

er grab, felicitously named the "Food, Drug, Cosmetic, and Device Enforcement Amendments of 1991." I shall leave the Device Enforcement aspects of this matter for later discussion when children are not present. I am not certain what "devices" Congressman Waxman has in mind, but this is a disquieting term, especially in light of the power Congressman Waxman's bill would invest in his favorite governmental agency, the Federal Food and Drug Administration.

That agency now has more power to terrify the corner grocer or pharmacist than the Drug Enforcement Administra-

tion has to apprehend cocaine peddlers. What Congressman Waxman's bill will mean for entrepreneurs and consumers can only be imagined. Lawyers defending them will prosper handsomely; but the increased regulations will cost us all a bundle, and only God knows what this legislation will mean for "Device Enforcement."

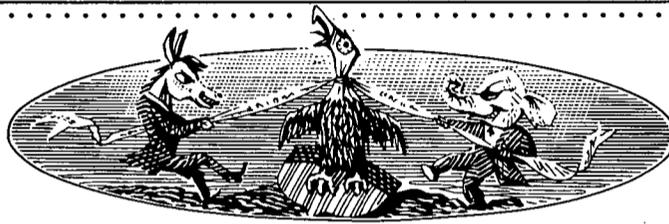
The act's very existence demonstrates the schizophrenia of the Democrats. At once they stand with Senator Mitchell and say presidential government does not matter. Then again they stand with Congressman Waxman and say the government will improve us. His act will

allow warrantless electronic surveillance of companies under the FDA's vast purview (which includes approximately 25 percent of the Gross National Product). All company records—including trade secrets and product formulations—would be exposed to FDA inspectors. The FDA would be able to recall products and embargo them for weeks without hearings or a right of appeal; and it would impose stupendous penalties. Over vast sectors of the American economy the FDA would be able to act as policeman and prosecutor, judge and jury.

This power grab is true folly. It invites

corruption, as all government regulations invite corruption—note the S&L scandals. It invites further politicization of the economy, for now interested groups can get their way not by competing in the marketplace but by bringing political pressure to bear on a government agency. Finally, the increased menace of lawsuits will stifle product innovation. Surely the world would be a safer place if the Democrats observed laissez-faire at home and allowed our government to wield power abroad. Recent experience proves as much, but then the Democrats have been remote from recent experience, haven't they? □

CAPITOL IDEAS



A CHAT WITH IRVING KRISTOL

by Tom Bethell

It was the day before Prof. Anita Hill's vindictive debut on Capitol Hill, and Irving Kristol was feeling depressed. Depressed? Normally he is the voice of optimism. "Depressed about Clarence Thomas, about Elliott Abrams, all the other things happening," he said. "Washington is a beautiful city, in the middle of which there is this cesspool called the United States Congress."

He was sitting in his "afternoon" office at the American Enterprise Institute, where he has long been a Distinguished Fellow. Recently he had been selected to receive the Institute's Francis Boyer Award for 1991. He is also publisher of the *National Interest* and co-editor of the *Public Interest*, where he has a "morning" office. He has been called the godfather of neoconservatism, his articles in the *Wall Street Journal* having been particularly influential. His hallmark is a relaxed, lucid style—the commonsensical voice of one who refuses to be impressed by experts. For years he was a professor of "social thought" at New York University, without having gone to graduate school. His son, William Kristol, is the chief of staff to Vice President Dan Quayle, and his wife, Gertrude Himmelfarb, is an eminent historian. He moved to Washington from New York four years ago.

What could be done about the nation's capital? "Term limitations are a

way of flushing out the filthy water and flushing in some fresh water," he said. "You also flush out some good things, but that's the price you have to be prepared to pay." He said that President Bush was permitting the Vice President to "run with" the issue, but he wished Bush himself would do so. Senior Republicans in Congress (ever willing to enjoy the perquisites of office and cede policy to the Democrats) are opposed to term limits. "It is the most popular issue in the United States today," Kristol said. "By far. And could make a very big difference. I'd love to hear the Democrats oppose it."

Kristol had found persuasive a recent book arguing that the Republicans recruit people "who don't believe in big government and therefore do not make good politicians." Implying, of course, that big government is popular and here to stay. Jack Kemp, secretary of HUD, has said much the same thing: Why should Republicans let Democrats outbid them in the compassion-stakes? Politics will always prevent spending reductions anyway. Calling for an increase in social security payments in 1987, Kristol deplored the Republicans' tendency to "deny themselves any interesting initiatives in social policy, because such initiatives always cost some money." The Reagan Administration, he added, had "mindlessly submitted to the tyranny of the budget."

Political discussions with Kristol have

a way of turning swiftly from the ideal to the feasible. Pragmatism prevails over ideology. One wonders: Is he not rather too comfortable with big government?

"Give me something you would do to reduce it."

How about getting the government out of education? Socialism has failed in every other field.

"Federal government, I assume?"

Why not the states as well?

"Come on," he said. You have to go back "prior to about 1835" to find a precedent for that. "It's a little ridiculous to say that the last 150 years have been one vast error." You can say that sort of thing as an intellectual exercise, "but not if you want to be taken seriously politically."

How about John Stuart Mill's belief that those on "parish relief" (welfare) shouldn't be allowed to vote?

"Oh, that doesn't matter really, in our society. The number of people on welfare who vote is so trivial that it's of no significance."

Kristol did much to disseminate supply-side economics in the late 1970s—a triumph of political advocacy. Tax rate reductions were urged (the Laffer Curve first appeared in print in the *Public Interest*), and a few years later implemented. The economy blossomed. And notice: government revenues increased markedly, as promised by Laffer. Compromise was at the heart of supply-side theory: if the government permitted people to keep a greater percentage of what they earned at the margin, the gov-

ernment would reap greater revenues. All would therefore gain.

The Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman, a man of libertarian preferences, observed at the time that if it was true that a tax-rate reduction increased government revenue, the rate obviously hadn't been cut enough. Kristol, on the other hand, was undisturbed by the prospect of more revenue flowing into the Treasury. In fact, his neoconservatism has often seemed more a matter of the Democrats' moving left than his moving right—as he himself has often said. It speaks volumes about the leftist fanaticism to which we have all been subjected in recent years that the supply-side compromise was itself shrilly denounced as ideological extremism and ridiculed by journalists and Democrats. Kristol touched on this when I spoke to him.

"The Democratic party is falling apart," he said. "Which is lucky for us. It's completely out of sync with the public. What's happening to the Democratic party is the same as what has been happening to the Labour party in England. It's becoming more and more the captive of ideological groups who are very influential but do not constitute a majority. I do not see how that can change." He cited the feminists, who already were baying on behalf of Anita Hill—long before they could have known whether she was telling the truth. "And the media is populated by these same people, which gives them tremendous resonance," Kristol added. —

In England, the loony left was so labeled—by Margaret Thatcher. But here, Republicans defer to each and every Democratic initiative, worriedly serving up their very own alternative (conceding the principle but quibbling about dollars). Kristol added that he might say something about the “loony liberals” himself. About the Republicans, he is inclined to speak tactfully. He wonders why they don’t ever resort to ridicule.

The opportunities are there. “I’m watching with great interest what is happening in New York City,” he said. “They have this program of handing out condoms to high school students. It is so absurd to imagine a 13- or 14-year-old girl coming home waving a condom, telling her mother, ‘Mom, look what I got in school today,’ and her ten-year old sister saying, ‘Hey, I want one of those.’ This is not the way life is sup-

posed to be in a civilized country, let alone a democracy. It’s not happening, as far as I know, in any other country. It’s peculiar to New York, but it’s the Democratic party in New York that’s doing it. I’d love to see the President or the Vice President get up and hold this up as an instance of lunatic liberalism. It’s lunacy to encourage kids to have sex; aside from the fact that it will wreck the educational system.” He sighed and lit

a Carlton. “It would be nice to have a Republican party a lot more self-confident, more articulate, more political,” he conceded. “But we’ll have to wait a while.”

Born in Brooklyn in 1920, Irving Kristol belongs to a generation that grew up overwhelmingly dedicated to progressive politics. In 1936 he went to City College, in Harlem, where the main political division was between Alcove One (Trotskyist, to which Kristol belonged), and Alcove Two (Stalinist, and about ten times larger than Alcove One). There were also conventional New Dealers—regarded as apolitical by the standards of the time. Kristol vaguely recalls that there may have been a Newman Club, and about one professor there was a scurrilous rumor that he played golf: think of him as the college Republican. Conservatives were invisible, perhaps nonexistent.

Unemployment was high, factories were standing idle, and, as Kristol said, the solution seemed obvious enough at the time: put the unemployed workers into the factories. Since private enterprise would not do it, the state had to assume control of the economy. “That’s why we were all socialists,” he said.

It’s also worth noting that the socialized institutions experienced by Kristol and others of his generation worked well at the time. At PS 54 in Brooklyn, Kristol recalled, they even had fingernail inspection. Sneakers would have been out of the question. He went on to Boys’ High, in Brooklyn, where the academic standards were rigorous. Even though he found the work relatively easy, he still had about two hours’ homework every night. At City College he found himself in a far more competitive and academically challenging atmosphere. Despite the comparative poverty of his upbringing—his father was a garment worker who suffered reverses during the Depression—Kristol looks back on the social milieu of his youth as a golden age. The city was orderly and there was no crime on the streets.

He has never been back to City College—nostalgia is something that he resolutely eschews. But the neighborhoods and the institutions of his youth stand in ruins now—ruined by the dominant ideology that repudiates individual responsibility and stigmatizes its critics as racist, sexist, etc. He continues to keep an eye on New York, though, sometimes returning there on business.

“It’s still a great city,” he said, “and its decline is not going to be precipitous, because there are institutions there with deep roots, like the financial community. But the city is in gradual decline. And I don’t see what can reverse it. The commercial real-estate situation is getting

Religion and the Life of the Intellect



In many intellectual circles the myth still circulates that religion is the preserve of the dim-witted and unlettered. Yet, recently *The New York Times Magazine* carried an article on the “return to religion” among intellectuals. From Harvard to Berkeley, and amid inquisitive people generally, there’s an undeniable renewal of interest in the questions traditional religion raises and seeks to answer. This fascination is largely a result of the failures of secular substitutes for religion (such as rationalism, narcissism, technological utopianism, aestheticism, and extremist political ideologies) to give abidingly satisfying answers to the truly significant puzzles in life: goodness, suffering, love, death, and the meaning of it all.

By no means, however, does this religious renaissance entail embracing the ersatz gods of dog-eat-dog individualism, consumerism, or superpatriotism. Nor does it imply a retreat from working for peace, justice, or human dignity. Rather, there’s an awareness that, as Jean Bethke Elshtain put it, religious commitment “can help further social reform,” and that religion can supply the ethical bedrock upon which to make political choices which are far more durable than those based on passing ideologies and enthusiasms. Nor does the new openness to religion signify a hostility to science, but rather an appreciation of the limits of science and technology.

The New York Times Magazine article dis-

cussed the NEW OXFORD REVIEW as part of this return to religion, and rightly so. We at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW are spearheading today’s intellectual engagement with what Daniel Bell terms “the sacred.” We are particularly interested in exploring religious commitments that yield humane social consequences, as exemplified by such giants as St. Francis, Gandhi, Bonhoeffer, Barth, Tawney, Schumacher, Mounier, Dorothy Day, Archbishop Tutu, Simone Weil, Martin Luther King Jr., and Archbishop Romero. And we probe the literary and philosophical riches offered by such greats as Kierkegaard, Tolstoy, Buber, Auden, Eliot, Silone, Maritain, Waugh, Merton, C.S. Lewis, Walker Percy, Flannery O’Connor, and Graham Greene.

An ecumenical monthly edited by lay Catholics, we’ve been characterized by George Will as “splendid,” by the University of Chicago’s Martin E. Marty as “lively,” by Berkeley’s John T. Noonan Jr. as “indispensable,” and by *Newsweek* as “thoughtful and often cheeky.”

Those who write for us — Robert N. Bellah, J.M. Cameron, John Lukacs, Henri J.M. Nouwen, Robert Coles, Christopher Lasch, Eileen Egan, and others — express themselves with clarity, verve, style, and heart. We bat around a wide variety of issues and defy easy pigeonholing. If you’re keen on intellectual ferment and the life of the mind and spirit, subscribe today!

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worse, not better. Crime is getting worse, not better. If you look at any index of social well-being, it's getting worse, not better. The public schools are getting worse, not better. And it will end up like Detroit or East St. Louis. But it will take time. It's not going to happen in five years. But it might happen in fifteen. And I don't mind. I don't care anymore. The people who are governing New York are so incredibly dogmatic ideologically, so incredibly stupid, so lacking in common sense, and they keep getting reelected. All one can do is shrug one's shoulders and say, If that's what the people want, let them have it. Only don't come to Washington begging for money. They're not going to get it anyhow."

In 1953 Kristol became co-editor (with Stephen Spender) of *Encounter*, published under the auspices of the Congress for Cultural Freedom (with CIA funding, as was not known at the time by the editors). The magazine was established to resist the "Soviet myths," as Peter Coleman calls it in his recent book, *The Liberal Conspiracy*. Reviewing the book here (*TAS*, June 1990), John Muggerridge wrote: "*Encounter* got us used to the idea that any serious attack on Soviet totalitarianism must come from the left."

"Well, there's some truth in that," Kristol said. "But a lot of people talk as if there was a conservative intelligentsia that could have been mobilized, and there wasn't." *Encounter* supported the Gaitskell wing of the Labour party, but you had to do that to influence intellectuals then. More controversially, Muggerridge wrote that the Cold War was a "civil war on the left, a Marxist Protestant reformation, the great theological question under dispute being whether truth resides in the Communist party or in the hearts of individual believers." Kristol called this "peculiarly reactionary." The *intellectual* fight may have been between democratic socialists and Communists who shared the values of the left. "But that's not what the Cold War was—there was a Soviet Army and the American Army, countries were occupied and millions were killed."

Anyway, the Cold War is over now, Communism is dead, and Alcove One has prevailed over Alcove Two. Maybe there was something about Communism, some peculiar virulence, that necessitated a homeopathic response. We are witnessing "the end of a major phase" of Western civilization, as Kristol pointed out recently in *Commentary*. Secular humanism has severely eroded our domestic institutions—our schools, courts, churches, media. We are now threatened with an "upsurge of anti-biblical barbarism that will challenge Christianity, Judaism and Western civilization

altogether," he wrote. For this reason, and because he is basically an optimist, Kristol is predicting a religious resurgence: "Without a set of religious beliefs that anchor your way of life, everything becomes permitted, and then you get anarchistic lunacy, as we have in the arts today, or liberal lunacy, as we have in our social policy. So I think that [resurgence] will become more and more evident with every passing year. I think

Russia is going to become a very religious country."

Retirement? His father lived for twenty years in the Los Angeles suburbs after retiring. "There is of course an old Jewish belief that all Jews should go to Jerusalem to die," Kristol said. "It's a beautiful city—you feel like you're in the center of history. But I don't think I'll go there. I think I'll stay in Washington—although I must say, that cesspool in

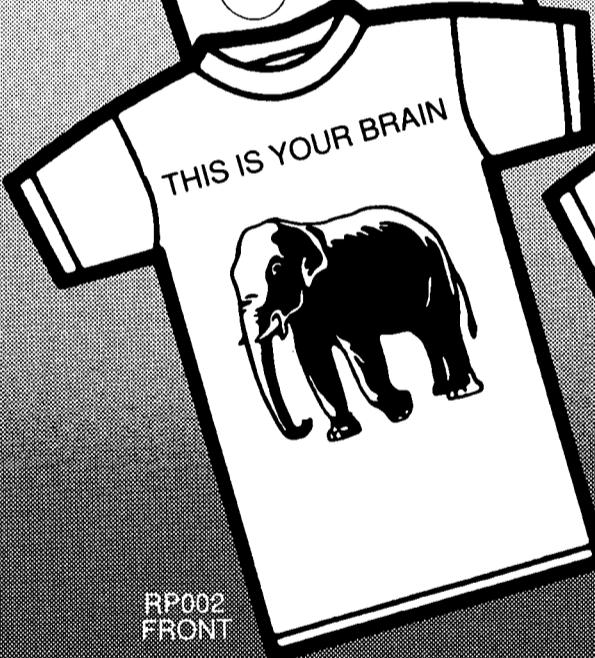
the middle of the city is getting more and more noxious." □

(Note to puzzled readers: A line was accidentally dropped from a sentence in last month's column, which should have read: "The mental escape route open to them [Republicans] is to see that it's not government's job to help anyone, any more than it is an umpire's job to help anyone in a tennis tournament.")

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BOOKS FOR CHRISTMAS

Our annual list of holiday gift suggestions from distinguished readers and writers.

JOHN A. BADEN

Much of my recent reading is for a research project, *Green Greed: Environmentalists and the Political Economy of Crisis Entrepreneurship*. My reading has focused upon ecology and the shift in Americans' land orientation from commodities to amenities. This change is largely a function of security and prosperity—not only ecological understanding. Hence, I've been reading in the fields of ethics, ecology, and political economy. My suggestions reflect this interest:

James Dale Davidson and Lord William Rees-Mogg, *The Great Reckoning*
 Garrett Hardin, *Filters Against Folly*
 Ken Kesey, *Sometimes a Great Notion*
 Aldo Leopold, *Sand County Almanac*
 Richard McKenzie and Dwight R. Lee, *Quicksilver Capital: How the Rapid Movement of Wealth Has Changed the World*

Robert Nelson, *Seeking Heaven on Earth*

P. J. O'Rourke, *Parliament of Whores*
 Randy O'Toole, *Reforming the Forest Service*

Mark Reisner, *Cadillac Desert*
 Michael Rothschild, *Bionomics: Economy as Ecology*
 Gordon Tullock, *The Social Dilemma*

John A. Baden is chairman of the Foundation for Research on Economics and the Environment, a classical liberal think tank with offices in Seattle and Bozeman, Montana.

FRED BARNES

I had lunch with Alan Ehrenhalt, then an editor with *Congressional Quarterly*, several years ago, and he told me of a book he was just beginning to research. It was something about the nature of

politics in various places around the country. I wasn't sure what he was getting at. And I wasn't sure he knew what he was getting at. It sounded imprecise and not very interesting at all. Boy, was I wrong. *The United States of Ambition: Politics, Power, and the Pursuit of Office* is one of those books that forever change the way you think about a subject. (The last book that did that for me was *Wealth and Poverty* by George Gilder a decade ago.) The subject in this case is electoral politics. Ehrenhalt discovered a structural change in politics that should have been obvious. It wasn't to me or anyone else. The change: full-time politicians have driven out part-timers. In fact, you almost have to be a full-timer at the state and national level (often at the local, too) or you won't get elected and stay elected. We have a new governing class. There's the rub. Who are the folks willing to work full-time at politics? Mostly liberals. Ehrenhalt's book explains why liberals keep getting elected in a conservative age, thwarting realignment.

There weren't many great political books in the 1980s, but the 1990s are different. I highly recommend *One of Us*, by Tom Wicker, a revisionist view of Richard Nixon by the liberal columnist and onetime Nixon basher. It may not change your opinion of Nixon but it will of Wicker. *Our Country*, by Michael Barone of *U.S. News & World Report*, is a brilliant analysis of the last half-century of American politics. I'd describe Barone as a former liberal, and he writes like one. *Minority Party*, by Peter Brown, a political reporter for Scripps Howard, tells how the Democratic party hurt itself on the race issue. Brown's book was slightly overshadowed by a book on roughly the same subject: *Chain Reaction*, by Tom and Mary Edsall. It shouldn't have been.

If you don't like politics, I've got a book for you. Of course, if you don't you're probably not reading this. Anyway, *Still Married, Still Sober* (InterVarsity Press) is about David and Elsie MacKenzie. David is now an Episcopal priest in Portsmouth, Virginia. But he

wasn't headed for the ministry when he and Elsie first married. He drifted into alcoholism, divorce, and attempted suicide. The book, written with Beth Spring, tells of their struggle and, finally, their Christian conversion, reconciliation, and remarriage. An inspiring tale of God's work in our world.

Fred Barnes is a senior editor of the New Republic.

JACQUES BARZUN

August Heckscher: *Woodrow Wilson* (Charles Scribner's Sons). At last! a biography on classical lines of one of the great figures of this century. It is needed because Wilson is still maligned and misunderstood, despite an enormous amount of archival, political, psychological, and medical writing about him. In this masterly work he stands out as an extraordinary thinker, speaker, and doer who changed university education before changing national policy and becoming the world champion of nationality and democracy. Scholarly and judicious, beautifully proportioned and written with great narrative art, Mr. Heckscher's work will remain a model of the genre, latterly corrupted by love of gossip and the tape recorder.

Henry Sidgwick: *Outlines of the History of Ethics* (reprint of the 5th ed., Hackett Publishing Co.). For people who believe that the basis of Right and Wrong is obvious and stable, this compact and lucid exposition of Western moral philosophies from Plato to Mill and T. H. Green should be an enlightening and sobering corrective. The author, himself a famous Cambridge theorist, is here the impartial historian. When he points out failures of logic or common sense, he does so like a candid student, without favoring any point of view or hinting at his sympathies. The book

