

A REVOLUTION, OR BUSINESS AS USUAL?

The mood these days in Washington's Republican salons is one of triumph and euphoria; plans are being made to occupy the capital for the next generation. But beneath the surface, signs of concern are starting to show. The staff director of the House Budget Committee recently admitted, "I don't know how many people thought we'd really have to implement these ideas."

As the Gingrich Congress debates the minutiae of term limits and capital-gains tax cuts, a new conversation is beginning among the backroom strategists whose memos and focus groups helped bring the party to power. How do Republicans placate an angry and fickle electorate that wants government to be slashed—as long as the cuts don't affect them? How do Republicans appease the ideologues who look at the November victory not as an opportunity for incremental economic reform but as a mandate for cultural war?

To cast some light on the next act of Washington's political drama, *Harper's Magazine* invited six of the party's leading theoreticians to gather together over lamb filet and crab cakes and debate the future of Republicanism.

*The following forum is based on a discussion held at La Brasserie restaurant in Washington, D.C.
Paul Tough served as moderator.*

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I. BOLD INCREMENTALISM AND PUBLIC DECAPITATIONS

PAUL TOUGH: The newly elected Republican Congress has, in the Contract With America, a more specific agenda than any Congress in recent history. But I want to ask you to go beyond the contract, to sketch out some larger themes for this Congress and for the Republican Party in the long term. Is there a single unifying idea that the party should devote itself to?

MIKE MURPHY: We were elected to make fundamental radical changes in the size of the federal government. That's the idea we campaigned on, and that's what we've got to do.

JAMES P. PINKERTON: But we could also lay out a couple of principles. For example, we ought to have an affluence test on government spending and government benefits. To listen to Bill Archer, the Republican Ways and Means Committee chairman, say that we can cut everything except Social Security, which

means Ross Perot and the Rockefellers will get their checks while people are getting thrown out on the streets—

FRANK LUNTZ: Wait a second. If we touch Social Security in the next two years, we will give credence to everything that Bill Clinton said about the Republicans—that if we became a majority we were going to mess with Social Security. Philosophically, you're right, and I don't think there's anyone at this table who would disagree with you. In fact, most of us would probably say that Social Security is heading into a crisis. But politically, we can't do anything for at least two years, until we gain the public's confidence.

WILLIAM KRISTOL: Part of being the majority is getting to the point where we can go after entitlements in a big way. Take Roosevelt as an example. He didn't do everything at once. He phased in most of his big programs. Similarly, we are going to have to be both bold in the vision we hold out for America and somewhat prudent—if I can use a discredited Bush Ad-

ministration word—and incremental. We need a kind of bold incrementalism that leads people along step by step, so that a year from now they'll be saying, "They really did cut some programs this year, and we like it."

RALPH REED: The most important thing for the Republicans to do right now, in order to rebuild the trust of the electorate, is simply to do what they said they would do. What they said they would do is honor the Contract With America. The Republicans have got to resist every temptation to get off that message. The great temptation right now, in the euphoria and giddiness after the election, is to begin to think of lots of other ideas, to begin to raise expectations even higher and try to do many other things that weren't in that contract. If the contract is successfully redeemed, then we will have built an enormous reservoir of political capital that we can carry into these other battles. So let's concentrate on the contract for now.

DAVID FRUM: But the contract isn't enough. Look, the 104th Congress has to pass two budgets. There's no way around it. They can either pass budgets that look essentially like the budgets that Congress has passed for the last decade, or they can pass budgets that cut a lot of the programs that deserve to be cut.

MURPHY: Absolutely. If we do not pass a budget that dramatically cuts spending, the kind that the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* will term a catastrophe, and pay that short-term price, then in the long term we're going to be destroyed, because we will have lied to America. We've got political momentum. If we don't use it right away to make significant cuts, we will be failures.

PINKERTON: The question is, where to begin? I heard David Frum say on TV that we ought to start by taking some big obnoxious spending program for the rich and ceremoniously, publicly decapitating it.

KRISTOL: I agree. Farm subsidies.

PINKERTON: Farm subsidies are a perfect candidate. We can't really go to poor black people and throw them off welfare if we haven't first gone to rich white farmers and thrown them off welfare.

TOUGH: How far are you going to go with these cuts? Walk me down the streets of Washington, D.C., ten years from now. What's left here?

FRUM: What I hope we'll see is a government whose social-welfare functions are essentially confined to insuring people against the uninsurable catastrophic risks of ordinary life—catastrophic illness, short periods of unemployment, indigence. I also hope that we will have gotten government out of the business of monkeying around in the private economy, which means that virtually all of the Department of

Commerce and the Department of Energy will be gone, as well as a lot of the Department of Transportation.

TOUGH: Where does the ax fall first?

FRUM: The big programs, like welfare, Medicaid, and Medicare, will take a little time to get rid of. But there are a lot of little ones that we can get rid of right away. Let's start with President Clinton's favorite, his advanced-technology project. If you have a plan for some technological breakthrough, the government will give you federal money to promote it—on one condition, which is that it can make a profit. In other words, if you can prove that you do not need a government subsidy, the government will give you one. That has to go. Washington is giving \$70 million a year to General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler to build an electric car.

That goes. When people hear that Republicans are taking money away from big automakers, that will help us politically.

LUNTZ: And we eliminate funding for the arts, the humanities, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Those cuts we do right away as well.

FRUM: Sure. And here's how I think we should do it. Instead of cutting incrementally—a little here, a little there—I would say that on a single day this summer we eliminate three hundred programs, each one costing a billion dollars or less. Maybe these cuts won't make a big deal of difference, but, boy, do they make a point. And you can do them right away, because, unlike Medicare, Medicaid, and welfare, they're not intellectually challenging.

TOUGH: So we're planning a day of public executions. What goes to the guillotine?

FRUM: The Rural Electrification Administration. The Department of Commerce's program to underwrite the advertising expenses of American corporations in foreign markets. The electric-car project. All programs to promote research on fuel efficiency. The Small Business Administration. Export promotion. Advanced-technology projects. The commercial space program. A lot of the Department of Transportation's demonstration projects. I mean, these things are just embarrassing.

TOUGH: Are farm subsidies in there?

FRUM: Yes. Although that's a much bigger program, and one that's politically a lot harder to cut. A lot of the people who get hurt are our voters. But intellectually, farm subsidies are indefensible. They're pure political pork, and cut-

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Most proponents of a balanced budget are understandably vague when it comes to the specific programs that would need to be cut. This is not the case for Representative Gerald Solomon (R., N.Y.), the new chair of the House Rules Committee, who last year issued a proposed budget that would balance income and expenditures by the end of the decade, without raising taxes or cutting Social Security. (The proposal would also allow for a substantial increase in defense spending.) It is, in Representative Solomon's words, "painful as hell." His Balanced Budget Task Force itemized more than five hundred specific cuts to be implemented over the next five years; a few are listed below, along with the amount that their implementation would save from the 1999 federal budget. In total, spending in that year's \$1.6 trillion budget would be \$221 billion below current Congressional Budget Office projections.

PROPOSED CHANGE	SAVINGS
Implement managed care for Medicaid beneficiaries	\$13 billion
Cut Medicaid payments to hospitals	\$8.9 billion
End all commodity subsidies (except dairy)*	\$6.8 billion
Eliminate Community Development Block Grants	\$4.8 billion
Restrict Medicaid coverage for noncitizens	\$2.7 billion
Increase civil-service retirement age	\$2.5 billion
Cancel plans to build the space station	\$2.4 billion
Reduce subsidies for mass transit	\$2.2 billion
Adjust food-stamp eligibility	\$1.6 billion
Reduce foreign aid to developing countries	\$1.3 billion
Cancel all bilateral assistance to Russia	\$1.2 billion
Freeze funding for the National Institutes of Health	\$1.2 billion
Reduce medical care for veterans	\$910 million
Cut funds for child-nutrition programs	\$790 million
Abolish the Geological Survey	\$710 million
Reduce Amtrak subsidies	\$650 million
Cut funding for NEA, NEH, Smithsonian, National Gallery of Art, and CPB in half	\$610 million
Cut funding for programs that pay for prenatal and preventive care, immunization, etc.	\$590 million
Limit U.S. contributions to the U.N.	\$400 million
Abolish the National Service Program	\$390 million
Reduce FBI salaries and expenses	\$350 million
Freeze funding for social services for the elderly	\$110 million
Eliminate the Economic Development Administration	\$36 million
Eliminate funding for the John F. Kennedy Center for the Arts	\$24 million
Reduce spending on magnetic-levitation trains	\$22 million
Eliminate the U.S. Travel and Tourism Administration	\$18 million

*Representative Solomon's district in upstate New York is known for its thriving dairy industry.

ting them would send a very powerful message.

REED: I think we also need to cut something early on that is dramatic and symbolic and sort of dramaturgical, something that has the same kind of political impact that the air-traffic controllers' strike had for Reagan in 1981. Sure, it may have been a small union, it may have been a relatively insignificant labor dispute in the broad scale of labor history, but it was a significant moment because it demonstrated that Reagan was no longer going to allow the labor unions to tell the government what to do. If you pick a small agency that has a very formidable constituency, it would help pave the way for a lot of these other ventures. The Legal Services Corporation, which provides legal aid for the poor, would be a great one to cut.

II. TWO YEARS IN HELL

TOUGH: Frank, it's the summer of 1995. It's David Frum's day of the long knives. Three hundred programs are executed. Politically, how do you deal with the reaction when he eliminates the Small Business Administration and farm subsidies and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the National Endowment for the Arts and student loans—

LUNTZ: He's going to cut student loans?

FRUM: Yup.

LUNTZ: The whole program?

FRUM: Yes.

LUNTZ: Then people are going to cry. Well, David and I are going to go out to Kansas, and I'm going to watch him announce to a group of farmers that he's eliminating the farm-subsidies program. And I'm going to stand far, far away from him.

TOUGH: Won't the public's enthusiasm for these cuts dim once they realize that you're cutting not just welfare programs but programs that are directly benefiting them?

MURPHY: Look, we can't make everybody happy.

KRISTOL: People are so distrustful of

government right now that we may have crossed some sort of magic threshold where people are willing to say, "Look, I'll even give up these programs that allegedly help me, because (a) they don't really help me much and (b) I do understand that we have a deficit and the whole thing is sprawling out of control. I'll give up my chunk of government benefits if everyone else is giving up his."

LUNTZ: That's the key. If everyone is giving up something at the same time, you're okay. But if we make the farmers go first, we're going to get killed in the farm community. We've all got to go together.

REED: According to our polling data, the first thing people want Congress to do is to reform welfare. So if you go out there early and pass a tough and strong and dramatic welfare-reform bill that encourages work and marriage and discourages out-of-wedlock birth, then rhetorically you can say, "Look, we've asked the least among us to sacrifice so that we can have a smaller government, so that we can have a more civil society, so that we don't have this spiraling debt. We can't ask the least among us to get out of the wagon and start pulling unless you get out, too." That's my argument on the NEA and the National Endowment for the Humanities. How can you go to a single mother in the inner city and say, "You're going to have to start carrying more weight" if you don't also go to the tuxedo and evening-gown crowd and say, "You're going to have to start paying for your own symphony." By starting with welfare, we can turn these cuts into a populist program that will actually work to our advantage.

MURPHY: What I'm advocating, with all due respect to my friend Frank, is that we ban pollsters for two years. Because the only thing the polls are going to tell us is what we can't do. In 1991, the Engler Administration in Michigan cut welfare. They just eliminated general assistance altogether. There was a huge war. Governor Engler cut arts funding. Our fat-cat donors didn't like that at all. Engler got his reelection number down to 19 percent. And last November he won reelection by a landslide. Let's face it: we are in for two years of political hell. There is simply no happy way for us to keep our promises. Yes, we can try to be clever and make sure everybody pays his fair share, but no matter how clever we are tactically, we're going to get a



coalition of people really mad about what we're doing. People in focus groups are always very happy about cutting spending and cutting programs—except programs for themselves. So our success is going to be a function of how much courage we show, because we're going to get no credit for years.

LUNTZ: And with all due respect to Mike, what I'm afraid of is the media consultants. They're going to put together a thirty-second ad with no words, just film of some homeless person walking across the street with superimposed words saying, "Republicans did this to you. Now you do it to them." I am afraid of what the media is going to do to us. Look at the *New York Times*. A week ago, there were two pages of pictures of homeless people on Madison Avenue. A week earlier on the front page was a picture of two elderly people rummaging through garbage for food. They're getting ready to blame the Republicans. They run the big story on the GOP's plans right next to the photograph. They haven't linked the two yet, but it's only a matter of time.

TOUGH: But the sort of cuts you're talking about are going way beyond homeless people on Madison Avenue. There are going to be people who can't afford to go to college; small businesses are going to fail.

KRISTOL: Some of these cuts will have some effect, but most of these programs are so ineffectual

that not many people are actually going to be hurt very much. The reason we don't like these programs, after all, is that we think they're ineffectual. If we thought they helped a lot of people, we wouldn't be conservative Republicans.

REED: And you're not just taking money away; you're also saying to the small-business community, "We're going to freeze federal regulations on small business for the next two years." You've now got 50 to 55 percent of the country receiving a check from the government in some way. And they've learned that with that money come all kinds of intrusive regulations on their freedom, on their liberty, and on their right to go out and earn a dollar and raise a family and have their children believe in the values they believe in. So if you don't just cut the money but you also pull back all of this intrusive government regulation, I think you can make it work.

TOUGH: So, Frank, does that reassure you enough for 1996? Do you think we can make those cuts?

LUNTZ: Absolutely. I just don't want to blunder into them. I think the timing is important, and I think we can finesse it.

FRUM: Are you sure you want to use the word "finesse"? Wasn't one of the ways we got into trouble in the late 1980s that we were constantly being, under the Bush Administration, so damn clever?

LUNTZ: I'll explain it in one sentence: I don't want to deliver bad news from a golf course in Kennebunkport. That's what I mean by finesse.



KRISTOL: That's why Frank gets the big bucks.

MURPHY: The tactics, which are what Frank and I do for a living, are just not that important. We have to do something big and unpopular, and it doesn't matter if we do it from a closed steel mill. It's still going to be unpopular. Sure, we ought to announce it from a closed steel mill as opposed to a golf course, but the political reality is that we're going to have to take a whack at the entitlement state, which includes a lot of programs that benefit the middle class. There's no easy, simple strategy to make that fact go away. We have never had our bluff called on spending. Now it's called. We better move fast.

III. STEWING IN BREZHNEVIAN JUICES

TOUGH: Ralph, you said that the place to start cutting is welfare programs. Whether or not that helps the poor in the long run, in the short run there are going to be people who are really going to suffer; there are going to be families who will become homeless and children who are going to be put in orphanages. How much should that concern us?

PINKERTON: The Republicans need to come to grips with the real issue in underclass welfare dependency, which is the value of work. The Republicans ought to say that the transcendent value all Americans can agree on is work.

REED: And marriage and childbirth in marriage.

PINKERTON: Well, I want to go with the lowest common denominator. So I'll just stick with

work. I'm not sure everybody wants to get married; I'm not sure everybody wants to have kids. But everyone wants to work.

LUNTZ: I don't know if that's true anymore. Particularly among black youth in the inner city, a lot of people would not say that work is a basic fundamental desire any longer.

PINKERTON: All right, then let's say the *Republicans* believe in work. Anybody who doesn't believe in work can be a Democrat. An emphasis on work puts some distance between us and the Michael Milkens and the junk-bond traders. In some areas of Republican ideology, there is a sense that the highest value is not work but just making money. We have to say that's wrong, that there is more merit to a person getting up every morning and going to work than someone just inheriting a fortune. Now, I can't imagine a welfare plan that doesn't involve us saying, "If you can work, you have to work. There's no more welfare." But in order to be successful, we're going to have to create some sort of program like Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps to guarantee that although nobody gets a check for doing nothing, nobody is starving.

REED: So we're dismantling the New Deal by creating a new one.

LUNTZ: The government is going to pay for these jobs?

PINKERTON: That's right. We give a job to anyone who wants one. Franklin Roosevelt summoned 8 million people to work during the Depression; we can do the same.

TOUGH: Who runs this program?

PINKERTON: I'd ask someone like Colin Powell or Norman Schwarzkopf. The leadership cadre for a new CCC already exists: all the drill sergeants and NCOs who are being demobilized out of the military. We scoop them up and get them involved. The military used to be a lot of people doing simple tasks. Now the military is a few people doing complicated tasks. Let's go back to a lot of people doing simple tasks, but instead of having them fight wars, let's have them doing peaceful construction or planting trees or unpaving the Everglades. We're going to spend billions of dollars to take up all those levees down in the Everglades. Rather than turning the operation over to some contractor, let's make it labor-intensive and put disadvantaged inner-city youth to work.

KRISTOL: But no one believes that the federal government could run such a program.

PINKERTON: You believe the military can organize large bodies of people to do this sort of thing.

KRISTOL: To fight wars. That's a bit different. Don't you think, practically speaking, that the Republican position on welfare is going to crystallize around the idea of large-scale devo-

lution to the states? Fine, let some governors experiment with a statewide public-works program. Other states would go with a tough cut-them-off approach.

REED: And after ten years you'll know which states have done a better job of encouraging work and discouraging illegitimacy.

PINKERTON: The problem is, we don't have ten years to sort this out.

KRISTOL: Don't you think most people would be thrilled if we got welfare down to the states?

PINKERTON: Well, yes. To use your phrase, many people *would* be thrilled. But there is a national consciousness on this above all other issues. The Republican message has to be totally clear: Nobody is going to starve. Everybody's going to make it. Everybody is going to work. I'm all for devolving education and housing and transportation and road building to the states. I just think that on this one issue of welfare, you need a federal guarantee.

TOUGH: Does that sound like such a radical idea, for the federal government to guarantee that people don't starve to death? Can't we all agree on that?

KRISTOL: It depends what it means in practice.

PINKERTON: It means we guarantee work. We guarantee honest labor.

KRISTOL: That doesn't guarantee that people won't starve, because people won't show up for work. You cannot in practice have a federal guarantee that people won't starve. Practically, the question is, Are you going to maintain federal entitlement programs or not? My preference is not to have federal entitlement programs but to send them all down to the states, let the states experiment much more, and have private charities take care of people. I don't believe, in fact, that people would starve. We could have federal leadership on these issues that is compassionate and says, "We think this is better for the poor."

REED: We live in a country with the most generous people in the entire world. The problem is that we've centralized charity and welfare, and things have actually gotten worse, not better. People want to return to nongovernmental solutions to poverty. We've got to challenge the churches, the synagogues, and the families to dig deeper and do more.

LUNTZ: Enormous government programs are what the other side offered. The public rejected that. They're ready to embrace us if we just do the things we promised.

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PINKERTON: The issue is whether we go further. The issue is how to take apart the institutions that are wrecking this country. If we simply pass the Contract With America, which is essentially a pro-business agenda, and don't go further, then the top half of the economy will be liberated from government control and will prosper and the bottom half will continue to stew in its Brezhnevian juices. And two years from now we'll have an even more radical skew—both electoral and economic—than we did in the 1980s. The moral credibility of capitalism will be further undercut by another round of homeless stories, which will ultimately retard the Republican progress. People will say, "Yeah, we're all getting rich, but what about this poor child here on TV?" I'm not

saying that if Republicans take bold steps to help the poor we can immediately expect to harvest a lot of votes from the inner city, but we'll reassure the rest of America that we do, in fact, have a plan for everyone. Right now, when you listen to Jesse Helms and Newt Gingrich, you don't really get the feeling that either man aspires to be a leader

for the entire country.

TOUGH: Well, what about those inner-city voters? If you want to represent the whole country, doesn't that mean trying to attract black voters as well as whites?

PINKERTON: There's a significant part of our program that will appeal to African-American voters. We can go to blacks and say, "School vouchers, own your own home, American dream—"

LUNTZ: And that ain't gonna do it. It ain't gonna do it.

TOUGH: Why not?

LUNTZ: In our polling, we find very different priorities in the white and the nonwhite communities. The black community has become very dependent on the government to provide services, and it expects government to get involved and fix America's ills. At the same time, the white community has become particularly hostile about the government and the services it provides.

TOUGH: What does that mean for the Republican Party?

LUNTZ: That the black community is not ripe for picking. The black community's policies and beliefs are actually very closely aligned with the Democratic Party. Blacks are making a rational decision by voting Democratic. If the

black community thinks it's better off and the country's better off with a Democratic administration, then its members should vote that way. The rest of America doesn't think so.

IV. BACKSLAPPERS IN A WARRIOR-LIKE FRENZY

TOUGH: Aren't people going to be bothered by photos of poor homeless people showing up at City Hall, saying that they want to work and that they don't have food to feed their families?

FRUM: I agree with Jim that it's dangerous for the party to seem callous. But people's attitudes about the poor have changed significantly in the last decade. People are tired of the constant moaning they hear about the poor. A lot of middle-class taxpayers feel that they're paying more and more for the poor and that the poor are behaving worse and worse. And people are not sure that they're as sympathetic as they used to be. I don't think we should go out of our way to be callous. But there is no way that the Republican Party is going to be able to remain true to its principles without being accused of being callous. In the current environment, being accused of callousness might even be to our advantage. Jack Kemp spent a lot of time trying to come up with ideas that would both be conservative and avoid these accusations, and he failed.

KRISTOL: Republicans obviously should be strategic and clever about how to cut spending. We should be careful to target middle-class subsidies and big-business subsidies as much as we target programs that allegedly benefit the poor. But David's right: no matter what we do, the fairness card will be played against us, and if Republicans get spooked the first time someone tries to demagogue that issue, we will be in deep trouble. Republicans will need to have thick skins to survive the fairness attack that will be launched on us during the course of 1995.

MURPHY: And the reason we have to have thick skins is that the media hates us. We just won a huge victory, but Newt's numbers are 20 to 28 fave/unfave because he gets smeared every day in the press. Today, I saw my third newsweekly cover photo of Gingrich, like, strangling a kid. It's amazing. Qaddafi gets better press. The point is that we can do all this strategic stuff, we can hold great photo ops and all that, and the folks who write the CBS national news are still going to say, "Meet Mrs. X. She's dying tonight because of the Republican plan." If our folks lose it and freak and stampede, then we're going to blow the whole thing. Remember, we have a lot of backslapping nice guys in our caucus who've never been on the firing line. I worked with a

lot of Republican politicians during the 1994 election, and everybody's real tough on the contract until some little old lady comes up to him at the plant gate and yells at him. Then he says, "Well, I don't really mean *all* of it." It's the natural way of politicians to be scared to do radical things. We have to whip our guys up into a warrior-like frenzy, or they're going to back off on day fourteen.

PINKERTON: Well, okay, that's one plan, to take a bunch of natural backslappers and whip them into a warrior-like frenzy. But another strategy that might work is to isolate a few core programs that the federal government will maintain that will guarantee that nobody falls through the cracks. I would rather buck up Mike's backslapping guys by giving them something to be *for*, which means a program like the CCC that guarantees that poor people are not going to starve.

FRUM: You're underestimating the opposition we're going to face. You're suggesting that the only thing that our legislators are afraid of is somebody saying, "There are hungry people, so we've got to have a program for hunger." That's not the accusation. There are going to be students who can't afford college. There are going to be electric cars not being built. There are going to be symphonies closing all over America.

PINKERTON: I'm saying there is a qualitative difference between those accusations. I think Republicans can withstand the symphony closures.

FRUM: The Republicans are much more afraid of angry symphony-goers than they are of people starving to death.

PINKERTON: Maybe so. Which exactly epitomizes the problem. If the Republicans are more afraid of symphony closures than of poor people starving, that says a lot about the Republican Party.

FRUM: It's just political reality. The sort of people who love the opera and support their local arts organizations are also the sort of people who make \$100,000 donations to the Republican Party. We're not going to be fighting with uneducated destitute people; we're going to be fighting with the most powerful people in American society.

PINKERTON: But we've got to set some priorities. If this is a country with a sense of compassion, then there ought to be a clearly articulated national policy that says, "We don't want anybody to starve, but we believe in work." We lay it out just like Franklin Roosevelt did on this one narrow issue, and we campaign on that.

MURPHY: We tried this in 1974, after Watergate: "Republicans are people too." It's pure defense. The slogan appeals: "We're for work and we're against starvation." But the *New York Times* is still going to find people who are starving,

even if we have WORK NOT STARVATION bumper stickers all over the place.

TOUGH: What if you start making all these cuts and President Clinton goes on television and gives a speech in which he says, "The Republican Party is attacking you. They won't let me give you the money that I want to give you to make your life better." And what if we're in a recession in 1995 and 1996, and people want some sort of economic stimulus? In 1992, George Bush was deemed out of touch for not responding to those calls. If we've got 500,000 people marching on Washington demanding that these cuts be reinstated, is it going to be as easy to ignore that as it is to ignore the *New York Times*?

MURPHY: Oh, it will be incredibly hard. But if we let the Democrats set the agenda, they're going to grind us up and they'll be back in power. We've got to say that we believe in personal responsibility; we don't believe people need a big government to organize them; people can do it for themselves. I mean, that's why we're Republicans. We've got to say that over and over and over again. It's the only choice we have.

KRISTOL: And Clinton cannot make the speech you're talking about. He totally lacks credibility with the American people. It's an interesting question whether another liberal could make that speech, Dick Gephardt or maybe a fresher face. Mario Cuomo out of retirement a year from now. With a new candidate, the Democrats could get 43 percent of the vote again. And if it's a three- or four-way race in 1996, that could lead to a Democratic victory. I don't think any of us discounts that possibility. In fact, I think Clinton has made a mistake by conceding so many of our premises. I mean, all he's doing now is cutting taxes and cutting spending. He's been harsher on public-housing programs than any conservative I can think of, which is a terrible concession for him to have made. He may have created room for some liberal to stand up and say, "Look, liberalism does have an honorable tradition. Roosevelt helped people. Johnson helped people. We're for civil rights. The Republicans are rich and mean-spirited. I'm going to defend these federal programs." Within the Democratic primary process, that would be a very attractive message from a fresh liberal face. I think it's a message that would defeat Bill Clinton in 1996.

REPUBLICANS
ARE MUCH MORE
AFRAID OF ANGRY
SYMPHONY-GOERS
THAN OF PEOPLE
STARVING TO DEATH

V. TAKING OFF THE JACKBOOTS

TOUGH: So far we've been talking about economic programs. But aren't a lot of voters attracted to the Republican Party because of your cultural agenda? Why aren't you talking about those issues?

REED: We have been. Welfare reform is a cultural and moral issue. It's not an economic issue. If we eliminate welfare altogether, it's not going to balance the budget or get us anywhere near there. It's about encouraging work and discouraging out-of-wedlock birth. It's about ending the chaos and the social dysfunction of our inner cities. There are critics who will try to

get the Republican Party to accept the notion that there is a dichotomy between our social agenda and our economic agenda. It's absolutely, totally untrue.

PINKERTON: But our moderator is onto something, which is that we are doing something that the Republican Party didn't used to be good at doing. Instead of hectoring people about values, like we did at the Houston convention in 1992, we are talking about changing people's lives by changing their economic reality. I think the reason that the Republicans are on the edge of success is that we have found a common denominator of economically driven issues that enable people to create their own cultural superstructure.

FRUM: The great conservative hope is contained in a phrase that goes back thirty years: "In a conservative country, the libertarian method yields traditionalist results." Go through Ralph Reed's mailing list, and you'll find an awful lot of old Wallace voters, people who stood for trying to achieve conservative results through authoritarian methods. And a lot of them still favor authoritarian methods—maybe not authoritarian with jackboots, but authoritarian nonetheless. The great contribution Ralph Reed has made is that he has convinced a lot of those people that a libertarian approach is going to achieve the same results, and that it's an approach we can run and win on.

REED: I think those people, by the way, ended up in David Duke's file, not mine.

PINKERTON: Well, there were a lot of them. There were 10 million of them in 1968.

FRUM: And they aren't all horrible people. I think that one of the reasons the Republican Party now is such a disciplined organization, certainly as compared with its competition, is that everyone—even people with strong cultural agendas—has agreed to hope for the moment that we can use libertarian means to achieve traditionalist ends.

PINKERTON: The question is whether Ralph is going to be able to go to all those people who originally paid attention to Pat Robertson because he's a faith healer who

THE VALUES AGENDA: THEN AND NOW

FROM PATRICK BUCHANAN'S SPEECH TO THE 1992 REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION:

We stand with [President Bush] for freedom-of-choice religious schools, and we stand with him against the amoral idea that gay and lesbian couples should have the same standing in law as married men and women.

We stand with President Bush for right to life, and for voluntary prayer in the public schools, and against putting American women in combat. And we stand with President Bush in favor of the right of small towns and communities to control the raw sewage of pornography that pollutes our popular culture.

My friends, this election is about much more than who gets what. It is about who we are. It is about what we believe; it is about what we stand for as Americans. There is a religious war going on in our country for the soul of America. It is a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we will one day be as was the Cold War itself.

FROM POLITICALLY INCORRECT, BY RALPH REED (1994)

The pro-family movement's political rhetoric has often been policy-thin and value-laden, leaving many voters tuned out. Values are very important to voters, but they are not the highest rung on a communication ladder.

The most urgent challenge for the pro-family movement is to develop a broader issues agenda. To win at the ballot box and in the court of public opinion, it must speak to the concerns of average voters in the areas of taxes, crime, government waste, health care, and economic security. Financial pressure on families must be addressed by the pro-family movement because it affects them as adversely as cultural decay.

In sports, if the defensive team is preventing the ground game, the offense should pass the ball. Likewise, in politics there is nothing wrong and everything prudent in changing the game plan at halftime if necessary to win. The key is not to become wedded to the playbook but to win the game.

averts hurricanes and predicts apocalypses and say to them, "Look, your real friends in this world are Wall Street tycoons, because trickle-down economics is the only kind of economics left." If he can sell that argument, that the haves and the have-nots share a common ethos, then the Republicans really will be the majority party forever.

MURPHY: What the pundits here in Washington don't understand is that these cultural issues are important to people. People see the whole concept of right and wrong eroding in this country. They see a kind of nihilistic society in which "values" is a dirty word and everything is okay. And that scares them. They want it to change. Politicians are afraid to talk about right and wrong because they are told by the intellectual culture that right and wrong isn't an issue. But voters are demanding that folks start addressing personal responsibility. Our party ought to address those things.

KRISTOL: As part of a broader conservative vision for the future, it's very important to emphasize that we have concrete ideas about how to revitalize civic society and how to strengthen families. But I tend to agree that the way in which this is reconciled politically is by making the political agenda mostly a neoliberal, federalizing, get-government-off-our-backs agenda, and then letting communities and families, with some encouragement from the government but without authoritarian coercion, work on the reconstitution of civil society.

REED: That's right. You can't be part of a movement for limited government without accepting limits to what government can do. That's one of the things that I think separates conservatives from liberals. We genuinely believe that some of the greatest work, the most productive and fruitful work that will be done in society to improve people's lives, will be done by institutions other than the government.

LUNTZ: And that's why this is the beginning of a Republican majority, and a relatively long-term one. When you can have the lion and the lamb lie down together, when the Perot

voter and the Christian conservative find more that unites them than divides them, you're looking at 55, 57 percent of America that is behind our program.

TOUGH: What about the possibility of a third party? Is that a threat to this coalition?

PINKERTON: I think that it is a threat, especially if the Republicans fall into the rut of complacency and smugness, looking after the top

half and letting the bottom half sink into Gephardtian resentment. It's a more difficult challenge for the Republicans than simply doing a good job. Because in an era of post-party factionalization, there is not a lot stopping some ambitious egomaniac with a billion dollars from saying, "I don't care if I have any issues or not, I just want to be president." I think we're going to see a whole slew of them: Ross Perot/Silvio Berlusconi types, out there running just for the hell of it. This

is how all our plans for coalitions and cleverness could come crashing down.

FRUM: I'm a lot less impressed by this threat. There aren't that many people in America with a billion dollars and an out-of-control ego.

PINKERTON: You haven't looked at the Forbes 400 list recently.

KRISTOL: But they won't get any votes unless Republicans fail. If Republicans succeed as the congressional majority, the chance of a third party is diminished radically. If Republicans fail on Capitol Hill, then you could have genuinely chaotic, postmodernist, deconstructionist politics in America. The interesting thing about the 1994 election is that by conventional analysis, it shouldn't have happened. It was an old-fashioned party election. It looked like elections from the 1890s, for God's sake. Maybe it's an aberration, maybe it can't last. Maybe a year from now we'll be back into chaos and into Perot squared. But maybe it really was a decisive moment and successful governance by the Republican majority will move us toward a generational realignment. At this point, I think those are basically the two alternatives: Republican success or political chaos. ■

