
EDITORIALS



TIP, A RAPPROCHEMENT

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

Falstaff I was with you. Admittedly I have at times been critical of, possibly even impolite to, that large rumped *basso continuo* of welfarism who serves as Speaker of the House, but last month as American soldiers were struggling against a Marxist-Leninist power grab in the Caribbean he was quick to oppose "any type of dialogue critical of my government at this time." His resolution lasted all of three days. In the New Age Democratic party where Christopher Dodd has replaced Henry Jackson, Tip's toughness took courage.

Possibly he recognized that since the early 1970s we have been living through an era of illusory peace, attained solely by allowing large parts of Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and now Central America to be taken over by Moscow's surrogates. All these tin-pot despots abominate us and our way of life. Maybe Speaker O'Neill appreciates the enduring wisdom of Lorenzo de Medici's fifteenth-century admonition to his son Pope Leo: "those who speak ill of us do not love us."

Adapted from RET's weekly Washington Post column syndicated by King Features.



Certainly the New Age Capitol Hill giants do not see the world this way. Dreamers that they are, they hear Fidel Castro tirelessly haranguing the United States, a nation that by any humane standard is as superior to Fidel's island hoosegow as heaven is to hell, and they suggest negotiations. He ships huge stores of weaponry and armies of soldiers to once serene little lands, and they see only technicians and construction workers. Do American construction workers carry Russian AK-47s? Does it really not matter if Central America and the Caribbean bristle with hostile military installations, or that "little" Grenada be turned into a giant aircraft carrier for Cubans and the Soviets?

Last month for just about the first time since 1917 a country taken over by Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries was reclaimed for freedom. Friends of freedom throughout the world should have been rejoicing. You can be sure that Lech Walesa was glad and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and all those who yearn for freedom in Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, Afghanistan, the aforementioned Third World despotisms, and, of course, Nicaragua: where the only independent newspaper is censored and subjected to brutal harassment, where the Church is under police surveillance, where there are no elections, where the thug Somoza begins to appear as a kind of liberal.

Yet, those who still have their freedoms have been slow to rejoice. From Europe we hear the usual disapprobation. During the administration of Jimmy Carter the Europeans scowled at us for his dithering; today they scowl at Ronald Reagan's decisiveness. It is an old story, summed up by Henry Kissinger in the first volume of his memoirs: "In times of rising tension, they feared American rigidity; in times of relaxing tension, they dreaded a U.S.-Soviet condominium." What do you expect from a people whose major daily meal comes at midday?

The fault-finding that issued from Capitol Hill last month and from our press was more disturbing. Drugged by the pessimism of the era, many now automatically anticipate American defeat and hope to profit from it. Noting that our military was engaged in a dangerous mission, Speaker O'Neill warned against being critical, and all the presidential candidates who would be tomorrow's heroes were today's ostriches. While our anonymous American soldiers who never will be able to exploit this moment were defending American interests, the candidates were awaiting their opportunities. Then Mondale and the terminally cynical fell on the President. How could Tip hold out?

There are those on Capitol Hill and in the media who are perfectly comfortable with American failure, for it fortifies their belief that to exercise power is futile. Now Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan has joined this band of popinjays, and last month all luxuriated in the kind of petty fault-finding whose aim is to allow them to look righteous whatever the outcome of events. At the

United Nations Moynihan used to take on all the world's despots. He wrote a memoir that is a sustained assault on the alleged softness of Henry Kissinger. It is particularly critical of our refusal to resist Cubans in Angola. Now, like so many other members of the club, Moynihan has retired from the fray for the comforts of the United States Senate.

Finally there were those of my colleagues who apparently did not have enough to keep them busy, so during a secret assault on secret Cuban installations they began complaining of our government's secrecy. When CBS News called for my reaction to this temporary state of affairs I am sorry I was out of the office. I would have told them that when U.S. soldiers are under fire protecting our interests I do not want them distracted by souvenir peddlers, life insurance salesmen, or even journalists. Apparently the massacre of our Marines in Beirut did not impose upon the colleagues' minds the seriousness of war, but Tip O'Neill understood and while he held out against the opportunists and defeatists I for one was grateful. □

PARSON ANDERSON, REFURBISHED

There is abundant proof that American politics is in a very frowzy condition. There are the bromides, the love poems from the candidates to each and every one of us, the promises of action this day. Then there are the facts: the obvious double-talk, the empty gestures, and very little action—the federal bureaucracy and judiciary having already arrogated so much of democracy's business, much to the satisfaction of our posturing pols. Now there is the presidential candidacy of John Anderson, the unctuous independent whose presidential bid in 1980 left him far in the wake of Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter.

Apparently Parson Anderson will now try again. Moreover this time he will be chief cook and bottler of the

a new political party. The party will have no support from any other elected political leaders. It has no defined constituents. All it has is a self-styled presidential candidate whose unscotchable agitations have rendered his visage, with its black-rimmed glasses and shock of white hair, a thing to be copyrighted. For principles his party will have a few banalities and incantations, for instance that laconic 1980 incantation: "the Anderson difference."

Phew! How American politics has fallen into a pathetic condition. Increasingly public life emulates the cheap melodrama of television land and the gimmickry of Madison Avenue. What would the American electorate make of candidate A. Lincoln? More interestingly, what

would the electorate of Lincoln's day have made of candidate Anderson? I believe they would have viewed him as weird. He is weird.

He is also much more liberal than in 1980. He is supposedly going to name his party the National Unity Party. Now there is bathos. How about the National Salvation Party? Such party names are used in the Third World, and Parson Anderson's vision of America is not so very different from that of many a Third World potentate pontificating to the dozing citizenry of his turnip-patch principality. The name that Parson Anderson has chosen is ridiculous in other ways too, for "unity" is just the opposite of what he is offering. His is a breakaway movement for political Pecksniffs too sanctimonious to work within one of the major parties.

"He's become a classic Kennedy-type liberal," one of Parson Anderson's former aides reported to the *Wall Street Journal*. He now favors "a global Marshall Plan," a nuclear freeze, defense cuts, and increases in aid to education. No longer is he the pert budget cutter of yore. Actually there is nothing surprising about his gallop to the left. He has been a liberal for years, and the only sure difference between a liberal today and, say, six months ago or six minutes ago is that now he is more liberal.

Liberalism has moved steadily leftward since its fetal stage. Relentlessly it has moved from thumping for equal opportunity to thumping for equality of condition, from thumping for welfare to thumping for income redistribution, from thumping for an

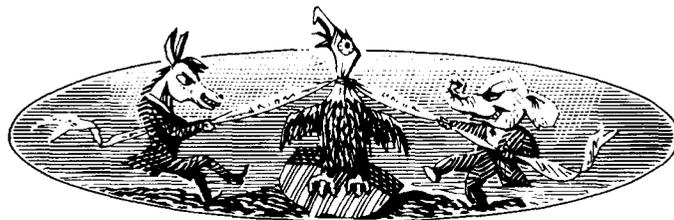
anti-Communist foreign policy to thumping for a policy of appeasement. Norman Thomas ran for the presidency six times on the Socialist ticket, and when he died it was with the utmost satisfaction that liberal pundits pointed out how many of Thomas's quack policies were now the law of the land.

So here we have candidate Anderson, markedly further to the left than four years ago. I shall offer him some campaign advice free of charge. Why not make the great leap in the liberals' evolutionary process and declare himself a revolutionary Socialist? It could be his boast in campaign '84 that he arrived first at the liberals' historic destination.

Is there any way to stop the

liberals' procession leftward? Experience clearly demonstrates that to follow this route is to impoverish one's country and to leave it increasingly unstable and defenseless. Yet candidates like Parson Anderson are blind to experience. Something dramatic will have to be done to restrain their drift. Conditions in Cuba, Poland, or M. Mitterrand's France do not smarten them up. Possibly, if Ronald Reagan were to rename the Republican party the American Communist Party and declare himself and all his tax cutters to be Marxist-Leninists intent on liberation of the proletariat, the American liberal would be sufficiently horrified to head back toward the political center. It is worth trying. The further radicalization of American liberalism makes no sense. □

C A P I T O L I D E A S



HIGH PRIESTS

by Tom Bethell

The big event this month promised to be the Neoliberal Conference in Reston, Va., put on by Charles Peters, the founder and editor of the *Washington Monthly*. I had been thinking about going, but then I began to suspect that I might not be entirely welcome at the solemn gathering. Charlie Peters was good enough some years ago to pluck me from the obscurity of a French Quarter attic in New Orleans to give me employment as an editor of his magazine, so I think that an article that might very well have been headlined "Paleoconservative Meets Neoliberals" would have been displeasing to all concerned.

Charlie Peters, who started up the magazine in 1969 after serving as a West Virginia legislator, a volunteer in John F. Kennedy's 1960 campaign, and a Peace Corps official, maintained an undaunted good cheer in face of the daily difficulties of putting out a small magazine on a shoestring budget. His employees had little enough to complain about, despite the low pay. Today I hear they are still paid the same, despite an infla-

tion that must have doubled the cost of living in Washington since the mid-1970s. I should imagine today's *Monthly* staffers qualify for Food Stamps. But of course there were intangible benefits, and whenever a vacancy arises, I gather, Charlie has to sort through hundreds of applications. (He *tries* to resist the Harvard men—not always successfully.)

One of the nice things I remember about writing for the magazine (I was on the staff for a year) was that you always had the encouraging sense that it was being read in High Places. David Riesman wrote fan letters, and in response to the very first piece I wrote—as I recall, it was something about the Space Program—I was surprised to receive a friendly note from none other than Arthur Schlesinger. "Arthur's friend," Charlie teased, the next time he saw me.

Charlie Peters's influence in Washington today, in my opinion, stems more from his personal qualities than from the rigor of his political analysis, which certainly in my day tended toward quirkiness. He was impervious to flattery and indifferent to personal stardom. One of his best qualities was that it never seemed to bother him that those who worked for

the magazine sometimes went on to media posts more prominent than the dusty little office-warren he occupied on the 12th floor of Connecticut Avenue. Indeed he seemed overjoyed by such advancement—perhaps secure in the knowledge that he would exercise a widening influence on the public debate through his undoubted influence on his rising disciples. One thinks particularly of Jim Fallows, always *primus inter pares* among Charlie's Angels, who went out to become Jimmy Carter's



chief speechwriter and the Washington editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*. (His recent thorough investigation of the alleged problem of immigration, published in the latest issue of the *Atlantic*, is well worth the price of the magazine.)

As a result of such influence, Charlie Peters is becoming something of a Washington insider, defined as one who knows a good deal more than he says publicly, and whose influence is to some extent dependent on his continued discretion. He probably wouldn't like the "insider" label. I remember Charlie once telling me that the late Peter Lisagor of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, who was on his advisory board, was far more interesting at the dinner table than he ever was in print. He knew all these things, but he was too discreet to write them down; doing so might, as it were, jeopardize his "seat" at the Godfrey Sperling breakfast conclave. This is quite common among those who have been in Washington for ten years or more, and Peters himself may be in very much the same situation today.

I'm not at all sure I know what this

Tom Bethell is The American Spectator's Washington correspondent.