



# Dan Quayle: Saving George Bush From Himself

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

How odd it is that our President sought digitalis for American trade by traveling halfway around the world to Japan. All he really had to do was walk into the office of his Vice President and acquaint himself with the work of his own Presidential Competitiveness Council. Its doughty band of free marketeers knows how to make the American economy competitive. It is a stronghold of all the knowledge achieved by studying economic stagnation over the past three decades. For eight years that knowledge contributed to the Reaganite revival of the American economy. Yet President Bush, who was very much on the scene in those happy days, went to Japan with a begging cup and the gaseous Lee Iacocca. (Incidentally, it was okay to take Iacocca to Japan, but to bring him back was inexplicable.) Here is but another of our President's recent miscalculations, reminding us that he takes the affectations of our politicized culture more seriously than he takes the ideas that got him elected.

Of course, there is always the possibility that the President suspects that America's competitiveness is threatened by Japanese secret agents. Maybe he sought their names and Prime Minister Miyazawa's promise that they would pack up their sushi, head back to Japan, and desist from frustrating American productivity, skewing our markets, and making America ever less competitive in the global economy. There are indeed thousands of such agents at work in the Republic at this very hour, probably hundreds of thousands; but they are not paid by the Japanese government. Rather, as Vice President Dan Quayle will testify, they are Americans, and often very patriotic. They are bureaucrats, Capitol Hill

staffers, and lobbyists for the special pleaders, members of what Ronald Reagan in his December 1988 farewell address on domestic policy termed "the iron triangle." They mire American commercial life in regulation and litigation, pursuant to a plenitude of noble ideals. Surely one explanation for America's difficulty in competing in a global economy is that government forces its citizens to pursue too many noble ideals.

In point of fact, all American institutions have been ordered to do more than they can possibly do, and frequently more than is possible. Consequently, an increasing number of American institutions achieve nothing but muddle. Consider American industry. It is not only supposed to turn out products that are competitive. It is to integrate women and minorities into the work force according to formulas that are at once complex, evasive, and subjective. It is to turn out products inoffensive to a wild and vaporous congregation of professional complainants: environmentalists, consumerists, preservationists, Christian Scientists, anti-Christian scientists, anti-science Christians, short people, fat people, the incontinent, people allergic to fragrances, people disturbed by loud noises—all the wondrous and querulous progeny of the most effective mutterer of all time, Ralph Nader. If industry fails, the "iron triangle" is ably supported by tens of thousands of trial lawyers, all handsomely paid whether they win their case or are laughed out of court. Their highest achievement is nothing more than the transferral of wealth from those who work to those who complain.

A decade back, Theodore H. White explained Liberalism's 1980 electoral de-

baclé thus: "The election of 1980 marked the rejection of a whole system of ideas that dominated American life ever since early 1960. The basis of all these ideas was high promises to everybody—promises to save the cities, promises to take care of the sick, the old, the universities. By 1980 we had promised ourselves almost to the point of national bankruptcy." American Liberalism has lost at presidential politics ever since, but it never lost its dominance in the culture. Hence the promises continue to echo through American society. They have become the unchallenged sacred music of the Republic, with only a handful of critics bold enough to remind us that each promise carries its costs. The costs have in recent years been offloaded onto industry, but the citizens eventually pay in higher prices, fewer jobs, and less consumer choice. During the Reagan Administration, free marketeers were brought into government to weigh the costs of regulation and litigation against the promised benefits. Vice President Bush presided over President Reagan's Task Force on Regulatory Relief, predecessor to Vice President Quayle's Competitiveness Council. He seemed to love the job. Unfortunately he never learned from it. He is an uncritical consumer of our politicized culture, buying into most of its sacred promises, no matter how inimical to the politics that got him elected.

Since the Reagan Administration shuffled out of Washington three years ago, the city has been on a regulation binge unmatched since the last days of the Carter grandeur. We have been living through the reregulation of Washington, and it has cost the economy almost enough in terms of productivity to

account for the present recession. The number of proposed regulations has increased by nearly one-fourth since Ronald Reagan left government. Nearly 4,900 federal regulations have been written by some 122,000 bureaucrats, more than were at work during the last stampede of regulation at the end of the Carter Administration.

The burden on the economy has been oppressive. At the end of the Reagan Administration the annual estimated cost to business of environmental regulation was placed at \$102 billion; it is now \$123 billion and expected to reach \$171 billion by the year 2000, with this year's Clean Air Act alone costing business \$25 billion annually. And that is only the cost of environmental regulation. Scores of other noble causes are being advanced by regulators now untrammelled by Reagan's cost-benefit sticklers. Under President Bush the egregious Clean Air Act was only one of several dinosaurs set loose to roam across the back of the economy. There have also been such monsters as the Americans With Disabilities Act and the Civil Rights Act. And then there have been the thousands of leeches placed on the economy, regulations against noise, smells, useful drugs, unlabeled booze, smokers, meat eaters, economic producers, prudent lenders. The Federal Register abounds with arcana intruding into every aspect of American life.

The doggedness of the regulators is a perfect example of how a politicized culture thwarts the presidency. The culture's disesteem for Reaganite cost-benefit sticklers affected President Bush. The culture presented Reaganites as unsavory right-wing ideologues and the President bought it. Rather than put these controversialists in charge of agencies and departments, the President stuck with those sunny, country-club Republicans who had given him loyalty if not intelligence. If they were innocent of the ideas that made the Reagan Administration one of the most successful of this century, so what? As *Newsweek* noted in its January 6 issue, "Reagan appointed ideologues committed to deregulation, while Bush emphasized competence and personal friendships, sometimes without even inquiring about the nominee's philosophy of government."

The philosophical vacuums appointed by the President to head bureaucracies have turned him from being the consolidator of a conservative revolution into

the cat's-paw of the *ancien régime*. Things would be much worse were it not for the perspicuity of the Vice President. Mr. Quayle is a conservative by birth who learned still more about conservatism in the 1980s. He recognized the danger regulation posed to economic growth and got the President's agreement to have a Competitiveness Council in the government similar to Vice President Bush's Task Force on Regulatory Relief. He kept a steely eye on bureaucratic marplots while our innocent President went around promising to become the "Education President" and the "Environmental President," apparently without recognizing the bureaucratic cost such promises entail.

Periodically, President Bush would note the accumulating red tape and sound an amazed alarm. In mid-1990 the President recognized the growing regulatory explosion and turned to the Vice President to cut back unnecessary regulation and resolve disputes between regulatory agencies. Now, we are told, the President is again alarmed about the spread of regulation. But the promises issuing from George Bush for a moratorium on regulation are not particularly heartening. He has expressed alarm erratically for three years, while the Competitiveness Council has actually done something, and always under the hostile gaze of Dick Darman, the country-club Republicans' chief Machiavel.

Last November the *National Journal* dubbed George Bush the "Regulatory President," observing that "despite President Bush's anti-regulatory rhetoric, his first term has witnessed the broadest expansion of government's regulatory reach since the early 1970s." "I thought we took care of that," the astonished President responded.

Well, from mid-1990 on the Vice President has tried. He was given a staff of six free marketeers on his Competitiveness Council to do battle with the aforementioned 122,000 bureaucrats. Given that his free marketeers have defensible ideas along with a record of achievement, and that the vacuums have no ideas, those are not bad odds. To begin with, the Council includes the Vice President, the White House chief of staff, the attorney general, the director of OMB, the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, and the secretaries of commerce and treasury. So it has clout. Moreover it has an excellent

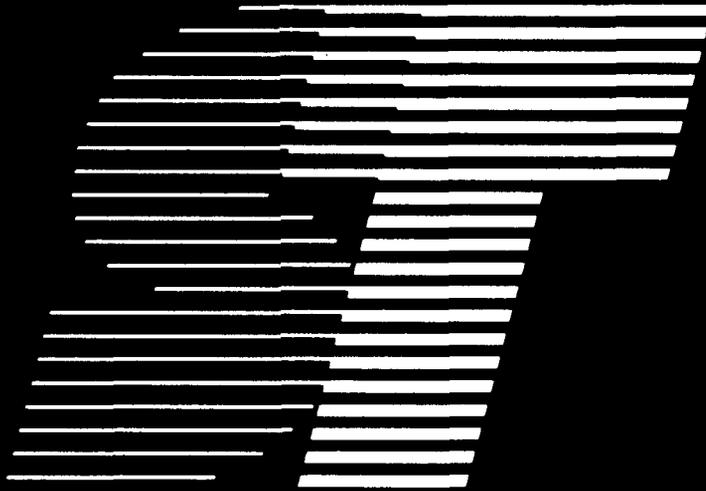
executive director in Allan B. Hubbard, who managed the 1988 presidential campaign of that superb advocate of economic growth, former Delaware governor Pete du Pont; and from his deputy, David M. McIntosh, co-founder of the luminous Federalist Society. That they have put together an effective engine of enlightened policy is clear; they are now under investigation in no less than seven congressional committees.

What raises the ire of the agents of the Iron Triangle? The staff members of the Competitiveness Council have not been anesthetized by the stupefying language of government regulation. Rather than read a week's supply of government regulations, most of us would prefer a stretch in solitary, the prison guards reading aloud, day and night, back issues of the *New York Review of Books*, the menu consisting solely of disgusting fruit juices and the kind of baby food prescribed by the country's health addicts. But the patriots of the Competitiveness Council actually read all the pernicious bulls of the regulators and act.

Some of their actions have had highly beneficial consequences. A 1989 edict, forcing all the Republic's municipal waste combusters to recycle 25 percent of their garbage and costing billions has been rolled back. So has that part of the 1988 Fair Housing Amendment (so-called) requiring all housing units covered by the act to include accommodations for the handicapped whether handicapped people live in them or not. The Council has revised a government regulation that would make banks responsible for cleaning up hazardous waste at properties on which the banks hold loans. The Council's influence will halve the time the FDA takes to approve drugs for life-threatening diseases. More immediately, it has relaxed requirements for a time-consuming process of acquiring government permits for industrial plant modernization, and prevented government from asserting a dubious definition of "wetlands" that would take 100 million acres of perfectly usable land from the free commerce of the private sector. Finally, it has eased regulatory processes that retard developments in the field of biotechnology.

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decades, the Council has attempted to make regulations reasonable and practical. We know that the environment must be cleaned up, but we also know that reprimanding it to an imagined premodern condition is absurd. An 80-to-90 percent cleanup is desirable. A 100-percent cleanup is economically prohibitive. We also know that justice must be done in the courts, but burdening the courts with nuisance suits only turns the process of law into an opportunity for venal trial lawyer to gouge productive citizens. Thus the Competitiveness Council has proposed fifty civil justice reforms, many that will dissuade lawyers from attempting extravagant litigation, and some that will protect property rights from insensitive bureaucrats. Of preeminent importance are the Council's attempts to place caps on punitive settlements and to adopt the British practice of forcing plaintiffs to pick up defendants' bills in lost tort cases

**F**ree marketeers and advocates of a competitive America will review the work of the Competitiveness Council with approval. Yet, as Terry Eastland notes in this issue, the council's work seems to be a rear guard action against the President's philosophical vacuums, who smile atop all the agencies of his government. Their reregulating of Washington continues at a mighty pace. It is a bizarre spectacle, but as time ticks away on the Bush Administration I have come to the conclusion that there is something bizarre about this President. Gentleman that he is, he does seem to have a little hang-up about his predecessor, the man to whom he owes not only his office but also the early success of his Administration. Ronald Reagan bequeathed him a healthy country, enjoying the peaceful break-up of an Evil Empire and America's longest period of peacetime growth. In President Bush's Christmas message to Americans on the Cold War, he did not even mention Ronald Reagan's name. In his policies he has furtively abandoned the Reagan legacy. There is something very small in a man who cannot acknowledge the greatness of a predecessor now safely retired, and when that smallness leads to the setbacks that the Bush Administration has sustained in recent months, one is reminded that the greatest asset for a statesman is not intellect or guile but character. □



# Warren Brookes

by Tom Bethell

The columnist Warren Brookes and his wife Jane had lived almost seven years in Lovettsville, Virginia, about sixty miles west of Washington, D.C., but by the summer of 1991 they had a For Sale sign in front of their house. Warren wanted to be closer to the city. At last, his fact-filled columns were beginning to be noticed. The Vice President had even invited him to his Christmas party. A year earlier, Steve Kroft of "60 Minutes" had done a program on acid rain, lending support to Brookes's critique and including a filmed segment of him. The *New York Times's* new environmental reporter had recently spent a day with Warren in Virginia, and was planning an article on him. Warren's editor, Tom Bray of the *Detroit News*, and Ed Crane of the Cato Institute felt that he should do a book on the environment, and arrangements had been made for Cato and the Competitive Enterprise Institute to provide support. Brookes would be staying at the Capitol Hill Hotel in January and February.

Less than a week before Christmas, Warren and Jane were looking for an apartment on Capitol Hill. They didn't see anything they liked, particularly, and then, after a couple of days' looking, Warren had an attack of the chills. On December 19, Jane phoned *The American Spectator* to say that he wouldn't be able to make it to the magazine's dinner with HUD Secretary Jack Kemp that night. The next day she bundled Warren up and drove him back home to Lovettsville. En route, she stopped at the Loudoun County Hospital and asked him half jokingly if he was sure he didn't want to check in and let them take care of him. She didn't feel so hot herself.

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"But I feel so much better," Warren said to her. And that was that. Over the next few days he seemed to improve, worked on his word processor, watched television. On Wednesday, Christmas Day, he took a shower, ate a chicken dish and some mint ice cream, and exchanged presents with Jane. "It never occurred to him that he was very sick," she said. But by Thursday afternoon, things looked entirely different . . .

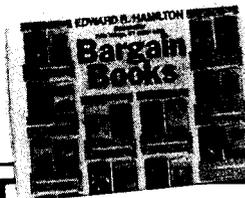
Warren and Jane Ewing Schwartz had met at the Christian Science Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the fall of 1956. She was taking a business course at Radcliffe College. He had been brought up as a Christian Scientist by his mother and grandmother, and Jane had become a church member, too, having come across Mary Baker Eddy's book in her grandmother's library in Pennsylvania. They were married in June 1958. Later in life he remained a practicing Christian Scientist, Jane said, but he was not affiliated with a church. Born in 1929, Warren had grown up in New Jersey. The family later moved to Massachusetts, where Warren attended the Brooks School in Andover. He graduated *cum laude* from Harvard in 1952, with a degree in economics.

Warren had business in his blood. His father owned a trade-book business. His grandfather at one point was president of the Chicago Board of Trade, and his brother became president of a chemical company in Baltimore. Warren worked for Cryovac Corporation, a subsidiary of W. R. Grace & Co., and for an advertising company, Kenyon and Eckhardt. Then he became promotions director for the *Christian Science Monitor*.

By the mid-1970s, however, Warren had a falling out with the *Monitor*. He

"struggled almost continually with his superiors over the paper's direction during his nine years there," Paul Sullivan wrote recently in the *Boston Herald*. "He suffered an emotional breakdown, quit the paper and did not leave his house in Marblehead for months."

"He couldn't believe that the *Monitor* was following this liberal line," Jane Brookes said. "He disagreed with them so much that he came home and went to bed and said 'I'm going to die.'" It took him about forty days to recover, she recalled. For a while he was in a wheelchair. "There was a sense of crisis at that point.



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