

The President As Preacher

"Civil Religion and the Gilded Age Presidency: The Case of Benjamin Harrison" by Charles W. Calhoun, in *Presidential Studies Quarterly* (Fall 1993), 208 E. 75th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Theodore Roosevelt was not the first president to see his office as a "bully pulpit." A dozen years before him, Benjamin Harrison, elected in 1888, grasped the opportunities the presidency offered to preach to the nation. Indeed, Harrison's "exercise of the 'priestly functions' of the presidency," argues Calhoun, a historian at East Carolina University, helped transform the office.

The grandson of an earlier president, William Henry Harrison, Benjamin Harrison (1833–1901) of Indiana served a single term in the U.S. Senate before running for the presidency in 1888. A contemporary said that Harrison had "a very cold, distant temperament," but "if he should address 10,000 men from a public platform, he would make every one his friend." That gift proved to be his greatest political asset, Calhoun says. Presidential candidates of the period were obliged to stay off the campaign trail and appear to be above politics. Candidate Harrison waged a brilliant "front-porch campaign," delivering brief "homiletic" remarks to throngs of visitors and reporters virtually every day. He defeated Democrat Grover Cleveland 233 to 168 in the Electoral College while narrowly losing the popular vote to the incumbent chief executive.

In the White House, Harrison continued to seek a direct rapport with the citizenry. During his single term (Cleveland won back the presidency in 1892), Harrison spoke publicly on 296 occasions, half as many as all of his predecessors combined. After Harrison, presidents would find it harder to view the office as strictly administrative; increasingly, they would feel obliged to exert leadership through direct appeals to the public.

"At a time when the disruption of modernization wrought profound disarray in personal and national values," Calhoun says, "Harrison effectively exploited the national pulpit, invoking the tenets of a civil religion that comprehended both spiritual and secular goals."

"I do not know how our institutions could endure," Harrison said on one occasion, "unless we so conduct our public affairs and society that every man who is sober and industrious shall be able to make a good, comfortable living and lay something aside for old age or evil days; to have hope in his heart and better prospects for his children. That is the strength of American institutions. Whatever promotes that I want to favor." What promoted that, he maintained, was the Republican economic program, particularly a stable currency



President Harrison, who sought a direct rapport with the people, receives a procession at the White House after his inauguration.

and the protective tariff.

Harrison has risen in the estimation of historians lately. With the 1890 Sherman Anti-Trust Act and other measures, Calhoun writes, his administration laid the groundwork for later Progressive reforms. And by addressing the nation so vigorously from the "pulpit," Harrison helped change the presidency. TR and other presidents would build on what Harrison began, "echoing his civil religious concerns but pleading more boldly and forthrightly for government action for the public good."

An Unlimited Future?

"Term-Limitation Express" by Mark P. Petracca and Darci Jump, in *Society* (Nov.–Dec. 1993), Rutgers—The State University, New Brunswick, N.J. 08903.

The term-limitation movement, born in 1990, shows no sign of slowing down. With the addition of Maine last November, voters in 17 states have limited the terms of federal or state legislators, and in 14 of those they have limited the terms of both. Activists are working to get initiatives on the ballot in eight other states this year and are lobbying legislatures elsewhere. Not

since the Progressive era has there been so much grassroots activity aimed at redesigning representative government, observe Petracca, a political scientist at the University of California, Irvine, and Jump, a 1992 graduate. Polls indicate that 70 to 80 percent of the public backs term limits. The remaining obstacles to a nationwide triumph may soon fall.

One barrier is that 24 states do not permit citizen initiatives, the favored device of term-limitation activists. Few legislators, after all, are inclined to vote to put a definite end to their legislative careers. Nevertheless, activists in some states, such as Connecticut, Indiana, Maryland, and New Jersey, have organized campaigns to pressure candidates for the legislature to pledge to support term limitation. In New Jersey and South Carolina, term-limit advocates are seeking to amend their state constitutions to allow initiatives; activists in Mississippi have already succeeded in doing so.

Legal challenges pose another big obstacle for the term-limitation movement, Petracca and

Jump note. Court or other legal rulings kept term-limit initiatives off the ballot in three states in 1992. Speaker of the House Thomas Foley (D.-Wash.), along with the League of Women Voters, has filed a suit to overturn the congressional term limits adopted in 1992 in his state. A 1992 study by the Congressional Research Service concluded that state-imposed limits on congressional terms are unconstitutional.

That objection would be moot, of course, if the Constitution were amended. How likely is that? Petracca and Jump contend that the movement's victories thus far—particularly the "overwhelming success" it enjoyed in November 1992, when 14 states opted for term limits—show that such an amendment is quite possible. They cite the precedent of the Progressive-era movement for direct election of U.S. senators (instead of selection by state legislatures). Reformers in Oregon managed to get a law enacted in 1901 that enabled voters to express their (non-binding) choice for senator. The reformers then demanded that candidates for the state legisla-

A Tale of Two Buzzwords

Veteran news commentator Daniel Schorr notes in the *New Leader* (Oct. 4-18, 1993) that candidate Bill Clinton, self-proclaimed agent of change, has turned into President Clinton, agent of security.

In Chapel Hill, North Carolina, on October 12, the president asserted that people would fear change less if they felt more secure. He went on to propound four kinds of security as an umbrella over diverse administration programs ranging from health care to crime control to the North American Free Trade Agreement. They are: health security, economic security, personal security, and community security—the last including shared responsibility for our children. . . .

"Security," the new buzzword, has over the years been put to many uses. . . . FDR called his pension plan "Social Security." Defense became "national security." An internationalist version of same was "collective security." The Red-hunt-

ers of the 1950s turned that inward with "internal security."

Although "security" appears in the dictionary as a warm, fuzzy noun, connoting shelter and protection, it has not been universally popular, particularly with those inclined toward rugged individualism. General Douglas MacArthur once said, "There is no security on this earth, there is only opportunity." And General Dwight D. Eisenhower, while president of Columbia University, said, "If security is what Americans want, they can go to prison." The closest that the Reagan administration came to the notion of security was the "social safety net."

That was before not only the poor but the middle class, in increasing numbers, began to feel insecure in the face of unemployment, family dislocation, and crime on the streets. The word "security" was test-marketed by the White House as it prepared to sell its health-reform program, and was found to resonate a lot better than "change."

ture sign pledges to vote for the winner of the primary. Progressives in other states followed suit. By 1910, 27 state legislatures had been pushed to petition Congress for a constitutional amendment. Two years later, the Senate finally gave in, and in 1913 the 17th Amendment became law after it was ratified by three-fourths of the states. A 28th Amendment, the authors say, could be only a few years away.

Court Costs

"Dwarfing the Political Capacity of the People? The Relationship Between Judicial Activism & Voter Turnout, 1840–1988" by Philip A. Klinkner, in *Polity* (Summer 1993), Thompson Hall, Univ. of Massachusetts, Amherst, Mass. 01003.

Legal scholars have long debated whether or not Supreme Court activism discourages public participation in electoral politics. Klinkner, of Loyola Marymount University, sides with the critics of activism. Comparing voter turnout in congressional and presidential elections between 1840 and 1988 with the number of federal, state, and local laws overturned by the Supreme Court during the two years before each election, he finds a troubling pattern.

Until the 1890s, turnout relative to the aver-

ages for the entire 148-year period was very high and "judicial activism" very low. (Usually fewer than a dozen laws were overturned in each two-year period.) From the 1890s to the 1930s, his index of activism rose to an average of 30 and voter turnout dropped. From the 1930s until 1960, the opposite pattern prevailed; and between 1960 and 1988, the pattern reversed itself again.

Since most people have only a very limited knowledge of what the Supreme Court is doing, a question arises: *How* does judicial activism depress turnout? Klinkner suggests that activism by the Court has its most direct impact on labor unions and other organizations that get out the vote. The activist Warren and Burger courts of 1953–86, for example, often let liberal interest groups achieve their goals without having to win popular support; hence, such groups put their money and energy into litigation rather than voter mobilization.

The possibility that judicial activism may result in more voters staying home on Election Day does not mean, in Klinkner's view, that the high court should always sit on its hands. In *Brown v. Board of Education*, the 1954 ruling outlawing school segregation, the requirements of justice were clear. The lesson, Klinkner asserts, is rather "that judicial activism may not be cost-free."

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

Filling a Vacuum

"The Emerging Structure of International Politics" by Kenneth N. Waltz, in *International Security* (Fall 1993), Center for Science and International Affairs, 79 John F. Kennedy St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States stands supreme, its power virtually unchecked. This will not last, promises Waltz, a prominent political scientist at the University of California at Berkeley. Within the next 10 to 20 years, he predicts, Germany (or perhaps a "United States of Europe"), Japan, and China may well become great powers—probably joined by Russia—all armed with nuclear weapons.

Waltz does not find the nuclear prospect trou-

bling. "China and other countries have become nuclear powers without making the world a more dangerous one," he argues. "Why should nuclear weapons in German and Japanese hands be especially worrisome? Nuclear weapons have encouraged cautious behavior by their possessors and deterred any of them from threatening others' vital interests."

Will Japan or Germany, already economic powerhouses, *want* to become great powers? Probably, Waltz believes. As memories of World War II fade, so will Japanese and German nuclear inhibitions. "Countries have always competed for wealth and security, and the competition has often led to conflict. Why should the future be different from the past? Given the ex-