
Tim W. Ferguson

. . . And I'll Cry if I Want to

California leads the way—down.

Los Angeles

Conservatives in most parts of America come off the 1992 election disappointed but fatalistic. They watched a bad marriage bust up and are hoping it doesn't cost them too dearly. In California, however, it's more like clinical depression. Conservatives lost their most articulate of all candidates for the U.S. Senate in a head-on fight with a beatable left-wing opponent; lost one seat in the state Assembly in a year when redistricting threatened the hold of Democratic speaker Willie Brown; won only twenty-two of fifty-two congressional races, when suburbanization and racial gerrymandering were supposed to give them a majority of the delegation; and crashed and burned on a referendum to control spending.

Those setbacks wiped out years of planning and dreams, and even worse, undermined the idea that a combative, ideological stance is effective in countering the "statist quo." They summoned an awful, unspoken fear not felt since the Goldwater aftermath of 1964: that perhaps the majority of the electorate, on the cutting issues, really is liberal-socialist after all.

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Bruce Herschensohn

It was the sad-eyed visage of Senate hopeful Bruce Herschensohn that brought the most tears to the right on the morning after. He had waged as intellectual a serious campaign as it is possible to run for major elective office, against Barbara Boxer, whose voice, manner, and votes in the House of Representatives are as pleasing as listening to her manicured fingernails streak across the proverbial chalkboard. The aging cheerleader won the race 48 percent to 43. (Minor parties generally

draw 5 to 10 percent of the vote in California races.)

Herschensohn refused to blame George Bush for his loss, as of course he was perfectly entitled to do. Instead, he blamed only himself. There was truth to that only in that he wasn't what he never promised to be: a fund-raiser, a glad-hander, a pork-promiser. He was a television commentator and documentary producer who loved ideas and the Constitution, but not politics. Nevertheless, his sincerity was appealing enough to have brought him and his economic libertarianism (exception: military spending) to even-stein on the virtual eve of the election. Then he stepped in some excrement that Boxer's running dogs had left in his path: evidence of his patronizing a nudie place or two in his hometown of Hollywood. This, a social conservative—even one who wasn't preachy about it—ought never to do. Boxer

also brought in a late half million bucks from somewhere to hit him with ads about colorful comments he'd made along the line, such as the crime-suppressing value of honest citizens armed with Uzis.

Herschensohn was the more substantive of the two on nearly any topic, which is one reason Boxer dodged debating with him nearly to the end. (Only after he started hammering at her 143 bounced checks and carving away at her early lead did she engage.) The gravitas gap was evident in every forum: One trade newsletter printed their responses to questions on banking regulation, surely a subject no dearer to him than her. Yet his answers were consistent and not canned; he agreed with the industry's objections to several specific controls but wouldn't go along with its wish to saddle competitors (credit unions, for instance) with similar baggage in order to "level the playing field." Boxer kept replying that sure, she favored a sound banking system.

She won, as did many others, because she was a Woman and a Democrat. Herschensohn's numbers consistently tracked and exceeded those of John Seymour, the nonideological nominee for the other Senate seat, through nearly every demographic group. Working women voted 70 percent against both.

The same headlong tendency of the stockinged set was evident in district races. The South Bay area of Los Angeles county, long a Republican redoubt, rejected almost all the GOP candidates, conservative or otherwise. Money from public-employee unions poured into several of the races when polling discovered that redistricting—the presumed Republican salvation—had served primarily to reduce name recognition by putting the party's incumbents in unfamiliar territory. Trial lawyers in some districts lent their offices for use as Democratic phone banks. The late push, including effective "hit" mailers, helped bring easy wins for some left-liberal (lady) Democrats. Even Joan Milke Flores, a pro-life but otherwise nondescript politician who'd done the Free World the favor of knocking off Maureen Reagan in the GOP primary, lost her congressional race to a woman lawyer who'd worked for Jimmy Carter.

If the female force was the big reason for the Republican debacle, it had help. A big turnout by the young drove home the message that, whatever magic Ronald Reagan might have spun with this group, the years of influence by MTV and public-school teachers have succeeded in molding another Kennedy generation. (It didn't help that no jobs were created for them under Bush.) Many of their parents, or their elder siblings, had seen their home values fall 20 percent in the California recession, which helped put them in a surly mood, too. Blacks and Jews, as usual, voted big-

time against the GOP. And organized labor, particularly teachers and nurses, was hell-bent for Democrats.

The public-employee onslaught was masterfully orchestrated by Willie Brown and his consultants, but what triggered it was the great Sacramento budget standoff of last summer, when Gov. Pete Wilson ultimately humbled the Democrats after pushing the schools and the hospitals and the rest of the "social service" world to what they kept telling us was the edge. Wilson won some cuts and the promise of more reductions in subsequent years.

Even those won't be enough to square the California deficit, so the governor came up with Proposition 165 to slash welfare benefits, give his office more authority to curb and control the budget, and cut off pay to both the executive and legislative sides if they gridlocked again. It sounded like a sure winner, but instead became the lightning rod for massive registration and get-out-the-vote efforts of every interest group that perceived Wilson as an enemy. Meanwhile, the need to defeat a soak-the-rich tax

plan that the left qualified for the ballot drew millions of business bucks away from both Wilson's Prop. 165 and the Republican legislative slate. Ultimately, the governor's fiscal disciplinary device went down in

flames with his party, his Senate candidate (Seymour), and the Bush campaign that he chaired.

Days afterward, Wilson was talking about cooperation with the legislature again, just as he had in his first year, when together they raised taxes more than \$7 billion. Because California's budget plight remains desperate, especially if some of the long-run cuts achieved this year are overturned, taxpayers can only cringe. But in Wilson's defense, it must be said he tried being tough and the voters seemed to hold it against him. He stiffened his spine, as conservatives demanded that he do, and got his block knocked off for it. The right bought into his act in 1990 and will in one way or another be the prisoner of it in 1994. Neither camp's fortunes look too promising.

To Barbara Keating-Edh, one "scary" aspect of the 1992 vote was the strong support for protecting welfare benefits that are nearly the highest in the country. A former official of the Conservative party in New York State, Keating-Edh was another casualty of the Willie Brown operation. She lost 51 percent to 49 in an Assembly district in the northern San Joaquin Valley, reaching over to Yosemite National Park. Turnout in her district was 81 percent, compared to a predicted 65 percent. She said she got more votes than she expected—the Christian right proved a force—but her opponent, a school board member whose husband and children all work in the schools, simply overwhelmed her.

Public-employee and trade unions financed Keating-

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Edh's defeat. The California Organization of Police and Sheriffs, which wants votes for pay increases, sent out a telegram-like mailer warning that the Consumer Alert organization she headed, a market-oriented group with industry support, was engaged in "fraud." Ralph Nader spoke against her at nearby Stanislaus State University, and the McClatchy newspaper chain hammered her as a religious fundamentalist, though her platform was economic. But the killer was the welfare vote rallied to oppose Prop. 165. It even showed itself among the supposedly rugged "hill people" on the Sierras side of the district, leaving her to lament the pervasiveness of the modern dole.

Keating-Edh had a \$500,000 war chest and was expected to win. She said she won't try again because she could never raise such support from cowed business lobbies against an incumbent. And she doubts too many other quality candidates will come forward unless the "incredibly libelous" mailers of the Democrats' alliance are curbed. This is unlikely, given that Willie's wrecking crew and the state party, under its crafty chairman Phil Angelides, are just gaining speed.

An even gloomier assessment comes from Tom McClintock, the premier idea man among the GOP congressional hopefuls. An Assembly member who's been the biggest thorn in Gov. Wilson's right flank, he met Rep. Tony Beilenson in what was considered a toss-up coastal district linking Los Angeles and Ventura counties. He was outspent and trounced, 56 percent to 39, caught up in "the undertow as the [USS] *George Bush* went down," as he puts it. McClintock also was effectively separated from much of his party base by negative ads that began in his hotly contested primary and were carried through effectively by Beilenson, an old pro from the Democratic wards of Los Angeles's westside.

Although he had staked out his independence from the governor on the tax increases of 1991, McClintock regards himself as partly the victim of Bush and Wilson on that score: "The voters simply wanted to shoot every Republican in sight." (Actually, two GOP candidates for the legislature won in parts of the congressional district he sought to represent.) And he thinks the well is poisoned through 1994, no matter whether Wilson himself runs or not. One reason: the budget battle will resume next year, with either the 1991 result (tax increases) or the 1992 one (a long, painful stand-off). Neither course helped the Republicans this time around. McClintock, who's been consistently right about the fiscal prospects, sees a \$10 billion gap to be filled in 1993, bigger than this year's.

With all this gloom, who on the right could be upbeat? Rep. Christopher Cox of Orange County, re-elected with 65 percent. He claims the California returns are indicative of a conservative elec-

torate, especially if you add six percentage points to the Republican line to compensate for the drag at the top of the ticket. (President Bush's abandonment of California may have hurt voter follow-up efforts, although in districts such as the South Bay's, Republicans went to the polls and opted for Democrats.) Adding six points, you get Herschensohn in, and close to a 26-26 split of the congressional delegation. Further, says Cox, the vote on most of the thirteen propositions reflected fiscal conservatism.

What of the failure of Prop. 165? A vote against Wilson, largely out of fear he would cut the schools more, Cox says. Like many suburban Republicans, Cox is caught on this issue—his voters want more money for their children's classrooms. His out is to say that a school-choice voucher would alleviate this concern and end the ability of teacher unions and administrator groups to hold the learning of youngsters hostage in lobbying for ever more funding. A

voucher initiative would have appeared on this ballot but for some apparent signature tricks by the opposition, and Cox says it would have passed if 1992 had been a normal political year.

As it is, the voucher measure will be on the June 1994 ballot, when Cox may be seeking the nomination to oppose Sen. Dianne Feinstein, so time may tell. But here the case for GOP optimism is stretched. School choice lost by 2-1 this time out in Colorado, just as it did in Oregon in 1990. The public-school establishment has found "no tax money for religious schools" to be an effective refrain. Beyond that, voters in affluent districts like Cox's are afraid choice will mean lots of poor, minority kids in the better neighborhoods' schools. The dangerousness of the issue is a reason Pete Wilson hasn't touched it. Without it, the governor lacks strong alternatives to cutting school budgets or raising taxes. Those who want him to do neither—and apparently this includes the majority of voters—have nothing to suggest if vouchers aren't going to be approved. Those voters wouldn't even okay cuts in welfare. Result: more feuding and frustration through 1994 and, if this year is any indication, more blame placed on Wilson and the Republicans.

The party has been lower—it had twenty-three assembly seats after Watergate versus thirty-two now—but it has rarely had less to look forward to. Nearly all the ammo has been spent, and Kathleen Brown, the state treasurer and heir to a dynasty that has bedeviled the GOP, is poised to waltz into the governorship. Wilson's ability to draw campaign cash out of a business sector beset by bitter recession is not to be underestimated, and he can be expected to share some of it with his legislative sympathizers. But as George Bush learned this year, it is hard to resist a clamor for divorce from a miserable electorate if you have no more roses to offer. And in California, the alimony payments are steep. □

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Daniel Wattenberg

Harvard's New Interior Minister

Luis Carrión was responsible for numerous political murders in Nicaragua. Now he's studying at Harvard courtesy of the U.S. taxpayer.

In 1981, Tomás Borge brought bureaucratic order to political murder in Nicaragua. Exasperated by the "anarchical fashion" in which the regime had been dispatching opponents since the July 1979 revolution, the interior minister and ruling Sandinista junta member promulgated a secret directive governing the application of "special measures," or extrajudicial killings. Under the new order,

authority to approve "special measures" would be limited to Borge himself and his Ministry of the Interior (MINT) deputy and fellow junta member, Luis Carrión Cruz. And in the years that followed, Carrión would not flinch: after defecting in 1985, Alvaro Baldizón, who had supervised internal MINT human rights investigations for Borge, implicated Carrión directly in the executions of hundreds of political opponents.

Hundreds of bodies may lie buried in Carrión's past, but Harvard likes his future. As a result, U.S. taxpayers are helping to put Carrión through graduate school. Carrión is spending this year at Harvard's Kennedy School of Govern-



ment, earning a masters' degree in public administration in the school's Edward S. Mason program for Third World leaders in mid-career. Because Harvard offers no funding to Mason fellows, students must secure it from other sources, often foundations or their own governments. On the strength of Carrión's admission to Harvard, the Organization of American States

awarded him one of its highly competitive Special Training scholarships, which pays his tuition, travel, and books. The U.S. is the largest contributor to the OAS, providing 59 percent of its annual budget.

Carrión was one of only 400 scholarship winners from an OAS applicant pool of 5,000 last year, but an OAS fellowship specialist is quick to defend the award. "We are not ethical judges, we are judging the academic credentials only," he says. "We don't run a CIA here. . . . It doesn't say that because he's a violator of human rights he cannot be granted a scholarship in our regulations."

While it is true that the committee rendered no ethical judgment, it is doubtful that they rendered an indepen-

Daniel Wattenberg's "The Lady Macbeth of Little Rock" appeared in our August issue.