

Was Cincinnatus a Commuter?

“Capitol Flight” by Jennifer Bradley, in *The New Republic* (Apr. 7, 1997), 1220 19th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Running as antigovernment outsiders in 1994, Republican candidates for the House of Representatives, intent upon becoming not mere lawmakers but citizen-legislators, promised in their “Contract with America” to enact term limits. Term limits may have failed, writes Bradley, a staff writer for *Roll Call*, but so many new members seem to think of themselves as Cincinnatus, ever eager to return to the plow and home, that the House is now a lot emptier most of the time.

“Every week, on Thursday evening or Friday morning, more than half the members of the House abandon Washington, and its pernicious climate of government professionalism, and head home,” she says. “They spend four cleansing, clarifying days with ‘real Americans’ in their districts and return, reluctantly, to Washington as late as Monday night or Tuesday morning.”

The work of governing—attending com-

mittee hearings and dealing with proposed legislation and fellow legislators—thus gets squeezed into three “harried, tense, 12-hour days”: Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. This truncated schedule was invented not in the last few years by Republicans but in the 1960s by Democrats who wanted to encourage members to be responsive to their constituents (and thus more secure in their seats). But the Republicans have made the weekly rush to the home district a virtual congressional commandment.

As a consequence, hundreds of lawmakers don’t know their colleagues very well and don’t understand much about legislative work. One recently retired congressman estimates that fewer than 100 out of the 435 members today are “serious legislators.” The result is not a more virtuous deliberative body, Bradley argues, but only “a new kind of do-nothing Congress.”

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

Politicizing the Military

“The Paradox of Professionalism: Eisenhower, Ridgway, and the Challenge to Civilian Control, 1953–1955” by A. J. Bacevich, in *The Journal of Military History* (Apr. 1997), Society for Military History, 910 Forbes Rd., Carlisle, Pa. 17013.

No *Seven Days in May* coup has ever taken place in the United States, and none appears in the offing. Nevertheless, contends Bacevich, executive director of the Foreign Policy Institute at Johns Hopkins University’s Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, the “edifice of civilian control” has become so “rickety” that “a highly politicized military establishment” feels free to enter “the partisan arena.” An example: the Pentagon’s “virtual insubordination” early in the Clinton administration over the prospect of overt gays in uniform.

Never as apolitical as Americans have liked to imagine, the senior U.S. military has become highly politicized, Bacevich says, as the result of events that have undermined the basis of the traditional concept of military professionalism. One of the most significant of these was a titanic—and often misunderstood—struggle that took place in

the Eisenhower administration.

In the fall of 1953, President Dwight Eisenhower, needing to make major budget cuts and believing that nuclear weapons had rendered a large military establishment for fighting conventional wars superfluous, decided on a new U.S. strategy: Soviet aggression would be met by “massive retaliation” with nuclear weapons. Eisenhower also worried that maintaining a large standing army might turn America into a “garrison state.”

Eisenhower had consulted the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but army chief General Matthew Ridgway felt that Ike had peremptorily adopted a policy with possibly calamitous consequences.

Often dismissed as merely a product of “interservice squabbling,” Ridgway’s opposition was actually inspired by much deeper concerns, Bacevich contends. “In jettisoning the principle that war was necessarily a

contest between opposing armed forces, massive retaliation presaged the demise of the military profession. . . . Worse, this new reliance on nuclear weapons to defend America on the cheap appeared to legitimize the targeting of civilian populations for wholesale destruction,” and to raise the specter of a preventive nuclear strike against them. In effect, the president was demanding that the army’s leaders carry out a policy that rendered the traditional tenets of their profession obsolete.

For the next 18 months, Bacevich writes, Ridgway and the army “obdurately” fought the new doctrine, carrying the campaign to the press and to the Council on Foreign Relations. Finally, in 1955, Eisenhower forced Ridgway to retire. But army resistance continued, and Ridgway’s successor,

General Maxwell Taylor, would angrily leave active duty and publish his famous indictment, *The Uncertain Trumpet* (1960).

Far from affirming civilian control, the struggle between Eisenhower and his generals accelerated the politicization of the senior military leadership, Bacevich writes. “No longer able to claim that warfare provided the basis for their role in society and was the wellspring of their authority, neither would they be able to claim to be the authoritative source of advice on military matters.” They were cast adrift. The “tragic dénouement of this process,” Bacevich says, would come when American involvement in the Vietnam War grew, yet top officers sacrificed their professional judgment of the military situation to the exigencies of civilian politics.

Toward a Smaller World

Have reservations about the growing global hegemony of Ronald McDonald, Sly Stallone, and the rest of their crowd? Not to worry, says David Rothkopf, managing director of Kissinger Associates and an adjunct professor of international affairs at Columbia University, writing in *Foreign Policy* (Summer 1997).

Many observers contend that it is distasteful to use the opportunities created by the global information revolution to promote American culture over others, but that kind of relativism is as dangerous as it is wrong. American culture is fundamentally different from indigenous cultures in so many other locales. American culture is an amalgam of influences and approaches from around the world. It is melded—consciously in many cases—into a social medium that allows individual freedoms and cultures to thrive. Recognizing this, Americans should not shy away from doing that which is so clearly in their economic, political, and security interests—and so clearly in the interests of the world at large. The United States should not hesitate to promote its values. In an effort to be polite or politic, Americans should not deny the fact that of all the nations in the history of the world, theirs is the most just, the most tolerant, the most willing to constantly reassess and improve itself, and the best model for the future.

Bazaar Foreign Policy

“The Selling of American Foreign Policy” by Lawrence F. Kaplan, in *The Weekly Standard* (Apr. 28, 1997), 1150 17th St. N.W., Ste. 505, Washington, D.C. 20036-4617.

The Clinton administration has put commerce at the center of U.S. foreign policy, in the hope of promoting peace, democracy, and human rights throughout the world. The result has been to cut American foreign policy loose from its strategic and ideological moorings, asserts Kaplan, a Fellow at Johns Hopkins University’s Nitze School of Ad-

vanced International Studies.

In the name of “commercial diplomacy,” the United States now “engages” nations of all sorts, he says, even those whose links to terrorist activities and human rights abuses have won them places on the State Department’s roster of rogue states. “No profit margin is too small [and] almost no regime [is] too distaste-