

# EDITORIALS



## NEWT THE WHALER

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

George Herbert Walker Bush has obviously never read the memoirs of Harry S. Truman or Hubert Humphrey, and Congressman Newt Gingrich has. Had the very capable gentleman who now serves as President read these memoirs he would have avoided the weeks of contretemps that he has suffered in budget negotiations, and with Gingrich at his side he might now be leading Republican challengers to victory against incumbent Democrats all over the country. Yet because President Bush is a gentleman he has had his "no new taxes" policy and much of his Reaganite allure denied him. He is headed for a terrible midterm defeat.

In the memoirs of Truman and Humphrey, our gentlemanly President would discover why he has just been taken to the cleaners by the Democrats and perhaps why his most useful lieutenant on Capitol Hill is Gingrich, the Republican whip who led the brassy Republi-

*Adapted from RET's weekly Washington Post column syndicated by King Features.*

can revolt against the Washington establishment's budget deal of September 30. Truman, at ease in retirement, and Humphrey, honored and loved at the end of a distinguished career, both wrote memoirs containing much good sense and many interesting observations; but never does either man pass up an opportunity for partisan sniping. Neither commits the ultimate *faux pas* as a successful Democrat to leave on record a generous reference to any living member of the loyal opposition. Newt Gingrich will some day write similar memoirs, or he will not be true to his political instincts.

He will also not remain the asset to the Republic that he now is. He is a defender of the wisdom of the 1980s. In Washington he is the defender of the taxpayers' 1980s tax cuts. Thus he is our staunch champion of economic growth. He recognizes that only economic growth can diminish the size of the deficit as a percentage of gross national product—which is all that can be hoped for in balancing the budget, given the prodigal ways of Washington's establishment. Gingrich is also one of

the few Republicans capable of emulating what is best in the Democratic politicians. I have in mind the Democrats' edifying ardor for eye-gouges, blows below the belt—and venomous partisanship. The Democrats are our nation's most professional politicians. I admire them.

Gingrich has made the astute observation that a Democrat rises with the sun and contemplates the many ways he can bring mischief to Republicans. The Republican contemplates what he can do to govern. President Bush has been duly concerned about the growing deficit, but he made the mistake of believing that the Democrats would compromise on their lust to spend if he would compromise on his pious promises against higher taxes. The Democrats have compromised nothing. We know that the President has joined with the Democrats in support of deficit-reduction agreements and raised taxes. What very few Americans know is that these agreements do not cut spending. (See my colleague Tom Bethell's column on the next page for details.) The original deal that Gingrich killed would have allowed an 8 percent increase in spending from fiscal 1990 to fiscal 1991, an increase far in excess of inflation. As Ronald Reagan learned in 1982, Democrats are biologically incapable of spending cuts.

A major reason for the federal deficit is the swarm of voracious lobbyists feasting off budget bills. When tax rates are high the lobbyists are particularly successful in arranging exemptions for special interests. Consequently, upper-income earners pay less in taxes and the middle classes pay more. When Ronald Reagan lowered marginal tax rates in 1981 and 1986, these exemptions lost value or were pared back. Hence, through the 1980s there was a shift in actual tax burden away from the middle class to the rich. The day the budget negotiators began negotiating higher taxes, the lobbyists converged on the negotiators, and the exemptions and subsidies spread like viruses.

Senator Mitchell's constituents in the boat-building industry got theirs. Senator Dole's constituents in the aircraft industry were remembered. Senator Bentsen's supporters in the oil patch, Senator Moynihan's friends in the arts, all the wheelers and dealers have returned to raise the cost of government for the middle class. There is nothing new here, save the arrival of Congressman Gingrich and his rebels. They oppose taxes, favor growth, and promise to gouge eyes and rabbit-punch their way to victory over the Washington establishment. President Bush should wish them well. □

## CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

*Kitty Hawk, North Carolina*

On October 5, I suffered a shock, and immediately took off to the beach to reflect on The Immensities (best done with a fishing rod in hand). The bold and ebullient William F. Buckley, Jr., at a festive dinner for the magazine he founded, *National Review*, ended another of those mellifluous speeches of his with a sob of emotion and retired as editor-in-chief. The thirty-five years during which he edited *NR* and shaped the conservatism that dominated American politics in the 1980s got him. I never thought they would.

When he began the magazine, he was

the *enfant terrible* of a small movement of anti-Communists, traditionalists, and libertarians. Eventually they composed the conservative movement, and for thirty-five years that movement has remained completely out of synch with the Republic's intellectual class. It is now, of course, obvious to all, save a few drunks and the Republic's bovine intelligentsia, that Bill and his conservative co-conspirators were out of synch with the intellectual class because Bill and company were in synch with the American people. Hence, they were abominated by the intelligentsia whose terms of abuse never applied to



Bill or, come to think of it, to the American people.

Contrary to the bovine intelligentsia, Bill and the American people are not racist or imperialist. They are generous and confident. They are not reactionary or timid. They are daring, hard-working, eager for progress. At his core, the typical American is devoted to family, country, personal liberty, economic growth, and expanded opportunity for all. That's Bill, and with a few more pretty thoughts

thrown in, that's conservatism.

When Bill began formulating and popularizing the conservative position, the bovine intelligentsia frequently disparaged him as a monarchist or at least an adherent to aristocracy. There is no truth to that charge, though one can understand its origin. Bill is a gentleman, and very few of his antagonists ever encounter gentlemen. In fact, at great universities and at other bemused provinces where the bovine intelligentsia dominate, public toilets can never

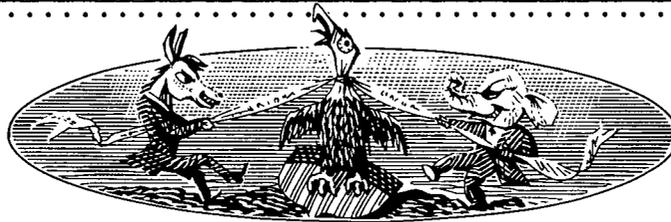
be designated by signs that read "Gentlemen" and "Ladies" lest confusion and protest ensue.

Bill is also the possessor of a jarringly intelligent mind, thoroughly engaged with thought and ideas; and that is another reason that he is out of synch with the intelligentsia, a group that increasingly confuses thought with psychotherapy. Of course, the American intelligentsia's addiction to psychiatry is no laughing matter. It is a fact that no other group of Americans

contains the intelligentsia's ratio of individuals who think that they are President of the United States, though the clergy comes close. But enough of this shameless bashing of American intellectuals. I bring it up only because Bill has exemplified all that an intellectual should be, and the average American intellectual falls so pitifully below the mark.

Rushing through his decades of public life, Bill has written a Himalaya of  
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## CAPITOL IDEAS



### SMOKE, MIRRORS, AND THE ADVERSARY PRESS

by Tom Bethell

President Bush's performance in the budget talks perhaps even surpasses conservatives' worst suspicions about his lack of political convictions or even political common sense. The damage to the Republican party will be considerable, and Bush himself is unlikely to recover fully from it. He will soon find himself looking back nostalgically to July 1990 as a time when his position was seemingly unassailable. Then he made two careless moves. First he placed 200,000 U.S. troops in the Saudi Arabian desert. The alliance that he was so highly praised for assembling will henceforth make life difficult for him. A few weeks later, he abandoned for good his pledge not to raise taxes. Once again, the Beltway culture and the media praised him for doing so. The final two weeks before the midterm elections he will spend campaigning for massive tax increases. The "\$500 billion deficit reduction package" will be relabeled, aptly, the "1990 Bush tax increase."

In abandoning his tax pledge, Bush showed that he never understood how potent it was. Throwing it away was an error on a par with that of an inexperienced card player who is dealt four aces but believes them to be low rather than high. Bush's political judgment does seem to be that weak. On October 6, the *Washington Post* reported that a "long-time Bush associate" said of Bush: "He didn't like it [domestic policy] when he first ran for President, he didn't like it when he was vice presi-

dent, and he doesn't like it much now. He knows he can't avoid it, but that doesn't make him have to like it. All you've got to do is spend five minutes talking to him about China and five talking about the budget to know where he's at." (James Baker, one wonders?)

Three days later Bush was asked at a news conference: "Why do you think you're so much more comfortable with and better at foreign matters than domestic? To some people, it seems almost like two Presidents."

"Well," he replied, he was troubled because "I don't really know the answer to it. Perhaps it has to do with the fact that in one, I think the Vandenberg theory applies. People really basically want to support the President on foreign affairs, and partisanship does, in a sense, stop at the water's edge. Whereas on domestic policy, here I am with Democratic majorities in the Senate and House, having to try to persuade them to do what I think is best. And it's complicated."

His mistake was trying to persuade "them." He should have tried to persuade the American people—not to "do" anything, but to understand that the Congress had by no means given up its big-spending ways, and that nothing could be reformed, certainly not the budget deficit, until this was corrected.

One day, elected leaders in Washington will understand that by drawing battle lines they can win battles. Notice that I didn't say Republican politicians. The current Republican

leadership does not think in terms of winning and the best we can hope for is that they will finally retire to their respective golf courses. Pursuing the golfing metaphor briefly, it's more appropriate to think of Bush, Dole, Michel & Co. not so much as golfers as caddies: Caddies to the Democrats. Bush is Caddy in Chief (as he wavered on taxes and capital gains, Maureen Dowd of the *New York Times* reported on October 21, "he clung to the Democratic leadership and kept House Republicans at a distance"); Michel is the Dutiful Caddy, and Bob Dole the Angry Caddy—angry at the younger Republicans like Newt Gingrich of Georgia, for wanting to be players rather than caddies.

I agree with Paul Gigot of the *Wall Street Journal* and Tony Snow of the *Washington Times* that the unacknowledged battle lines are demographic. The younger Republicans know they can win if they are permitted to fight. Vice President Quayle understands this. So do Gingrich and Reps. Bob Walker (R-Penn.) and Vin Weber (R-Minn.). Bush doesn't. The older Republicans, almost without exception, are unable to think of themselves as the initiators of winning policies. One day Bush went up to Capitol Hill, having signed the stop-gap spending bill he had threatened to veto two days earlier, and said: "I'm here to discuss what we can do at the White House to help move the process forward." Spoken like a Republican who remembers the Depression and thinks of government in World War II terms: Let's make it bipartisan—best

of all a national unity government.

On September 30, Bush notoriously announced that he had managed to get a \$500 billion deficit reduction deal—the result of "blood, sweat, and fears." "It has the largest spending savings ever—more than \$300 billion," Bush said in his televised address. "For the first time," he added, "leaders of the Democratic Congress have agreed to real cuts that will be enforced by law, not promises. No smoke, no mirrors . . ."

Notice the awkward phrase "spending savings." Right there, you can see smoke and mirrors.

Budget numbers are tiresome, but bear with me. You probably haven't seen these numbers in print. All you have to know is that federal fiscal years begin three months ahead of calendar years, on October 1. So we are just beginning a new fiscal year, 1991. The relevant budget numbers are put out by the Office of Management and Budget, presided over by Dick Darman—the man primarily responsible for leading Bush into this domestic policy morass.

I phoned the OMB to find out just two numbers: the overall government spending totals, or "outlays," for fiscal year 1990 (just ended); and for comparison purposes, the comparable outlays for the year just beginning. A woman at the press office answered the phone. I won't give her name because she was quite candid and forthcoming. "There are lots of different numbers that are correct," she said. "Probably up to about nine numbers." —

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