. . . in committee. Once such a bill reaches the floor and is passed by both houses of a legislature and signed by the governor, no one would argue that, because it should not have reached the floor of one of the legislative chambers, it was invalid. A legislative committee, like an initiative petition, is a screening procedure, and if the "committee of the whole" (i.e., the legislative body as a whole, or the whole body of voters) approves an idea, details about the screening process are no longer relevant. But courts can get away with invalidating initiatives in this manner because they really do not believe in the initiative procedure.

A final indication that voters are losing clout is that they recently lost the right to cast a write-in vote. On June 8, 1992, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Burdick* v. *Takushi* ruled that the state may prevent a voter from voting for someone who meets the constitutional qualifications to hold the office yet whose name is not on the ballot. Never before had the Court upheld a restriction on the voter's freedom of choice. The case was from Hawaii, one of five states that bans all write-in space on ballots.

There is no good reason to ban write-in votes. If the voters elect someone by write-in vote who does not meet the constitutional requirements to hold a particular office, such a person will not be sworn in to that position. However, in practice, voters never elect anyone by write-in vote who is ineligible to hold the office. But voters *do* frequently elect write-in candidates. Write-in candidates were elected to Congress in 1930, 1954, 1958, 1980, and 1982; and hundreds of write-in candidates have been elected to state legislatures, most recently in Nebraska (1988), Virginia (1989), and Rhode Island (1990). A write-in candidate was almost elected to the Colorado legislature in 1992. Write-ins are useful when the voters learn something unsavory about the candidates on the ballot and it is too late for anyone else to qualify for the election. Write-ins are especially important in state legislative elections, because so many (over 25 percent) of them inevitably have only one candidate listed on the ballot.

Back in the period 1890-1940, almost half the state supreme courts ruled, or stated in *dicta*, that write-ins had to be permitted or the election would not be free. Only two state supreme courts said the opposite. Until the *Burdick* case, *no* federal court had ever ruled that write-ins could be banned. But when the U.S. Supreme Court said that it is constitutional to ban write-in votes, the decision received so little notice that the *New York Times* did not even run a separate article about the decision. Instead, it mentioned it at the end of an article that was mainly describing another of the day's Supreme Court opinions.

There are groups working to protect and expand the initiative and to relax ballot access restrictions. Barbara Vincent (P.O. Box 11351, Memphis, TN 38111, 901-327-6824) heads up a national campaign to increase the number of states with initiative provisions, and the Coalition for Free & Open Elections (P.O. Box 20263, New York, NY 10011) works on the ballot access problem. The erosion of the electorate's power can be reversed, if enough people become aware of the problem.

The Widower

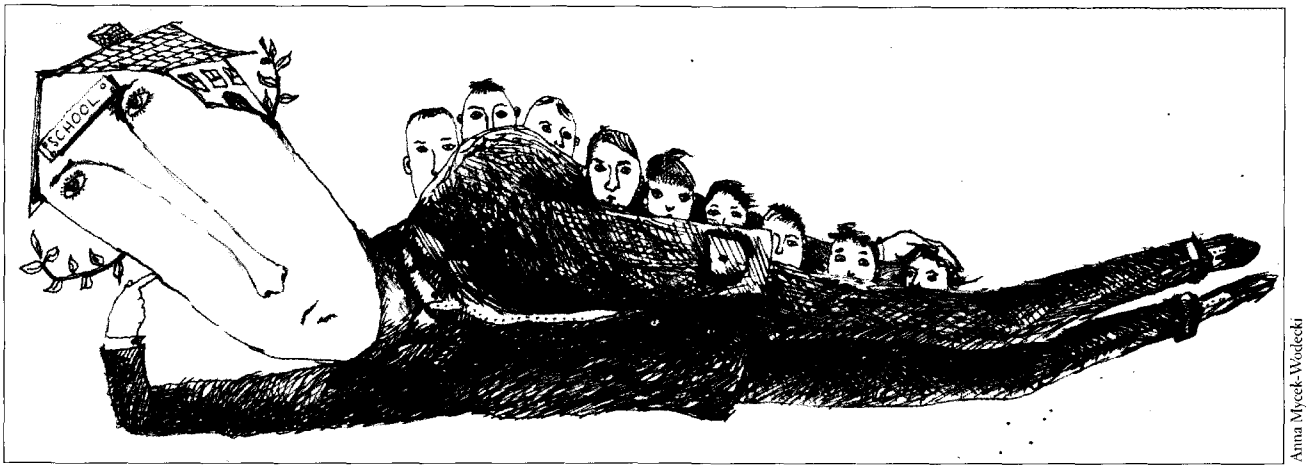
by Bradley Omanson

It may have been only the consequence
of age or grief (or of something worse,
something he'd never admit to himself)
that he heard her again, heard the scrabble
of mice on loosely piled-up plates
as the clatter of dishes being stacked
on a cupboard shelf. Later that night,
forgetting he'd put on the kettle himself,
he waited for its insistent shrill
to summon her from her sewing, and when
it persisted, shrugged it off as only
wind in the wires alongside the house.
He sat in his chair in the upstairs room
and listened to hear her foot on the step,
then he pulled a blanket up to his chin
and slumbered by fits and starts. In the kitchen,
the curtains, saturated with steam,
adhered to the window and slowly froze.

Grassroots Extremism

The Religious Right

by Wayne Allensworth



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

"Extremist" is a word that may conjure up images of hooded Klansmen crowded around a burning cross or of Black Panther separatists or kooky 60's "revolutionaries." Or perhaps images of Hitler, Stalin, or Mao come to mind. There is a supposition that those who are commonly called "extremists" are unreasonable, irrational, perhaps crazy, and quite possibly dangerous. In the brutal battles of the culture war, the word has become a weapon against which there is no defense, particularly when it is coupled with poisonous adjectives like "fundamentalist" or "religious" or "right-wing." The ruling elite, ensconced in the nation's cultural, educational, and political institutions, has decided that anyone who resists the steady attack on American and Western cultural norms is "extreme" and that only "moderates," those who wish merely to slow the rate of erosion while accepting in large part the premises of their erstwhile opponents, are acceptable as players in the public arena. More ominously, the ruling elite has displayed a growing willingness to call on the muscle of the state apparatus to suppress, and even to kill, "extremists," who have displayed an "irrational" (and one may say traditionally American) tendency to resist the encroachment of the state on what were once commonly considered the prerogatives of communities, families, and individuals.

Republicans were celebrating in November 1993. George Allen had become the first Republican elected governor of the state of Virginia in 16 years, defeating his Democratic opponent, Mary Sue Terry, by 17 percentage points. Republican James Gilmore was elected Attorney General, and statewide the Republicans did quite well, gaining a substantial number of seats in the House of Delegates. Allen and Gilmore had campaigned on a law-and-order platform, calling for the abolition of parole, as well as opposing further gun control measures. Allen supports parental notification for underage girls seeking abortions and opposes a tax increase to shore up the state's budget. There was certainly cause for rank-and-file Republicans to celebrate, but for small "r" republicans the real story in this campaign was Mike Farris, who was defeated in his bid to unseat incumbent Lieutenant Governor Don Beyer, a liberal Democrat.

Farris, a fundamentalist Christian, one-time Pat Robertson supporter, and former Moral Majority activist, is a lawyer who heads the Home Schooling Legal Defense Association; his own nine children are schooled at home, and Farris has acted as legal counsel for parents in disputes with school officials. In one case, Farris represented a group of Tennessee fundamentalists who wanted to have their children excused from reading certain books that they deemed offensive to their religious convictions. This in itself was probably enough to knot up the innards of professional do-gooders, who are all for protecting the rights of, or even inventing "rights" for, worthy victim groups but who cannot imagine that Middle Americans, particularly religious believers, have any rights at all.

But the clincher for the nattering nincompoops of respectable opinion was the fact that Farris openly attacked the state's monopoly on education, that he called the public school system "a Godless monstrosity" and even questioned whether

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Wayne Allensworth writes from Purcellville, Virginia.