

not even that flower of Soviet womanhood, Dr. Gorbachev, shared their peculiar vision of careers before all else and ego above everything?

The Angry 150, who, let us note, have wide support amongst the cadres of militant feminists, do not have a very generous sense of the world nor is their vision very intelligent. They opposed an invitation to Mrs. Bush because she had not arrived at her position in life *on her own*, as though they themselves were all clinically maintained white rats, raised under the strictest

laboratory conditions, and with no external circumstances ever affecting their development—not family, personal wealth, distinguished benefactors, affirmative action. Affirmative action? Oh yes, they deny that Mrs. Bush should get a boost in life because of her husband, but they believe they should get a boost because of their gender or, if applicable, their race.

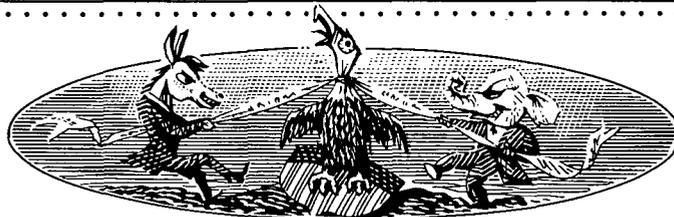
Mrs. Bush did not accept the full humiliation that these bullies impose on the true representatives of the American people when invited to cam-

pus. She refused to get up before the audience and accept their dictates on policy. Eschewing their demands for more futile federal programs to endanger further the American family, she boldly declared, “your human connections with spouses, with children, with friends, are the most important investment you will ever make.”

The greatest irony of the Wellesley row is that the Angry 150 have raised career above family. They espouse what traditional Liberalism has condemned, to wit, rampant materialism. But what

an absurd materialism it is! Over the centuries men and women have lived and died for family. Who but a fool ever died for career? “R.I.P. Charlie Wilson. He Gave His Life That General Motors Might Live.” Or how about: “Ms. Millicent von Hansdoodle died in a duel yesterday defending the honor of the accounting profession against slanders allegedly directed against it by smartalecks who were also disrespectful of executive vice presidents.” Imagine, our bogus progressives now stand four square for the bourgeois grind. □

CAPITOL IDEAS



THE COURAGE OF HIS CONVICTIONS

by Tom Bethell

President Bush received daily reminders from the tax-consumers inside the Beltway that it was high time for him to raise taxes. Budget negotiators would have to venture “where the money is” and support a “sizable tax increase,” the *Washington Post* said, adding a note of urgency: “There isn’t much time left. . . . The longer they wait, the closer will be election day.” (In Washington, elections are, understandably, perceived as hazardous.) Finally, on June 26, Bush issued a statement calling for “tax revenue increases,” and there was a tremendous sense of triumph in Washington. An important principle was thereby unwisely conceded, but budgetarily not much was changed by the statement, which also called for “growth incentives.” By this was meant a capital gains tax-rate reduction, for which it would be worth accepting some taxes on gasoline, cigarettes, and alcohol. But the Beltway gloating was understandable, for the President had at least given the impression that he was willing to sacrifice the defining difference between the political parties.

For the last eighteen months or so there has been a great sense of exasperation in Washington because new tax revenues, which since World War II have flowed effortlessly into the capital, have more or less dried up. As a result, Bush has been repeatedly urged to break his campaign promise. Only the other day there was a long, sly ar-

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ticle on the *Washington Post's* op-ed page by Stuart Eizenstat, Jimmy Carter's chief domestic policy adviser, claiming that “the people will forgive a breach in a major campaign commitment if the President can convincingly demonstrate that external circumstances have changed.”

New revenues have dried up because bracket creep (inflation combined with static tax rates) has been eliminated by the Reagan reforms. Moreover, the “Laffer Curve” argument—that above a certain tax rate, tax revenues do not increase but actually decline—has been shown to work; in the early sixties, the Kennedy tax cuts ensured a massive increase of revenues. Then, for the remainder of the 1960s and all through the 1970s, bracket creep yielded non-legislated tax increases year after year. Washington could hardly devise programs quickly enough to keep up with the revenue bonanza.

By 1980, however, the injustice of taxing middle-income earners as though they were rich disturbed the electorate, who voted Ronald Reagan into office. In 1981 he cut the top tax rate from 70 to 50 percent, then cut it once again in the mid 1980s to a top rate (for most taxpayers) of 28 percent. The Laffer Curve proved as accurate in the 1980s as it had in the 1960s, and revenues continued to grow. But, just to be on the safe side, Reagan signed on to five more revenue-raisers, including hefty new Social Security taxes. By the time he left office in early 1989,

the revenues flowing into Washington were at least 50 percent higher than they had been when he arrived.

Undoubtedly, revenues could be raised once again by lowering tax rates still further—by reducing the top income tax rate to 20 percent, for example, and the capital gains tax likewise. Bush's recent statement, calling for “tax revenue increases,” could in fact be construed as a call for further rate reductions. This will not happen, however, because the desire of politicians to spend the people's money is exceeded by the pleasure so many of them take in appealing to envy. The tax code (Democrats in particular feel) ought to be punitive, even if this *does* detract from revenues. Washington is now in the unprecedented position of having to vote explicitly for tax increases to raise still more revenues. Bracket creep no longer exists—there are only two tax brackets, and the threshold dividing them is indexed to inflation.

In its ravenous desire to spend more and more of the people's money, Washington already enjoys the overwhelming support of the press corps. An interesting aspect of the recent budget struggle, however, has been the way in which the internal dynamics of the news media have worked to impede the necessary “deal” being cut. The phrase that has been used is “immaculate conception.” An immaculately conceived budget “compromise” would be one in which all the relevant parties—both from the White House and Capitol Hill—met in private and struck a bargain in which taxes were raised, some (not

much!) spending was cut, and everyone agreed to the outcome. All participants would march out to face the cameras in unison, announcing that everything was unanimous. There would be no “finger-pointing.” The actual negotiating steps would remain invisible and completely inscrutable to the voters.

Bush himself obviously pines for invisible negotiations yielding unanimous conclusions, and he has had some success in imposing this *modus operandi* on his administration. But he can't impose it on the legislative branch, with whom in this instance he must negotiate. Every time the dealers get together for a session, legislators leak the details of who said what to their sources in the news media. As a result, the necessary secrecy has proved unattainable. The whole proceedings might as well be conducted in front of live television cameras. And when President Bush issued his ill-advised June 26 statement, there was finger-pointing galore, with lots of Democrats on camera saying (nudge-nudge, wink-wink) that they weren't going to blame Bush for breaking his campaign promise. One wonders if Bush will learn from this experience.

As I write, the likelihood that the budget negotiations will produce much change in the tax code seems fairly small. Ultimately, everything will depend on the President. What, then, are we to make of the man? Let us note first of all key differences between George Herbert Walker Bush

and the President he succeeded. Reagan came to Washington advertising his disagreements with Washington. He hired conservative speech writers, but his chiefs of staff were (with the partial exception of Don Regan) loyal advocates of the Beltway crowd. Reagan seemed to enjoy rhetorical conflict, but actual conflict he avoided as much as possible. His opinions were "set in concrete," but the sound we

heard was that of concrete cracking. His lips said *no, no* but his pen said *yes, yes*. Political capital was something he loved to hoard and hated to spend. He campaigned outside the Beltway and governed within it. He seemed to prize his popularity above all things. After his re-election in 1984, when he no longer needed the voters and already had the conservatives in one pocket, he seemed eager to win the

liberals into the other. He (or Nancy, or both) bought the spurious argument that his "place in history" depended on his embracing liberal initiatives. The Middle East hostages he seemed to regard as Rose Garden photo opportunities, and he paid a price for that mistake. One is tempted to say that Reagan had convictions, but did not have the courage of his convictions. The media bristled at Reagan when he

arrived—he "was nothing but an actor." But they applauded his performance when he left.

By contrast, President Bush came to the Oval Office promising reconciliation rather than conflict. He would work *with* Washington rather than against it. Out went the conservative speech writers. The media gave Bush a warm ovation—now there would be openness and press conferences galore. If political disagreements arose (Bush seemed to believe), misunderstanding must be the root cause. Patient negotiations would therefore resolve all difficulties. People everywhere—inside the Beltway and out—were basically looking for the same thing: a problem-solving government. So there would be talks with Palestinians and dialogue with Capitol Hill, and Bush himself would be known as the education President.

Bush comes from a generation (probably under the influence of the New Deal and World War II) which places great faith in consensus, in the adequacy of good intentions, and in the benign effects of big government. He comes from a class and background which seemed privileged at the outset of the twentieth century, but irrelevant as we approach its close. His father, Prescott Bush, who represented Connecticut in the U.S. Senate (he retired in 1962), was an upright gentleman who played by the rules and assumed (with ample precedent) that those he dealt with would do likewise. In his milieu, most of the rules were unwritten and observed without question. True, Hobe Baker had been deliberately tripped on the hockey field of St. Paul's, but that was an aberration. Prescott Bush's idea of a revolution was to revolutionize the bass part in the barbershop quartet and to change the stymie rule in golf. He was a senior prefect, a good athlete, a member of the Whiffenpoofs and Skull and Bones and the Yale Glee Club, had briefly considered the Episcopalian ministry, was a partner of Brown Brothers, Harriman, and president of the U.S. Golf Association.

Politically, Prescott Bush "never tried to prepare his sons for anything but good citizenry," according to Fitzhugh Green's recent biography, *George Bush* (from which some of this material is taken). Politics was construed as public service—a matter of giving something back to the system that had given one so much to begin with. In his business days, Prescott Bush would spend twelve hours a day in Manhattan and then devote evenings to hospital work or local town council meetings. He was one of those very decent Republicans who at all times did the right thing: resisted Joe McCarthy, supported civil rights, and when the Democrats became a little too enthu-

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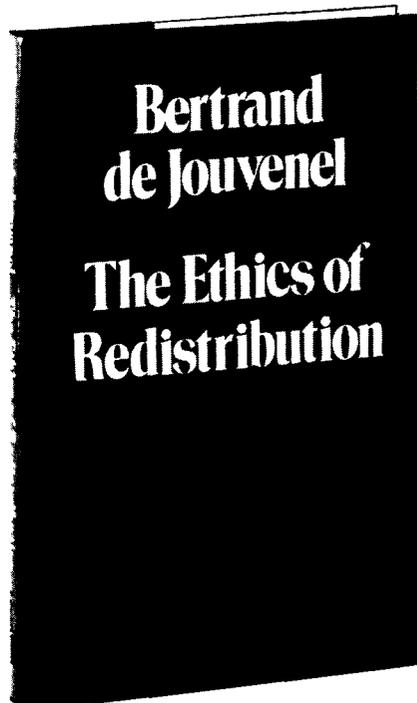
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siastic on the spending side, why, he would understand the need to restore a measure of fiscal balance on the revenue side. Responsible Republicanism! (The kind that Senator Dole emulates and Congressman Gingrich does not.)

One is tempted to say that Prescott Bush didn't prepare his sons for the real world at all. Modest George went on to Greenwich Country Day, then to Phillips Academy at Andover, school motto *Non Sibi* (not for oneself). He played by the book and played to win: president of senior class, president of Greeks, captain of baseball and soccer. Competitive! Met Barbara at Greenwich Country Club, rustle of *crepe de chine*, Glenn Miller tunes, military uniforms, Secretary of War Stimson delivers 1942 commencement address at Andover, George volunteers, youngest pilot in the Navy, Wings, June 1943; flew fifty-eight combat missions, Distinguished Flying Cross, shot down twice over the Pacific, the second time two crew members killed, nearby submarine rescues GHWB from grim fate . . .

In light of this it's presumptuous to claim that the President has led a sheltered life. True, he majored in economics at Yale, but after graduating he did something that must have surprised his thousands of friends. He headed off for Odessa, Texas, in his red 1947 Studebaker. Starting out as a laborer for Dresser Industries, he lived with Barbara on a dirt road "in a frame building, bare boards nailed together without insulation" (Green writes). Wall Street would have been easier—and you might say he had the contacts. Later he formed his own business, entering the competitive arena of the independent oilmen in Midland, Texas.

Bush's career has demonstrated an outstanding ability to play by the rules. Now he is in a position where he must formulate them. Presumably he realizes that he is "playing" with people—including a good many of the Democrats on Capitol Hill these days—whose ideas about the rules of politics are radically different from anything his father would have encountered in the 1950s. The old consensus can no longer be sustained. For example, Bush is now confronted with a "civil rights" bill that mandates a great expansion of government power—the exact opposite of what "civil rights" are supposed to do.

Conservatives are uneasy about Bush, worrying whether he understands that the rules are no longer those that went without saying in the Greenwich Country Club. There are grounds for uneasiness. When he said he wanted to become the "education President," Bush obviously thought that mere goodwill

was sufficient, not realizing that socialism can no more be made to work in the field of education than in any other.

But he has also shown signs of an indispensable quality—courage. If Reagan lacked the courage of his convictions, Bush has shown that he has the courage—when he can muster the necessary convictions. His decision to maintain China's most-favored-nation

trading status was nothing if not courageous. It was also the correct call. (In foreign affairs more generally, Bush may not have to do very much at all—just let James Baker jet back and forth from one international conference to another, pretending to shape events that are fortunately outside his control.)

But the decisive events of Bush's presidency will be domestic, and they

lie immediately ahead. Let us hope that he heeds the advice of his chief of staff, John Sununu. If Bush can in practice win a capital gains tax cut with insignificant sin taxes, hold down spending, and rule out civil privileges masquerading as civil rights—if he can restore the old rules in public life as well as he could play by them in private life—he will have earned our thanks. We shall see. □

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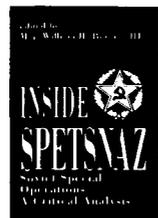
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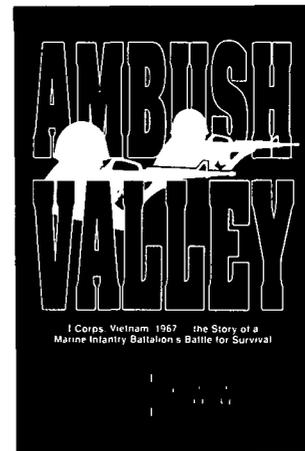
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ENVIRONMENTAL GORE

Having failed to distinguish himself from his fellow dwarves in the 1988 primaries, Sen. Al Gore is hoping that radical green rhetoric will do the trick for him in 1992.

Nashville

In the two years since his run for the White House crashed and burned in the New York primaries, Tennessee's Albert Gore, Jr. has emerged as the greenest of the Democratic presidential hopefuls for 1992. Gore thinks the ecological fate of the earth is the key issue of the 1990s, but his bid to become the "environmental candidate" has led him on a leftward journey through a lurid and occasionally vulgar rhetorical landscape. Rather than charting the future of the Democratic party, he seems to be repeating its worst mistakes.

Soon after the 1988 debacle, Gore and his advisers apparently seized on the environment as the issue to set the senator apart from the Democratic pack. In fairness, Gore has shown a passing interest in environmental matters since his arrival in Washington in 1976 as a member of the House of Representatives. Yet, contrary to the impression the Gore camp seeks to convey, environmentalism was a minor item in his 1988 campaign. In his basic stump speech, the environment is mentioned only once, in the penultimate paragraph, amid a laundry list of pledges "... to build the best education system in the entire world; ... to improve access to health care and combat the AIDS epidemic; to seize new opportunities for arms control; ... to protect our environment; to make continued progress on civil rights ...". Hardly an environmental call-to-arms from young Albert.

The first notes of Gore's new song were sounded before the presidential election year had closed, in a December 26 article for the *New Republic*, an early and enthusiastic backer of his White

House bid. In a short piece about his recent trip to Antarctica—Gore would soon be jetting off to Brazil and Moscow in search of ecological enlightenment—we see Albert in "the coldest place on earth ... hunt[ing] for information about global warming." Antarctica, he noted, is the "frontier of the global ecological crisis," adding that awaiting us are three potential catastrophes: rising seas; carbon dioxide-choked oceans; and a change in the "very pattern of the world weather system." The real question, Gore concluded, is "whether the world's political system can find a new equilibrium before the world's climate system loses its current one."

Less than a week later, Gore was featured in *Time's* "Planet of the Year" issue as "one of the most ardent environmentalists in Congress." The "fact that we face an ecological crisis without any precedent in historic times is no longer a matter of dispute wor-

thy of recognition," Gore said. "And those who, for the purpose of maintaining balance in debate, take the contrarian view that there is significant uncertainty about whether it's real are hurting our ability to respond." Gore's dismissal of valid doubts wasn't a credit to his statesmanship or his science, but it was politically opportune. The environmental movement was gathering steam, and Gore was determined to stay at the head of it. His radical green- ing had begun in earnest.

Evocations of "crisis" and "catastrophe" were not enough, and Gore soon turned up the rhetorical volume. We are now facing "the horrendous prospect of an ecological collapse," Gore told a National Academy of Sciences forum on global climate change a few months later. "Nuclear war is an apocalyptic subject, and so is global environmental destruction. We

are dealing here with increasingly credible forecasts of climatic dislocations, vast changes in growing cycles, inundations of coastal areas and the loss to the sea of vast territories—some of them very heavily developed and populated." An alarm must be sounded "loudly and clearly—of imminent and grave danger."

Gore echoes the radical environmental argument, which lays the blame for an allegedly enormous ecological devastation at the feet of industry and technology, more precisely at the feet of industrial capitalism itself. A typical Gore summary—without nuance or light—appeared in a *Washington Post* article: "The world's forests are being destroyed; an enormous hole is opening in the ozone layer. Living species are dying at an unprecedented rate. Chemical wastes, in growing volumes, are seeping downward to poison groundwater while huge quantities of carbon dioxide, methane and chlorofluorocarbons [CFCs] are trapping heat in the atmosphere and raising global temperatures. ... It took 10,000 human lifetimes for the population to reach 2 billion. Now in the course of one lifetime, yours and mine, it is rocketing from 2 billion to 10 billion ...". Gore also routinely includes in this litany the death by starvation or malnutrition of "40,000 babies ... every day." Rainforest destruction. Ozone depletion. Species extinction. Population explosion. Dead children. Gore bangs out the dark refrains of his eco-apocalypse whenever he has a national audience.

Gore's descent into apocalyptic demagoguery hit a new low last year on the op-ed pages of the *New York Times*, when he compared the planet's ecological condition to the rise of Hitler in the 1930s. "Humankind has suddenly entered into a brand-new relationship with our planet," he wrote in a fulmination entitled "An Ecological



Micah Morrison is The American Spectator's roving correspondent. He is working on a book about the Yellowstone fires and environmental politics for Harper & Row.