

political thought, leaving the reader to wonder whether it developed at all. The Arthurdale, West Virginia episode, which she witnessed rather early in her career, seems to have left no lasting mark.

That this admirable woman felt our pain is undeniable. Whether the programs she sponsored with such regal certitude eased that pain or exacerbated it is another question altogether, and one that goes unanswered and unasked in this book.

*Alan Pell Crawford, author of Thunder on the Right: The 'New Right' and the Politics of Resentment, is senior counselor with Martin Public Relations in Richmond, Virginia.*

### CAN THE MUMMY WALK?

By Samuel Francis

*Left For Dead: The Life, Death, and Possible Resurrection of Progressive Politics in America*

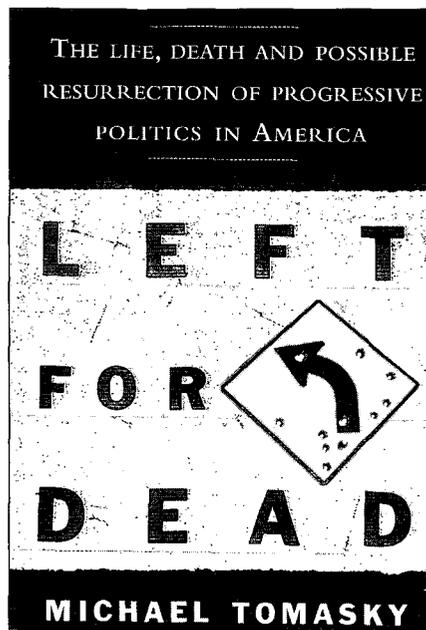
By Michael Tomasky;  
Free Press, 214 pages, \$23

A new genre of public commentary seems to have evolved which might be called “political autopsy.” Its practitioners dwell on the theme that the categories of “Left” and “Right” are no longer meaningful. These morticians appear to be correct, given recent political conflicts over trade, immigration, foreign policy, and the counter-terrorist policies of the federal government. Yet those who ring the death knells of these ideological categories are often trying to raise them from their graves. Certainly that is the mission Michael Tomasky has assigned himself in a kind of funerary companion to David Frum’s *Dead Right*.

Tomasky’s main argument is that the Left is now defunct because it has abandoned what he calls “Enlightenment universalism,” and cloaked itself instead in an “identity politics.” Left-wing advocates of identity politics hold that “it’s not universal rights and bonds...that elevate people and give them power, but their own particular histories and involuntary affiliations—be they cultural, racial, ethnic, or gender-based—that enable them to act politically.” The Left can rise from the

tomb, Tomasky argues, but only by somehow synthesizing liberal “Enlightenment” views with what he takes to be the “legitimate” issues raised by identity politics.

It is not clear that can be done. “Identity movements” like Louis Farrakhan’s racial nationalism, or authoritarian feminism and multiculturalism, display many anti-liberal tendencies and much indiffer-



ence to the individual rights and liberties for which the historic Enlightenment Left fought. Efforts to combine such movements with old liberalism face a virtually insurmountable paradox: The whole point of the Enlightenment’s universalism was to emancipate people from “particular histories and involuntary affiliations.” A politics that defends those histories and affiliations is not of the Left but of the Right.

Tomasky repeatedly beats the Left over the head with the irony that today’s Right has captured the rhetoric and ethics of the Enlightenment (he even cites Pat Buchanan endorsing the good old Enlightenment principle of “equality of opportunity”). In Tomasky’s view, the Left needs to do two things: first, recapture the belief in universal rights, democracy, and reason—envisioned not as dead ends but as processes that can and must be improved. Second, respect natural group identities, but do so in a way that stretches people’s affiliations beyond the simple definitions of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.

This sounds nice, but it’s easier said than done. Those elements of contemporary leftism that Tomasky most dislikes—its snobbery, hostility to working-class whites, and “increased identification with selected liberal elites”—derive directly from the Enlightenment legacy. It is most Enlightened of Hillary Clinton to avow that “she’s not some little woman standing by her man like Tammy Wynette,” or that she had better things to do in life than “stay home and bake cookies.” This is rejection of the “involuntary affiliation” of pre-Enlightened womanhood. It is most Enlightened for the Left to demand laws against hate speech, despite Tomasky’s dislike of such measures, since emancipating people from “hate” and “bias” by force of the state was a central project of the Enlightenment. It is most Enlightened for the Left to insist on gun control, despite Tomasky’s advice to give it up (“while we’re defending amendments, let’s not exclude the Second”), because gun control reflects the Enlightenment’s faith in elite control, state engineering, and managed emancipation from the “irrational” proclivities of the masses.

Tomasky’s ideal Left would in many ways resemble a real Right (rather than the Enlightenment Right that now flourishes or the historic Left that the Enlightenment Right emulates). But it would repel those who have been drawn to the Left by the very vices Mr. Tomasky criticizes. So the ideological cadaver Tomasky seeks to resuscitate seems unlikely to wander very far from its slab in the morgue.

*Samuel Francis is a nationally syndicated columnist.*

### AL GORE’S NEWEST HORROR STORY

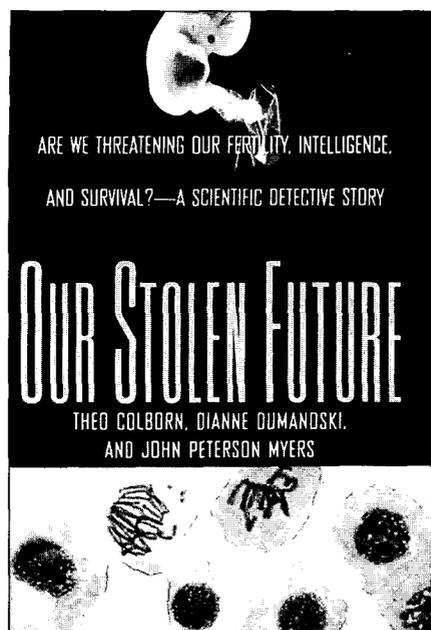
By John Baden and Douglas S. Noonan

*Our Stolen Future*

By Theo Colborn, Dianne Dumanoski, and John Peterson Myers;  
Dutton, 306 pages, \$24.95

**O**ur *Stolen Future* portrays a frightening world where synthetic chemicals assault our fertility, intelligence, and survival. But instead of delivering

substance, it capitalizes on hype. It hit bookstores just in time for Earth Day, and on the heels of the National Academy of Sciences' investigation of synthetic estrogens. Thanks to the big behind-the-scenes boost given to the book by Fenton Communications—the same P.R. firm that ginned up the 1989 Alar-



on-apples scare—the book received coverage in nearly all national media, and backing from hip cultural figures like Robert Redford.

The book's message is dramatic, urgent, and personal: In a terrible "Faustian bargain," we have bought technological progress at the price of the environment, the well-being of our children, and perhaps even our survival. Touted as a "scientific detective story," the book combines suspenseful narrative and apocalyptic overtones into a real page-turner. Ambiguous prophecies of "fates worse than extinction," of terrible forces that are "slow, invisible, and indirect," are banded about darkly.

The villains are chemical manufacturers and profiteering corporations. Synthetic chemicals, the authors say, are disrupting human hormones and causing widespread developmental abnormalities. The authors suggest that synthetic chemicals could potentially be responsible for nearly every prominent social ill. Poverty, educational breakdown, crime, homosex-

uality, deteriorating family life—these may all be the fault of corporations like DuPont and Dow Corning.

Actually, hormone disrupters are poorly understood, and there is no conclusive evidence linking developmental problems and environmental chemicals. The science behind *Our Stolen Future* is unorthodox. It indicts the very concept of causality, and other basic tools of the scientific method that have been used to challenge environmental claims. Indeed, it rejects the scientific method itself as Enlightenment arrogance. That kind of thinking, the book argues, is what got us into this mess in the first place. A new wave of thinking, "eco-epidemiology," is now required.

This brings to mind the debate over global warming. Problems in human reproduction and development, like climate change, can only be reliably observed over long periods of time. Links between plastic lining in beer cans and illiteracy are about as tenuous as links between chlorofluorocarbons and the 1996 blizzard in New England. But the authors are very clever. They display short-term tragedies and augur long-term catastrophes. So none of their claims can be disproved in the near future.

The marketing appeal of the synthetic chemical scare far surpasses that of global-warming alarmists. It is racy and anecdotal: Synthetic chemicals affect our sexuality; they are so prevalent no one can escape them. Painful, personal experiences pile up. One couple's dreams of a family are ruined by DES, another sees their children's future spoiled by DDT, a third is rendered infertile by declining sperm counts. Al Gore, who wrote the introduction for this book, invokes children three times.

Fortunately, *Our Stolen Future* will not become the next *Silent Spring*. Reputable critics have trashed the book for all manner of scientific and logical flaws. And after repeated wolf-calling, the public has become more jaded and cynical about predictions of ecological catastrophe.

*John A. Baden is chairman of the Foundation for Research on Economics and the Environment (FREE), where Douglas S. Noonan is a research assistant.*



## OLIVER THE ROUGH-RIDER

By Brian Hook

*Oliver Cromwell*  
By Theodore Roosevelt;  
Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906

"Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure, than to take rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in the gray twilight that knows not victory or defeat." Theodore Roosevelt both wrote and lived this manifesto. Mayor of New York City, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Governor of New York, President of the United States, and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize—such were Roosevelt's political achievements prior to his forty-fourth birthday. He was also a soldier. Lieutenant Colonel Roosevelt led the charge of the Rough Riders at the Battle of San Juan Hill during the Spanish-American War. Somehow Roosevelt also found time to hunt wild game in Africa for 10 months and pioneer an expedition deep into the Brazilian jungle down the unexplored River of Doubt. But T.R. was not exclusively a man of action; he was also a distinguished writer.

Roosevelt's published works include three biographies, the most thoughtful of which appraises the life of Oliver Cromwell. It was written in 1899, during his first term as governor. Roosevelt was feeling so beleaguered by the cares of state that he left Albany for one month's vacation. He ensconced himself at Sagamore Hill and an-