

## POLITICS &amp; GOVERNMENT

*Liberals versus  
Neoliberals*

"A Neoliberal's Manifesto" by Charles Peters, in *The Washington Monthly* (May 1983), 2712 Ontario Rd. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

American political liberals are beginning to look almost as imperiled as the snail darter once was. Many liberals left the fold during the 1960s and '70s to become "neoconservatives." Today, even more are decamping to join the "neoliberals."

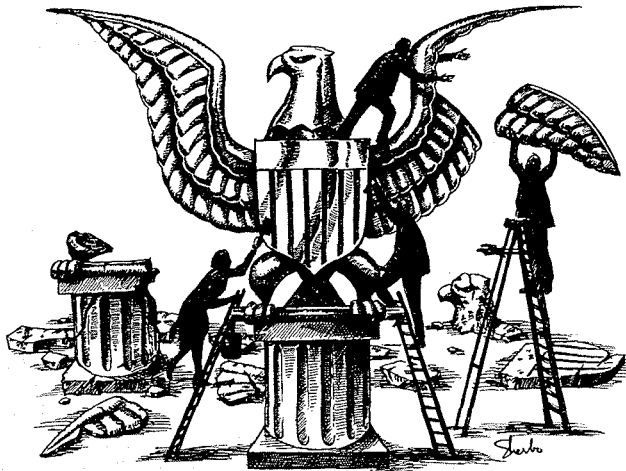
Notable defectors, writes Peters, *Washington Monthly* editor and himself a self-styled neoliberal, include Massachusetts Institute of Technology economist Lester Thurow, Democratic Senators Gary Hart (Colo.), Bill Bradley (N.J.), and Paul Tsongas (Mass.). They still believe in "mercy for the afflicted and help for the down and out," he explains, but they have curbed their old "knee-jerk" reflexes. Big Government and labor unions are sacred cows no more; the military, the police, and Big Business get a more sympathetic hearing.

The neoliberals flunk several standard liberal litmus tests. They support silent meditation in public schools and oppose the courtroom insanity defense. They favor a peacetime military draft as a way to trim Pentagon spending for generous all-volunteer force salaries and to bring rich and poor together in national service.

In the private sector, the neoliberals' "hero is the risk-taking entrepreneur who creates new jobs and better products." Pay hikes, whether for union workers or the denizens of the executive suite, must be tied to improvements in productivity. Workers, they add, should consider accepting stock in their companies in lieu of wage increases.

Neoliberals would also hold government to higher performance standards. Peters ridicules the city of Los Angeles, for example, for cutting back on street repaving and public libraries' hours while paying its fire

"Rebuilding America," particularly U.S. industry, is a leading theme of the neoliberals. They join more traditional liberals, and even some conservatives, in calling for a national "industrial policy."



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**POLITICS & GOVERNMENT**


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chief a hefty \$93,688 salary. Nor are federal social programs immune from criticism. Peters argues that Social Security benefits should go only to the needy aged, not "my aunt who uses her . . . check to go to Europe."

"We want a government that can fire people who can't or won't do the job," Peters declares. "And that includes teachers." He favors gradually making up to half the federal government's 2.8 million civil service slots appointive positions, with terms limited to five years. That would bring risk-takers and innovators into the government. Invigorating the bureaucracy, not tearing it down, is Peters's goal. But too many bureaucrats are getting "fat, sloppy, and smug."

Traditional liberals, Peters believes, were beginning to take on some of those same traits. The neoliberals prefer the lean and hungry look.

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**FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE**


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*Good Neighbor?*

"The Explosive Soviet Periphery" by Jiri Valenta, in *Foreign Policy* (Summer 1983), P.O. Box 984, Farmingdale, N.Y. 11737.

The Soviet Union's reactions to unrest in Poland, Hungary, Afghanistan, and other neighboring states have repeatedly strained superpower relations since World War II. To avert such tensions, says Valenta, a Soviet affairs specialist at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, Washington must somehow steer Moscow toward a more tolerant view of its neighbors' domestic matters.

History, Valenta notes, offers abundant examples of how *not* to moderate Soviet behavior. In November 1956, inflammatory U.S. Radio Free Europe broadcasts incited Hungarian freedom fighters by arousing hopes of U.S. military support. When Russian tanks rolled in, those hopes proved mistaken.

In 1968, when Czechoslovakia's Alexander Dubček carried his "Prague Spring" reforms too far for Moscow's liking, Washington went to the other extreme. President Lyndon Johnson, preoccupied with the Vietnam War and its domestic repercussions, seemed indifferent to Czechoslovakia's fate. By continuing to call for SALT talks, he implied American "acquiescence" to Soviet aggression, says Valenta. Again, the Red Army marched in.

Before Moscow's 1979 invasion of Afghanistan, Jimmy Carter's White House sent contradictory signals, leaving Moscow no way to anticipate the resulting U.S. grain embargo and the death of the SALT II treaty.

Over the years, American efforts to discourage Soviet military intervention in Poland may have been more successful. In October 1956, the Soviet Union, after flexing its muscles, chose not to invade, deterred chiefly by Polish leader Władysław Gomułka's expressed resolve to put