

flap needed fixing fast -- before it mushroomed into a 'malaise' mess."

- Asked about it later at a press luncheon, Clinton explained that "Last year, last November, plainly the country was in kind of an anxious mood, a negative mood, a frustrated mood about the government." But now the country is moving "into a more positive frame mind" thanks to good economic news and lower crime rates." He said it would be hard for the press or opponents to "convince people that I am advocating the politics of a national funk, because it's so inconsistent with my own outlook toward life." Besides, 'malaise' is a state of mind. A funk is something you can bounce right out of."

Now let's deconstruct all this:

- The inner monologue of Broder's article is that (1) what you say doesn't matter as long as you backtrack soon enough (2) the president and his handlers were really clever to engage in such disingenuous and timely verbal manipulation.

- Broder implies that *funk* is a milder word than *malaise*. In fact, a state of funk is far more serious than a state of malaise. As Broder himself noted, a funk is a "state of paralyzing fear." What he didn't say, however, is that malaise is only an "indefinite bodily weakness or discomfort." Thus Clinton used a far more apocalyptic word yet Broder managed to make it appear otherwise. Further, while admitting that Carter did not actually use the word *malaise*, Broder never tells his readers how the Washington press happened to convince the public otherwise.

- Broder also takes no note of the contradiction in the president saying that his new mission was to get people out of their funk, and then three days later saying that the funk had occurred a year ago and presumably was now gone.

- Finally, Broder allows the president, without challenge, to provide a totally misleading definition of the two words.

Imagine similar journalistic skill being applied to a more complicated issue such as Medicare or crime and you can see one reason Americans are in such a funk and/or malaise.

Jimmy Breslin thinks he knows where Clinton got the "funk" idea in the first place. Breslin happened to be at a hotel in Hawaii at the same time as TV huckster and Clinton advisor Tony Robbins, who was there for a promotion. Breslin watched Robbins urging a youth to climb a 45-foot pole. A crowd affiliated with Robbins yelled, "Get out of your funk, Dave. No blue funk, Dave. No blue funk, Dave." Breslin thinks Clinton picked up the word after Robbins visited him while the president was on vacation in Wyoming. Wrote Breslin: "I don't mind Tony Robbins selling his tapes to the suckers. . . It does both me, however, when one of the suckers is the country's president."

Details

- Anne Manning, a volunteer during a 1970s Gingrich campaign, describes some of her work with the candidate this way: "We had oral sex . . . He prefers that *modus operandi* because then he can say, 'I never slept with her.'"

- We're told some DC drug dealers are sending their families to live in the suburbs for a safer environment, better schools and so forth.. This emulation of the Mafia and rum-runners (such as the elder Kennedy) suggests that the drug wars may be in a late stage of development.

- Gore Vidal says in his memoirs that directing Charlton Heston must have been like "trying to animate a lumber yard."

- Stewart Brand, writing in techno trendy *Wired*, offers this postmodern paean to the present: "Time can be thought of in terms of everything happening-now-and-last-week-and-next-week (wide) or as a deep, flowing process in which centuries are minor events (long). The wide view sees events as most influenced by what is happening at the moment. The long view perceives events as most influenced by history. . . Wide time is on the increase these days and for good reason. Technology seems to be accelerating, and you have to keep up. Networks and markets, instead of staid old hierarchies, rule, and you have to keep up."

Weather Report

Just politics

There have been four instances in the 20th century when a third party presidential candidate has gotten more than 10% of the vote. In each case, the party against which the third party candidate was mainly rebelling rebounded in subsequent elections. Here are the cases:

- In 1912, Theodore Roosevelt (Progressive) took enough votes away from the GOP incumbent Taft to elect Woodrow Wilson president by 18 points. But just four years later, Charles Evan Hughes came within three points of Wilson and the next three presidential elections went Republican.

Details

• A fiftyish Peace Corps employee has accused his female boss of sexual harassment. According to the allegations, when the employee protested that he was a married man, the woman boss replied, "That's your problem. We will have an affair yet. When I decide to have an affair, I have one, and I have it on my terms."

• Senator Packwood showed up at Washington's Irish Times bar one last time. A staffer said it was for "closure."

• A senior Army attorney has backed off charges made in a memo that congressional staffers has "engaged in espionage" for talking to international negotiators about the Pentagon position concerning laser weapons. After the news of the accusation broke, the attorney withdrew the memo explaining that it "has not been fully coordinated."

• Judge Kimba Wood has ruled that Jim Henson Productions did not violate the Hormel trademark by inventing a character named Spa'am. Afterwards a Hormel flack issued a statement saying that "We were surprised and disappointed in Judge Wood's decision . . . just when the company was planning a line of apparel and non-apparel items bearing the Spam image."

Litigation styles of the rich and famous: The aforementioned Judge Wood's name has been raised in the marriage breakup of socially prominent Nancy and Frank Richardson. But she's not the only factor according to *Vanity Fair*. In separate affidavits, Nancy claims her husband is a spendthrift who "created through various residences a universe of hedonistic and exhibitionist excess," that he humiliated her sexually, suffers from a rage disorder and has been seeing a psychiatrist four times a week for the past three years. Meanwhile Frank claims his wife was determined to destroy him, had demeaned his sexual prowess, falsely spread rumors that he was gay, went through \$1 million in clothing and jewelry in 1989 alone, has averaged \$8000 a month on shoes over the past three years, called his office as many as 20 times a day, and was seeing six mental health professionals.

• Yuppie coffee may be creeping in as a designer drug. One Starbucks employee has reported that he has several ex-crack users who come in several times a day for things like a "four shot" -- i.e. a quadruple espresso.

• In 1924, Robert M. LaFollette (Progressive) helped keep Democrat John Davis's total at 29% (down from Wilson's 49% eight years earlier). But two elections later, FDR started the five term tenure of the New Deal and Fair Deal Democrats.]

• In 1968, George Wallace (American Independent) helped keep the GOP from recovering from the Goldwater debacle and Nixon had to squeak into office over Humphrey. Four years later, however, Nixon won reelection by 61% of the vote.

In 1992, Ross Perot helped to drag down Bush's percentage to only 37% (from 53% in 1988. Two years later, Gingrich et al roared into legislative office.

The Center for Defense Information reminds us that the Gingrich Gang isn't the only one attacking the budget. The Democratic White House proposed a budget this year that -- without any GOP help -- would have reduced or in some cases eliminated funds for school-to-work programs, energy conservation, environmental protection, vocational and adult education, Head Start, UN peacekeeping, low-income home energy assistance, summer youth employment, legal assistance for the poor, as well as AIDS education and training centers. Meanwhile, Clinton's budget added \$7 billion for military spending.

USA Today has come out editorially for some form of proportional representation. Said the paper: "The nasty fact is that our winner-take-all election system, adopted from 18th century England and unchanged, has the potential to leave up to 49.9% of the voters in any district feeling unrepresented -- whatever their race or ethnicity. Most other democracies have moved beyond us in making the systems more representative . . . It's time for some affirmative action for real democracy -- for all Americans."

How tough is it for third parties in this country? Consider this: there are 5440 state legislative seats. Third parties hold three.

It may help to understand Louis Farrakhan to remember that he spent some of his formative years in Boston -- a place, it is said, that believes in three things: sports, politics and revenge. While Boston did not invent ethnic and class hostility, it did turn them into an art form. So confident was Mayor James Michael Curley of the reaction of Irish voters in this regard that he hired Harvard students to go into South Boston and campaign for his opponent. It was a raw, tough, hyperbolic politics that never heard of the word *inappropriate* but which used a lot of words that would be considered so today.

In such a politics you learned not to rely on textual analysis but to watch what people actually did. By such a standard, Farrakhan's decision to live among the very non-nationalist folk of Chicago's Hyde Park may be at least as revealing as his very nationalist rhetoric. Similarly, an action rather than text-based evaluation would place the Nation of Islam well behind the 104th Congress in any fair ranking of efficacious hate groups.

In fact, many religions could vie for position on the list. It is -- or has been until recently -- the typical view of followers of many faiths that those who did not share their convictions were going to hell. It is hard to conceive of a more prejudicial view of a fellow human being.

For example, on the day of the Million Man March, a black Christian minister on C-SPAN informed one of the participants that following Farrakhan would lead one to hell. No one suggested that the minister was a member of a hate group. And it was not all that long ago that one of our most sainted leaders, FDR, told a Catholic government economist and a Jewish Secretary of the Treasury that Catholics and Jews were in this country by sufferance and that they had better follow his lead on everything.

We keep trying to pretend that ethnic antipathies represent some deviation from the American norm. Because of this illusion, we waste a lot of time being shocked by what people say -- complaining about the right way to talk together instead of accepting the antipathy as real and then talking about how we can live together anyway. If we reversed our priorities, and worried about life before language, the language would tend to take care of itself.

Loose change

Here's a list of agricultural products where only four firms control at least 80% of the market: corn syrup, ready-to-eat cereals, beer, meat slaughtering, beer, soft-drinks, ready-to-drink tea and farm machinery. Just four companies (including Tysons Food), reports Pacific News Service, control over half of all meat and seafood sales. It is estimated that that ten cents of every dollar American spend on food goes to Philip Morris and six cents to ConAgra.

Privatization is having a few growing pains. The Esmor Correctional Services Corporation, one of the biggest players in the private prison business (with halfway houses, boot camps and detention centers), lost an immigration contract, according to the *New York Times*, after officials issued a report "detailing an atmosphere of abuse and penny-pinching in a jail for illegal immigrants and asylum seekers."

One of the best kept secrets in Washington is that reducing the deficit will not reduce the debt and that reducing the debt may not be that important anyway. As Susan Dentzer pointed out in the a *Newsweek* column, the debt (now nearing \$5 billion) is less than one year's national income. Dentzer also noted that our debt, as a percentage of gross domestic product, is lower than Canada's or Italy's. In truth, obsession with the deficit coincides with the rise to power of those who want to do away with social welfare programs.

The mediocracy

The media surrender to the right continues apace, with ABC dumping Jim Hightower and Time-Warner kicking out its rap record label. What's more, James Ledbetter in the *Village Voice* reports that *Nation* regulars Alexander Cockburn, Christopher Hitchens and Katha Pollitt have been given "proposed guidelines" by their bosses. Among instructions for Cockburn was the note that "we are unenthusiastic about devoting any serious space . . . to bashing our allies on the liberal left." Hitchens told Ledbetter that he had thrown his letter away as he proposed to "ignore it in theory and practice." He did say he was hurt not to have been told to lay off Clinton since "I think I've been at least as rude and as militant as Alex has."

Meanwhile, *Nation* editor Katrina vanden Heuvel was busy remaking her mag's image on the *Archer Daniel Midlands Hour*, where she told McNeil and Lehrer that "I don't think of *The Nation* as a left publication. I think of it as an independent publication that, because the center has so shifted in this country, is on the liberal side of the spectrum." Yes, she actually said that.

Writing of the search for the Unabomber, the *New York Times'* Kenneth Noble produced this small gem of journalistic stereotyping: "For decades this socially progressive Northern California city [Berkeley], dominated by its famous university, has been a refuge for political rascals and social iconoclasts trying to elude the and reinvent themselves."

In his memoir, Pierre Salinger writes that he had the Secret Service hire a retired pickpocket to recover silverware from out-of-town reporters invited to Kennedy luncheons .

Jessica Mathews' *Washington Post* op ed piece on new and more realistic measures of economic growth was a classic example of gatekeeper journalism -- the assumption that the job of the press is not to tell readers about new ideas but to inform them when it is safe to hold them. Thus, soon after *Atlantic's* cover story on the subject, Mathews (who is a Council of Foreign Relations senior sinicurist), announced that the time for rethinking GDP had come. While one could have little quarrel with her view, Mathews' manner of expressing it was particularly graceless, albeit well within Beltway turf-fighter norms. She even tried to take credit for the idea by noting that she was vice president of the World Resources Institute when it issued a report on the subject by Robert Repetto in 1989. From this thin reed, she moved on to say that "other voices have joined the chorus," which is Washington lingo for "Oh, I knew that all along." When she finally gets around to citing the *Atlantic* article (which has attracted considerable attention) she doesn't even bother to mention the names

of the authors, Clifford Cobb, Ted Halstead and Jonathan Rowe. We happened to notice this because Rowe has been a *Review* contributor from time to time although, despite Mathews' model of Beltway gamesmanship, we take no credit for anything he says.

Feedback

Martha Koester writes: Your article *America's Extremist Center* reminded me of a story that Claude Steiner told more than 20 years ago. (He was one of the founders of the radical therapy movement, whose premise was that "mental" problems should be treated with attention to the material and political circumstances of the patient.)

His definition of paranoia was that it was a mental state which is caused by being lied to. He gave the example of a woman who had told him in some detail about the elaborate plots her husband had to kill her. Her

husband was disturbed about these fantasies and wanted Dr. Steiner to make them go away. Upon digging into the case, Steiner found out that the man had not been getting along with his wife, and whenever she asked him what was wrong, he said that everything was fine, though he had been making planes to institutionalize her.

The woman knew only that something was wrong. Since her husband would not give her the real story, she made up some consistent stories which explained her perceptions. Stein says that this is the source of all paranoid fantasies, and that all of them have a grain of truth however implausible the elaborations.

Our brains are built so they must have sensory input in order to operate. If you get into a sensory deprivation tank, your brain will obligingly provide its own, commonly called hallucinations. Similarly, it is absolutely essential for us to have a consistent mental model of How Things Really Are. If people with power who control information flows lie or withhold information, everybody else is going to be making up stories in which things make sense. If the powerful think that these stories are excessively bizarre, they ought to quit complaining and just start coughing up the missing information.



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