

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

## The New Fusionism

by Thomas Fleming

“In the government of Virginia,” said John Randolph in 1830, “we can’t take a step without breaking our shins over some Federal obstacle.” Randolph’s metaphor was a minor exaggeration 160 years ago; today, it would be a gross understatement, because today that federal obstacle has been erected so high, so deep, so strong, that we can scarcely take a step of any kind. This same federal government stipulates how we shall rear our children, how we may conduct our business, whom we may choose or refuse as our companions. The whole of our private and social lives are hemmed in by various decrees, restrictions, and codes—and not just by the national government. State and local jurisdictions, with what little dribbles of power they have left, are just as eager to invade our homes, to tell us what we can smoke, drink, and say.

Randolph himself made a similar complaint in the matter of a billiard table that some members of Congress thought an evil. “In Virginia,” he said, “we are and I trust shall ever be alive to States rights. But have the people no rights as against the Assembly? All oppression commences under specious pretexts. I have wondered that no rural, or rather rustic, Hampden has been found to withstand the petty tyranny which has as good a right to take away his wife’s looking-glass or frying pan as his billiard table. By what authority is this thing done? Under color of law, I know, but a law in the teeth of all principles of free government.”

Randolph was a lover of liberty, an Old Republican who cherished minimal government and distrusted all forms of tyranny including that tyranny of a majority manipulated by

a minority that we call democracy. He was almost entirely without cant. Freeing his own slaves, he nonetheless ridiculed the political doctrine of equality as subversive of all liberty. “Sir,” he once observed, “I am an aristocrat: I love liberty. I hate equality.” This aristocrat was also a radical Jeffersonian who opposed every move to increase the size and scope of government, while at the same time resisting attempts to take away voting rights from smaller free-holders in Virginia.

Randolph once occupied an honorable place in the pantheon of American conservatism. He and the other Old Republicans had so profoundly influenced the course of Southern political thought that Henry Adams selected him—in addition to Captain John Smith and Thomas Jefferson—as one of the pernicious Virginians who needed debunking. Russell Kirk’s M.A. thesis, *Randolph of Roanoke*, helped to launch Dr. Kirk’s career as the most authentic voice of traditionalist American conservative thought, and this book—imbued with the sentiments of Burke and the traditions of prescriptive right—has been kept in print by the Liberty Fund, an organization whose very name declares its sympathies.

Randolph and Calhoun were once studied by conservatives who also respected Herbert Spencer and Lysander Spooner, Henry Adams and Irving Babbitt, Friedrich Hayek and Ludwig von Mises. It is instructive, occasionally, to spend a morning reading early issues of the *New Individualist Review*. There you will find Milton Friedman almost cheek by jowl with Richard Weaver, a frey interchange

between Ronald Hamowy and William Buckley on the influence of *National Review*, as well as article after article by competent scholars honestly coming to grips with the reality of the New Deal revolution.

The richness and variety of the right in those days is astonishing. What is especially striking is the absence of a party line that could keep out serious minds. Louis Bromfield (a highly respected northern agrarian novelist), journalist and novelist Rose Wilder Lane, novelist and fruitcake Ayn Rand could all be read with respect by people who looked to George Stigler and Milton Friedman for economic wisdom. All were anticommunist, but there was no consensus on the Cold War. The hysteria over containing and/or rolling back the Communists was manufactured almost entirely by ex-Communists who, if they better understood the motives and goals, wildly overestimated the abilities of their former co-conspirators.

In recent years many of those on the right—reactionaries, conservatives, and libertarians—have had ample cause for melancholy reflection on what their movement had turned into: a narrow-minded ideology that justified the high salaries of fundraisers and foundation managers. Out of the ferment of their discontent it is just possible that something positive might spring up, and last autumn Donald Devine brought together a group of mostly Washington conservatives to consider the prospects for reawakening the right's historic commitment to limited government. At the same time, a group of "Old Right" conservatives and libertarians went to Dallas to hold the first meeting of the John Randolph Club.

The John Randolph Club grew out of a series of meetings and conversations initiated by an exchange of letters between Murray Rothbard and me. As it turned out, we were both disturbed by the development of new and highly rigid orthodoxies among conservatives and libertarians. Big government, minority rights, and globalism, it seems, are the new conservative creed, and it is now heresy to oppose the steady march of progress toward the New World Order. But the libertarians are hardly any better off than the conservatives. Recently a prominent establishment libertarian (Ed Crane of the Cato Institute) attacked Lew Rockwell and other paleolibertarians as social fascists. Why? Because they think that marriage between a man and a woman is preferable to marriage between a man and a man or a man and a sheep.

With the official conservatism turning socialist and official libertarianism turning libertine, we began to wonder where things went wrong. The most obvious answer is that all along, libertarians and traditionalist conservatives needed each other. It was only the presence of the libertarians in the so-called fusionism of the 1950's that prevented the monarchists, authoritarians, and starched-pants dandies with spats and waxed mustaches from taking over, and when the libertarians were kicked out of the coalition, their place was eventually taken by a determined cadre of Trotskyists and Marxist revisionists who proceeded to construct a whole raft of new conservatisms: Big Government conservatism, window of opportunity conservatism, and progressive conservatism. It is simpler to call these people, wherever they happen to be living at the moment, Washington conservatives,

because they seem to live in the revolving door between Republican administrations and lobbying organizations. They are, for the most part, shills for whoever will pay them. In the old days, it was big business Republicans; today it is multinational companies and foreign interests. They have changed the words, but the tune is still "M-O-N-E-Y" (the best things in life are free / but you can give 'em to the birds and bees).

In this new conservative movement, Pat Buchanan is regarded as a dangerous bigot, while A.M. Rosenthal of the *New York Times* is celebrated as a great conservative commentator. Welfare is not evil per se, and only needs some adjustments—enterprise zones, workfare, and educational choice—to make it an issue that can secure votes for Republicans, jobs for conservatives, and contracts for loyal supporters "in the community." The new conservatives have all but given up on the natural institutions of family and community and are ready to embrace Checker Finn's latest gimmick: total education for the total state. (Finn is said to be the brains behind the new Education secretary. What a thought.)

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Some of the right's left turn toward big government is the direct result of the libertarian schism and the neoconservative alliance. But if conservatives have suffered from the libertarian defection (or rather expulsion), the reverse is also true. Liberty as a rallying cry has always attracted a certain number of eccentrics who were looking for nothing more exalted than a justification for their vices. (It's no accident that so many lifestyle libertarians gravitate to San Francisco.) With traditionalists and social conservatives out of the way, the path was clear for a takeover by the misfits, the group that Murray Rothbard usually describes as druggies, grifters, and losers.

So much for how and why we have been holding meetings. What do we hope to accomplish? The first piece of business on our agenda is the restoration of debate and free expression. If Pat Buchanan and Joe Sobran criticize the present government of Israel, they are branded as anti-Semites; if Anthony Harrigan calls for a critical scrutiny of unfair Japanese trade practices, he must be a xenophobic mercantilist, an enemy of free enterprise, and a lackey of the textile manufacturers. But if these *ad hominem* attacks on motives are to be permitted, why does no one question the vicious anti-Arab sentiments of the neoconservatives, or the flood of Oriental money in which the conservative free traders are swimming?

To most of the political questions that vex us in our time, I

have no ready answers. What I do know is that we need more, not less discussion from journalists and scholars whose checks are not signed in Tokyo or Seoul. In the not distant future, we hope, these discussions will lead to the formation of a new political coalition that will not be content with slowing the federal government's rate of growth; if a patient is suffering from a malignant tumor, what kind of a doctor would confine his treatment to chemotherapy to slow the growth, and narcotics to numb the pain? The federal government is just that malignant tumor, and all the conservative Republican doctors can offer are smaller tax increases than the Democrats want, and an infinite number of speeches, magazine articles, and background reports justifying the welfare state, democratic globalism, and a war that was designed to benefit every country in the world except the United States.

It is too late to think about conserving. There is not much left of the old Republic, which has been bloated into a swollen and cancerous empire that threatens to devour all the life and energy that still exists. We don't need to reform the nation; we need to take it back from the occupying army of government officials and managers and interest groups that treat the citizenry like a conquered people.

We need to take back the streets from the criminal classes that now possess them.

We need to take back the courts from the protectors of those same criminal classes.

We need to take back the Congress and state legislatures

from the lawyers and politicians who govern only in their own interests.

We need to take back all the power and wealth that has turned Washington from a sleepy Southern town into the most gaudy imperial capital in the world.

But none of this is possible so long as the so-called conservative opposition remains stuck in the rut of anticommunist leftism. There are socialists and radicals today whose ethical and cultural principles are well to the right of Washington conservatism. With the end of the Cold War, and in the dawn of the New World Order, the old anticommunist alliance has lost whatever utility it might once have had. Whatever new coalitions may form, they will be on the basis of what we are for, not just what we are against, and red-baiting will no longer constitute an automatic ticket of admission for any ex-Trotskyist bully boy purged by the left.

Then what will become of the official conservatism of Washington and New York? In the short run, we can predict a brilliant success. They have a lock on all the money and all the institutions created by the right; they have established a cozy relationship with the leftist establishment media who recognize them for what they are: safe and well-groomed lapdogs who bark but never bite. When the day comes that they are no longer needed, the conservatives will be treated like a lower-class sweetheart picked up for a summer affair. I only hope they're given carfare for the long ride home back to their side of town. 

## IN THE MIND'S EYE

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*Thomas G. West*

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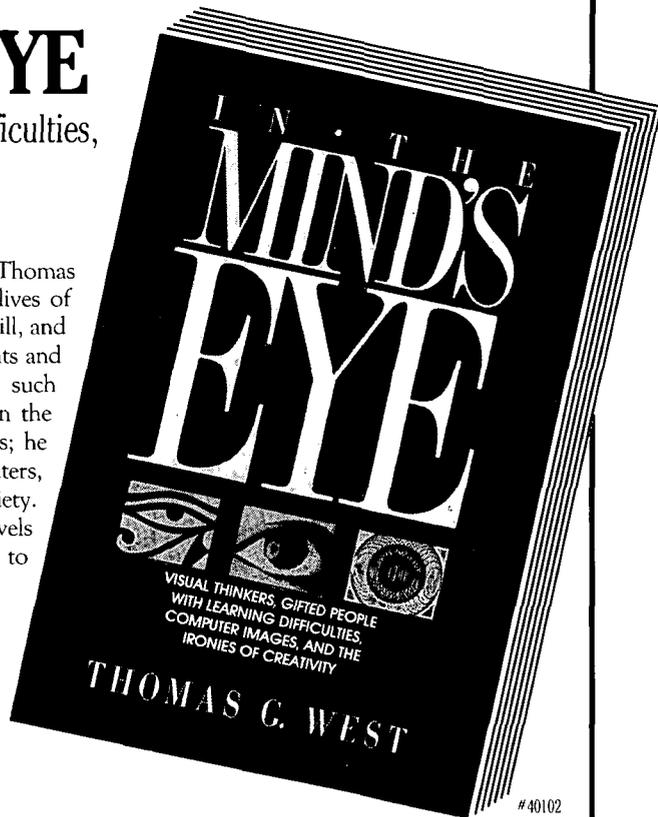
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## The Slothful

by *Dabney Stuart*

You have seen the whales expire on our beaches:  
they faintly heave, and flibber about the blowhole  
as if sighing for an ocean without oil.  
So a culture might quiver as it vanishes.

We long for nothing but our own inertia.  
The sougning often mistaken for a grove  
of trees waving is the sound we make when we move.  
You should not look forward to our departure.

The famous trough we are supposed to feed from  
exists only in your mind. It's been enough  
since we began to displace the holograph  
of your will with our solid kingdom come.

## The Vengeful

We deem it meet and orthodox  
to store our hearts in Reynolds wrap,  
to hunt the cow, to milk the fox,  
to think of anger as a map.

The end of life is commonplace;  
we stack our weapons in the hall.  
We dress for love as outer space.  
Our saint is Simon Wiesenthal.

We sleep awake, we dance The Torque,  
Our eyes are serpents under glass.  
Our password is the three-tined fork.  
The future is what comes to pass.

## The Decadent

We have been here long enough to learn  
there is nothing new under the sun.  
We no longer seek even surcease  
from boredom, or read Ecclesiastes.

If we feel the faintest insinuation  
of desire, as a breeze  
hints itself into summer grass,  
we imagine what it would be like  
to do this, or that, and the glimmer dies.

If regret stirs with its seasoned irk,  
or something crawls, or swims, or flies,  
we are at peace with such simulation.  
We have had it all, and that suffices.

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