

The World According to Newt

by Justin Raimondo

Conservatives are looking to Newt Gingrich to lead a revolution, and the man who calls himself a "revolutionary" has certainly promised to do just that. But what kind of a revolution can we look forward to?

Those who want a preview should familiarize themselves with Gingrich's course, "Renewing American Civilization," a series of ten lectures, originally delivered at Georgia's Reinhardt Junior College, and broadcast live by the Free Congress Foundation's National Empowerment Television (NET), in which he lays down the principles of his own rather strange version of conservatism. It is a conservatism that is thoroughly egalitarian, which justifies state subsidies as long as they are "entrepreneurial"—and even, at one point, calls for more government largesse in a crankish crusade to "abolish death"!

Gingrich regales his

audience with the revelation that "you are an American because of what you believe." Citing those two dyed-in-the-wool American patriots, G. K. Chesterton and Margaret Thatcher, Gingrich announces that the American identity is an abstraction, a "creed." He then trots out the inevitable Ben Wattenberg, who pontificates on the subject of America as the "first universal nation."

And what exactly is a "universal nation"? A nation is, by definition, a particularity; that is, a *particular* people, with a specific history and culture, and usually a fixed geographic location. How can a nation be "universal" if it has these decidedly non-universal characteristics?

That this militant universalism, the hallmark of modern liberalism, is being marketed as "conservatism" is an indication of just how far the Right has wandered from its original meaning and purpose. As if to underscore this strange reversal of polarities, Gingrich buttresses his case by quoting Max Lerner, whom he describes as "a liberal who wrote for the newspaper *PM*." A more accurate description of Lerner would be: a commie who wrote for the fellow-traveling *PM*.

Quoting Wattenberg, Gingrich asks us to look at the back of a U.S. dollar bill, and the words "Novus Ordo Seclorum," if we want to see the real essence of America. "A New Order for the ages," rants Gingrich, means that America is a new kind of nation under the sun. "The New World Order refers to a new moral and political order within ourselves."

We are then shown the mass swearing-in of naturalized citizens in South Florida. Gingrich celebrates the fact that immigration has increased faster than at any time in American history, and that recent immigrants and their children will soon make up a majority of the U.S. population. As an example of the benefits washed up on American shores by this immigrant floodtide, he cites none other than Arnold Schwarzenegger, "the single greatest foreign exchange earner in America." We are then treated to a film clip of Arnold, in which he claims to be a refugee from "socialism," as if his homeland of Austria had just emerged from behind the Iron Curtain.

Every minority, from Antiguans to Indians, is praised in this multi-cultural love-fest. Only one people—the largest single ethnic group in America—is singled out as altogether reprehensible: Germans. Not only does Gingrich crack a series of anti-German jokes, he also launches into a long story which supposedly proves that Germans are obedient robots, slaves born to

More Quotes That Need No Comment

"Newt's a lot like Bill Clinton, with a deep and abiding faith in the power of his mouth. (From the rear they even look alike). Like the Arkansas Mercury, Newt imagines that his years on a college campus made him wise, and if he talks long enough and fast enough he can persuade anybody to do anything."—Wesley Pruden, editor, the *Washington Times*

"Gingrich covered all the right bases, a couple of times." — Senator Bob Dole, *USA Today*

follow orders.

Someone asks a question about blacks: why didn't they assimilate into American culture? Gingrich, the victimologist, blames slavery, and, incredibly, *the conservative movement* for opposing the civil rights movement. Because the civil rights leaders "didn't understand private property," the black population then became the passive victim of racism, government oppression, and welfarism.

Why is Gingrich smearing the movement he is supposed to be leading? Conservatives opposed the so-called civil rights movement because they correctly saw that anti-discrimination laws would lead to affirmative action. They also opposed the movement because they knew that black leaders like Martin Luther King most certainly *did* understand private property—at least enough to know that it stood in the way of their redistributionist agenda.

Gingrich is full of little aphorisms, like "Every person is an executive" (really?) and "Every person is an entrepreneur."

He then launches into a speech about how we should never have abandoned the space program, the biggest example of pure corporate socialism.

Newt tells us government must be "entrepreneurial." But how does government, the negation of the market, become an "entrepreneur"? "Entrepreneurial government" is a contradiction in terms.

Alvin Toffler then appears to

tell us that "technology is destiny," to be embraced because it is "the great equalizer," and because it led to the "liberation" of women. We are then subjected to a convoluted explanation of Tofflerian bromides, climaxed by Gingrich's breathless declaration that the "entrepreneurial spirit" is "a rhythm in your head."

A major roadblock on the road to Gingrich's hi-tech Eden is "credentialism," any kind of hierarchical system which seeks to discover new knowledge and pass it on, i.e. the universities and schools in general. He contrasts "putting in hours" in a classroom to gaining knowledge in the manner of a "genius."

A major enemy of technology is taxation, says Gingrich, and who could disagree? But he *praises* taxes that "target the ones who lay around all day," living off "inherited wealth."

This hatred of inherited wealth is rooted in radical egalitarianism: in the left-liberal notion that we all have to start out in life with a "level playing field." That a man with such views is Speaker of the House is frightening enough: that he poses as a conservative adds insult to injury.

In Gingrich's view, "government can (and should) play a powerful role in science and technology. Breakthroughs affect everyone, and are worth the costs." Big projects are particularly suited to government control, provided they are "focused." His enthusiasm for the multi-billion-dollar orbiting

boondoggle known as the Space Station is unbounded. He even exhorts us to "wipe out disease" through government-promoted DNA research, and claims we may be able to "abolish aging"—and have Gingrich, I guess, around forever.

But government-funded superscience will not alleviate the problem Gingrich reiterates again and again throughout this course. "We cannot survive as a civilization as long as 13 year olds are having babies, sixteen year olds are shooting each other, and eighteen year olds are dying of AIDS." The invention of fiber optics will not ameliorate the natural inequality of human beings. In fact, it is far more likely that this technological advance will widen the cognitive gap between the classes, and lead to an explosion of resentment rather than "genius."

Although Gingrich used to be a history teacher, the American Revolution does not much enter into his calculations. According to the Newtonian view, the three great events of American history are the defeat of the evil Confederacy, World War II, and the rise of Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement. The media were taken by surprise when Newt praised his hero, Franklin Delano Roosevelt; In this lecture series delivered more than a year ago he was full of praise for the founder of America's welfare state.

As an example of his "entrepreneurial" concept of

government, Gingrich discusses a bill he introduced in the Democratic-controlled Congress, the "Teen-age Employment Act." This was a revision of a bill introduced by the Democrats, which granted federal money to local governments so unemployed teenagers could come on down to city hall and get a make-work "job." Gingrich advocates taking "the same amount of money" and giving it "to businesses to hire these kids." "We wanted to subsidize inner city business," says Gingrich.

As Gingrich openly (and proudly) acknowledges, "it's going to be some minority group" that will get the subsidies. "It's no accident," he boasts, "that the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce supported my bill."

Gingrich claims to be the advocate of "a very different approach to the question of who do you subsidize and who do you encourage." Conservatives used to be *against* subsidies. Under the new Gingrichian dispensation, welfare and other subsidies are reinvented, redirected, and made oh-so-very "entrepreneurial." This is not conservatism, but a hi-tech, politically correct supply-side version of the spoils system.

Newt won't get rid of unemployment insurance. He

thinks it is "a contract between big business and government," and as such must be solemnly continued unto eternity. And don't worry about worker's comp: it will be turned into a retraining program, and never lack for money as long as Newt remains Speaker.

Welfare must have a work requirement, he intones. This is another occasion for a subsidy, this time to employ an otherwise unemployable rabble. Clinton would give them govern-

ment jobs; Gingrich would pay business to babysit them. In the latter case, the welfare state remains not only intact but strengthened, since it now wears an "entrepreneurial" disguise. In terms of cost and scope, such a program would be the biggest government jobs program since FDR.

Gingrich would require everyone to buy health insurance, and to those who can't, "if somebody needs a subsidy," he says, "give it to them directly." And if your blood pressure is at a certain prescribed level, then "we should reward you."

Government must use its "police powers" to not only ensure product "safety," but also "reshape the market," and issue the "occasional" bureaucratic edict.

Newt rhapsodizes about the "Earn to Learn" program in which inner-city "at risk" youth

are paid to read books. Although the program gets no federal dollars now, Gingrich plans to change that to effect "an explosion of literacy."

In the realm of public housing, Gingrich would expand the program while giving it an "entrepreneurial" veneer. Giant public housing complexes would be dismantled, and tenants would be given vouchers (i.e., subsidies) for housing in the suburbs.

Gingrich even launches into a paean to Jimmy Carter. Carter may be a Democrat, he tells us, but their respective "visions" are "the same." "I appear conservative," says Newt, but am actually a "revolutionary centrist." It is in this connection that he denounces H. L. Mencken as "cynical, mean, nasty, and hostile" in his treatment of American politicians. Mencken, he says, hates "self-government."

If "self-government" consists of paying "minority"-owned businesses to babysit inner city urchins, who are then paid to read the *Autobiography of Malcom X*, then, yes, Mencken would have hated it. And I have news for Newt: so will every decent hardworking American taxpayer.

Gingrich's course is little more than g ideological Muzak: half psychobabble, half technoidolatry. Meandering, disjointed, repetitious, often babbling, and occasionally downright bizarre, "Renewing American Civilization" fails both as theory and as theater. ■

**Gingrich's
course is lit-
tle more
than
ideological
Muzak.**

Neil McCaffrey, Jr., Conservative Giant

*by Llewellyn H.
Rockwell, Jr.*

The publishing industry has never been friendly to the opponents of Leviathan, and conservatives and libertarians had to seek out alternative channels. Preeminently, those were Arlington House, Publishers, and the Conservative Book Club, both founded by Neil McCaffrey, Jr. (1925-1994).

Mr. McCaffrey was a man of faith, and that's what it took to start both companies after the Goldwater defeat. But Mr. McCaffrey knew that the conservative movement was about more than winning elections. Its task was to guard the institutions of the Old Republic against liberalism in the academy, the media, and the government.

As an entrepreneur, he combined a faith in markets and the conservative vision with his own broad publishing experience. He recruited investors, created two eminent institutions, and raised a new generation of thinkers and doers when everyone said conservatism was dead, and liberalism was predestined.

Hundreds of thousands have relied on the Conservative Book Club to bring them the books that others ignored, and Arlington House published

many of them. Mr. McCaffrey kept Ludwig von Mises in print despite the attempts by Keynesians to silence their greatest opponent. He published economist Henry Hazlitt when no one else would touch his anti-welfare views. He brought out Murray N. Rothbard's four-volume history of colonial America when William F. Buckley, Jr., had tried to turn the creator of libertarianism into an unperson. And unlike today's "conservatives," he didn't shy away from Abraham Ellis's book on the Social Security fraud.

As an early consultant to the Republican Congressional Committee, Mr. McCaffrey also founded ideological direct mail, allowing conservative candidates and organizations to bypass establishment funding sources. That others have not lived up to his ethical example does not diminish this achievement.

Mr. McCaffrey was also a culture warrior. Against modern decadence, he upheld the popular entertainment of the 1920s and 1930s, founding two more book clubs to spread the word.

Not that he went from strength to strength. At one point, his financial backers decided to sell Arlington House and the Conservative Book Club. The paper profits seemed large, but the move proved a disaster for Mr. McCaffrey, who watched shares that represented his life savings drop to zero.

Most men would have been

destroyed. But those who worked for Mr. McCaffrey saw instead how a man can and should face adversity. He was angry at incompetence, and he worried about his family's financial future, but he carried out his obligations every day, and never abandoned his humor or his Christian sense of hope.

A theological advisor to more famous conservatives, Mr. McCaffrey was a serious Catholic of a sort rare these days. Like Acton and Newman, he opposed the centralization of ecclesiastical power, and watched in horror as liberals led the church into doctrinal and liturgical disaster.

Catholics believe that married life is every bit as much a vocation as the priesthood, and Mr. McCaffrey was proof this is so. He had joked that like Evelyn Waugh, he would have his children brought in to him for ten minutes a day. But he was a pro-family conservative in fact, who never put his wife or children second as he rebuilt his business.

"I love my faith, my family, my home, my work, my friends, my books, my records," he wrote the members of the Conservative Book Club when he learned he had cancer. "I could never willingly leave Joan, even for a day. Joan, who won my heart, effortlessly, that soft night in early June 1947, and who has had no trouble exercising her property rights ever since. And our children: we are blessed in each one of our three sons and three daughters.