

Chapman calls that “old liberal porridge” from the “great stove of government expansionism.” This is hardly a clarion call to rev up the draft boards.

Secondly, the charge that I outline a fascistic plan of national service is patently absurd. A system of national service organized and operated at the state and local levels—meeting the social and environmental needs deemed worthy by state and local communities, not Washington bureaucrats—would be the very antithesis of the centralist dogma on which fascism is based. If *Chronicles* were going fascist, we would be supporting the plan recently proposed by a prominent conservative, a plan to tie college financial aid and home-buying assistance to service in a Police ROTC and to organize high-school students into paramilitary platoons that would conduct “surveillance” while

acting as a “presence” in our neighborhoods. We’re not and we don’t.

On the ‘National Endowment for the Arts’

The crux of Jacob Neusner’s (*Cultural Revolutions*, September 1990) frustration lies in the fact that he is desperately trying to find a “middle position” solution to the NEA funding crisis. There is no middle position to take with NEA, simply because the very nature of its being violates free market principles. Art is a business just like any other business and should not be exempt from the dictates of the consumer.

Censorship is an issue in NEA funding—however, not in the same

context currently used by supporters of the NEA. It is ironic to think that the ones who distribute and the ones who receive NEA funding are the first to cry censorship when their taste in “art” is questioned. Is it not censorship to the many who do not receive funds? Is it not censorship for the state to decide what is and is not art?

The fact is censorship is not such a bad word, so long as there are objective rather than subjective standards in place. And the only possible way for objective censorship to take place is to return the arts to the free market where the consumer will decide what is and is not “art.” This will be the only solution to saying “yes to the arts, no to pornography, and no to censorship.”

—Barbara Rauch
Houston, TX

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

SYRIA’S CONQUEST of Lebanon is the first fruits of the Bush administration’s Middle Eastern policy. While 200,000 American soldiers were fighting off boredom in Saudi Arabia, our newest noble ally in the region, “President” Assad of Syria, was storming the Christian positions in Beirut. With a 40,000-man force that included hundreds of Soviet T-54 tanks, the Syrian army finally broke the resistance of the Christian militia headed by General Michel Aoun. Early reports put the casualties at 300, but the death toll has climbed to at least 750, including a large number of Christian militiamen who were shot with their hands tied behind their backs.

The Syrian conquest, conducted under the very feeble pretext of assistance to the Syrian-backed Lebanese President Hrawi, marks the end not just of the fifteen-year civil war in Lebanon but of the country itself. The tragedy of Lebanon is also a milestone in the deteriorating relations between Christians and Muslims in the Middle East. In the 1950’s, Lebanon was a shining example of what a free economy and political toleration could achieve in a multiethnic society. The

Christian half of the population did exercise a sort of political preeminence, but this special position was largely the effect of the economic success of the pro-Western, French-educated Christians. When pan-Arab nationalists attempted to overthrow the constitutional government of President Camille Chamoun in 1958, President Eisenhower was quick to send in the Marines to defend a legitimate government that governed the only free and thriving country in the Arab world. He was also, as we all knew, defending a people whose religion and way of life had much in common with our own.

Even in the midst of almost continuous civil war, the Lebanese people—Christian and Muslim alike—displayed incredible fortitude. All they needed, it seemed, was a few months of comparative peace, and they were busy repairing houses and hotels and rebuilding the economy. Now, after a suitable period of massacre and pillaging, the Lebanese can become the exploited subjects of a greater Syrian empire. Their new leader is more ruthless than Saddam Hussein, more savage even than the Hitler-Hussein of George Bush’s nightmares. But, as we

like to say in America, he’s “our S.O.B.”

There is considerable speculation in Washington that the Bush administration gave Assad the green light, but Assad hardly needed any encouragement. As our faithful ally at this difficult juncture, he knew he could count on the silence, if not the support of the United States. How times have changed. In 1958 a moderate Republican administration sent in the Marines to protect the Christian pro-Western government of Camille Chamoun; in 1990 another moderate Republican President sends troops to defend the virulently anti-Christian royal house of Saud and connives at the massacre of Lebanese Christians, including the son of former president Chamoun: a week after General Aoun’s surrender, Christian leader Dany Chamoun, who remained in Beirut under Syrian protection, was brutally murdered along with his wife and two children. What is the administration’s response to this violent and brutal conquest? The State Department would only comment that it hoped Aoun’s surrender “ends a sad chapter of Lebanon’s history.” So much for America’s determination to

resist aggression.

As the Gulf farce continues, we are provided with almost daily evidence that George Bush is a worthy successor to Jimmy Carter. It was under Carter that the crusade for international human rights came out in the open as a campaign against national sovereignty, and throughout the so-called crisis in the Gulf, the key American decisions have nearly all been justified on the grounds of collective security, the United Nations, or international human rights. Within a mere 48-hour period, President Bush once again denounced Saddam Hussein as another Hitler, threatening him with a war crimes trial, if there were any more incidents of Iraqi soldiers shooting civilians. As if American soldiers have never shot civilians, as if that were all that Heinrich Himmler was accused of, as if the Nuremberg trials were not a travesty of every decent principle of national and international law. As Churchill among so many others insisted at the time, the worst of the Nazis should have been shot as soon as they were captured, without setting a precedent that could some day be used against Britain and America. As the tide turns against nuclear weapons, will the United States someday be required to pay reparations to the Japanese?

But worse, far worse than the reckless Presidential rhetoric was the U.N. resolution to send a delegation to Israel to investigate the killing of 21 Palestinians. The United States, eager to appease its vehemently anti-Christian allies in the Arab world, voted in favor of the resolution, provoking the Israeli countermove: the decision to step up the settlement of Soviet Jews in East Jerusalem.

Many if not most Americans probably deplore the excessive force used by the Israeli government against Palestinians, and many if not most would be delighted to see the United States begin lowering its foreign aid to Israel, foreign aid that enables the government of Israel to provide a welfare safety net far in excess of what we enjoy here. Some Americans, at least, would be content to see Israel withdraw from its occupied territories and allow the establishment of a Palestinian state. But these are all practical matters of *Realpolitik*, in which there is room for disagreement. What is frightening,

however, is our blithe willingness to abridge the sovereignty of an allied state by supporting the United Nations' claim to stick its nose in, every time there is a question of an oppressed minority. The day is coming when we won't have the votes and won't have the backing of the Soviets. George Bush's New World Order will seem less attractive, when Americans have to face a series of U.N. delegations that come to investigate conditions on Indian reservations and to guarantee the rights of Puerto Rican separatists and black nationalists.

The Israelis are justifiably upset with the United States, and not just over the U.N. resolution. There are rumors that the Israelis, alarmed at the expansion of Syrian territory right up to their doorstep, are hinting at the possibility of a strike against Syria. The possibilities for Armageddon appear to be multiplying. If one can believe a report in the French *L'Express*, the Bush administration has serious plans of attacking Iraq as soon as the elections are safely out of the way.

—Thomas Fleming

THE IMMIGRATION and Naturalization Service announced last June that to "regain control of the border" the INS will now begin to deport and possibly jail aliens and smugglers entering our country illegally. If you're wondering whether this hasn't been INS policy all along, think again. In the Southwest, repeat offenders have traditionally been released just inside the Mexican border—not arrested, not fingerprinted, just released, often to be apprehended again later in the same night.

This catch-and-release policy has long been evidence not only of the federal government's refusal to control illegal immigration, but of its ardent interest in its proliferation. Remember when Washington told us that the Immigration Reform Act of 1986, which amnestied 3.1 million illegal aliens, would not be the precedent for further amnesties but would merely acknowledge present realities? Washington lied. Last October the House passed the Family Fairness and Employment Opportunity Immigration Act of 1990 (H.R. 4300), and as of early November the bill had entered a

conference committee where lawmakers are busy ironing out differences between the House and Senate versions. Sponsored by Democrat Bruce Morrison of Connecticut, the House bill grants two new amnesties to illegal aliens, increases family-chain migration, grants permanent resident aliens the same immigration privileges as citizens, and will cost the American taxpayer another \$3 billion annually. The bill will increase legal immigration to this country from roughly five hundred thousand immigrants a year to seven hundred thousand a year in 1992, 1993, and 1994, and then reduce the level to 675,000 annually in subsequent years.

Congress's timing is appalling. At the very time a 1990 Roper Poll shows that 77 percent of Americans, including 78 percent of blacks and 74 percent of Hispanics, oppose increasing immigration, that one out of five prisoners in American jails is an illegal alien (a figure that has risen 600 percent in the last decade), that unemployment is on the rise and a recession is on the way, and at the very time that Congress itself cannot figure out how to balance the federal budget at its *present* level without raising taxes on citizens legally residing in this country—it is now that our leaders propose one of the most sweeping changes in U.S. immigration policy in more than a quarter of a century. And amendments that would have forced Congress to reimburse cities and states for additional social service costs incurred by the new influx of immigrants were defeated on the House floor.

In other words, cities and regions hardest hit by these immigration waves can expect no help from Washington. Last June, when the California town of Costa Mesa banned the spending of local funds on aid for illegal aliens, Housing and Urban Development Secretary Jack Kemp personally intervened, arguing that no city has a right to restrict HUD funds. Nor can Californians expect much help from their state legislators. In 1989 the state passed a law providing medical coverage, including pregnancy care, for all illegal aliens who reside in California. Illegal aliens have openly told state investigators that the Medi-Cal program is their sole reason for migrating to America. Administrators of Califor-

nia hospitals and clinics now encourage illegal aliens to claim residency in California so that their facilities can claim Medi-Cal reimbursement.

The San Diego suburb of Encinitas, once a peaceful middle-class community known for its beautiful beaches and gardens, is reportedly now knee-deep in vagrants, panhandlers, squatter villages, and crime as a result of Mexican and Central American immigration. Ten years ago the Central Valley town of Merced had no Asian refugees. Now one fifth of its population, approximately 12,000, is composed of Laotian Hmong, 80 percent of whom are on welfare. The town of Santa Maria suffers the same problems. But when Santa Maria Mayor George Hobbs last year stated the obvious, that his city has "a Mexican problem," he was denounced as insensitive, alarmist, racist, and nativist. Like quotas, affirmative action, gay rights, and issues of gender, immigration has become an intellectual no-man's land where career-conscious scholars and prudent politicians must either tread lightly or dare not tread at all.

So let us tally the record. In virtually every Western and Southwestern state illegal aliens can receive free legal advice and free medical services, including pregnancy care. The City University of New York in 1989 lowered the tuition for illegal aliens. Illegal aliens in New York City, as in many other cities, can also legally demand both housing and education. In October Congress decided that, despite our current budget woes, another two hundred thousand immigrants should possibly be allowed in annually. Last May Washington set the potentially explosive precedent of giving asylum to a Chinese couple who wanted to defy Chinese law by having a second child, thus adding birth control to the growing list of "injustices" that now warrant entry to our country. And illegal aliens who actually want to become American citizens—why any of them would want to limit their entitlements by opting for citizenship is beyond me—can now enroll in the 40-hour cram course the federal government has established for aliens to prepare for their civics, U.S. history, and English proficiency exam. What this amounts to is a Princeton Review of citizenship funded by millions of tax dollars.

Luckily for themselves, members of Congress and Beltway think tank executives will not have to suffer the consequences of their policies and actions. Instead, it is the blacks and Hispanics and other struggling minorities who will have to suffer the heightened competition for jobs and low-cost housing that results with every new wave of immigration. It is the citizens of the Southwest and of Southern California in particular, who will have to watch crime, disease, and welfare skyrocket in their communities because Washington cares most about votes of special interest lobbies. And it is the cities and communities of the Pacific Northwest that also will suffer from immigration and migrations, migrations not of illegal aliens but of the scared and frustrated Southern Californians who are trekking there to escape the ravages of what they once called home.

The "Okies" of the 1930's took to the road when they realized they couldn't count on Washington to lighten their plight. The "Okies" of the 90's have come to the same realization.

—Theodore Pappas

NO MAJOR CITY in this country concedes that its major hospital is a pest-house, or that its museums display junk, or that its symphony orchestra squeaks. Nor are cities satisfied with inadequate schools. In medicine, the arts and music, politics and government, and primary and secondary education, there is good but no "best." Yet we take for granted that, in higher education, there really is a "best," which can be measured by polling college presidents and deans. That conception yields the fiction that our elite universities are national ones, whereas the undergraduate programs of our state and municipal universities are second class. But American life is lived at home, in the cities, and in the states. We are a nation of regions, a people of localities; we have no Paris or London to set the standard.



When we conceive higher education at the undergraduate level to be national, we contradict our character as a nation. In Europe, even with the various ministries of culture and national cultural centers, higher educa-

tion is local. Providing dormitories and playing fields for large numbers of young people who are far from home is uncommon. University students ordinarily go to schools in their own cities for the baccalaureate degree. (Oxford and Cambridge are exceptions, along with Uppsala and Lund. But the rule is mostly local: London or Helsinki or Köln or Bologna.) Here in America, however, large numbers of students are detached from their homes and communities to form cities of transients. American higher education is made up of Brigadoons; it takes place outside of the context of normal life—of work, home, and family. True, the municipal and state universities attract homebodies. But however accomplished the faculties and able the students, the excellent regional and state universities take second place to what are dubbed the elite colleges and universities of national prominence. The state-supported and state-sponsored universities are rarely mentioned on such lists, and when Berkeley, Ann Arbor, or Chapel Hill do make it, it is always with a vague nod to "the great unwashed" or to the "great rival" of Harvard, which is "Podunk College." In higher education "best" means national, whether or not the education is good, the faculty is accomplished, or the environment nurtures excellence or even mental health. We all know that best is best. American higher education institutionalizes snobbery.

When people imagine that higher education can accomplish its goals through elite national institutions—and the rest be damned—they make a quite substantive error. For the self-styled national universities sever the vital connection between learning and living, between learning and working. The national university removes the young from home and family and community in the theory that, in these formative years, where one has worked and lived and is likely going to work and live no longer serves a purpose. But education only works when it serves a purpose, when the university is answerable to the community for the here and now of students' lives. When education is not answerable it becomes surreal.

Students pay a heavy emotional price for the sense of having been chosen to live among the elite: they

doubt whether they are all that good, and rightly so. The competition to gain entry into the so-called elite universities is brutal; for every one who is chosen, ten are rejected. The selection process confers upon the chosen not only pride but also self-doubt. Snobbery and conceit then must cover up the uncertainty. The faculties at elite schools also pay a psychological price. They know that it is not the position that honors the person, but the person who honors the position; they know that no university today is "best" in all departments; and they know that most prestigious universities rely for their fame upon their professional schools, rather than on their college and graduate faculties. There is a simple rule of thumb: good people are where they are, good work comes from where it comes from, and important minds impart prestige to the colleges or universities where they do their work.

Does anybody remember Königsberg, but that Kant worked there? And who cares whether Einstein was a professor at Tübingen or Basel, or Darwin at Cambridge or Leeds, or Freud in Vienna, or Marx in Frankfurt? Inflated endowments, great libraries, tradition, and old buildings can form a facade that conceals a shabby intellectual slum. This is not to compare Ivy League universities to Potemkin villages, nor to say that all emperors are naked. I mean only to ask if it is worth the price exacted of those students and professors, who live lives of conceit, insecurity, and vacuous self-importance.

I left a "hot college" for what some might call a backwater, because I wanted to devote the final chapters of my teaching career to a life of learning and scholarship within a community. At Brown University, smart and lazy and spoiled rich kids told professors that their parents are paying \$25,000 a year, so therefore. . . . At the University of South Florida, students come because they're there and we're here: it is the only opportunity. I get to teach in a cycle at five campuses, Tampa, St. Petersburg, Fort Myers, Sarasota, and Lakeland, and many of my students will come from their jobs and go on to their homes. At Brown the conventional students do the conventional thing. Here, there is scarcely a convention; a forty-three-year-old woman, a

college senior, talks to me about graduate studies, my classroom is open to anyone who registers, and senior citizens come free.

This is not to suggest we have no need for national universities with undergraduate programs. Highly specialized universities such as MIT and Cal Tech will always find a special place for themselves; but their professionalism and their acknowledged eminence in the few things they claim to do justify that place. In the aggregate, however, education works best when learning relates to living, when learning yields to preparation for work—not a particular job to be sure, but the capacity to work in general—and when what we do in the university years leads from somewhere to somewhere. When universities are answerable to their communities, and when communities sustain their universities in a reciprocal relationship, learning is endowed with context and meaning, and education serves a purpose.

—Jacob Neusner

THE ART WORLD, never a place for the linear-minded and logical among us, seems to be in an exceptionally strange way these days. Here a woman "performance artist" makes a career of doing vile things with yams while squeaking about phallocentrism; there a young man, presumably in the same spirit, castrates himself before a camera. (To paraphrase comedian Bob Goldthwait, pity the Fotomat clerk who loses *that* roll of film.) Some blocks away, another young man immerses a crucifix in urine in order to make, as he says, a statement about the commercialization of religion. All of them, of course, have exercised such ecstasies of the creative imagination through government funds. And all of them want still more public dollars.

A person endowed with a sober brain may well be inclined to post a letter to Washington to request that funds for such nonsense be diverted to more useful ends. A rank philistine may question why the government should be in the art racket in the first place. A real boor may even suggest that artists undertake not to outrage public sensibilities with the help of public largesse, reasoning—as so many artists seem incapable of doing

—that the one who pays the piper calls the tune.

These good citizens have strange allies, it happens, in a wobbly coalition of artists and "cultural workers" who have pledged, as of January 1, 1990, not to lift pen or chisel or burin. Instead, they've called an Art Strike. Only unknown artists are participating, while the tills of the Mapplethorpe estate and the SoHo-Tribeca set happily fill up. But as the strike wears on and crowds of revolutionary post-neo-expressionists wrest state power away from Sotheby's and MOMA, they may lure their more impressionable seniors into the movement.

Let's dismiss the cynical notion that the strikers, by withholding their art from the world, are merely drumming up demand, thereby contributing to the "inflationary commodification"—as one of them, schooled in Marx and French critical theory, put it—that allows a nondescript be-dribbled canvas to fetch six figures. Poor souls, they may mean it. The strikers may even have to seek their living in gas stations and convenience stores and factories. There are, after all, as Oscar Wilde said, moments when art attains to the dignity of manual labor.

The Art Strike has a sort-of-official organ in *Yawn: A Sporadic Critique of Culture*, which I commend to those in want of amusement or annoyance. Perhaps to co-opt would-be scabs, some of the strikers have opened a sale outlet in San Francisco, where prices range from a nickel to a ceiling of thirty-five dollars. Don't anyone tell the Japanese.

The art strikers pledge to continue their strike against the elitist commodity market until the first of January, 1993. In the manner of our Department of Agriculture, I wonder whether we could subsidize them to even greater ends—offering, say, a stipend of twenty thousand dollars for every year in which they produce nothing whatever. It's too late for Mapplethorpe, but can we enroll the Serranos and Finleys right now? Dare we prevent still more duotone castrations? If we act now, we may be able to see to it that the Art Strike is never settled.

In the idea- and ideal-less world of modern art, we may have hit upon a notion whose time has truly come.

—Gregory McNamee

WHAT IS THE ART WORLD'S state in America today? The answer depends on whom you talk to and what they do. Some of the answers I've heard are: rich, poor, over- and underfunded, neglected, status-laden, censored, silly, profound, personal, public, patriotic, obscene, sacrilegious, attacked, elitist, sexist, postmodern, pluralistic, and so on. And all are true. Anything and everything is sold in the American art industry.

As an artist, designer, and educator I've watched the art establishment grow, prosper, and become politicized over the last quarter century. This growth parallels the expansion of the National Endowment for the Arts and the various state art councils that now exist not only in every state but also in American Samoa, the District of Columbia, Guam, the Northern Mariana, and the Virgin Islands. Then there are the city-sponsored cultural centers and regional and private arts groups that "support the arts." What emerges is a vast and powerful culture machine employing thousands of well-paid art bureaucrats who are devoted to pointing out cultural avenues to the rest of us who presumably cannot find our own way.

Nowhere does this art bureaucracy show the relationship of art and politics better than at the state level. According to the Illinois Arts Council's 1989 annual report, the Lyric Opera of Chicago received \$25,875, and the opera's Center for American Artists received \$95,220 "for general operating support." However worthy and fruitful the goals of the Lyric Opera may be, one wonders why this prestigious institution representing Chicago's most socially prominent families and corporations needs over one hundred thousand dollars from the taxpayers, most of whom will never go to the opera. This pales, however, next to the \$302,250 that the California Arts Council gave in 1989 to the San Francisco Opera, and the \$305,000 that went for the San Francisco Symphony. The exclusivity of these groups raises questions about funding special interest constituencies that have a significant private sector funding base.

This commodification of the art world has created a lot of very well-to-do artists and dealers, and new generations of young artists now aspire to the

fame and riches of the art establishment with a zeal more reminiscent of avaricious actors hustling Hollywood than serious practitioners of what can be solitary and lonely crafts. The NEA stamp of approval has become a coveted status symbol; references to it are commonly made on artist, gallery, and institutional resumés; and jobs at the NEA and the various state art agencies have become the patronage turf of the privileged few and the politically well-connected. At between forty and fifty thousand dollars a year, a regional representative for the NEA may work out of his home and have a job that has to be considered one of the patronage plums of the art bureaucracy.

Founded shortly after the NEA, the Illinois Arts Council, now 25, is one of the oldest state art councils. Its present chairman, Shirley R. Madigan, was appointed by Governor James Thompson, and she is the wife of Illinois Speaker of the House Michael Madigan. Acting Executive Director Rhoda A. Pierce makes over \$57,000 a year, and in the IAC annual report for 1989 she states, "the arts must remain a significant priority on the government agenda," and that "the Council firmly believes that no other means of support can fully meet the needs of a growing artistic constituency." This is exactly the kind of airy grandiosity that so many of the art bureaucrats project to justify patronage of all kinds of groups that become ever more dependent upon the state for their existence.

The IAC is divided into funding areas by state senate and legislative districts. Chicago is by far the funding epicenter, but all over the state people lobby for the state's art largesse. The Visual Arts Advisory Panel for the IAC even seats members who are requesting grants themselves. When a panel member's application comes up for review that person is said to leave the room, and with this brief and fleeting nod in the general direction of ethics it seems clear that the establishment that promotes art for all is also adept at feeding itself at the taxpayer's expense.

There is perhaps no better illustration of the nature of arts bureaucracy in government than California. In the early years of the California Arts Council, actor Peter Coyote and others called for the CAC to pursue this long-range goal: "To ultimately have a

society so deeply dyed with art, craft, and style as to render an Arts Council unnecessary." This goal was quickly branded as naive and unrealistic and was then dropped by a council that opted instead for self-preservation. Since its founding in 1976 the CAC's annual budget has increased from just under two million dollars to a proposed twenty million dollars for 1990.

In a free and democratic republic the human spirit should defy even good-intentioned regimentation, and therefore the creative establishment of this country should form a new agenda that rejects the materialism that has reduced the arts in this country to one more form of pop entertainment. Artists should make their own decisions about their lives and careers, free of government intervention, and neighborhoods, towns, cities, and states should nurture their own creative environments, however banal or elevated they choose to make them.

I recently suggested to one government art manager that the chairman of the NEA be elevated to cabinet-level status with the title of Secretary of the Arts and Humanities. I argued that this would enable the President to fully develop an art policy that reflected the best interests of the United States. Somehow my sarcasm was missed, and I was both amused and appalled to hear this reply: "What a wonderful idea. What a simply wonderful idea!"

—Stanley D. Edwards

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JANUARY 1991/9

Principalities & Powers

by Samuel Francis

There's a bad moon on the rise, and as 1990 drew to a close, the American ruling class began to huddle in its tents to meet the coming storm. When ex-Klansman David Duke seized 44 percent of the vote in Louisiana's senatorial election last October, the howling of the political cyclone could be heard even in the cellars of New York and Washington, where the oligarchy's augurs at once set to work to explain away the tempest as just a light rain. Louisiana's voters are racist, whined the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. The state is economically depressed. It was all Ronald Reagan's fault anyway.

The pundits may actually believe their own propaganda, and it's just as well if they do, since it means that once again they've managed to miss the point and lose the message Mr. Duke's supporters were sending. Duke did not run as a Nazi or a Klansman, but neither did he campaign as the kind of conservative that is now fashionable, and no one has accused him of being liberal. Indeed, one of his two opponents, Ben Baggert, was precisely a fashionable sort of conservative Republican, and Duke ripped his political throat out. Three weeks before the election, Mr. Baggert's campaign fell apart like a wet grocery sack, and his top aides resigned. Two days before the election, Mr. Baggert himself withdrew and endorsed the Democrat, third-term Senator Bennett Johnston, and a whole flock of Republican geese suddenly flapped south to honk in Mr. Johnston's support. Had it not been for such last-minute devices, Duke would almost certainly have forced a runoff and perhaps would have wasted Mr. Johnston as thoroughly as he did Mr. Baggert. Thus does the oligarchy close ranks when it spies the lightning of revolution flash in the darkening sky.

Of course, by itself, Mr. Duke's ability to gain votes does not constitute a revolution, nor does the candidate himself seem to promise much as a serious leader of one. He simply carries too much baggage, and there are persistent rumors about irregularities in his personal life, which, if true, point to serious character flaws and threaten an

eventual political embarrassment. Whatever his plans for the future, Mr. Duke and his supporters shouldn't count on holding high elective office. He can at most be a gadfly, and perhaps the best thing for him to do now would be to institutionalize the movement he has started in a nationwide organization that could exert cultural and indirect political power and radicalize Middle American consciousness still further.

But despite Mr. Duke's shortcomings, the election of October 6 was not a fluke, and it could be the first rumblings of a new national political force that rejects the dominant political culture and the increasingly meaningless poles of right and left between which it shuffles. More than twenty years ago, George Wallace, who was in the same mold as Mr. Duke, declared that there wasn't a dime's worth of difference between the two major parties, and the hasty coalition between left and right formed to make sure Duke didn't cause any more trouble pretty much proves he was correct.

Not only the Duke election but also the paralysis of the federal government over the same weekend shows that the old order is simply out of gas. The President and Congress wheeled and dealed and ran off the road trying to draft a miraculous budget that would placate all the parasites while at the same time not bankrupt the country. The recession that began to settle over the economy, the threat of a war in the Middle East on behalf of a "new world order" that is irrelevant and inimical to real American interests, the disgust that most voters express for Congress, and the apparent end of the Cold War all point to the exhaustion of incumbent elites, the uselessness of their ideologies, and the readiness of many Americans to forge a new identity that reflects their real needs, interests, and values.

There is, in fact, statistical support for this thesis. One month before the election in Louisiana, the Times Mirror Center for the People and the Polls released a comprehensive survey of political opinions in the United States, a sequel to a similar survey published in 1987. The study divided the electorate into several groups called "attitudinal

clusters," and it found no category larger than the one it labeled the "Disaffecteds." In 1987 this group comprised 9 percent of the adult population, and by last year it had grown to 12 percent. It leans toward the Republican Party, but the GOP has not been able to secure its loyalty, and it remains volatile, ready to follow whoever has the boldness to lead it.

The Times Mirror survey characterizes the Disaffecteds as "alienated and pessimistic" and "highly suspicious of all forms of authority, alienated from both the political and economic establishment, aggravated by constant financial pressure, and ready to defect politically at the slightest provocation." The Disaffecteds bear a striking resemblance to, and may be identical with, the group sociologist Donald I. Warren in 1974 called the "Middle American Radicals," or MARs, who perceived themselves as caught in an iron sandwich between an irresponsible and oppressive elite, on the one hand, and, on the other, a ravenous underclass that the elite supports at the expense of the middle class. The MARs were the core of the Wallace constituency, and it is likely they would support a candidate like David Duke, baggage or no baggage, wearing a Klan bedsheet or a Dacron suit bought at K-Mart.

But even outside the Disaffected category, the Times Mirror survey found a "significant intensification" of feelings of alienation, mistrust, disillusion with politics, and helplessness. While there was little evidence of increasing racial intolerance, "there has been a greater proportionate increase in feelings of economic pressure among middle-income whites and greater indications of personal alienation among poor white people than among blacks." One of the most interesting changes in opinion was the decline of the perception of communism as a threat, but at the same time the survey concluded that "the American public remains as militant and nationalist as it was a few years ago," and there has been an increase in hostility toward Japan, Israel, and Mexico. Nationalism, the survey found, is linked with economic pessimism as well as with unfavorable opinions about Japan.