

in electoral strength, he says. “Republicans can now usually count on majorities among men, Democrats on majorities among women. Republicans win majorities among whites; Democrats can sometimes assemble majorities from whites and other groups combined. The parties have exchanged regional bases with the South trending toward Republicans, New England toward Democrats.”

But he discerns some trends that could prove favorable to Democrats. Chief among them: a dramatic increase in the number of Hispanics (an estimated 18 percent of the population by 2025) and seniors (about 20 percent). “Their growing numbers provide a historic opportunity for a flip of the lower, ‘Latinized’ Sunbelt back to the Democrats,” Starr believes.

He assumes that a continuing maldistribution of economic rewards will keep Hispanics “predominantly working-class in orientation” and thus more disposed to vote Democratic. As for the elderly of 2025, he expects them to be more Democratic than they were in middle age. Because men tend to die at a younger age than women, there will be a larger proportion of women. Joining these elderly widows will be large numbers of divorced women of all ages. The “gender gap” that works to the Democrats’ advantage, Starr notes, is chiefly among *unmarried* women.

Much ink has been spilled over the Republican Party’s woman problem. Less noticed, observes *National Journal* correspondent Starobin, is the Democratic Party’s man problem—the “Guy Gap.”

“Desertions by men cost the Democrats control of Congress in 1994,” he writes.

“Democrats did better among men in 1996, but not well enough to regain control of Capitol Hill.” Since then, according to a recent survey, support among men for Democratic congressional candidates has dropped sharply. Men favor Republicans over Democrats in the midterm elections coming up later this year by a margin of 14 percentage points. “You wouldn’t see Republicans elected in many places if it wasn’t for the fact that Democrats get trounced by men,” Republican pollster Glen Bolger told Starobin.

For men who embrace what Theodore Roosevelt once called “the stern and virile virtues,” the GOP is now home, Starobin contends. “The base of the pump-iron culture is in the South, the GOP’s stronghold, but its values strike a chord with men all over the country—and not only with ‘angry white males’ . . . In both the African-American and Hispanic communities, Democrats fared worse among men in the 1996 elections.” Exit polls that year showed that men and women have different visions of the role of government. In one survey, men, by a margin of 26 percentage points, said they believed that government was “doing too much,” while women divided evenly on the question. Men worried more about foreign policy and taxes; women, about education and health care.

Despite their party’s Guy Gap, Starobin says, Democrats don’t seem to be doing much to overcome it. As one unhappy moderate in Congress told him: “Many Democrats are more committed to trying to advance an agenda than in getting back a majority.”

The Pitfalls of Compassion

“Moist Eyes—From Rousseau to Clinton” by Clifford Orwin, in *The Public Interest* (Summer 1997), 1112 16th St. N.W., Ste. 530, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Compassion is one of the cardinal virtues in American political life. Candidates who appear to have it will find many vices forgiven. Those who do not soon begin thinking about careers in the private sector.

Americans’ compassion, however, is not the same as that of Jesus or Plato, argues Orwin, a political scientist at the University of Toronto. It owes its character to Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–78), who, in

Émile (1762) and other works, “set out to devise a worldly, egalitarian, post-Christian, and post-Enlightenment morality” grounded in compassion.

Rousseau’s notion of compassion was different from the Christian idea of charity, says Orwin. “Charity is a theological virtue . . . : to love one another as God has loved, we must overcome our natural human self-love. Compassion, as Rousseau

presents it, is an emanation of that natural human self-love—which as such attests to the natural goodness of man.”

Like other Enlightenment thinkers, writes Orwin, Rousseau rejected the classical notion that human beings are united by “a natural common good.” But there he parted company with them. Thomas Hobbes and later thinkers held that the social contract is grounded in rational self-interest growing largely from fear: we don’t harm others so that they won’t harm us. But Rousseau insisted that society grows out of mutual concern: our awareness of suffering, and our desire to avoid it. “When the strength of an expansive soul makes me identify myself with my fellow, and I feel that I am, so to speak, in him,” Rousseau writes in *Émile*, “it is in order not to suffer that I do not want him to suffer. I am interested in him for love of myself.”

In a society that esteems compassion,

Orwin says, many of the sterner, self-denying virtues get pushed aside. Compassion breeds many political ills. It feeds America’s image-oriented politics, Orwin argues, as politicians respond to growing public cynicism about politics by emphasizing their personal, caring qualities—and call upon “handlers and image makers” to get the job done. In government, too, compassion often backfires, Orwin contends: “Almost always . . . too intense or too sporadic, liable alike to mindless excess and to calculated hypocrisy, compassion is anything but a reliable basis for public policy.”

Don’t blame Rousseau for all this, though, Orwin says. He saw that “the decay of Christianity,” the rise of a commercial society based on self-interested calculation, and other developments called for a new morality. He did not think he was providing a guide to public policy. That, Orwin suggests, may have been “his greatest error.”

The Not So Indifferent Voter

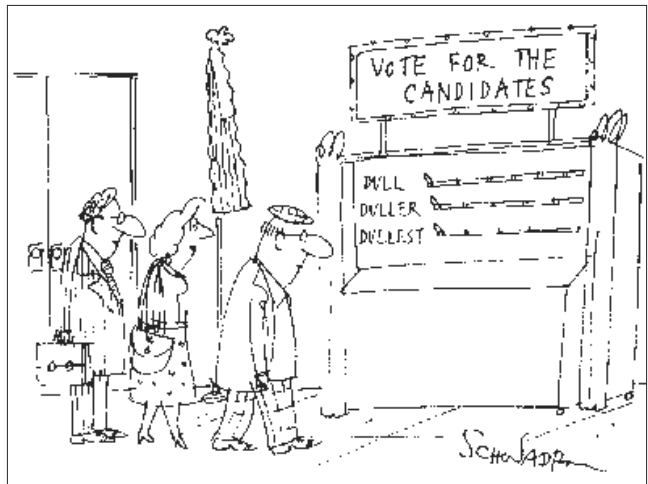
“How the Experts Got Voter Turnout Wrong Last Year” by Peter Bruce, “It’s Bruce Who Got the Turnout Story Wrong” by Curtis Gans, and “Reply to Gans” by Bruce, in *The Public Perspective* (Oct.–Nov. 1997), Roper Center, P.O. Box 440, Storrs, Conn. 06268–0440.

News stories shortly after the 1996 elections told a gloomy story. A majority of Americans did not even bother to vote. The 48.8 percent voter turnout was said to be the lowest since 1924, sparking a new round of lamentations about America’s civic decline. Hold everything! says Bruce, a research associate at the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, at the University of Connecticut. The real story is not quite that bad.

In the first days after the election, the nonpartisan, Washington, D.C.-based Committee for the Study of the American Electorate (CSAE), the chief source for most of the postelection news stories, reported that 95.8 million Americans (later upped to 96.3 million) voted for president, out of 196.5 million people of voting age—a turnout rate of 49 percent.

Bruce points out that CSAE uses the

Census Bureau’s estimate of the voting-age population to represent the eligible electorate. But that figure includes 14.6 million resident aliens and about 2.75 million



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felons. Subtracting these ineligible voters from the total produces an electorate of 179 million. But the story does not end there. Bruce agrees with CSAE director Gans that 1.1 million aliens naturalized in