

calls, extra personnel, special elevators—all for someone (me, in this case) who is as able to walk by himself as the aide pushing him. Needless to say, it doesn't help your dignity or morale to be pushed around like a cripple, or a piece of meat, when there is no need for it. But then it does seem to make the hospital feel more in control. ("Can't have patients running around by themselves, you know.")

Medicines are doled out shorn of their individual packaging, powders of their envelopes. And they must be swallowed in the presence of a nurse. Just getting an antihistamine, I was made to feel incompetent. And why did the nurse's aide who took my temperature treat it as a state secret? I asked for aspirin. Not without a doctor's permission. Now, aspirin may not be advisable in some cases. Why then not tell me to consult the doctor before taking it? Why insist: You cannot have it unless we decide you can? The hospital does not believe that any patient will act rationally without supervision.

Most patients accept this treatment

without protest. They feel guilty for being patients—and they feel dependent. Hospitals take advantage of this dependency to re-infantalize patients, because the staff finds it convenient to treat all patients as if they were children. I doubt that it helps the patients.

I know, I know. A hospital feels not just responsible for your health, but, above all, financially liable. The fear of being sued is supposed to explain all kinds of foolish regulations, universally applied. But it would be simple for the hospital to protect itself against liability—allowing patients to sleep at night, for instance, or to move under their own power, or to take their own medicines—by having any competent patient who wants to do so (and perhaps his physician) fill out an appropriate form.

What prevents such a policy is not the law, or any medical need, or fancied difficulties about liability, but the punitively egalitarian ethos of the hospital. It's fine that medical services should be equally good for

everyone. But why must everything else be equal? Why must every room be equipped, expensively, for the worst case (oxygen outlets, mechanized beds) when only a few patients are likely to need the equipment? Why must every patient suffer the discomfort of plastic sheathing when it's needed only occasionally? Why must patients suffering from broken ankles, or simply undergoing tests, be treated as though totally disabled and incompetent? All patients are alike in the hospital's eyes: equally guilty of being patients. The same rules for everybody, regardless of his medical or financial condition: "Where do you think you are? This is a hospital."

The biggest hotels manage to cater to the wishes of individual guests. Hospitals don't. There is only one reason. You are not a guest. You are a patient. We will make you well, they say, if you are willing to suffer.

The punitive tradition of hospitals dates from time immemorial. Disease, through most of history, was

thought a form of disgrace, deserving pity, perhaps, but not comfort. Medicine was largely purgative and punitive. Hospitals were places for the poor only; the well-to-do were taken care of at home. Hospitals were charities (most, in fact, are still run on a non-profit basis). The grateful patients did not expect comfort, and the patronizing spirit of charity has not changed.

I doubt it will, until, at least, the non-medical aspects of hospitals are run on a profit-making basis by private firms, as hotels are. As it is now, there is no effective competition among hospitals by means of patient comfort. And the deck is stacked anyway: If you want your personal physician to treat you, you have to use the hospital to which he is accredited, even if another one is medically no worse, and more comfortable for you. Thus the admission policies of hospitals preclude competition.

Hasn't the time come to treat sick people as though human, adult, and entitled to whatever comfort their medical conditions and their purses permit? □



PRESSWATCH

SPEAKING FOR SUPPLY

by Fred Barnes

It is fortunate that Rowland Evans and Robert Novak do not require regular doses of public praise from the political community, that unofficial body of reporters, columnists, elected and appointed officials, executive assistants, publicists, and consultants which shapes the conventional wisdom in American politics. For they get practically none. Rather, they have a knack for touching off criticism that is not always good-natured. A recent survey of congressmen and editorial page editors rated Evans and Novak sixteenth in a field of 17 columnists. Only Jack Anderson fared worse, and Tom Wicker and Garry Wills were among those who ranked higher. Meanwhile, their new book—*The Reagan Revolution**—evoked a snotty, barely serious critique in the *New York Times Book Review* by James Fallows, the former

*Dutton, \$12.75.

Fred Barnes is Washington correspondent for the Baltimore Sun.

speechwriter for Jimmy Carter and normally a journalist of unusual thoughtfulness. Even the crowd at the Reagan White House piles on from time to time. One senior official refers derisively to Evans and Novak as "the press spokesmen for Jack Kemp and supply-side economics."

Yet in the teeth of this negative recognition, Evans and Novak have been producing the most discerning and prescient—and often best reported—commentary on the Reagan administration of any columnists or reporters in Washington, or anywhere else in the country for that matter. Almost alone, they gleaned the fundamental characteristic of Ronald Reagan: that he is a man of deep and abiding ideological conviction. While others dwelled on Reagan's inattention to detail and willingness to delegate authority, they emphasized the dramatic impact of his ideology on the course of his presidency. Well in advance of other reporters, they determined how Reagan would shave his tax cut, whittling five percent off

the first year. And when nearly everyone in Washington—including ranking aides at the White House—was concluding that the tax bill would fail in Congress, Evans and Novak insisted passage was certain. When the measure was overwhelmingly approved, they knew why. The journalistic pack credited Reagan's skill as a television communicator and lobbyist; Evans and Novak explained the tax cut was just plain popular. They also counseled, starting back in the early months of the 1980 campaign, that Reagan would get into trouble if he turned from supply-side optimism to the gloomy austerity of old-fashioned conservative economics, say by proposing to slash Social Security benefits. Before other journalists knew the difference between a supply-sider and an orthodox conservative—most still don't—Evans and Novak spotted the struggle between the two competitors for Reagan's economic soul as crucial to the economic success and political strength of his administration.

One reason why Evans and Novak, a team for 18 years, earn so little credit is that their column is difficult to classify. Initially, they wrote glowingly of liberal Republicans who were "pragmatic problem solvers," but they became disillusioned with this rootless breed during the Vietnam war and Nixon presidency. Now Evans and Novak are conservative and thus baldly sympathetic to Reagan, but so are James J. Kilpatrick, George Will, and William F. Buckley, Jr. (all of whom scored considerably higher in the rating of columnists). They are chiefly political writers, but so are Jack Germond and Jules Witcover. What makes Evans and Novak unique is the blend of reporting, analysis, and advocacy that they inject into their column. Kilpatrick, Will, and Buckley don't do much legwork, after all. And Germond and Witcover don't overtly advocate policies and promote political favorites. A late summer column by Evans and Novak on Congressman Kemp, the new round of budget cuts,

and the gold standard exemplified their approach. It began with fresh reporting: Kemp would oppose the new cuts in order to play up the need to move toward restoration of gold convertibility. Then, it slid into analysis, endorsing the "widespread belief that budget director David Stockman's latest spending cuts while undercutting Reagan's defense aims, will not help the economy." Finally, it wound up with a thinly disguised appeal for Reagan to put consideration of the gold standard on his immediate agenda. Unfortunately for Evans and Novak, there turned out to be a problem with the column. A few days later, Kemp decided to go along with the new cuts, though he argued they wouldn't invigorate the economy.

That was a rare mistake for Evans and Novak in writing about Reagan. True, Reagan didn't buy much of their advice on appointments, notably in the case of New York businessman Lewis Lehrman. They plugged him as "a loyal Republican, a devoted Reaganite and a brilliant student of supply-side economics" who would be a perfect choice for Treasury Secretary. But even when Reagan picked conventional types like Donald Regan for his Cabinet, Evans and Novak did not alter their assessment of Reagan as a conservative ideologue bent on radical change. His wounding in an assassination attempt crystallized Reagan's indispensable role in reversing years of expanding government, soaring taxes, rising inflation, and a sluggish economy. They wrote:

The assassination attempt that afternoon left those who share Reagan's dream cold with fear at the futility of going on without Reagan. There is no alternative to Reagan himself to ensure that his goals are not diluted into the fuzzy pragmatism of the previous 16 years of postwar Republican administrations.

The administration of Dwight D. Eisenhower, with whom Reagan often is compared, functioned efficiently without apparent disruption during three prolonged absences of the ailing president. While Reagan indeed resembles Eisenhower in wholesale delegation of duties, he alone has set the ideological tone of his administration in a way the old general never did.

Accordingly, the announcement Reagan would be able to function as president the very day after his shooting and might leave the hospital within two weeks was of vital importance. Nobody could guess what would happen to this administration's motive force during protracted convalescence for its chief. Far from being the irrelevancy of his caricatures, Reagan is the vital spark that moves his administration.

Vice President George Bush has gained Reagan's confidence as witness his triumph over Secretary of State Alexander Haig in their power struggle. But even if Bush, with vastly more govern-

mental experience than Reagan, fully agreed with Reagan's revolutionary goals, he could not match Reagan's ideological commitment. The White House senior staff, including the President's longtime servitors, seem closer to Bush than Reagan in lack of ideological intensity.

This ideological component in Reagan's makeup—namely, that he believes all the conservative ideas he

had been espousing for 20 years and intends to implement them—was lost on most reporters and columnists well into the Reagan presidency. On inauguration day, one of the most astute Reagan watchers, Lou Cannon of the *Washington Post*, wrote that it was Reagan's "agreeable nature" that "more than anything . . . commends him to his fellow Americans." As late as last August, Steven

Weisman of the *New York Times* characterized Reagan as a president who concentrates on "the big picture," but made only a fleeting reference to Reagan's "deep determination about general principles" in explaining why. *Newsweek* went so far as to label Reagan a "disengaged President" on the same page that it called him an "activist President." It failed to reconcile the two. →

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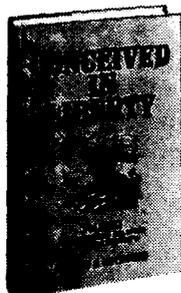
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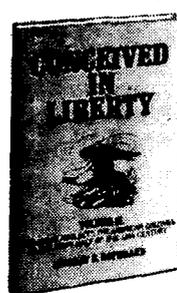
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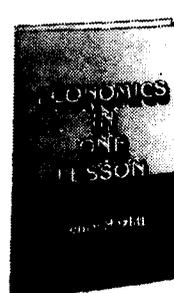
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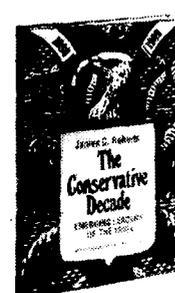
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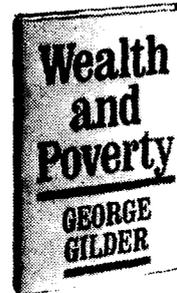
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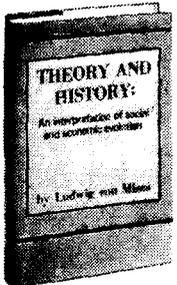
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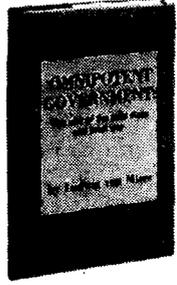
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The perception in the press of Reagan as "disengaged" from policymaking and a creature of his staff in reaching decisions has dogged him for years. It arose again during the transition, as Lee Lescaze of the *Washington Post* declared that Reagan "seems to be remote from the process of shaping his administration." Indeed, Evans and Novak expressed alarm over the appointments bestowed on non-conservatives. But they never doubted Reagan's "radical plans for transforming national policy" or the prospects for dramatic change. Shortly after the election, they wrote that Reagan, not "shackled" by a hairline victory, "faces unlimited possibilities with no need to embrace names and policies of a past more associated with failure than success." Most other journalists doubted this, downplaying the idea of a compelling Reagan mandate. (I fell in with this line of thinking, writing in the *Baltimore Sun* the day after the election that Reagan's victory "does not guarantee that much change will take place." On the contrary, I wrote, Reagan is "circumscribed" and his "ascendancy is unlikely to spawn the burst of executive activity . . . that followed Franklin D. Roosevelt's inauguration." Sure wish I hadn't written that.) As the transition wore on, there developed among the media a consensus that Reagan would do little of a radical nature. Hedrick Smith of the *New York Times* wrote that the administration's plan to "hit the ground running" was encounter-

ing obstacles. Robert G. Kaiser of the *Washington Post* said the "movement from campaign flourishes to more conventional utterances is well under way and shows every sign of continuing. This rhetorical adjustment appears to reinforce an impression created by the new president's Cabinet and first sub-Cabinet appointments—an impression of conventional instincts at work."

Wisely, Evans and Novak were scornful of this spate of reporting about the taming of Reagan. "That Reagan himself since the election has remained faithful to his political movement is not questioned by his own followers," they wrote after the inauguration. "Rather, it is political opponents and news commentators from the first hour of his election victory who have perceived that Reagan was about to abandon his ideology now that power beckoned and was embracing 'pragmatism.' It is mostly wishful thinking."

Wishful or not, it persisted, especially in regard to the tax cut. Last spring, the expectation in the press was that Reagan would compromise with congressional Democratic leaders like Dan Rostenkowski on a tax bill. "Like proud and coquettish students at a prom, each has been eyeing the other, hoping for an invitation to dance," *Time* wrote in late May. "Last week, with congressional Republicans acting as chaperons, they began edging toward one another in a series of private meetings . . . that laid the groundwork for a possible compromise tax bill." But at precisely the same time, Evans and Novak said that "unless Reagan amazes everybody by surrendering, he will again battle House Democratic leaders on the floor, with the odds heavily in favor of the President." A

month earlier, in fact, they had predicted "a Republican triumph on the tax cut." How so? A "Hance-Conable" bill was in the works that would unite Republicans and Democratic boll weevils on a 25 percent tax cut whose effective date would be a little later than the July 1 pegged by Reagan. Of course, exactly such a bill emerged and passed, despite the fears of White House officials that it was doomed.

Quickly, the journalistic forces joined in the conclusion that the tax cut passed because Reagan is such a convincing television pitchman and genial armchair lobbyist. It was all politics, and nothing about the popularity of deep, permanent tax cuts slipped in. Reagan knew how to "focus his personal charm upon the lowly riflemen of politics"—congressmen—said Lou Cannon of the *Washington Post*. He is "a dedicated and serious politician who knows how to grasp the levers of power in the age of television." The *Post*'s Martin Schram added that Reagan "blended basic skills of mass communicating and one-on-one politicking and raised both to a state of high presidential art." Only Evans and Novak went to the substance of the tax issue. Reagan's "video virtuosity" spurred the tax victory, but at bottom it reflected "genuine popularity for deep, continuing tax reduction." Democratic defectors to the Reagan tax cut "were moved by unprecedented public demand" and "were reflecting the popular appeal of tax reduction."

Vindicated on the tax cut, Evans and Novak also proved to be uncanny in their warnings about Social Security reductions. A week after Reagan

took office, they praised Stockman for rejecting the "conservative orthodoxy" and opposing "broad cutbacks in Social Security benefits. Politically, Stockman is seeking to protect the Republican Party from its incorrigible desire to throw widows and orphans to the wolves and thereby embellish a villainous reputation that has helped lose elections for a half-century. The new office of management and budget director is saying that there are methods less painful, both for Republicans and the old, to cut the budget."

Stockman found some of them, but not enough. Desperate to show financial markets the administration was serious about budget cutting, he turned to Social Security cuts. And what Evans and Novak had predicted occurred: a firestorm of public protest fueled by Democrats. "The Social Security fiasco follows a historical syndrome—Republicans seeking to alleviate national problems through pain and suffering, only to end up wounding themselves to the benefit of Democrats," they wrote after the White House retreated sheepishly from its Social Security proposal. "There is one further lesson that may be missed at the White House," they added. "While everybody there mourns political fallout, it may not be noticed that the latest exhibition of Republican masochism had no effect whatever on the bond traders it was intended to impress so profoundly."

Nor will a new round of budget cuts galvanize financial markets and drive down interest rates, Evans and Novak said. The answer is the gold standard. "Bringing down interest rates by permanently guaranteeing the value of the dollar, the gold standard would save at least \$30 billion a year in federal debt service charges," they wrote. At any rate, gold is the ultimate issue dividing supply-siders and orthodox conservatives. The supply-siders want Reagan to act quickly in setting a deadline for restoring the gold standard. The orthodox conservatives scoff at the need for this. Without Evans and Novak, the highly visible national debate on gold would not have erupted. They spotted the gold issue months before anyone else and began proselytizing last summer for new gold adherents. One result was a spate of magazine and newspaper stories on reviving the gold standard. All the same, Evans and Novak will lose face if Reagan continues to ignore their pleas. But if, as the supply-siders insist, Reagan soon announces his interest in returning to the gold standard, Evans and Novak stand to be vindicated again. □

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Ian Hunter intended this book to be a work of literary criticism. But in the writings of Malcolm Muggeridge all roads lead to Mr. Muggeridge: The book became a biography. Professor Hunter must be the first biographer who has ever had to flatten himself against the pictures as the life tenant breezed by, showing yet more tourists round himself.

In the year this book appears there has been on British television a series of programs, *Muggeridge Ancient and Modern*, an anthology of Mr. Muggeridge's television appearances; he himself at 78 supplied the linking commentaries, sitting in happy, writhing judgment on himself like a President of the Immortals. His diaries were recently published, and the third volume of his autobiography will soon be at the printer's.

Whatever else one can say about Ian Hunter, a professor of Law at the University of Western Ontario and author of *The Immigration Appeal Board of Canada* (Ottawa 1976), he is a brave man. Mr. Muggeridge has always been a sort of war front to himself. His biographer has thus to assume the position of a United Nations peace-keeping force.

Mr. Muggeridge is also a war front to his contemporaries. "A prize shit," reflected Evelyn Waugh in his diaries. A vicar in Berkshire once dreamt wistfully of blacking his eye. There have been, as Mr. Muggeridge says, many Malcolm Muggeridges, "all those selves, so different and so hideous."

Had he died during the War, some might have mourned the author of some of the bleakest novels written in this century. Had he died in the middle fifties, many more would have remembered an embattled public figure. Had he died in the sixties, his reading public and I would have grieved over the passing of the greatest comic writer of his time. But he is now 78 and Professor Hunter's biography is an account of a spiritual pilgrimage: "His trek was to Emmaus, not Damascus, and only occasionally did he recognize the stranger who walked with him."

Some of his admirers will mourn the fact that Mr. Muggeridge got to Emmaus, wherever that is. He was so busy on the road, and so entertain-

Byron Rogers is Welsh and living on his wits in London, sustained by Watney's and good prose.

MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE: A LIFE

Ian Hunter / Thomas Nelson, Inc. / \$13.95

Byron Rogers

ing, one hoped no cars would stop for him. But to many, most of them outside Britain, Mr. Muggeridge is a prophet.

This biography will only confuse those who have come into contact with him. As someone who worked with Muggeridge in MI6 during the War observed, "I remember him as something of a playboy. There were always women around, and booze. Great charm. I can't recognize this Christian chap on the box at all."

But one activity has been followed all his life. It reminds me of an image I came on once in a cook book and have never been able to get out of my mind: It is of an old lady in Calabria who was seen to bash out an entire and vast ox tripe against the basin of a public fountain. Mr. Muggeridge has always bashed himself, his career, and his beliefs against the twentieth century.

He has been, as Nigel Dennis once remarked, its busiest double agent. And the twentieth century, like all infiltrated organizations, has showered employment on him, from the Mellins Baby Food Beauty Prize (which he won in 1903) to the editorship of *Punch*. He has met most of its great men ("I've heard of you," the Viceroy said, a touch of grimness in his voice) and ransacked its utopias. He was there in the sunset of the British Raj, was in Moscow in the 1930s when that was a Brave New World to many of his contemporaries, was in Paris for the Liberation (his own part being the liberation of P.G. Wodehouse). As naturally as some come to edit their school magazines he was, with Kim Philby and Graham Greene, a member of the British Secret Service. "A ruling class on the run is capable of every folly," wrote Muggeridge gratefully: Kicking old employers in the teeth is another activity that has not changed.

But even a quick glance through Professor Hunter's narrative will leave you with the impression that whatever century he was born in, when Rome fell, when Luther nailed his treatises to the church door, there would have been Muggeridge buying Alaric a drink, talking much to his friends about Luther of an evening. ("Once a comedian, dear boy. Now a satyr.")

He was born in that featureless suburban sprawl south of London, into the working class (his upper class vowels, "his uniquely irritating accent," as the *Guardian* once put it, are of more fascination to his countrymen than his spiritual development: Mr. Muggeridge believes he acquired them at Cambridge by a sort of osmosis). His father, an office clerk and soap box opera, hoped to see his son a prominent figure in the Promised Land of his Socialism. He began well, marrying into the progressive equivalent of the Royal Family: His wife is a niece of Beatrice Webb, the Fabian. Mr. Muggeridge has written much of Mrs. Webb; he has made her into one of the great comic figures of the twentieth century.

Where Professor Hunter is most fascinating is where, in his capacity as UN observer, he gives his own account of events. So where Mr. Muggeridge claims to have been an outsider at Cambridge he prints letters showing him to have been happy enough, and adds a photograph of Muggeridge in the rowing eight.

It tends to reinforce a suspicion that it is impossible to get any accurate picture of Muggeridge from his autobiographies, where the old cynical Mugg pads through every paragraph beside his younger selves, jeering and pointing. "Truth, not facts, dear boy," as he once observed.

The young Muggeridge was indeed a remarkable figure. He taught at an Indian college, walked barefoot, learned to throw rice into his mouth, and tried to incite his pupils to rise against the British: His pupils seem to have found him a figure of great fun. But he took himself very seriously. Lust and rage danced attendance on his youth, and the novels and plays that lurched from his typewriter are among the bleakest ever written.

