

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

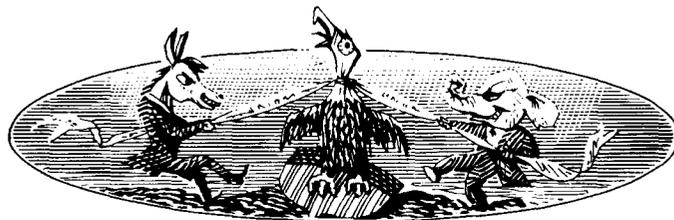
anti-Communist foreign policy to thumping for a policy of appeasement. Norman Thomas ran for the presidency six times on the Socialist ticket, and when he died it was with the utmost satisfaction that liberal pundits pointed out how many of Thomas's quack policies were now the law of the land.

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.

"neoliberal" business is all about, and I suspect it may not be a particularly suitable description of the philosophy espoused by the *Washington Monthly*. It all came up after my time. I think the general idea is that a neoliberal is to a liberal what a neoconservative is to a conservative: a more moderate variety of the same species. On a few issues the

Monthly (i.e., Peters, for he ran a fairly tight ship, editorially: it was no easy matter to get things he didn't agree with into the magazine) was to the right of the Washington Consensus—but never by much. When one day I expressed doubts about the Bail Reform Act, he encouraged me to write the "right-wing crime story" that no one else in the office would

tackle at that point. Not death-penalty stuff, you understand, but lock-'em-up-if-they're-dangerous stuff. Moderate enough, but of course rather rightish from the D.C. point of view.

My guess is that Charlie is not entirely comfortable with the leftward drift of the Democratic party, and of the Washington consensus

generally. He may well have been more comfortable with the *old* liberal position, as indeed were many of those who now call themselves neo-conservatives. But of course it's not done to object explicitly to this leftward drift; if you do, and you are considered important enough, you will be called an ideologue and anonymous informants will start whispering unkind things about you to the bloodhounds who dwell inside the *Washington Post* kennels.

If this analysis is correct, then Charlie Peters is not really a *neo-liberal* at all. He's an old, or paleo-liberal. By the same token those who are comfortable with the new "liberal" position are really leftists in disguise. Senator Paul Tsongas, a speaker at the conference, perfectly exemplifies this position. I've kept a wary eye on the man since he was elected to the Senate, and he strikes me as being a fairly hard-line leftist who is only too happy to be offered shelter under the same taxonomic umbrella as genuine moderates like Fallows and Peters.

The trouble with the centrist position that Peters by nature finds congenial, it seems to me, is that it is ultimately at the mercy of the extremes. If your goal is to stand between two people, then you must move where they move. A protractor is a convenient instrument for bisecting the angle between left and right, but you never quite know in what direction it is going to end up pointing you.

On defense, for example, Michael Kinsley, a *Monthly* alumnus who went on to become editor of *Harper's*, tells me that the neoliberal position is: we need an *efficient* defense. This strikes me as being unexceptionable, because so few people are calling for an inefficient defense. Edward Luttwak, maybe, but I can't think of anyone else.

But enough of this carping. Charlie Peters is a patriot, which I fear is no longer universally the case in Washington, especially in the media. Oh, one final point. I think I might have plucked up my courage and gone to the conference anyway had William Greider been there to speak, as originally scheduled. But he canceled. I might have picked up some good-writing tips.

So I was left with time to spare and space to fill. I decided to see one of the few explicitly right-wing movies made in recent years, *The Final Option*, which is about the British Special Air Service foiling a Commie plot in London. Although it had only opened at area theaters a few days

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earlier, there was no sign of it anywhere in the *Washington Post* listings! Foiled again. I'm beginning to suspect we could use a visit in Washington from the Special Air Service.

At my wits end, I decided to go to a movie which I thought might contain some reassuring Biblical message, *Daniel*. Oh dear, how wrong I was. It turned out to be some terrible rubbish about New York Communists in the 1940s. The message seemed to be that Commies don't engage in plots—they're all trumped up by the FBI, which is the truly conspiratorial organization. The joke is that the notion of Communists-as-plotters is most strenuously opposed by those who would least object to such plots; just as Alger Hiss's innocence is most loudly proclaimed by those who would have the least objection to his guilty actions; just as the very notion of unpatriotic behavior is decried by those who persistently denigrate patriotism.

Daniel turned out to be a muddled and boring movie, with the very poor sound track that is now standard in Hollywood movies. (The soundmen are rock graduates and half deaf.) When the portentous Ed Asner appeared in the courtroom scene I could stand it no longer and left.

So I trudged up the steep hill beside the Soviet Embassy to the National Cathedral, anticipating perhaps a few quiet moments of ecumenical reflection in the gothic structure. Wouldn't you know, I arrived just in time for one of those now-common church debates whose unstated premise is that it might be wise to surrender to the Soviets before it's too late. It was billed: "Understanding the Soviet Union." A leaflet explained that "we need to be able to see the world from the Soviet perspective, and to respect its problems and goals..." Someone at the church porch handed me a counter-leaflet about the Ukraine, and placards were dimly visible in the night air.

Nice-mannered Episcopalian ladies were shaking out their umbrellas, and one with a green alligator on her top asked in a loud voice, "Who's Richard Pipes?" Not that he was speaking. We took to the pews and a breezy, hearty canon appeared at the speaker's platform—didn't catch his name; he is the type of clergyman you would have met a lot twenty years ago in England who is awfully keen on cricket. He apologized for the absence of Valentin Berezkhov, First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy, from the discussion a week earlier, explaining that there had been the problem of his son's trying to escape from the Embassy compound (which

is just up the road from where I live, and means that I get rather more police protection than the average D.C. resident). The canon explained that Senator Claiborne Pell had only the other day had dinner with Berezkhov Sr. in Moscow, "which is good news," he added, "because it means he's in Moscow and not Siberia." Polite little titters from the green-alligator contingent. I couldn't

help wondering why we should respect that country's "goals" which lie so predictably in the direction of Siberia.

Someone called Doctor Geyer was talking, a Methodist of sorts; apparently a heavy hitter on the peace and justice circuit. He wore suede shoes and sideburns. I couldn't follow the details—a lot of talk about the freeze and something about

build-down being a build-up. He did a good job of seeing the world from the Soviet perspective, I'll say that for him. "As a Methodist," he said, "I can say that build-down appears to be a fig-leaf for the MX." His amplified voice echoed around the nave and transept. I looked up at the ceiling, and noticed large dark patches of rain-soaked stone. Somewhere up there I also saw the cross. □



Coolidge and the Historians

Thomas B. Silver

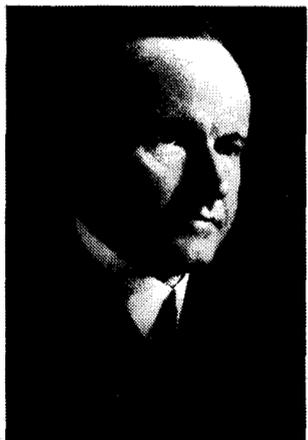
What do we know of Calvin Coolidge? He took long naps in the White House every afternoon. To maintain his feeble health he rode a mechanical horse. *The Oxford History of the American People* holds that he was mean, dour and mediocre.

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American Spectator, November 1983
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Jacques Barzun: *A Stroll With William James* (Harper & Row, \$19.95). I do not blush for adding my own most recent book, because it is

so much more James's than mine. It amounts, in fact, to a chrestomathy of his writings and thoughts on all subjects and is thus the means of getting to know at first hand one of the greatest minds this country has produced.

Jacques Barzun is University Professor Emeritus at Columbia University, literary adviser for Charles Scribner's Sons, and author of numerous books, including Teacher in America (Liberty Press, \$9.00/\$4.00 paper).

PRISCILLA L. BUCKLEY

Russell Baker is not my favorite humorist, not by a long shot. I can pass up his *New York Times* column with the greatest of ease, so *Growing Up* (Congdon & Weed, \$15.00) was published and hit the best-seller list without my even noticing it. But when a 93-year-old friend whose critical judgment I much respect told me that I shouldn't miss it, I trotted off to the nearest bookstore. Baker's

first chapter, a visit to his aged mother in a nursing home—she tells him, querulously, that he, this middle-aged stranger, is not her son Russell; Russell is only nine years old—talks to all of us whose parents are on that downhill slope. Baker's mother, a Depression-era widow with small children to support, dominates *Growing Up*. She copes, not dreadfully, or wearily, but with verve and gusto supported, and sometimes preyed upon, by a loving, quirky, but never cranky family. It's a romp that can bring tears to the eye. Like my friend Corinna I have now become a bore on the subject. Will whoever has my copy please return it.

Paul Johnson's *Modern Times* (Harper & Row, \$27.95) you may, with luck, finish by year's end, not that it won't engross you—it's a stemwinder—but its 817 pages are so tightly packed with fascinating information that it is better savored than romped through. Mr. Johnson's

canvas is the world, starting at the turn of the century. The world has seldom had a better biographer. It's a joy to read. But how is Paul Johnson going to top this one?

My third choice would be any novel by Canada's premier novelist, Robertson Davies. For those unfamiliar with his work, the *Deptford Trilogy* (Penguin, \$3.95 each) is a good start. Davies is not only Canada's finest contemporary novelist, he is one of the best anywhere.

Priscilla L. Buckley is Managing Editor of National Review.

JOHN CHAMBERLAIN

The Healing of America: What Can Be Done About the Continuing Economic Crisis, by Richard Cornuelle (Putnam Pub. Group, \$14.95). The whole history of voluntary action in the United States. The way it takes Keynes apart is delicious. Reagan could do a great service not only to himself but to his country if he would only review it from the Oval Office.

My Brother's Keeper, by Marcia Davenport (Bentley, \$12.50/\$3.50 paper). Marcia is one of our most neglected novelists. Her *Valley of Decision* was an American *Forsyte Saga*. By contrast, *My Brother's Keeper* lacks wide social scope, but it is a tremendously dramatic story of the family bond, done with both realism and compassion. Based on the real life story of two eccentrics, it is anything but eccentric in the telling.

Overdrive, by William Buckley (Doubleday, \$16.95). The Left hates Bill because he knows how to spend money. Horror of horrors, he enjoys skiing and sailing. Even worse, he devotes a good lecture income to supporting a magazine that did more than most to change the intellectual climate of the country. Naturally the Left regards all this as sheer indulgence.

