

death penalty bills amounted to a defiance of popular will, and he began to mumble about holding a referendum on capital punishment. But this was too little, too late.

Since his inauguration, Pataki has given several speeches reaffirming his commitment to capital punishment. The case of Reuben Harris, a man with a long criminal record who recently escaped from his captors and pushed an elderly woman in front of a subway train, did little to dampen public anger about crime and the justice system's laxity.

The death penalty may become law, but any bill Pataki signs is likely to be so watered down that its effect will be minimal at best. According to the *Times*, the New York Civil Liberties Union is gearing up for an all-out battle to prevent the restoration of capital punishment and is also preparing a contingency plan involving the insertion of bogus "racial justice" clauses into a death penalty bill. These stipulations will require courts to show that racial bias did not affect the outcome of trials involving black criminals.

The *Times* also reports that "some lawyers have called for *sequestered pretrial questioning of individual jurors about their views on race.*" (Emphasis added.) With the definition of "racism" now encompassing a thousand different things, there are probably very few people who would qualify for jury duty under such rules. Any jury that passes muster with the interrogators will probably be comprised of devout "progressives" predisposed to acquit a black defendant.

We can expect to hear the liberal platitudes about how the death penalty is "racist" and does not really deter crime. Never mind statistics showing that states frequently experience a drop in violent crime after reimplementing capital punishment, and never mind that even in this age of race riots and "gangsta" warfare, more whites than blacks go to the electric chair.

—Michael Washburn

OBITER DICTA: Contributing editor Clyde Wilson's book *Carolina Cavalier: The Life and Mind of James Johnston Pettigrew* is finally available in paperback, from the University of Georgia Press. Readers who have enjoyed Mr. Wilson's essays in *Chronicles* will doubtless want to order his life of

the famous Confederate leader, a book the *Southern Partisan* praised as "a singular and elegant contribution to the art of biography, the history of the war and the civilization of the South."

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pear throughout the review sections.

Chronicles readers in Madison will be surprised to learn that two stores in their city actually carry the magazine: Borders Book Shop (3416 University Avenue) and Pic-A-Book (506 State Street). Other stores in Wisconsin selling *Chronicles* are: Barnes & Noble Superstore (4625 Michaels Drive, Appleton); Media Play (4240 West Wisconsin Avenue, Grand Chute); Schwartz Book Shop (209 East Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee).

Inaugural Ode

by *Harold McCurdy*

What was put down has risen, what was enslaved is free,
And everywhere bears witness to the world's old agony.

All tribes are intermatted, and each on itself contracts,
Committed more to its mythos than to its chattering Fax.

Race against race grows sharper, creed against alien creed,
While crushed by big technology is Pascal's thinking reed.

Toward uninhabited planets the giant spacecrafts roar,
Polluting the empyrean, preparing for total war.

On earth, imperial power ascends a tottering throne,
Soot-sprinkling with debts and promises snow-white Washington.

Best here to be oracular, not too precise or clear,
To speak in tongues, in rapture, of a good morning near.

The Rock (what rock?), the River (what river?), the Tree (what tree?)
Hint at a foggy, demotic, recycled Trinity.

Whose were those muffled sandals stumbling on Mt. Sinai?
Did St. John's crystal River emit that muddy sigh?

The Tree? Was it a 'simmon from which a nigger swung?
Or the unique terebinth where the Authentic Hanged Man hung?

The orotund vague phrases drop Eskimo and Kru
Into *E Pluribus Unum*'s heady post-Christian brew.

Inebriate with diversity, no longer a huddled mass,
We swarm across Walt Whitman's savannahs of leaves of grass.

A glow along the horizon, whether from shaken L.A.
Or burning Sarajevo, forecasts a brighter day.

And so, realizing westward, or eastward perhaps, we explore
Our Mother-of-Exiles' vista beyond her golden door.

by Samuel Francis

Gnostic Newt

The hallmark of the sophomore mind is that it knows the sorts of things that adult minds do but has not yet figured out how to do them. Bright undergraduates who solemnly inform their professors that they plan to write term papers applying what they have read about the latest fads of pop psychology to the enduring problems of literature and history are fairly typical specimens of the breed. They know that mature scholars spend their lives trying to apply new ideas to old problems, but in their own immaturity they have not yet learned how to tell which new ideas might offer useful approaches to such problems, which ideas are worthwhile but irrelevant, and which ideas are merely foolish. Hence, the papers they eventually submit to their teachers are usually minor disasters of ingenious but misapplied erudition.

Sophomoric minds are common enough in colleges, but sometimes they never grow up. Sometimes they manage to gain Ph.D.'s and teach college, and occasionally they get themselves elected to Congress. But only once in a century or so does a perpetual sophomore become Speaker of the House of Representatives, with a majority of his own party behind him. Such an event is now upon us, and the consequences of a sophomore mind unleashed and equipped with real political power may turn out to be a good deal more disastrous than those of silly term papers.

Most Americans and even most Republicans who knew of Newt Gingrich before last November's Republican sweep of the House and Senate probably had no idea of what for years he has thought and believed, and when in January he began to unbosom his wisdom in nationally noticed speeches, those who listened to him must have been astonished. It is well known that Mr. Gingrich is a man of no small intelligence—the brightest in the House, some say—and is eager to absorb, combine, and spew out new ideas in much the same way as the computer with which he is so fascinated. In academics

and even young lawmakers, such traits are assets, but in what is supposed to be the more sober figure of Speaker of the House, they may be flaws.

It is a fair and reasonable interpretation of last year's elections that the citizens who voted for the Republicans did so because they generally wanted such mundane desiderata as lower taxes, safer neighborhoods, smaller government, more controls on immigration, and less meddling abroad. Probably not a single voter in the United States cast his ballot for a Republican (or a Democrat) because he thought it would accelerate a world-historical transformation comparable to the transition to agriculture in prehistoric times or the Industrial Revolution of the 18th century. It is just such a transformation, however, to which Mr. Gingrich is personally dedicated and to which he now seems determined to deliver the country, if not the planet.

The transformation is what Mr. Gingrich and his personal gurus like to call the "Third Wave," a term they take from the best-selling tract of pop futurism by Alvin Toffler, and no sooner had the 104th Congress convened than Mr. Gingrich himself showed up at a day-long conference with Mr. Toffler and the latter's ubiquitous wife Heidi to proclaim the arrival of the New Age. The conference, on the topic of "Virtual America," was sponsored by the Progress and Freedom Foundation, run by former Gingrich staff aide Jeff Eisenach, and in addition to the new Speaker it featured former Congressman Vin Weber and the lovely if largely brainless Arianna Huffington, who, while everyone else was palavering about the Third Wave, had some thoroughly unremarkable revelations to impart about what she calls the Fourth Instinct.

But never mind the Fourth Instinct for now. Keep your eye on the Third Wave, which, it turns out, is the epochal social, economic, and political change supposedly induced by the arrival of computers and similar postindustrial technologies. As Toffler himself described it in his 1980 book, "The Third Wave brings with it a genuinely new way of life based on diversified, renewable

energy sources; on methods of production that make most factory assembly lines obsolete; on new, nonnuclear families; on a novel institution that might be called the 'electronic cottage'; and on radically changed schools and corporations of the future." Mr. Toffler always characterizes the coming age in the most breathless and dramatically utopian (not to say apocalyptic) terms—"The emergent civilization writes a new code of behavior for us. . . . The new civilization . . . will topple bureaucracies, reduce the role of the nation-state . . . [and] could . . . turn out to be the first truly humane civilization on earth."

The First Wave, you see, was the agricultural revolution of Neolithic times, and it took thousands of years for its implications to unfold. The Second Wave was the Industrial Revolution, and it took only a couple of centuries to waft us to the crest of the third one. Now, armed with laptops and lasers, we can surf into the final high-tech happyland under the mellow guidance of Mr. Gingrich himself.

Mr. Gingrich, it turns out, believes almost all of this, just as a college sophomore believes everything he reads in the *New York Times*, and he has believed it for years. In his book *Window of Opportunity*, which bears a somewhat qualified endorsement from Toffler (they disagree on abortion and school prayer) and somewhat less guarded ones from Ronald Reagan and Jack Kemp, Mr. Gingrich expatiated on just a few of the wonders of the coming era. The first one he mentioned was "a home video-computer system which would film your golf swing" and tell you how to improve it. Then there was the "personalized health chair," which would record what and how much you should eat and "allow a lot more people to stay out of nursing homes" (he said nothing in this book about orphanages). There will be "an interactive computerized income tax package," a "retirement rules and regulations package," a computer directory for federal parks and monuments, new techniques for helping the handicapped, and (perhaps Mr. Gingrich's favorite, at least next to spiffing up his golf swing), new techniques for learning and "infor-