
THE NATION'S PULSE



MOM AND POP DEMOCRATS

by Allan C. Carlson

While billed by its principals as a contest between rival visions for the American future, the 1984 presidential campaign is actually shaping up as a battle between nostalgias. Republican ads feature cute kids on bikes, small town streets, unfurled flags, and buxom majorettes leading high-school marching bands. More surprising is the way the Mondale campaign has been wrapping itself in family, hearth, and home. Fritz has "moved back" to Elmore, Minnesota, a reduced speed zone now portrayed as a kind of Norwegian Plains, Georgia. We're soon to be treated to the Mondale family cookbook. Geraldine Ferraro is presented as a typical Italian-American mom, "the daughter of a woman whose highest goal was a future for her children," a "good" Catholic and "true" Christian dedicated to "the values that we share," to people who support "their families through hard work and initiative," to "the gift of life," and to the American dream. As

Allan C. Carlson, who writes frequently on the family, is affiliated with The Rockford Institute.

New York Governor Mario Cuomo put it in his oratorical *tour de force*, "We [Democrats] believe in a single fundamental idea. . . . The idea of family. . . . We believe we must be the family of America."

The Democrats' effort to recover the "pro family" label impudently seized by the Republicans in 1980 is obviously aimed at wooing alienated Roman Catholics and other traditionalists back into the donkey's corral. Will the strategy work?

There once was, to be sure, an authentic Democratic "family" tradition. Although not explicitly "Catholic" (that would have driven another segment of the great coalition, Southern Protestants, to apoplexy), this vision was compatible with traditional beliefs, and had real policy consequences.

The Social Security system created during the 1930s, for example, presumed a nation of intact, relatively healthy nuclear families. Married women received their benefits through their husbands. Aid to Dependent

Children (ADC, later AFDC) was sold as a specialized children's allowance for orphans. Widows' pensions extended further benefits to married women. During the Truman years, Congress restructured the federal income tax code, creating the joint return (which favors married couples with one income) and setting the dependent deduction at \$600 per child, acts which removed the large majority of American families from any significant income tax liability. The Housing Act of 1949 opened up opportunities for home ownership to millions of families, and encouraged both the suburbanization of America and a booming birth rate. Truman justified the housing program in simple, sincere words: "Children and dogs are as necessary to the welfare of this country as is [sic] Wall Street and the railroads."

During the felicitous 1950s, the Democrats continued in the family way. Adlai E. Stevenson told the 1955 graduates of Smith College that there was much they could do in their roles as wives and mothers about the "great historical crisis" facing the nation.

"You may be hitched to one of these creatures we call 'Western man,'" Stevenson explained to the Smithies, "and I think part of your job is to keep him Western, and to keep him truly purposeful, to keep him whole." Rather than leading college-educated women away from the great issues of the day, the cerebral Democrat continued, "the vocation of marriage and motherhood . . . brings you back to the very center and places upon you an infinitely deeper and more intimate responsibility than that borne by the majority of those who hit the headlines. . . ." Stevenson thought so much of the speech that he included it in a compilation—*What I Think*—published as a prelude to his 1956 presidential campaign.

This orientation reached its apogee during the early 1960s. In a report to the International Labor Organization, for example, the Lyndon Johnson Administration reaffirmed American support for "the basic legal principle which places on the husband the primary responsibility for support of his wife and family with secondary liability devolving on his wife." As the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations began plotting out their war on poverty, the family grew in political significance. A key planning document—Assistant Secretary of Labor Daniel P. Moynihan's 1965 report *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*—was premised on the vitality of the middle-class family model, and its usefulness as a policy focal point. The mass media and the development of suburbia, the report stated, had created "an image of the American family as a highly standardized phenomenon." Indeed, the white family now showed "a high degree of stability." In contrast, "the family structure of lower class Negroes is highly unstable, and in many urban areas is approaching complete breakdown." The report focused specifically on the "pathologies" of illegitimacy, divorce, and female-headed families. Moynihan and his team urged the creation of a federal poverty pro-

There is opportunity in America!



Sarkes Tarzian Inc. Bloomington, Indiana

gram designed "to have the effect, directly or indirectly, of enhancing the stability and resources of the Negro American family."

But it was a road not to be taken. Reactions to the "Moynihan Report" became unexpectedly vicious. Critics on the left said it was "racist" to force blacks to live by "Western, middle class, white values." Female-headed families, they all agreed, represented a "healthy" adjustment by blacks to ghetto conditions. Lower-class and minority cultures should not be destroyed by "cultural imperialism," they added. Wounded and confused, Lyndon Johnson beat a hasty retreat.

In the years that followed, sociologists, psychologists, and anthropologists conducted a peculiar ideological assault on the American family model. Considered until then to be an extraordinary success and the model for developing nations across the globe, the American family was recast as narrow, mean-spirited, and destructive, a place of repression, the seed bed of sociopathic behavior.

During this time of intellectual ferment, the Democrats tended to avoid the family theme. It was resurrected only in 1976 when Jimmy Carter, a candidate with refreshing if endless naiveté, gave a widely admired campaign speech that pointed to rapidly growing levels of illegitimacy, desertion, and divorce in the United States. Carter concluded that "the American family is in trouble." In a subsequent address before a Roman Catholic audience, he pledged to call a White House conference on the American family to find ways to correct the problem. There is little doubt that this rural, "common sense" traditionalism lent Carter much of his early appeal.

Once in the Oval Office, though, Carter began his education in a new set of liberal pieties. There was no longer any model of family health, the party sociologists told him. Rather, Americans now lived in a guilt-free society with a variety of "life styles," which meant—in the words of a popular textbook—"that people [must] be able to feel that their life style is proper to them, even though it may not be a proper life style for other people." "The family" had become "families," Carter's social gurus added, an elastic term covering communal groupings, "gay" marriages, single-parent arrangements, and so on. The scales then fell from his eyes, and Carter saw that families were not really in trouble; they were simply changing! "Diversity" and "pluralism" were the new realities. Chastened, yet still grinning, Carter transformed his little assembly into "The White House Conference on Families," which eventually degenerated into farce. Administra-

tion-guided "celebrations" of the International Year of the Child and International Women's Year showed a similar hostility toward the nuclear family model, and a politically odd embrace of normlessness as a guiding principle. The Republicans had a field day in 1980.

In judging the "family" prospects for Mr. Mondale and Ms. Ferraro, it might also be useful to ask what a truly "pro family" Democratic platform, premised on government intervention and appealing to the Catholic tradition, would look like. Several governments—including those of France and Belgium—have actually constructed interventionist "family policies" responsive both to Catholic political pressure and to concepts originally laid out in the social encyclicals of Popes Leo XIII, Pius XI, and John Paul II. The family policies of these lands embrace:

- The concept of a "family wage," usually provided through an allowance paid to every family on a per child basis, and originally designed to allow the average laborer to support a wife and children in moderate comfort on one income.
- Special allowances, grants, or tax benefits to support parents (usually mothers) who stay at home to provide full-time care for their pre-school children.
- Grants to parents on the birth of a child.
- Special health-care programs covering all the costs of birthing and pre- and post-natal care.

One searches the 1984 Democratic platform in vain for such provisions, though. Indeed, the "family sensitive" parts of the platform would actually subvert the principles of Catholic social theory. In the section on women, for instance, the platform's unqualified support of "equal pay for work of comparable worth" cuts at the heart of the informal "family wage" system that long prevailed in the United States. The call for "universally available day-care with federal or business funding" runs exactly counter to the Catholic policy preference for maternal care of children. The endorsement of "reproductive freedom as a fundamental human right," the pledge to "end such acts" as "harassment against health providers and women" providing and pursuing abortion, the promise to develop "strong local family planning" programs, the vow "to restore full U.S. support for national and international population [control] programs," and the pledge to prohibit discrimination against homosexuals in the work-place and military all deny, explicitly or

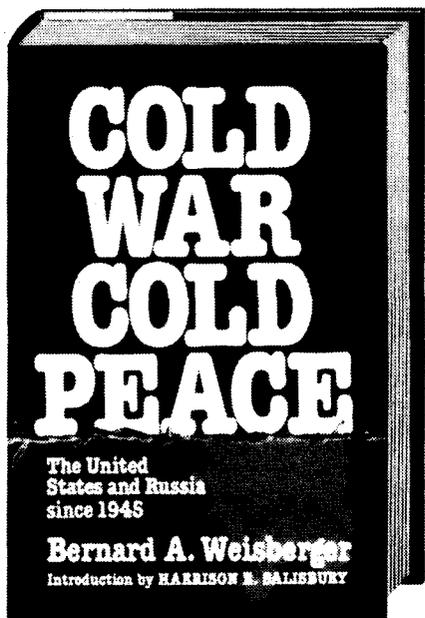
implicitly, the natalist bias found in the authentic Catholic tradition.

The Democrats' schizophrenia here comes from two sources. First, the party has not had a working model of the family since the mid-1960s when it abandoned the middle-class nuclear family during the furor over the Moynihan Report. With no criteria for social "health," there can be no social

"pathology" and nothing for "social policy" to heal or accomplish. Consider the proverbial Martian who, without any criteria for "health," views a human cancer patient and sees not "disease" but only physical "change." In the same way, the Democrats are now unable to see family pathologies: All they perceive is diversity and random social "change." This leaves social policy as a mere com-



AN AMERICAN HERITAGE BOOK



"A marvelous book by a first-class historian."

A superb writer, he treats his momentous subject with broad understanding, great fairness, and a rare feeling for the human side of his extraordinary cast of characters.—*David McCullough*. "By all odds, this is the best-written and most judicious account that has yet appeared of the history of the last four decades. Instead of blaming, he has sought to understand. Instead of confining himself to diplomatic history, he has explored the impact of the Cold War on all of American society."—*William E. Leuchtenburg*. With photos; \$17.95 at bookstores

From the publishers of American Heritage Magazine Distributed by Houghton Mifflin Company

SPEAK FRENCH Like A DIPLOMAT!

What sort of people need to learn a foreign language as quickly and effectively as possible? *Foreign service personnel*, that's who.

Now you can learn to speak French just as these diplomatic personnel do—with the Foreign Service Institute's Basic French Course.

The U.S. Department of State has spent thousands of dollars developing this course. It's by far the *most effective* way to learn French at your own convenience and at your own pace.

The Basic French Course consists of a series of cassettes and an accompanying textbook. Simply follow the spoken and written instructions, listening and repeating. By the end of the course, you'll be learning and speaking entirely in French!

This course turns your cassette player into a "teaching machine." With its unique "pattern drill" learning method, you set your own pace — testing yourself, correcting errors, reinforcing accurate responses.

The FSU's Introductory Basic French Course comes in two parts, each shipped in a handsome library binder. Part A introduces the simpler forms of the language and a basic vocabulary.

Part B presents more complex structures and additional vocabulary. Order either, or save 10% by ordering both:

- Basic French, Part A.** 12 cassettes (15 hr.), and 194-p. text, \$125.
- Basic French, Part B.** 18 cassettes (25 hr.), and 290-p. text, \$149.

(Conn. and N.Y. residents add sales tax.)

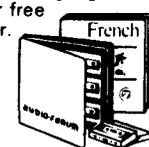
TO ORDER BY PHONE, PLEASE CALL TOLL-FREE NUMBER: 1-800-243-1234.

To order by mail, clip this ad and send with your name and address, and a check or money order — or charge to your credit card (AmEx, VISA, MasterCard, Diners) by enclosing card number, expiration date, and your signature.

The Foreign Service Institute's French course is unconditionally guaranteed. Try it for three weeks. If you're not convinced it's the fastest, easiest, most painless way to learn French, return it and we'll refund every penny you paid. Order today!

116 courses in 39 other languages also available. Write us for free catalog. Our 12th year.

**Audio-Forum
Room 704
On-The-Green,
Guilford, CT 06437
(203) 453-9794**



All orders received by Dec. 14 will be delivered before the holidays!
Or visit our New York sales office 145 E. 49th St., New York, NY 10017 (212) 753-1783.

petition for spoils, where efforts at income redistribution lose any possible moral justification.

Second, ideologies abhor a vacuum, and rival world views have impressed their mark on the Democratic party. Neo-Malthusians, taking political form in the population-control and environmentalist movements, truly fear the reproductive potential of the American people and have forced a strong anti-natalist bias on the party. Feminists, meanwhile, have sharply devalued "motherhood" to at least a secondary role, and their fingerprints are found all over the 1984 Democratic platform.

What, then, are the prospects for Democratic exploitation of the "family" theme? Actually, in the modern political house of mirrors, they're fairly good. In the battle of nostalgias, the Democrats have a potent hand: rhetorical and symbolic allusions to the pre-1965 past masking a radically different but adroitly concealed present agenda. Working to the Democrats' advantage are the current slippery nature of the "family" label and the apparent ignorance or indifference of many American Catholics about their own socio-political tradition. Even the majority of American bishops, one suspects, spend little time

these days re-reading Papal encyclicals.

The Republicans have been more honest in linking their electoral program to their nostalgia. Indeed, in its emphasis on tax equity for families and the "life" issues, its flat rejection of "comparable worth," and its nod toward an anti-Malthusian population policy, the 1984 Republican version is probably the most explicitly "pro-family" platform in American political history.

Yet more is needed to frustrate Democratic designs. The Reagan campaign needs to expose the hollowness of its rival's "family" rhetoric and

reveal the true ideologies now dominating the Democratic party. The campaign might usefully focus on the implicit racism and anti-child bias lurking behind the "reproductive freedom" and "national population program" labels. Or it might show how the Democratic party has sharply deviated from the social policy heritage of Roosevelt, Truman, Stevenson, and Johnson.

Admittedly, such tasks could be nasty, and they may best be left to others than the Great Communicator. Without such efforts, though, Mr. Mondale may just get away with his verbal and symbolic legerdemain. □

THE CAMPUS

YOUNG TURK TUNES

by Gregory A. Fossedal

Perhaps the most surprising—and least understood—news coming out of Harvard and Dartmouth, Berkeley and Kent State this fall is that students will most likely vote for Ronald Reagan. *Datum:* A 1984 *Los Angeles Times* poll finds that the greatest support for Ronald Reagan is among voters aged 18 to 39, particularly on the younger side. As of June, this group planned to vote for Reagan by a margin of 58 to 37 over Walter Mondale. Similarly, a 1981 *New York Times* poll showed the greatest support for Reaganomics coming from people age . . . 25 or younger. *Datum:* According to two recent surveys, the best read papers at Dartmouth College and the University of California, San Diego are not any of several left-of-center sheets published with administration subsidies, but the independent and infamous *Dartmouth Review* and *California Review*. Indeed, the *Berkeley Barb*, famed taunter of then-governor Ronald Reagan and citadel of anti-Vietnam sentiment, has folded. Its radical replacement is the *Berkeley Review*, which supports Reagan and tosses its barbs at "the establishment" from the opposite direction. *Datum:* Recent straw elections at several Ivy League, Big Ten, and Pac-8 schools show Mr. Reagan whipping the Democrats with majorities of 60 percent and more.

Gregory A. Fossedal is an editorial writer for the Wall Street Journal and co-author of A Defense that Defends. He was a founder of the Dartmouth Review, where he appointed the first woman, black, Native American, and (Bombay) Indian to the staff.

That this longstanding shift in student opinion passed unnoticed until the recent GOP convention can be attributed in large part to a continuing superstition that youthful activism can exist only on the left. The *New York Times*'s Stephen Engleberg recently wrote a feature piece on "Young Activists and Capital's Allure." He mentioned not a single conservative group, concentrating instead on youngsters working for Ralph Nader, Common Cause, and the like. Engleberg was innocently unaware that there exist similar activists working for Terry Dolan, Howard Phillips, Irving Kristol, or Midge Decter. Similarly, ABC's "20-20" recently showed a series of television news clips to Americans of various ages and occupa-

tions and races, asking them if assorted stories—on the Korean Airlines massacre, invasions of Afghanistan and Grenada, Vietnam, and so on—made them feel patriotic. The most frequent positive response came from World War veterans and high-school students. Again, there was a kind of sweet innocence as an ABC reporter concluded that "the young people . . . thought of Vietnam as a place where America fought communism."

Straight election coverage manifests a more active bias. "The flow of young people into conservative activism today," estimates Morton Blackwell, president of the Leadership Institute, "is at least twice what it was four years ago. And four times what it was eight to ten years ago." Yet news coverage

throughout the year has focused on the nuclear freeze movement (remember the freeze?), candidates Jesse Jackson and Gary Hart, and now, Geraldine Ferraro, all alleged focal points for youthful enthusiasm and new ideas.

As the elephants herded into Dallas, some Republicans and network correspondents did begin to take note of the new shift in youth opinion. Even so, they refused to recognize this development for what it is. The GOP's Libby Dole pointed to the youth movement as a kind of defense against the Gender Gap, proof positive that Democrats may have blacks, women, hunchbacks, and Hispanics, but Republicans have their favored groups, too. For the networks, it was a curio, an interesting anomaly. ABC saw a good photo opportunity to haul a few strange Reagan delegates, age 18 to 21, before the camera. The news of Reaganite youths was presented, in other words, as a sort of freak show—and not as a deep-seated political and social shift.

As a result, many have missed the real developments and are ignorant of the substantial changes effected by these activists on the nation's campuses. These students have been successful not by presenting formal manifestos or lists of demands, but in pursuing a loose collection of principles and goals. *Human Events* outlined that basic agenda a few years ago:

A renewed emphasis on achievement in the classroom, on sports and productive activities, as against the '60s ethos of equality, self-expression, and guilt . . . A balanced offering of courses and teachers:

