



Father Higgins, RIP

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

Indianapolis

They buried coach Bob Knight's favorite cleric out here in the rolling greenery of south central Indiana the other day. Bob Knight is, of course, one of the great coaches in sport. He is also one of sport's great characters, known for his adamant principles and, not incidentally, for his irascibility. Now, alas, when he blows there will not be a ruddy-faced cleric in Roman collar standing by the bench, eyes cast heavenward.

Father James P. Higgins was an unassuming priest who somehow left a profound mark on most of the eminences he encountered; though he was infinitely more at ease with ordinary people, ministering faithfully to their needs, spiritual and otherwise. His sudden death from a heart attack encourages me to enter a debate that I missed out on a few months ago when the Pope came to Denver and the American media treated orthodox religious views—whether Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish—as quite shocking.

"A Troubled Church In Changing Times," was the theme of most of the coverage. It is a hackneyed line that has been resorted to by boob journalists for decades in reporting on orthodox institutions. "Times," of course, in this century have been changing since roughly August 1914, and the orthodox churches have changed hardly at all. What did the commentators expect? Is the Pope supposed cheerfully to relinquish centuries of teaching based on scriptures held to be

the word of God, and take up the belief system of the modern American progressive? But what is that belief system? There was a day when the belief system of the American liberal was at least coherent. Now it is idiotic with contradictions: obsessed with child abuse, but also with introducing homosexuals into the Boy Scouts, insistent that women are the same as men—strong and self-reliant—albeit terrified by a lewd glance from the local sexual harasser. Show me a prized liberal value and I shall show you a high-minded liberal pompously contradicting that value.

Even such defenders of the Catholic Church as the columnist E.J. Dionne cannot defend the Church as being anything other than a fine social welfare movement in need of a few corrections. Drop the ban on abortion, birth control, and celibacy, admit women to the priesthood,

and clean up this mysterious mess over child abuse, and E.J. believes the Church will get on with its noble role of spreading progress: guaranteed human rights (ever more human rights, and animal rights, too!) educational opportunity, improved dental care, sex education, all manner of personal counseling. And what about infrastructure? Is the Church sufficiently eloquent on the need for more highways and waste-treatment facilities, E.J.?

Actually it is doubtful that any of the orthodox churches of the country feel duty-bound to serve as an arm of the Democratic party or for that matter the Republican party. They are institutions of prayer, morality, and, for those whose dogma includes it, salvation. Those churches that have entailed themselves in political and social causes have steadily lost members. As they have denatured their theology into schemes for personal growth they have become the stuff of jokes. Intent on making religion "rational," many have become asylums for kookery. At the services for Father Higgins I actually heard of a couple of liberal Catholic priests who offer "therapeutic massages" at the Indiana University Catholic student center. The priests claim to be trained masseuses possessing wondrous powers over diligently fingered bodies and souls. And they charge for their services! What's their price on baptisms?

An undercurrent of the "troubled church in changing times" saw is that the Church is losing the faithful. Actually orthodox churches everywhere are flourishing, as is the Roman Catholic church

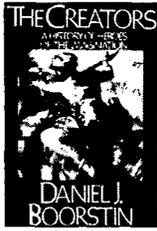


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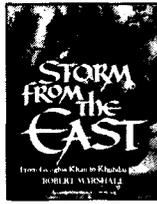
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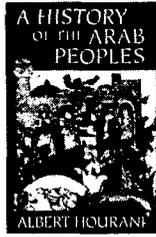
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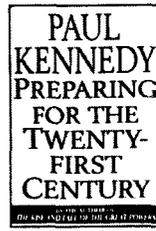
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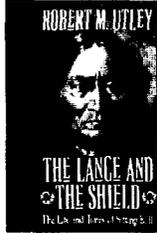
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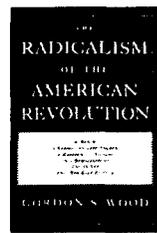
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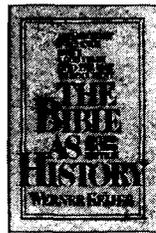
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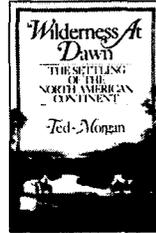
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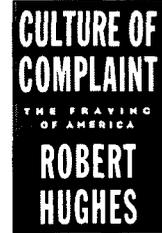
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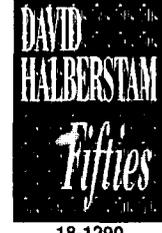
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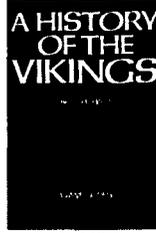
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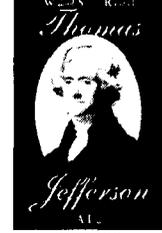
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in those dioceses where orthodoxy is preserved and the mystical masseuses are—dare I say it—held at arm's length. There is in the Republic a widespread demand for the spiritual labors of priests, ministers, and rabbis. They are always overworked and their work is to bear the rites and teachings of their church to the laity. Those rites and teachings are not modern but timeless. They are beyond science and practicality.

Years ago one of Father Higgins's parishioners was placed in a hospital's protective isolation room, having suddenly come down with a deadly leukemia and been given but a few days

to live. Minutes after I telephoned him the bad news I witnessed Father Higgins rush through the hospital lobby, suavely pass a security desk of astonished doctors and nurses, and enter our friend's isolation room to administer the Church's Last Rites. All hospital regulations had been trampled under foot in God's work. Now he will do God's work in a more exalted place. At his interment a terrible grief creased the faces of his friends. No happy mystical masseuse can banish that grief, only faith and time. This insight is what drives so many Americans from kookery to orthodoxy. □

been a successful attempt to drive out intelligent thought and respect for the Bill of Rights, in particular, free speech.

Bullying? Think of Jesse Jackson's many public complaints on behalf of petty revisions in common English usage. Now he is urging all non-racists sensitive to the plight of lowly blacks—who apparently remain lowly despite the grand old time Jesse has been having on their behalf for so many decades now—to abjure the term Black for African-Americans? Two decades ago he was admonishing all those who listened to him to abjure the term Negro for Black. The futility of such cosmetic revisions in terminology was noted fifty years ago by the eloquent and perceptive social critic George Schuyler. He was from the Reverend Jackson's race, and back in the 1920s, when he wrote, he had premonitions that phony leaders would supersede legitimate black leaders with meretricious proposals over terminology.

Now of course the phonies dominate practically every minority movement. Show me one living leader of a minority group who can point to one proposal of his that has demonstrably improved the conditions of his group. For every one you might come up with, I shall point out a dozen who have made their way to the top by discovering ever more fanciful problems that supposedly lay their people low. Has Senator Campbell ever implemented any policies that have relieved his peoples'—whether Indian or Portuguese—poverty, health problems, or educational deficiencies? Will the elimination of the term Redskins be of any help in assuaging these genuine problems? I can think of not one practicing Moses of Minority Rights whose passing would damage his constituents' prospects for improvement whatsoever.

And what about the Bill of Rights and our right to free speech? Clearly the Washington football team is free to call itself anything it chooses if the First Amendment has any meaning. But this is where intelligent thought comes in. It is in the best interests of all the bogus spokesmen for the so-called aggrieved to drive out intelligent thought. This is being done in all the hubbub about the quack rights of the aggrieved. And what will take the place of intelligent thought? Why, brute power of course, which is an unwelcome prospect for minorities and majorities alike. □

Senator High Horse

As events in Moscow demonstrate, mighty events are shaping world history. The immediate future could be more perilous for us all than the recent past, with its threats of nuclear nightmare. So what are the energies of our leaders absorbed in? Well, consider Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell of the great state of Colorado.

He has pledged his prodigious energies and sacred honor to blocking the Washington Redskins from getting a new stadium on federal land until they shed the name Redskins. Senator Campbell considers the name somehow humiliating, laboring apparently under the belief that sports teams adopt names that humiliate them. But Senator Campbell is not to be disputed. He has proclaimed himself expert in representing Indian concerns. With him we step into America's phony world of Minority Rights, which has evolved from a series of legitimate complaints into the present humbug governed by charlatans.

Indian concerns are whatever he proclaims them to be. And what makes him expert in these concerns? Well, he is half Portuguese. Perhaps his Portuguese mother's blood has made him the genuine Indian that he claims to be. And maybe it was Lani Guinier's Jewish mother's blood that made her so perfect an expert on black people's concerns. As I say, America's world of Minority Rights is a phony world. Any loud-

mouthered extremist can lay claim to a leadership position in it.

The senator's noble cause is of course petty and stupid. Dozens of groups in the country could raise similar petty and stupid complaints. Actually many do, which is what is ultimately so distressing. In a time when Americans should be addressing such serious matters as crime, education, family break-up, and national purpose, they are forced to immerse themselves in the petty stupidities of frauds. Often it is the law, and there are thousands of prehensile lawyers on the make, prospering from these laws.

Thousands of public officials are right now codifying regulations to encourage neurotics to complain about their hurt feelings over alleged slurs, harassments, annoyances, bad manners, and on and on. In reading the news stories about these unhappy people and about the efforts such risible creatures as Senator Campbell are taking to appease them, one gets the feeling that America is almost solely populated by victims, losers, and the hypersensitive. "...Give me your tired, your poor/Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free," should read Emma Lazarus's poem on the Statue of Liberty "and I shall get them a good lawyer."

Along with the charlatany there is a large element of bullying in these petty and stupid complaints. There has also

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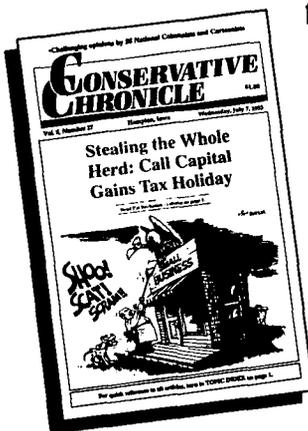
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Immigration, Sí; Welfare, No

by Tom Bethell

While in San Diego recently, I took the electric trolley down to the Mexican border, a pleasant ride of about twelve miles, past rectangular warehouses and dusty oleander bushes, to Chula Vista. A concrete footbridge takes you over Interstate 5 and then you walk straight across the border, no questions asked or documents requested. You're in Tijuana, and lots of cabdrivers want to drive you downtown. I went with my friend Charlie Thomas, and to keep the sun off our heads we both wore white duckster hats; probably we looked like Harvard alumni somehow separated from the reunion.

I was expecting to see bare terrain on the Mexican side, development on the U.S. side. It was the other way around—sorry about that. The hills on the U.S. side must be “owned” by the military or maybe the Border Patrol and are mere meadows; the Mexican slopes are covered with houses. No doubt there's more economic activity going on south of the border now. That wouldn't be hard to believe, given the power of the environmental movement. I worry that they will soon be able to extend their dominion to Mexico if the North American Free Trade Agreement passes. Imperialism, not loss of sovereignty, is the great NAFTA-worry.

In Tijuana, Charlie inspected a striped burro and pronounced it to be genuine. I had a V-8 juice. Then it was time to go back because our taxi driver was patiently waiting.

Crossing the border into the U.S. you go through a turnstile, and an INS official gives you a practiced glance. I showed a driver's license but was told

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you don't even have to do that. They have a “profile” of likely illegals and do little more than occasional spot checks. So many people are coming across that a huge increase in the bureaucracy would be needed to permit a more thorough inspection. It's the same with cars heading north on the interstate. Sometimes they are stopped and searched, but when that happens the highway instantly becomes a parking lot, and the Mexicans coming across for day-labor and housework in San Diego are three hours late on the job. Then there are complaints to the local politicians.

So, as far as I could see, there really isn't much of a border at all. It's an obstacle that most of the time is “flattened” by market forces—the heavy volume of passengers who are crossing at every minute. The potential exists to turn it into a substantial barrier, but the cost of doing so is presumably reckoned to be higher than the benefits. I think I like it that way. If immigration is such a big problem, why does one not hear more complaints about it in San Diego?

Immigration, of course, has become a great bone of contention among conservatives. *National Review* seems to have more or less joined the anti-immigrant camp, and *Forbes* senior editor Peter Brimelow—like me, a (former) Brit—has, well, gone nativist. I am in favor of more or less unrestricted immigration myself, with the caveat that this is feasible only if all newcomers are subjected to the discipline of the market. If unmitigated by income transfers and privileges for ethnic groups with “victim” status, the market is a potent discipline indeed. It should not be disparaged as “the cult of efficiency,” in Pat Buchanan's phrase.

A newcomer who must provide for

himself and his family in a pure market economy, with only his own labor and human capital to rely upon, finds himself in a position where he must obey at least most of the Ten Commandments. Virtue is thrust upon him. Furthermore, this discipline is potent enough to override such “cultural” or racial characteristics that he may have brought with him, and which seem to be of so much concern to many of those in the anti-immigrant camp.

In the early twentieth century, when proportionately far more immigrants arrived than today, the discipline of the market was in place and it was effective. Today, unfortunately, this is very far from being the case. There has been a great and calamitous change. What has changed is not that the new immigrants are Mexican and Vietnamese rather than Italian and Irish, and therefore culturally and racially different. It is that the free-market system has been eroded by the ever-encroaching welfare state. What is so disastrous today is that very recent immigrants, even those who are here illegally, more and more have access to that welfare state. There's no escaping that this is incompatible with uncontrolled immigration.

A curious feature of the recent intra-conservative debate on immigration is that the availability of government services to recent immigrants, including illegals, was not much discussed until California Governor Pete Wilson brought it up in August. What this suggests, unfortunately, is that the anti-immigrant people just don't like immigrants period, whether or not they can tap into the welfare state; while many of those who favor immigration are supporters of the welfare state, and don't mind very much if immigrants make use of it, whether they are legal or not.

My own position, which I should