American cities in the first half of the 20th century, the rebellions and War on Poverty of the 1960s, the white flight and deindustrialization that emptied city centers in the 1970s, the drugs and crime that ruined many neighborhoods in the 1980s, and the increased social and economic polarization that shaped them in the 1990s.

Out of this ferment, conservatives promoted a race-based depiction of the city as “chaotic, ruined, and repellent, the exact inverse of the orderly domestic idyll of the suburbs.” In such a view, urban poverty is a natural byproduct of unnatural urban life; it is slack morals, not racism or capitalism, which create the urban underclass and its affluent liberal enablers.

“The lower-class individual lives in the slum and sees no reason to complain,” writes Edward Banfield in his 1968 book *The Unheavenly City*, which planted the seeds of the conservative urban critique and policy agenda. “He does not care how dirty and dilapidated his housing is either inside or out, nor does he mind the inadequacy of such public facilities as schools, parks and libraries.”

Thus the solution to urban poverty and lawlessness is not welfare and economic development, which will “prolong the problems and perhaps make them worse,” but instead law enforcement, religious evangelism, and market-driven ethnic cleansing.

Tilting Against Towers: The New Right's Common Ground

As America urbanized and conservatives resurrected the ancient image of the city as dirty and dangerous, they simultaneously affirmed the ideal of the steeply declining small town and countryside. Religious and secular conservatives alike found common ground in this anti-urban ideology—promoting the idea of an urban/rural divide and, in the process, helping make it real.

When the New Right emerged as a political force in the early 1980s, journal-

Homelander ideologues
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in the bathtub.

ist Frances Fitzgerald paid a visit to Lynchburg, Virginia, where Jerry Falwell founded one of the first suburban megachurches and launched the Moral Majority, the first major organizational expression of the modern religious Right. There, in 1981, Fitzgerald found a homelander utopia with over one hundred churches.

“Lynchburg calls itself a city,” she writes in *Cities on a Hill*, “but it is really a collection of suburbs. In the fifties, its old downtown was supplanted by a series of shopping plazas, leaving it with no real center...The automobile has cut too many swaths across it, leaving gasoline stations and fast-food places to spring up in parking-lot wastelands. But it is a clean city, full of quiet streets and shade trees.”² She also found Falwell's congregation to be aston-

ishingly uniform in race, culture, and dress, despite a substantial minority of African-Americans in the suburbs around them.³

In his church sermons Falwell talked with his congregation about his trips to New York “and the narrow escapes he has had among the denizens of Sin City,” hitting racial code words like “welfare chiselers,” “urban rioters,” and “crime in the streets”—all phenomena with which his congregation had little or no personal contact. Falwell's proclamations did, however, serve a political purpose, helping to mobilize the homeland against the forces of modernism—global, post-industrial—that converged in the city.

The current round of city-bashing started in 1992 when Vice President Dan Quayle attributed the Los Angeles riot—which erupted in response to the acquittal of L.A. police officers videotaped beating Rodney King—to a breakdown of family values. (In *The Unheavenly City*, Banfield calls the Watts riots an “outbreak of animal spirits” conducted “mainly for fun and profit.”) The riot is an image that has played to fears of the North American city as a Babel of confusing languages and brown faces.

To neoconservative Irving Kristol, the city does not actually belong in America, which he once described as an “urban civilization without cities”—meaning that the United States has never had a city that plays the same role that, for example, Paris plays in France, of providing an exemplary cultural identity and administrative center. Some (primarily New Yorkers) might point to New York City as such a place, but for homelanders, New York is alien territory. “New Yorkers don't really see themselves as part of the rest of America,” pronounced right-wing pundit and honorary homelander Ann Coulter. “Americans understand that Manhattan is the Soviet Union,” she said on another occasion, positioning Mann's homelanders as the only true Americans.

After terrorists destroyed the World Trade Center, Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson deplored the attack but also saw it as

a re-play of Babylon, Sodom, and Gomorrah, just deserts for “all of them who try to secularize America” and re-build the towers of Babel.⁴ To people like Kristol, Coulter, Falwell, and Robertson, the alleged decline of the city is nothing to worry about—in fact, it is to be welcomed and encouraged.

In recent decades the libertarian Right has presented the city as a gray, ruined place where rugged entrepreneurs are hemmed in on every side by rules and regulations and neighbors. “The problem with the cities today is that they are parasites,” said libertarian cyber-guru George Gilder in 1995. “And those cities will have to go off the dole.” Another libertarian futurist, Alvin Toffler, has argued for decades that computers and automobiles would combine to make the city obsolete, “dispersing rather than concentrating population.” (As we’ll see, these predictions have turned out to be almost wholly wrong.)

In the April 2006 issue of the libertarian journal *The Freeman*, Steven Greenhut attacks New Urbanism, a successful neoliberal movement to revitalize city centers, and sketches the ideal libertarian city, which is to say, the suburbs. “Suburban neighborhoods are often filled with the vibrant sense of community the New Urbanists say is lacking,” he writes. “There’s nothing wrong with preferring to spend time in a private backyard rather than in the commons area New Urbanists want us to spend time in... I do not think diversity, economic or ethnic, is either good or bad in and of itself... People should live around whomever they want to live around, for any reason.”⁵

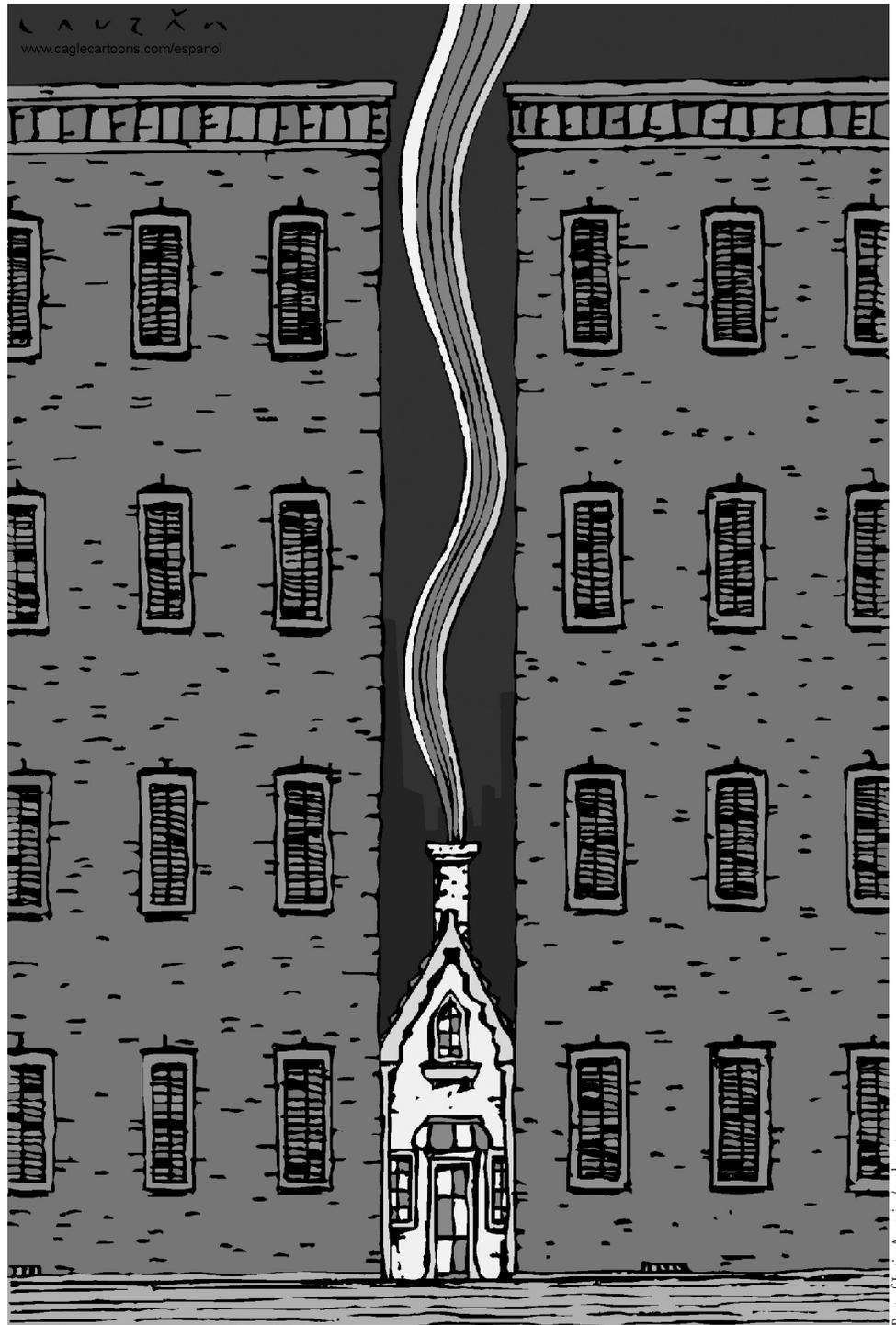
The Right’s Attack on Cities

Though the Religious Right bases its public policy agenda on the authority of the Bible and the libertarian Right bases its on the sovereignty of the individual, they converge in the same suburban parking lot. As the Right gained power on a national level, their policies and preconceptions have had a direct impact on cities. “During the Reagan and Bush eras alone,” Macek writes, “federal aid to local governments was

slashed by 60 percent. Federal spending on new public housing dropped from \$28 billion in 1977 to just \$7 billion eleven years later. Meanwhile, shrinking welfare benefits have made it harder for the disproportionately urban recipients of public assistance to make ends meet.”

Conservative policies and the retreat of liberal commitment to ending poverty

combined to make cities increasingly unequal. But as Juan Enriquez makes clear in the *The Untied States of America* (Crown Publishers, 2005), welfare didn’t disappear—the money just shifted from cities to the homeland in the form of farm and corporate subsidies, price supports, military spending, and pork-barrel projects. Reviewing a chart of tax benefits to states,



Enriquez notes that it is curious “that the most productive, high-tech states tend to vote Democratic. The most dole-dependent tend to be hard-line, antigovernment, antispending Republicans. Seventy-five percent of Mr. Bush’s votes came from taker states.”

Conservative policy initiatives like California’s Proposition 13 (which in 1978 slashed property taxes by more than two-thirds) devastated urban school systems, to the benefit of suburban and exurban homeowners. More recently we’ve seen public transportation funding slashed, AIDS funding shift from Blue to Red States, and homeland security funding distributed as a form of pork. “Low-population states such as Wyoming and North Dakota received forty dollars per person to arm themselves against the impending al-Qaeda menace,” Brian Mann notes. “Meanwhile, the big I-have-a-bulls-eye-on-my-forehead states like California and New York managed to pocket about five dollars per capita.”

Mann points to the 9,000 residents of Ochiltree County, Texas, “the most Republican place in America,” who were graced by nearly \$53 million in federal money in 2003 alone — which is, by any standard, a generous reward for their unstinting support of President Bush. The state of Kansas went from losing \$2 million a year in what it paid in taxes, to making “a sweet profit of \$1,200 per person” by 2004. When Mann raises this fact to his conservative brother Allen, he is enraged. “I don’t believe it,” Allen says. “No way. I know so many people in my town who refuse to take government money. They’d rather go hungry.” Allen urges his brother to drop the issue. “You’ll make rural people so mad that they won’t listen to anything else you have to say.”

To Enriquez, the divide is nothing to celebrate. Urban areas are surging ahead, skimming the talented tenth right off small towns and generating the vast majority of taxes, investments, and patents. “While Republicans cover the most land surface,” Enriquez snidely notes, “they do not generate most of the knowledge.”

In short, Gilder was dead wrong to call

cities “parasites.” Quite the opposite is true, and that truth is driving the nation into two camps. “Nations are divisible,” Enriquez writes. “Monetary problems and inequalities often accentuate, or revive, divisions...” When residents of Perrytown and Lynchburg embrace xenophobia and fundamentalist faith in a society that is increasingly global and technological, the divide is only exacerbated.

Lakoff and the Culture Divide

How have so many rural folks and their political allies gotten so hostile to cities and cosmopolitan values? Part of the answer, as I have suggested, lies in the particular cultural histories of Christianity

**A 2003 study by the
General Social Survey
found that city dwellers
were more likely to help
each other out than
their rural counterparts.**

and America. Race is also a factor, as it has been from the moment Europeans set foot on the continent.

But why has this front of the culture war suddenly gotten so rhetorically violent, the rift so wide? Popular explanations of the right-wing resurgence touch on its anti-urbanism. University of California, Berkeley, linguist George Lakoff argues that Republicans got skilled at convincing traditional families (which he says follow the “Strict Father” model) that secular, urban families (who favor a “Nurturant Parent” model) are out to destroy their very way of life. Explicit sex, abandoned children, and dissolving families are framed as urban

maladies, a strategy we saw in action when “San Francisco values” became a conservative talking point in the 2006 election. From this perspective, the rural/urban split simply emerges from regional demographics.⁶ As the urban space grows and non-traditional families thrive, conservatives living in more rural areas are fighting ferociously to hold on to a disappearing way of life.

Though profoundly alienated from a popular culture that is shaped by urban sensibilities, Mann argues that homelander have succeeded in building an alternative mass culture of their own over the past two decades. “When I was a kid,” Mann writes, “you drank from the spigot of urban culture or you went without.” “Back when the three media networks controlled everything and AP and UPI were the only sources of news, that was our window on the world,” says Jim Hudson, the publisher of *Perryton Herald*. “Now I start my day with *Fox and Friends*. Then I do a computer check, reading NewsMax.com, a very conservative site.”

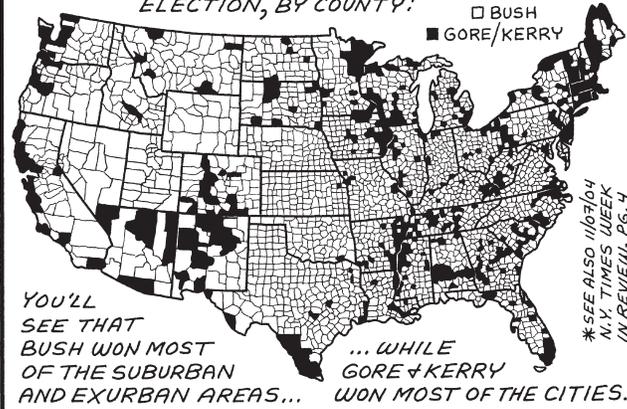
“These days, rural Americans can get their news, books, art, movies, and music from sources that more closely reflect their values,” writes Mann. “The break isn’t clean or absolute; small-town folks still watch *Everybody Loves Raymond* and buy Stephen King novels... But now they can also get their news from Fox, Sinclair, or NewsMax.com. They can buy top-notch thrillers and romance novels written by evangelical Christians.” In effect, homelander are bicultural; they can understand the language of urban popular culture, but mainstream urbanites are often clueless about the homeland lingo. “This media balkanization extends beyond politics and journalism,” Mann writes. “These days, for every Dr. Spock, there is a Dr. Dobson. For every Stephen King, there’s a Tim LaHaye.”

Mann’s points are well taken, but I think Enriquez’s economic explanation (also mentioned in *Welcome to the Homeland*) is another important piece of the puzzle. Homeland conservatives have risen to power during a period when heartland

HOW POLITICS RELATE TO TRANSPORTATION

(OR "WHERE YOU LIVE MAY DETERMINE HOW YOU VOTE?") BY ANDY SINGER

LOOK AT A MAP OF THE 2000 OR 2004 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, BY COUNTY!



YOU'LL SEE THAT BUSH WON MOST OF THE SUBURBAN AND EXURBAN AREAS... ... WHILE GORE & KERRY WON MOST OF THE CITIES.

EXCEPTIONS WERE INDIAN RESERVATIONS, WHICH VOTED DEMOCRATIC, AND LOW DENSITY SPRAWLING CITIES, LIKE HOUSTON, WHICH WENT FOR BUSH. IF MOST OF YOUR STATE'S RESIDENTS LIVED IN DENSE, URBAN AREAS, YOUR STATE WENT FOR GORE OR KERRY. IF MOST OF YOUR STATE LIVED IN SUBURBS, IT WENT FOR BUSH. THUS, POLITICS HAVE BECOME AN URBAN VS. SUBURBAN WAR!



THIS RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DENSITY AND POLITICS MAKES SENSE. BY NECESSITY, CITIES FOSTER TOLERANCE, SINCE PEOPLE ARE FORCED TO LIVE CLOSER TOGETHER. BECAUSE THEIR PROBLEMS ARE BIGGER AND MORE CONCENTRATED, CITIES ALSO FOSTER COLLECTIVE PROBLEM SOLVING, LIKE GOVERNMENT SOCIAL PROGRAMS OR PUBLIC TRANSPORT. SUBURBS, BY CONTRAST, TEND TO FOSTER ISOLATIONIST, INTOLERANT AND MORE UNILATERAL VALUES:

BIG LAWNS ISOLATE HOMES

ENTRY AND EXIT VIA GARAGES LIMITS CONTACT WITH NEIGHBORS

ONLY GET 'MAINSTREAM' MEDIA, AND LACK ACCESS TO ALTERNATIVE WEEKLY NEWSPAPERS, COLLEGE RADIO, COMMUNITY RADIO AND (IN PLACES) EVEN N.P.R. THUS, SUBURBANITES CAN BE MANIPULATED BY CORPORATE MEDIA AND CORRUPT GOVERNMENTS

NO SIDEWALKS OR PUBLIC TRANSIT ON WHICH TO MEET OTHER PEOPLE. ALL TRANSPORT IS IN ISOLATION OF CARS. SOME SUBURBS EVEN LACK COLLECTIVE SEWERS, AND RELY ON INDIVIDUAL SEPTICS

2004 MARKS A TURNING POINT. THANKS TO SPRAWL, WE HAVE BECOME A SUBURBAN NATION, WITH A SUBURBAN PRESIDENT, WHO IS PROMOTING SUBURBAN VALUES.

HIGHWAYS AND CARS CREATE AND ENABLE SUBURBAN SPRAWL.

IF WE WANT TO PRESERVE OUR PLANET AND TOLERANT, COOPERATIVE POLITICS, WE MUST STOP BUILDING HIGHWAYS AND INSTEAD PROMOTE DENSE, WALKABLE CITIES... AND MORE PUBLIC TRANSIT!

name of liberal and progressive urban policy, an urban liberalism is flourishing; in places like San Francisco and Portland, it has achieved a confident hegemony. Though the San Francisco Bay Area has plenty of problems, including profound wealth inequality and troubled public schools, it remains a seat of technological and cultural innovation, with its low fertility rates offset by immigration and emigration that keep the city culturally diverse. Meanwhile *Money Magazine* has called Portland "one of the best cities in which to live."

Even families who flee from city centers take their urban values with them into the increasingly diverse inner suburbs, where Democrats won 58 percent of the presidential vote in 2004. Both left and Right are turning out to be wrong about the politics of sprawl, which is emerging as the bleeding edge, rather than the death, of urbanization.⁷ Today even "edge" cities like Las Vegas and Miami have turned deep blue, as their populations grow denser and more diverse. Even the urban outposts of places like Montana and Oklahoma run politically to the left.

Far from dispersing, as Alvin Toffler predicted, the "creative class" is concentrating itself in blue cities the way medieval gentry once crouched behind castle walls when they saw barbarians on the horizon, in the process displacing poor and working-class residents. Despite all the conservative prophecies of urban apocalypse, the level and pace of urbanization continues to accelerate, with complex economic and social results.

Every year two million people move to American cities and inner suburbs, adding islands to the archipelago, while America's homeland population falls fast toward 56 million, "roughly the level of the mid-1970s," notes Mann. Far from declining demographically, the United Nations predicts that the percentage of the North American population living in urban areas will rise to 84 percent of the population by 2030.⁸

Cornell researchers Barclay G. Jones and Solomane Koné found that from 1970

industry, mom-and-pop shops, and family farms are all in steep decline; the massive redistribution of government largesse has stepped in, like the Marshall Plan once did for a ruined Europe, to fill the economic void. Homelanders are not, as Tom Frank argues in *What's the Matter with Kansas?* (Henry Holt, 2004), being tricked into voting Republican by an evil corporate elite; in many respects, the radical grassroots base calls the shots and embraces mutually beneficial alliances with beltway players, often

rooted in military spending.

Beyond the Myth: The Truth About Cities

"Modern liberalism was born in the big cities and died there," neocon Fred Siegel writes in *The Future Once Happened Here* (Free Press, 1997), painting American cities as economic and moral dead zones. But as the most recent elections reveal, nothing could be further from the truth. For all the mistakes committed in the

to 1990, per capita income increased directly with population size in metropolitan areas, a trend that benefits whole countries. “For states of the United States and 113 countries for 1960 and 1980,” they found, “a strong positive relationship exists and holds temporally between level of per capita Gross Domestic Product and percent of the population that is urban.”⁹

Urban areas concentrate social as well as financial capital: a 2003 study by the General Social Survey found that city dwellers were more likely to help each other out than their rural counterparts.¹⁰ Such statistics — there are many — stand in contrast to the Stygian alienation depicted in conservative “yuppie horror films” like *Judgment Night* (1993) and *Ransom* (1996), which show urbanites as antisocial and uncaring — a phenomenon ably dissected by Macek in *Urban Nightmares*.

An Urban Backlash Is No Solution

Dumbfounded by the homeland ascendancy, many urbanites have embraced a misguided strategy of rebranding progressivism as specifically urban. In their influential 2004 manifesto “**The Urban Archipelago**,” the editors of the Seattle weekly, *The Stranger*, argue that it’s time for urbanites to aggressively pursue their own self-interest on a national stage. “We need a new identity politics,” they write, “an urban identity politics, one that argues for the cities, uses a rhetoric of urban values, and creates a tribal identity for liberals that’s as powerful and attractive as the tribal identity Republicans have created for their constituents... To red-state voters, to the rural voters, residents of small, dying towns, and soulless sprawling exburbs, we say this: Fuck off. Your issues are no longer our issues.”

Though easy to dismiss as a rant, “The Urban Archipelago” hit a nerve with cosmopolitans. When Wal-Mart, which already dominates rural America, tried to open a store in Boston, public outcry stopped it cold. “Wal-Mart does not suit the clientele we have in the city of Boston,” said Mayor Thomas Menino. “They don’t

pay wages that are sufficient. Their benefit structure is poor. I don’t need employers like that in our city.” Throughout the country, notes the Wall Street Journal, anti-Wal-Mart activists are augmenting their message with “an appeal to urban cultural values,” making Wal-Mart a metaphor for the worst in homeland America.¹¹

Yet cutting the Red States off the federal dole, ignoring the downward-pressure on income created by Wal-Marting the homelander economy,¹² or leaving Red States out of environmental policymaking — all steps recommended by *The Stranger’s* editors — ignores our mutual interdependency and breeds self-destructive partitions.

Neoncon Fred Siegel paints American cities as economic and moral dead zones.

An urban identity politics would also serve the interests of urban elites by seeking to paper over the deep social and economic divisions that shape 21st century cities. In his book *The Rise of the Creative Class* (Basic Books, 2002), Richard Florida argues that attracting highly educated New Economy workers to cities is key to urban economic growth. But as Rebecca Solnit points out in *Hollow City: The Siege of San Francisco and the Crisis of American Urbanism* (Verso, 2000), creative class migration is driving social inequities and gentrification. “[T]he new future looks like San Francisco: a frenzy of financial speculation, covert coercions, overt erasures, a barrage of novelty-item restaurants, websites, technologies and trends, the despair of unemployment replaced by the numbness of incessant work hours and the anxiety of destabilized jobs, homes, and neighborhoods.”

This might be the prime weakness — some might call it a strength — of urban identity politics, and perhaps all identity politics: it encourages groupthink, conceals inequality between members of the in-group, and obscures system-wide problems with inflated egotism and compulsive self-regard.

And as Brian Mann points out, even if *The Stranger’s* strategy was desirable, it would be extremely difficult to pursue on a national level. The Senate, for example, gives each state two seats regardless of population. “As a consequence, those lucky homelanderers in Wyoming and Alaska receive 72 times more clout per capita than do California’s metros,” Mann writes. “It’s a startling fact that half of the American people live in just nine highly urbanized states — most of them staunchly Democratic — but they hold only 18 percent of the Senate’s power.” Similarly, the structure of the Electoral College has tilted power towards the rural states, while gerrymandering has given Republicans an edge in the House of Representatives.

“Put bluntly, our political system is no longer a neutral playing field,” Mann writes. “In ways our founding fathers could never have imagined, the Electoral College and the Senate now favor one way of life, one set of cultural and political values, over another. Because those values are no longer shared by most Americans, the result is a growing disconnect between our political elites and the people they govern.”

His is a bald statement, implying the increasingly diverse rural states are homogeneous. This has huge political implications, if it were true. Since it is impossible politically to reform the Senate or abolish the Electoral College, does that mean that all is lost or that a Second Civil War is inevitable? Mann argues that liberals and progressives have no choice but to organize and campaign in the homeland, building on a populist and civil rights history that never quite went away. On this we agree: Now is the time for reclaiming a progressive rural heritage instead of running from it, and discovering what Americans in

both camps have in common. The 2006 elections suggest this strategy has promise.

“People are hurting in the countryside,” Chris Kromm, executive director of the Institute of Southern Studies, told me. “You go into western North Carolina, and you see hundreds of thousands of people whose lives are being shattered by economic dislocations. If progressives turn their backs on those people, they’re losing a huge opportunity and they’re failing to address this country’s deepest problems.”

Meanwhile, the Right-wing hasn’t abandoned the cities. Refusing to rest on their homeland base, Republicans are now organizing urban think tanks and recruiting politicians in “purple” cities like San Diego, applying rural and suburban values in an urban context, capitalizing on the libertarian inclinations of the creative class.¹³

At this writing it’s too early to tell, but November 2006 may stand as a turning point, when rural liberals and progressives fought their way back onto the electoral map. We still have a long, long way to go, and we need more research, writing, and debates like the ones found in *Welcome to the Homeland* and *The Untied States of America*. There is more at work in the homeland ascendancy than pure ideology and moral politics; we also have to respond to the self-interest of people whose lives are being turned upside down by war and economic change.

Too many liberals and progressives are isolated in their metropolitan towers, looking down not only at the people *The Stranger* deem “rubes, fools, and hate-mongers,” but also at the disenfranchised and dispossessed of their own unequal cities. Even if the homelander challenge fades to a historical footnote, metropolitans will still need to face cities rived by class and race. Maybe it is time for those of us who live in cities to come down from our towers, before it’s too late. ■

End Notes

¹ In this essay, I intentionally avoid complicated issues of economic vs. social liberalism, instead focusing on rural vs. urban political competition and how that is reflected in voting patterns. However, it’s worth noting that urban and inner suburb politics are very often economically conservative while being aggressively liberal on social issues, often slanting heavily in a libertarian direction. It’s perfectly true that in America today we are most divided over ideas of what constitutes family and family values, to the detriment of larger economic issues. “People have personal standing in a discussion about what a good marriage is and what a bad marriage is,” Republican operative Bill Greener says. “They feel comfortable in that dialogue. It’s about something they understand, a lot more than about trade policy.”

² Fitzgerald, Frances, *Cities on a Hill*, New York, 1981.

³ When Fitzgerald asks a civic leader about the relationship of Falwell’s church to Lynchburg, he replies, “It’s in Lynchburg, but it’s not of it.” Might the same be said of all religious fundamentalism in America?

⁴ Robertson interviewed Falwell on September 13, 2001 on *The 700 Club*. For a transcript of the interview, see <http://www.actupny.org/YELL/falwell.html>.

⁵ Greenhut, Steven, “New Urbanism: Same Old Social Engineering,” *The Freeman*, April 2006. See also “How Public Transit Undermines Safety,” by John Semmens,

in the same issue.

⁶ To learn more about Lakoff and his ideas, see www.rockridgeinstitute.org. For an interesting elaboration on Lakoff, see Doug Muder, “Red Family, Blue Family,” <http://www.gurus.com/dougdeb/politics/209.html>.

⁷ Macek’s book does have serious analytical flaws. In a rush to synthesize huge amounts of material, much of it outside his academic discipline, Macek peddles out-of-date or questionable conventional wisdom and simplifies complex demographic issues. For example, he paints “the suburbs” as monolithic conservative redoubts without noting gradations from inner suburbs to exurbs that vote in distinctly different ways.

⁸ World Urbanization Prospects: the 1999 Revision, prepared by the United Nations Population Division. Available at <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/publications.htm>.

⁹ Jones, Barley G. and Solomane Koné, “An exploration of relationships between urbanization and per capita income: United States and countries of the world,” *Papers in Regional Science*, April 1996.

¹⁰ Smith, Tom W. “Altruism in Contemporary America: A Report from the National Altruism Study,” National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago. Report prepared for the Fetzer Institute, June 2003.

¹¹ Hudson, Kris, and Gary McWilliams, “Seeking Growth in Urban Areas, Wal-Mart Gets Cold Shoulder,” *Wall Street Journal*, September 25, 2006.

¹² The Wal-Mart Foundation and Walton Family Foundation, well known for their homeland sympathies, both give generously to churches, charter schools, and voucher campaigns aimed to privatize schooling. It’s a curious irony that the most definitive homeland business chain is also the one to do the most economic and social damage to small towns, wiping out good jobs and local business. Homeland America’s support for Wal-Mart might be a better example of economic self-destructiveness than voting Republican. For additional reference, see Betty Feng and Jeff Krehely, “The Waltons and Wal-Mart: Self-Interested Philanthropy,” Center for Responsive Philanthropy, September 2005.

¹³ Cokorinos, See Lee, “Target San Diego: The Right Wing Assault on Urban Democracy and Smart Government,” Center for Policy Initiatives, November 2005.

PRA’s Special Reports Now Available Online!

RUNNING AGAINST SODOM AND OSAMA *The Christian Right, Values Voters, and the Culture War in 2006* (October 2006) By Chip Berlet and Pam Chamberlain

PRA’s pre-election analysis dissected how the Christian Right was again trying to mobilize its base by foregrounding the threat of gay marriage. But to this “internal threat,” PRA found, the Christian Right added the “external threat” of Islamic terrorism, linking the two under the theme “Family, Faith and Freedom.” Visit www.publiceye.org.

Also, listen to *The Public Eye* on the Airwaves!

A special half-hour radio report on the Christian Right’s election mobilization, reported by *Public Eye* editor Abby Scher, aired on Making Contact starting Nov. 1 in a special collaboration with the National Radio Project. To listen to a podcast, visit www.radioproject.org.

Congratulations to The Public Eye!

In its November/December issue, *The Utne Reader* named *The Public Eye* as a finalist for its Independent Press Award (General Excellence for newsletters). The first place winner will be announced in January.

Thank you Utne!

Book Reviews

ProLife – and Feminist

ProLife Feminism: Yesterday and Today

Mary Krane Derr, Rachel McNair, and Linda Naranjo-Hubel, eds.

Xlibris Corporation, 2005, 474 pages (pbk).

Reviewed by Sarah Augusto

The editors of *ProLife Feminism* tell readers that their purpose is “to offer a largely untapped but nonviolently powerful resource for healing and preventing the personal, familial, and societal wounds surrounding abortion and other forms of life-taking.” In this new self-published edition of the 1995 volume, they assemble a diverse collection of writings from pro-life feminists, an identity which most pro-choice feminists likely find quite paradoxical. Nonetheless, the women whose voices are represented in this volume challenge many of the stereotypes often held about pro-life women. Many of the contributors espouse beliefs that fall right in line with those of most pro-choice feminists, except of course when it comes to the issue of abortion.

The contributors are powerful and influential women whose work spans over two centuries. They are accomplished movement leaders and activists involved in a vast array of social justice issues including racial and economic justice, environmentalism, disability rights, gay and lesbian rights, and anti-war and anti-death penalty initiatives. Among them are prominent early feminists including Mary Wollstonecraft, Susan B Anthony, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. More contemporary contributors include Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai, former South African Member of Parliament Jennifer Ferguson, and Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

Beyond their impressive resumes and commitment to equality and social justice, pro-life feminists share the core belief of the mainstream anti-abortion movement: that personhood begins at conception and abortion therefore constitutes the violent death of a human being. The same arguments that are most commonly directed at all pro-lifers can be used to critique pro-life feminists — women’s right to control their reproduction is necessary for equality, compulsory pregnancy violates women’s autonomy and human rights, and without safe, legal and accessible abortion women turn to dangerous alternatives. However, there is one claim that is particularly difficult to refute using the above reasoning. This claim, prevalent among pro-life feminists including many contributors to this volume, contends that abortion is a symptom of male domination and is therefore harmful and oppressive to women.

Pro-life feminists contend that abortion is a symptom of male domination, and therefore harmful and oppressive to women.

Many of the essays argue that men often coerce and pressure women into having abortions and that the very structure of a patriarchal society makes abortion necessary. Daphne Clair de Jong, founder of Feminists for Life New Zealand, describes abortion as something that is “done to women to fit them into a society dominated by men” and “a sell-out to male values and a capitulation to male lifestyles.” She goes on to state that abortion is “a deeper and more destructive assault than rape, the culminating act of womb-envy and woman-hatred by the jealous male who resents the creative power of women.” Abortion, in this view, allows men to avoid sexual responsibility and victimize women. And women who support abortion rights, they say, use arguments that resemble those justifying sexism.

Feminists for Life activist Leslie Keech contends that sexist and irresponsible behavior is “heightened and encouraged by abortion’s easy way out,” which allows men “to simply use the woman for his pleasure, and then buy his way out of the deal for a couple hundred dollars.” Furthermore, abortion pushes women into becoming more like men by portraying their reproductive capacities as a handicap that makes them unable compete in a man’s world. For example, Rachel MacNair, past president of Feminists for Life and one of the editors of this volume, argues that pro-choice feminists perpetrate “the idea that our bodies are inferior due to their innate abilities.”

Implicit in this rhetoric that equates abortion with oppression, violence against women, and male dominance, is the assumption

that no woman would make the decision to abort were she given a truly free range of choices. This argument exposes another similarity between pro-life feminists and the mainstream pro-life movement — both groups emphasize and idealize women’s reproductive capacities, often to the point of sacralization. Pro-life feminists assert that motherhood is not the only or the most important role for women, yet it is simultaneously stressed as a fundamental and essential part womanhood. Women, then, are portrayed as naturally nurturing and empathetic beings with an innate respect for life. Pro-life activist and suffragette Mattie H. Brinkerhoff describes women’s reproductive capacities as the “holiest of instincts” while Isabella Beecher Hooker argues that motherhood gives women “a moral advantage that man can never have.” Longtime Feminists for Life activist Frederica Mathewes-Green states, “every woman need not bear a child, but every woman should feel a proud kinship in the earthy, elemental beauty of birth. To hold it in contempt is to reject our distinctive power.”

Abortion is said to violate these uniquely female instincts, therefore causing great emotional pain and psychological harm. Many of the writings argue that women experience feelings of regret, guilt, and depression for years after an abortion. Artist and writer Elizabeth Edson Evans argues that abortion represents an “irreparable loss,” which often causes serious emotional after-effects. Cecilia Brown, president of the Pro-Life Alliance of Gays and Lesbians, likens post-abortion suffering to “an open wound that was not going to heal.” One of the first American women to receive a medical degree, Dr. Rachel Brooks Gleason, argued over a century ago that many women who abort “are victims of a melancholy which amounts to monomania.” In another example Grace Dermody, founder of the New Jersey chapter of Feminists for Life, discusses a 1983 court case in which a woman was tried for the murder of her three-year-old son, citing that court testimony “connected the young mother’s fatal beating of her child to the trauma of her abortion the day before.”

In some respects, pro-life feminists are correct that the demand for abortion is a symptom of women’s inequality. Many women who might choose to carry an unplanned pregnancy to term under ideal circumstances are deterred due to issues such as a lack of financial and social support, inadequate child-care and parental leave policies, or stigmatization of single motherhood. Pro-life feminists are correct in saying that these problems pose serious impediments to women’s equality and need to be addressed. We must continue to work for gender equality and improved social services to ensure that these women have the full range of reproductive choices available to them.

However, there will always be some women who would choose not to carry an unplanned pregnancy to term, regardless of whether all these needs are met. Some women who choose not to carry a pregnancy to term do so not because their life circumstances make pregnancy difficult or impossible, but because they do not want to be pregnant. For these women, abortion is not a choice imposed by a sexist, male dominated society. It is a means of exercising control over their bodies and their lives. Furthermore, the argument that abortion is oppressive and harmful discounts the many women who have had abortions and do not regret their choice. To claim that these women are under some form of false consciousness because they do not feel pain and sadness over their decision to abort is to claim that they lack the ability to think for themselves and make intelligent, informed decisions. Such characterizations of women fly directly in the face of core feminist values, both pro-life and pro-choice.

These pro-life feminists articulate a vision of a world where abortion is rendered unnecessary due to comprehensive sex education, access to contraceptives, and full empowerment and equality for all girls and women. The need for abortion would surely be minimized in such a utopia, yet women will continue to experience unplanned pregnancies. Misunderstandings and miscommunications can never be completely eliminated and contraceptives are not 100% effective. Abortion rights are necessary to make certain that women have the ability to choose not

to have children or to delay childbirth until a time in their lives when they are ready to fully embrace pregnancy and parenthood. Rather than oppressing women, the availability of safe and legal abortion helps ensure that women have full equality and reproductive choice.

Nonetheless, pro-life feminists do share many of the same goals as pro-choice feminists. It is unfortunate that these two groups cannot come together to advocate the issues they agree upon. Doing so would also promote increased dialogue and understanding on the issue of abortion.

Sarah Augusto is a graduate student in sociology at the University of California, San Diego. She is conducting an ethnography of the interactions between pro-choice and pro-life movements.

Child Warriors for God

Jesus Camp

Directed by Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady, Magnolia Pictures, 85 minutes, 2006.

Reviewed by Eleanor J. Bader

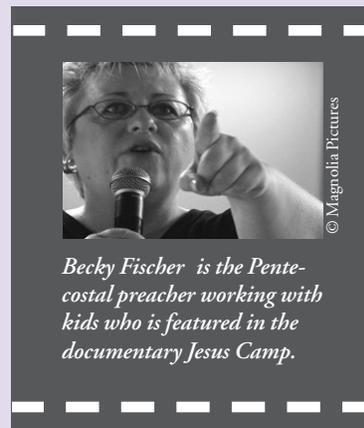
Pastor Becky Fischer, Director of Kids in Ministry International and the subject of *Jesus Camp*, a riveting documentary about a weeklong summer program for Pentecostal/Charismatic youth, hopes people will see that her message is about piety, not politics.

“It’s about the importance of disciplining children in the Christian faith,” she told the film’s directors, Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady, in a post-production interview. “My hope is that viewers will be able to see the obvious truth which is children are capable of understanding, feeling, being an enthusiastic and powerfully effective part of extreme faith in Jesus Christ.”

Some call it being a radical Christian.

For Fischer, who was herself saved as a young girl, it’s simply about repairing society. As a Pentecostal, she and her followers nurture a direct, born-again, relationship with God. And part of that, she exhorts, is speaking out. “Boys and girls can change the world. I can lead kids to the Lord in no time at all. They are so open. They are so usable in Christianity.”

The North Dakota camp, located in, ironically, a town called Devil’s Lake, trains kids to preach, prophesize, and evangelize. It supports them in taking the next step in their faith, whatever that might be. During the course of daily worship, they are encouraged to speak in tongues, a hallmark of the sect’s form of prayer, and the



Becky Fischer is the Pentecostal preacher working with kids who is featured in the documentary Jesus Camp.

film captures them as they mumble, and occasionally shriek. Their passion is apparent, if incomprehensible to secular viewers. Fischer and other adults join the cacophony, making sounds sure to unsettle film watchers who have not seen this kind of worship.

But as odd as it is for many people to see hundreds speaking in tongues, Fischer never loses control, easily pulling the kids back into the real world when she decides they've had enough. It is like watching orchestrated pandemonium. Fischer's hand is heavy, and her oversight constant, because she knows the stakes are high: 43 percent of the 100 million Americans who claim to be born-again report being saved by age 13. "One-third of the 6.7 billion people in the world are children," she continues. "So where should we put our focus? Our enemies train kids to use rifles and machine guns... We want kids to lay down their lives for the gospel... We have to stand up and take back the land."

Despite assertions that the movement is apolitical, reclamation clearly involves supporting President George W. Bush. At one point in the film, a cardboard cut-out of GWB is placed on stage in front of an American flag. "Tell him, 'Welcome President Bush. We're glad you're here.' Speak a blessing over him. Tell him, 'We want one nation, under God,'" Fischer urges.

The prayer—if there are objections they are not articulated aloud—is followed by a fire-and-brimstone speaker, an inspiring (though to us unidentified) middle-aged man wearing an anti-abortion tee-shirt. "Before you were born God knew you," the elder thunders. "You weren't just a piece of tissue, a piece of protoplasm, whatever that is. You were created by God. Isn't that incredible? But since 1973, up to 50 million babies never had a chance to fulfill God's plan for their life [sic]. God had a dream for these babies, just like He has a dream for you." The preacher then holds up a cardboard box filled with tiny plastic dolls and puts one in each child's hand. A prayer to end abortion has voices soaring as they beg the Almighty to do their bidding. Some kids, boys as well as girls, cry, tears streaming down their mournful faces.

Other prayer vigils are equally intense. We watch as Levi O'Brien, a 12-year-old from St. Robert, Missouri—one of three children the film follows and already a gifted preacher—prepares for his own sermon. Saved at five, he tells the filmmakers, "It's not me up there. It is, but it's not. I don't write the sermon, God writes it," he says.

One adult lambastes Harry Potter—"You don't make heroes of a warlock [sic],"—while services on different days hammer

away at ethics. "Some of you are phonies and hypocrites," Fischer charges. "You do one thing in church and another when you're with your friends. If that's you, come up here and wash. Say it. NO MORE. Name what you need to be forgiven of." Again, tears fall as confessions are offered.

"It's really hard to do this," one boy admits. "It's hard to believe in God. You don't see Him. It makes me feel bad, but sometimes I don't believe what the Bible says."

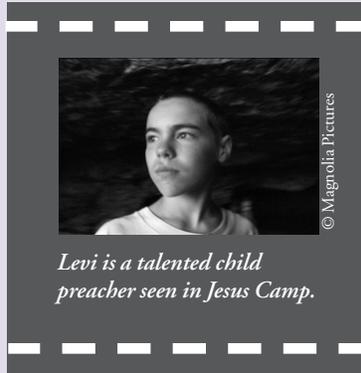
The strength of the documentary is capturing moments like these. The filmmakers provide a window into a world their intended audience probably knows little about. But while they provide on-screen analysis of the conservative political values the adults promote in their evangelizing, they provide little perspective on the "Jesus camp" as a religious phenomenon. For instance, you would never know that Pentecostalism is embraced by many African American Christians who are not George W. Bush supporters. You might assume that every evangelical Christian is a conservative Bushite.

Another of the film's few flaws is that it only shows the kids when they are participating in organized events. Despite the fact that virtually all of these kids live in a born-again Christian bubble, they have heard of the cultural icons celebrated by non-evangelical youth. Whether it's musicians, film stars, or sorcerers, they have some inkling of a broader world. For this reason, Jesus Camp would have benefited from a few shots of the campers hanging out with one another during non-scripted activities. Similarly, despite a voiceover informing viewers that the kids participate in sports and other typical camp activities, we see nothing of them in these contexts.

What we do see, however, is poignant and frightening. It is disturbing to see adults try to politicize those who are so young in the name of instilling values. One wonders whether these kids will remain true believers or will leave the fold. What's more, if they leave, what scars will they bear as a result of their upbringing?

"The intensity you see in these kids is incredible," Fischer says. She sees the camp as a defining moment in participants' lives and is convinced that what they've learned will be the basis of a lifelong morality.

Despite her confidence, the jury remains out. I, for one, am hoping that Ewing and Grady will turn their cameras on O'Brien—and his peers—a decade from now to hear what they have to say about religion, politics, and the Reverend Fischer.



.....Reports in Review.....

REPORT OF THE MONTH

What Liberal Media Bias?

Study Finds First Drop in Think Tank Cites

by Michael Dolny, *Extra*, May/June 2006.

<http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=2897>

Claims by conservatives of a liberal bias in the media are totally unfounded, if you judge only by which “experts” are interviewed. This was the tactic taken by Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) in its annual survey.

Of the “expert” sources appearing in the major newspapers, TV and radio transcripts archived in the Nexis database in 2005, 40 percent were affiliated with conservative or center-right groups, 47 percent were to centrist groups and 13 percent were to center-left or progressive groups.

Think tanks are the main source of “expert” opinion for news sources. The centrist Brookings Institution is most cited, followed by the conservative Heritage Foundation at number two. What’s more, according to FAIR, unmistakably progressive think tanks are being replaced by “left-centrist” ones. The most often quoted of these groups—the Urban Institute—receives “less than a third

of Heritage’s total and approximately one-fifth of Brookings’ citations” – a statistic that is less disturbing when you consider its more limited mandate.

FAIR also found that journalists are citing think tanks 10 percent less often than in 2004—the first drop since the survey began in 1996. Left-center and progressive groups saw a 23 percent decline in citations in 2005 compared to 2004, almost three times the decline in citations for right-leaning think tanks. And a few right-leaning groups are cited more than in years past: the conservative Discovery Institute—a think tank that denies the science of evolution—and the militaristic, Lexington Institute.

The highest ranked progressive group to make the top 20—the Economic Policy Institute at number 13—experienced a drop in citations from 1,376 in 2004 to just 730 in 2005, a 47 percent drop. Meanwhile, the conservative group with the biggest negative percent change in the top 20, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, had 1,869 citations in 2004 and only 1,331 citations in 2005, a 29 percent drop.

—Jake Pearson

Other Reports in Review

Beyond Family Values

2006 American Values Survey

By Dr. Robert P. Jones and Dan Cox

The Center for American Values in Public Life, People for the American Way Foundation, September 2006.

This research turns everything we think we know about values voting on its head.

Given eight choices, people reported that the top political issue that would influence their vote in 2006 was the economy, followed by the Iraq War and terrorism, with only 5 percent saying abortion and gay marriage were the most important. Republicans overwhelmingly listed the Iraq War and terrorism as their top issue. A politician’s integrity was the top concern of the 2,502 people surveyed. This was true across parties.

Turning to the top issue facing America, the economy still ranked first, with 85 percent choosing poverty and affordable health care. But more than 20 percent of Hispanic Protes-

tants and Catholics joined the 27 percent of traditional evangelicals who said abortion and same sex marriage is their top issue.

In a more nuanced approach to religious orientation, the survey identified about 50% of Americans as religious centrists, whether Catholic or Protestant, about 22 percent as traditionalists and 18 percent as modernists, creating the categories by evaluating how often someone goes to church or prays, their view of God and the Bible, and their sense of how important religion is. This sidesteps the trap of other polls which identified religiosity only by how often someone goes to church each week—a practice largely associated with evangelicals.

Perhaps the biggest surprise was that 44 percent of those “born again” said conservative evangelicals Pat Robertson and James Dobson don’t speak for them well or at all. And a majority polled—61 percent—support at least civil unions for gays. —Abby Scher

Different Kind of Front Group

Smokescreen

by Brendan Mock, *Southern Poverty Law Center Intelligence Report*, Fall 2006. <http://www.spl-center.org/intell/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=672>

This investigative article sponsored by the Southern Poverty Law Center tracks the impact a tiny number of black anti-immigration advocates have on the primarily white-organized and white-run anti-immigration groups like the Minuteman Project and Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR). “The campaign aims to convert black Americans to their cause, and simultaneously to provide groups like the Minuteman Project and... FAIR with cover against accusations of racism,” writes Mock.

He focuses on Terry Anderson, a black pundit from South Central Los Angeles, who hosts a weekly radio show in which he regularly harangues against Latino—mainly Mexican—immigrants with blatantly racist, vitri-

olic speech. Yet while Anderson is active in the anti-immigration cause—he regularly speaks at Minuteman sponsored conferences and sits on the board for the FAIR front-group, Choose Black America (CBA)—he is not well known beyond the anti-immigration hard-core and especially not by black people. “By his own description, most of his radio show’s nationwide listening audience is white.”

While the investigation shows that a handful of truly racist, active anti-immigration African-Americans do exist, their presence is less important than the decision by organizations like FAIR to utilize them for their own cause. The 11 founding members of CBA are not necessarily of the same ilk. One member, the far-right Christian Evangelical preacher Jesse Lee Peterson, is actually despised by another member, businessman and columnist James Clingman, who told Mock that “...if he had known, he would have never shown up [for CBA’s creation].”

Though mentioned, there is less focus on the actual racism of these black men (there are no women featured in the article). Instead, the focus is largely on the connections between the various anti-immigration groups and the handful of black anti-immigration activists who allow themselves to be paid as spokespeople: Anderson alone received upwards of \$10,000 from FAIR founder John Tanton’s U.S. Inc. to fund his radio show.

Mock does not delve into why Anderson and those like him are so actively aligning themselves with racists and organizations like FAIR or the Council of Conservative Citizens (CCC). Still, it may not matter. Indeed the main finding of “Smokescreen” is that there

is no black anti-immigration movement, only a few individuals promoted by the same, racist groups that have been fighting the rights of immigrants for years. —*Jake Pearson*

A Nation of Civil Libertarians?

ACLU Voter Poll: Connecticut, New Mexico, Ohio and Pennsylvania

American Civil Liberties Union, October 10, 2006.

<http://www.aclu.org/natsec/gen/27025pub20061010.html#attach>

Perhaps we shouldn’t get too excited by the results of a survey of 600 people about civil liberties issues, especially when the ACLU phrased the questions for election purposes. Nonetheless, the poll of registered voters in four key states found that a greater proportion say the US President shouldn’t act on his own in fighting terrorism and bypass the checks and balances provided by the courts or Congress. Depending on the state, somewhere between 64 to 72 percent backed that statement versus 60 percent in February.

Seventy percent opposed “extraordinary rendition” where the government detains suspects in a different country and secretly flies them to a location where they could be tortured. Two-thirds opposed torture. Sixty percent wanted Guantanamo detainees to see all the evidence against them and bar hearsay evidence. Sixty percent objected to holding detainees without charge or access to a lawyer.

On the down side, close to half supported the government secretly listening in on calls without a warrant. Almost 30 percent thought

it was okay for the government to look at someone’s library records without his or her knowledge. And surprisingly large proportions say we should back the President and “give up some civil liberties to keep Americans safe.” That is, 35 percent in Connecticut, 31 percent in New Mexico, 33 percent in Ohio and 30 percent in Pennsylvania. —*Abby Scher*

War Profiteering by Privateers

Executive Excess 2006: Defense and Oil Executives Cash In on Conflict. The 13th Annual CEO Compensation Survey.

Institute of Policy Studies and United for a Fair Economy, Washington D.C. and Boston Mass, August 2006, 60 pp.

With a focus on military contractors and oil company executives, this 13th edition of the compensation survey reveals that since the War on Terror began, CEOs of 34 of the top military contractors made on average double what they had before 2001.

The figures are mind-boggling. The average compensation of these “war profiteers” is \$7.2 million per year, with the highest package going to United Technology’s George David at \$31.9 million. Military contractor CEOs make 308 times what an Army private makes, and 44 times an Army general with 20 years’ experience.

Across industries, CEOs make on average 411 times an average worker’s pay. The top 15 U.S. oil company executives received an average of \$32.9 million each in 2005, 518 times the average worker in the oil and gas industry, with “pump profiteer” William Greehey of Valero Energy raking in \$95.2 million.

Aside from statistics, represented in easily accessible charts and graphs, the added value of the report for activists includes arguments against unchecked greed and a welcome set of reasonable recommendations. Starting with talking points about why such pay disparity is wrong, (not the least of which is creating a privatized profit motive for war), they go on to recommend ways to encourage restraint and workable caps on CEO pay, curb windfall corporate profits, put in place tough anti-trust requirements and eliminate taxpayer subsidies for the oil industry. —*Pam Chamberlain*

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Eyes RIGHT

A FIRST FOR WOMEN

In a first for women, the first full-time woman professor at Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is now the first woman to leave under a cloud of controversy.

According to *Christianity Today*, the departing Dr. Ruth Tucker, author of seventeen books, has been in an almost constant struggle with the CTS administration since arriving as an associate professor in 2000. CTS is affiliated with the Christian Reformed Church, a "dominionist" denomination that believes America is (or should be) a Christian nation.

Tucker claims she is a victim of sexual discrimination, with her negative personnel evaluation conducted by a professor who, an investigating committee found, "display[ed] some evidence of gender and diversity insensitivity." What was Tucker's sin? She reportedly displayed "unspecified ungodliness" and a poor "faculty room ethos" that involved joking "inappropriately." A true path breaker, indeed.

Source: Sarah Zylstra, "Public Grievance," *Christianity Today*, October 12, 2006
<http://www.ctlibrary.com/ct/2006/november/2.26.html>
 and "Calvin's Seminary's first female professor quits, charging bias," *Christian Century*, October 17, 2006
<http://www.christiancentury.org/article.lasso?id=2426>.

A LIE OR WISHFUL THINKING?

When the libertarian magazine *Reason* recently sat down with Grover Norquist and asked him about civil liberties, it prompted a lively debate about the line between personal freedoms and national security. In true Norquist fashion, the head of Americans for Tax Reform responded that it is Republicans—not ACLU-loving Democrats—who are responsible for resisting some of the PATRIOT Act's most pernicious parts.

"Everything that was in the PATRIOT Act that was a problem was asked for by Clinton, and the Republicans stopped it...it was the Republicans who fought most competently against the imposition of the first PATRIOT Act unamended."

Oh that it were so, Grover. If only there were more Republicans filling out the slim ranks of Democrats resisting the law then maybe the peep of Congressional opposition would at least have become a howl.

Source: Katherine Mangu-Ward and David Weigel, "Who Deserves the Libertarian Vote?" *Reason*, December 2006, 21-28.

EXODUS FROM SCHOOL

Every Southern Baptist Convention state affiliate is considering whether to develop a public school exit strategy for their kids, inspired by theologian Albert Mohler's belief that the schools foster moral decay.

By training children to have a "secular mindset," leaders fear that public schools "exclude the acknowledgement of God and the Word of God at every point."

"The experiment with government schooling has failed," says resolution co-author Bruce Moran. "An affordable, effective Christian education alternative to the government schools...would truly be the

most important and effective domestic evangelistic initiative in the history of the SBC."

So union organizers take note: America's 16 million Southern Baptists may need a lot of new teachers for their children. Good luck bringing them into the fold!

Source: <http://www.christiannewswire.com/news/657961228.html>

SOME OF MY BEST FRIENDS ARE...

The cofounder of the anti-immigrant Minuteman Project, Jim Gilchrist, brought along an African American colleague to his October talk sponsored by the Columbia University Republicans. Gilchrist, who is White, took the stage, wrapped an arm around colleague Marvin Stewart and declared, "Who's a racist now?!"

Stewart, who sits on the Minuteman board of directors, said demonstrators called him racial epithets, and that he is going to sue the university for how it responded to a tussle between college Republicans and protesters. So if a Black man is a member, does that mean the group's program and rhetoric can't be racist?

Source: <http://www.columbiaspectator.com/media/storage/paper865/news/2006/10/06/Opinion/The-Riot-Act-2335572.shtml?nrewrite200611031539&sourcedomain=www.columbiaspectator.com>



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