

CARLETON OBSERVER

“TRUTH IS THE MOST SACRED VIRTUE OF THE HUMAN HEART” - SENECA THE YOUNGER

LIBERAL PRAISE FOR CONSERVATIVE IDEALISM

BY ALEX VON HAGEN-JAMAR

Before I begin this article, I would like to say that I am unabashedly liberal and believe President Bush is the worst President in recent memory. I am also fairly active within the Democratic Party. That said...

This is a crazy time for politics and anyone associated with it. In a time with one of the most hotly contested Presidential races in our history, an ongoing war, fear of future terrorist attacks, disputed economic trends, and fierce conflicts over numerous social issues, it is difficult to see those on the “other side” as intelligent, well-meaning people. However, there are people on both sides who genuinely do mean well, and there are elegant and powerful ideas driving both our nation’s conservatives and its liberals. This article is my attempt, as a liberal, to openly display my admiration for some of the concepts and values that I believe underlie much of conservative thought.

While “idealism” is more often associated with young, fresh-faced liberal college students, it can be just as accurately applied to conservatism. At the heart of much of traditional conservative philosophy stands a deep underlying faith in people, both as individuals and as a society. It is this faith that leads to a belief in the value of small government, among other things. I think government should provide an environment of equal opportunity and basic necessities—a decent standard of living for everyone. The difference between a conservative and myself thus lies less in what we want, and more in what we think is necessary to get there. While I place more responsibility in the hands of society rather than in the hands of the individual, I respect (and often do actually agree with) the individualism and trust in human ingenuity held by many conservatives. While I often disagree with the conclusions towards which this belief structure leads many conservatives—reductions in social welfare, for example—I cannot help but be envious of the strength of this optimistic viewpoint.

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RALLY ROUND THE QUOTE:

“HE WHO DECIDES A CASE WITHOUT HEARING THE OTHER SIDE...THOUGH HE DECIDES JUSTLY, CANNOT BE CONSIDERED JUST”

-SENECA



LIBERAL PRAISE FROM PAGE 1

Complementing this idealistic streak conservatives bear an equally important willingness to make difficult decisions. I do not mean a belief that the ends justify the means, but rather that in some cases, in order to improve things, we must be willing to accept losses. This is visible in traditional conservative support for free trade as a vessel to improve the economic wellbeing of individuals both in and outside of the United States. Furthermore, while I may once again disagree, for many conservatives the decision to go to war with Iraq was not based upon fear of WMD's, but rather in a forceful conviction that ousting Saddam Hussein was the right thing to do for the people of Iraq. This ability to make tough choices is both impressive and necessary when scarce resources must be distributed across a wide, problem filled world. I find it difficult to watch things turn bad before they become good, or to ever endorse the idea of a "just war" (beyond perhaps World War II and a few other examples), but I do believe that the willingness to do something hard and at times untrue to our better natures in order to reach a more positive and welcoming world is a trait worthy of praise.

Finally, while I completely disagree with most social and moral stances on the Republican platform this year, particularly as represented by their stance on gay rights and abortion, I do not believe that they necessarily reflect the position of all conservatives. In fact, it is arguable (and often put forward by committed Libertarians) that the conservative approach once again suggests small government and individual rights. This equally conservative approach translates into acceptance of gay marriage and pro-choice laws, regardless of each individual's approval or lack thereof. While to me tacit acceptance is not enough on issues such as these, I do find that willingness to accept others—even though you may disagree with them—commendable, and a welcome addition to our political dialogue.

Why write something like this? A liberal praising conservative values as I see them, especially in the middle of an election into which I've personally poured thousands of hours? Am I trying to lose? Obviously not. However, both during the election and afterwards, I am committed to remembering that there is much value in the ideas of those with whom I disagree, and while every group or 'side' has its bad apples and aggressively fanatic zealots, there are always bright, wise, and dedicated people striving to improve the world around them.

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WHAT IS THE CARLETON OBSERVER?

Greetings! We, the editors, would like to introduce you to the Carleton Observer. The Observer is a nonpartisan journal of social and political commentary. In fact, it is the only such journal at Carleton. The Observer strives to foster intellectual discussion and diversity on campus by publishing all points of view on social and political issues. The Observer accepts submissions from any and every Carleton student. This year, we hope to publish at least four issues of the Observer every term.

The Observer is published by the Carleton Conservative Union (CCU) and the editors are members of the CCU. The CCU is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to the support and spreading of conservative ideas at Carleton and beyond. To this end, the CCU hosts conservative speakers on campus and holds other events to inform the campus about conservative ideas.

The CCU is not a Republican organization. While the CCU does work closely with Republicans on campus, it is a nonpartisan organization. The College Republicans are a separate organization that actively works to elect Republican candidates to office. The CCU does not campaign for particular candidates. We welcome and support all types of conservatives: libertarians, neoconservatives, social conservatives, classical liberals, Republicans, and others. We also welcome individuals who are not conservative to join our organization or our mailing list in order to learn more about conservatism.

If you are interested in writing for the Carleton Observer, please contact one of the editors. We would love to print your opinion, whatever it may be. The Observer is always looking for talented writers. You can write an article once, occasionally, or for every issue. The choice is yours. The editors are making a large effort this year to make the Observer more appealing to the student body. We are looking for someone to draw political cartoons. If you can draw and enjoy politics, please consider submitting cartoons.

Thanks for reading this issue of the Carleton Observer. The editors look forward to including your submissions in our upcoming issues. We hope that you will continue to read the Observer and will spread the word to your friends and acquaintances. Thanks for reading!

The Editors

Josh Markowitz, Rawdon Bergquist, Andrew Navratil

WAGING THE PEACENIK WAR

BY RAWDON BERGQUIST

Just step right in, Osama. I'd ask you to wipe your feet, but here we respect other cultures so by all means muddy up the place. Cleanliness is all the rage now, but we just sweep the dirt under the carpet so don't be offended. The Capital is on your left and the White House your right. Might as well stop by the Smithsonian and do a little housecleaning while you're in town, and don't forget to hide behind the Bill of Rights; we've got all sorts of lawyers lining up to defend your buddies. You're a busy man and all, but you'll find the time to get rid of all those statues that litter the Mall. There are some theatres and clothing stores around here that need some sprucing up. While you're at it take a tour of the Pentagon – whoops, it's not there any more. We tore it down, shipped it to Manhattan and built some low income housing out of it, right next to One World...well, you know the place.

We're all very tolerant and understanding here, so we cancelled the love fest and group hug and sent all the women home. I know you'll appreciate that sort of thing. Cozy up to your buddies, we flew them first class from Guantanamo just to see you smile, like you do in all the wonderful cultural pieces that those equitable dispensers of truth in the Gulf play for us. We're playing them twenty-four hours a day in order to see your perspectives on things; it's just so hard to get fair and balanced coverage these days. I've heard that the ratings are highest in federal prisons; it's so nice that you've given murderers, rapists and thugs hope for the future.

It's so sad that things couldn't work out between us, but in the interest of peaceful relations, we shelved our guns and bombs. The inspectors from the United Nations will arrive shortly to make sure we got rid of them all. We just can't trust ourselves anymore, ever since those confidence and insecurity problems. Hopefully, we'll restore faith in the government in the near future. You'd probably know something about that, wouldn't you?

Can we get down to business? Here are our intelligence sources and anti-terrorism (I'm sorry I know you prefer the term "jihad" but we've had translation problems with that one) plans – we can't allow opacity in the government, lest some government agency even thinks about tracking immigrants or taking pictures of visitors. Patriotism, securing something called a 'homeland' and compliance with federal law are all un-American. Oops. Sorry, can't use the term 'American' as it might offend all the hyphenated people and ethno-nationalists. I think we've finally settled on Western-style liberal democratic capitalistic oppressive imperialism. Sooner or later we'll send you reparations for colonialism and the crusades; of course, we don't expect anything in return, that would just be un-Christian. Err, another banned word, I hope I don't get fired for that. Before you leave on your perfectly justifiable quest, here's the list you requested of people who identify themselves as Jewish. I thought Kabul was a city in Afghanistan, but if you say they rule the world, then it must be the word of Allah. Oh, and by the way, we play fair now, so if you can too that would be great. If any of our spitballs hurt, just cry foul and appeal to the morally just globalizing institutions you wish to destroy. Have a nice day.

The Observer is a non-partisan newspaper of social and political commentary. The opinions expressed herein are the sole creations of their authors. The Observer welcomes articles and letters from all viewpoints, and seeks to promote a diversity of keen and insightful thought at Carleton. Thanks for reading!

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“Ours is a government of laws, but...no law is worth anything unless there is the right kind of man behind it.” - Theodore Roosevelt

LIVING AN ALTERNATIVE LIFESTYLE AT CARLETON

BY PETER FRITZ

“Oh.” The girl I had been in intense conversation with up to that moment spoke with confusion and maybe even a little fear when I told her what my lifestyle choice was. “So... You’re one of those people... Why did you come to Carleton?” The words came out slowly, with no malice, but with the confusion mixed with just a tiny bit of fear that is now familiar to me. Her reaction was not surprising. I engage in something in which only a small minority of Carleton students participate, something that challenges many of the dearest held beliefs of the majority. The display of my lifestyle has caused fear, laughter, revulsion, and sheer confusion.

I am a conservative.

I am a strange animal indeed for many of my peers. Since this is Carleton after all, once the initial shock upon hearing of my political views has been overcome, people become curious and inquisitive. “Are you a Republican?” is sometimes the first question, inadvertently revealing my “yes, but” approach to politics. Yes, I am a Republican, but I’m a conservative first. Often they ask, “How can you vote for Bush, even if you are conservative?” When I answer questions of religion, they are amazed by the apparent paradox of a conservative who is churchgoing, but not fundamentalist, born-again, or Catholic.

So what is this alternate lifestyle of mine all about? Is it “guns, God, and gays” as one liberal famously expounded? Well... God might be a starting place if there ever was one. Transcendent moral order is key, be it the Christian God or something else. Without such an order there is no room in this world for truth, in the discernable and universal sense. This is one of the two basic ideas of conservatism. The other half is the negative view of human nature, the view of humanity as forever imperfect upon this earth. The futility of perfection seems like a wretchedly dreary point of view, however, just as happiness cannot be truly felt without sadness, and in the same manner one cannot truly appreciate what is good in this world without an appreciation of evil.

From these two ideas grow all the fruits of conservatism. The sweetest of these fruits is a love of liberty and the Hayekian Rule of Law. Recognizing tradition as a conveyor of human wisdom through the ages is another fruit. The understanding of differences among people, their abilities, interests, hopes, and desires, and the wisdom to stand in awe of those differences are yet even more of the many fruits of conservatism.

There you have it. A conservative fully, if rather cursorily, dissected. You see what makes me tick, the basic ideas which govern my thought. The lifestyle I lead is one that seems bizarre to many, but it may be curiously appealing. To those of you who are intrigued by this lifestyle, take a closer look – you might be surprised by what you find. And for those of you who are conservative and ashamed, or afraid: don’t be. Conservatism is not something to hide, but to live and revel in.

PROGRESSIVE INCOME TAX = BAD

BY ANDREW WEINER

The following is a several hundred word-long rant about income taxes.

Are you confused by the Federal Income Tax? Me too. It doesn’t make any sense. I mean, why would they charge a higher tax rate for people who earn more money? Are they trying to discourage people from making money? Why in the world are they charging a lower rate for people who earn less money? Are they trying to reward poverty? Some people make so little money that they don’t pay any income taxes at all. I mean, even if poor people were paying 100% of their income in taxes they wouldn’t really be carrying their weight, considering the staggering amount of money it takes to run this country. Rich people, on the other hand, are not only paying more because they make more, but they are also paying a higher percentage of their income in taxes. That means that the harder you work, the smaller the fraction of that work you are allowed to keep.

So here’s what I propose: replace the progressive income tax system with a regressive system. The more money you make, the lower the percentage of your income you pay in taxes. The less money you make, the higher the percentage of your income you pay in taxes. This would actually give poor people some incentive to make more money. I mean, under the current system a poor person’s decision-making process probably goes something like, “yeah, I could get a better job and make more money, but then I would just have to give more of it away. Screw it.”

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The progressive income tax system discourages people from getting rich. A regressive income tax would discourage people from being poor. Rich people would be like, “man I don’t feel like going to work today—I’d rather spend the morning out on my yacht...but then again, if my boss docks my salary, I’ll have to pay more taxes...screw it—I’ll go to work.”

The logical extension of the regressive income tax system is that welfare benefits should be paid to rich people rather than to poor people. Why does our government reward failure and decadence? Really, it is the rich people who should be rewarded—they’re the ones who make our economy so strong. I say that anyone who makes over \$400,000 should receive “luxury stamps” that can be used towards the purchase of goods such as jewelry, monocles, private jets, and top hats.

Okay, I know what you’re thinking: “Andrew, that is the worst idea ever. Don’t you realize that even if poor people pay a higher percentage of their income in taxes, people with no income will still be getting off scott-free?” Well, you are absolutely right. Therefore, the law will have to state that anyone who earns less than \$10,000 per year should have to pay, let’s say, a flat rate of \$3,500 in taxes. People who are unable to pay that amount will be arrested and forced to work off their taxes by performing low wage government jobs.

Of course, my idea is still only in its early stages of development, as I have yet to flesh out many important details. However, if you have any suggestions, please let me know. Teamwork is, after all, the foundation of wealth.



CONSERVATISM: TASTE THE RAINBOW

BY NICK HOWARD

“Elitist; Snobbish; Hypocrite; Fascist; Racist.” Do any of those sound familiar to you? Carleton students tend to be very proud of their beliefs, and will defend them vehemently. Both sides do sometimes suffer attacks, but after seeing the campus for two years, I believe that conservatives do tend to be attacked more often. What does it mean to be conservative, though? Many people at Carleton would answer that question in a very narrow fashion, although this interpretation is much more often than not incorrect.

Around campus and in classes, I’ve heard the “liberal” Democratic Party declared the party of the masses. That it is the party that covers the widest variety of people, as compared to the alternative. The label of “conservative” does function to cover just as many political ideas and beliefs, though. As was said by Rudy Giuliani on Meet the Press with Tim Russert, the Republican Party and the conservative label is, “a big tent...much bigger than people give it credit for.” To understand what he meant by this, let us simply look at elected representatives in various parts of the country.

First, let me speak to the realm of politics in general. To begin with, for those who do not understand it, politics as it exists in America and throughout most of the world is very sectional and regional. Different areas of countries, states, and even districts in state legislatures have different needs and wants. Politicians that have a desire to win (and that is ALL who do in fact win) will play up these needs in their campaigns, thus in some ways exacerbating these sectional differences. Now, let us discuss two areas of the country and analyze them.

The first place to look would be to the State of New York. You could look at Mr. Giuliani, and the beliefs that he holds. He is pro-abortion, anti-gun rights, and has various other viewpoints that would be said to be unpopular under the label of “conservative” by many of the more politically active individuals on our campus. While in the realm of New York, you might also take a look at George Pataki, the current governor. In many ways he resembles Giuliani, and in some ways he is even more “un-conservative.” In addition to holding many of Rudy Giuliani’s social opinions, Pataki is more economically and socially liberal than him.

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Does this make him “un-conservative”, or does this simply make him different from some other people that reside under the label?

The answer is that it simply establishes one portion of the conservative ideal. For a different perspective, let’s look at the “Heartland of America;” Kansas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma. Politicians in these areas must also appeal to the values of the majority of the populations in the districts and States from which they run. For the purposes of evaluation, let us look at Kansas. Robert Dole was a 30-year representative and senator from Kansas who retired after his unsuccessful bid for the presidency in 1996. Throughout his career, Dole appealed to both conservative social and economic values that were present in the majority of the people he represented. He exemplified these values by such measures as supporting nationwide criminalization of American flag burnings. Do these values make him anti-liberal? No, it just makes him an embodiment of the people that he represented.

Between these two elected officials lie the majority of the conservatives in America. As can be seen from this discussion, there is a wide berth with a lot of room for different belief systems that are present in different parts of the country. There will probably arise another situation in which you or another person thinks that a person who believes differently from you deserves to be given a colorful title. When this occurs, do a little more thinking and research about the background of the individual and about the belief structure from which they come. Looking at this can do a lot for your understanding of both the person and about the beliefs of other people you will meet.

PRINCIPLE OR POLITICS? AN ELECTORAL DILEMMA

BY ANDREW NAVRATIL

George Walker Bush or John Forbes Kerry? When you go to the polls on November 2, for whom will you cast a vote? Many Americans, and certainly most Carleton students, have already decided. For some of us, the question is more complex. I do not want John Kerry OR George Bush serving as the next President of the United States. I could vote for one of many third party candidates, but I know that they do not have a chance of winning. It comes down to a question of principle or politics. Should I cast a principled vote—a vote for the candidate I most agree with and believe should be the next President of the United States? Alternatively, should I cast a vote for the major party candidate I most agree with—more pessimistically, the lesser of two evils—in order to directly influence the outcome of the election? Over the past months, I have been debating the merits of both sides in my mind and have reached the conclusion that I must look beyond politics and cast a principled vote.

Why not George Bush? After all, I am a political conservative. I believe in limited government, free markets, and individual liberty. I like low taxes! So I should support George Bush, right? Wrong. As President, George Bush has presided over an enormous expansion of the federal government. His administration created the Department of Homeland Security, a seemingly useless government agency with little real power. The No Child Left Behind Act expands the role of the federal government in education and undermines the constitutionally-granted power of the states to regulate educational policy. The Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit further expands the role of the federal government in health care. George Bush is not balancing the budget. The federal deficit is growing dangerously large as a result of a nonsensical fiscal policy of increased spending coupled with decreased revenue. Furthermore, the Bush administration has not done much to encourage free markets. Bush waffles on the issue of tariffs on steel. The Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit and other recent legislation do not promote free trade; they have given enormous power and benefits to powerful corporations. Finally, the Bush administration has not promoted individual freedom. The USA PATRIOT Act that the administration proposed in 2001 is an unprecedented violation of the fundamental rights granted to Americans in the Bill of Rights: freedom of speech, freedom of expression, and freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures. All in all, George Bush and the neoconservative wing of the Republican Party do not represent my political views.

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What about John Kerry? If I do not agree with Bush, what about his principal opponent? It can be said that I am a different sort of conservative than George Bush. But I am still a conservative. John Kerry is anything but conservative. He supports an increased role for the federal government in every domestic arena. Kerry claims that he will give ninety-five percent of Americans, including all children, access to the same health care plan available to members of Congress. He plans to establish a National Education Trust Fund and support more federal dollars for after school programs. He plans to do all of this while modernizing the military and cutting taxes on the middle class and on “ninety-nine percent of businesses.” Finally, Kerry claims he will cut the federal deficit in half within four years. One word: impossible. If Bush’s fiscal policy is nonsensical, Kerry’s is ludicrous. It is simply not possible to decrease middle class taxes and business taxes, vastly increase government spending in health care and education, and maintain military spending while balancing the budget, much less cutting the deficit in half! John Kerry’s plans for America would increase the scope and size of the federal government even more than the current administration has done. His proposed fiscal policy makes no sense and would lead America farther down the road to financial crisis. Furthermore, John Kerry does not support free markets and free trade. He would offer government incentives to businesses that do not outsource, rather than keeping government out of the market and allowing businesses to compete freely. Kerry supports an even greater expansion of Medicare, creating a national health care system run by the government, rather than promoting competition among insurance companies and private health care providers. Finally, John Kerry does not support individual rights to the full extent of their meaning. Kerry did vote in favor of the PATRIOT Act. He has not proposed a radically different approach to the war on terror. Also, Kerry’s plans for health care and the economy undermine the rights of individuals and individual businesses to compete in the free market. His plans call for an enormous expansion of federal power at the expense of the states, undermining our federal system.

It should be clear to the reader by this point that I disagree with George Bush and the neoconservative’s brand of conservatism, and that I fundamentally disagree with almost all of John Kerry’s vision for America. So whom do I agree with? The Constitution Party most closely fits my views. They firmly believe that the federal government has become too large and too powerful. The party advocates a return to the fundamental structure of federalism, where the powers of Washington are limited and the states have real policymaking ability, as spelled out in the Constitution. The Constitution Party advocates a balanced budget, little government interference in the economy, and uncompromising respect for individual liberty as enshrined in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Finally, the party advocates a decreased role for the United States in foreign affairs. Given the current state of the national Republican Party, my principles draw me to the Constitution Party.

The dilemma for me lies in the fact that the Constitution Party candidate has no realistic chance of winning the Presidency. It is a two-man race between Bush and Kerry. So what do I do? If I vote Constitution, my vote has little effect on the election. I am essentially throwing away any political power I have as a voter. Yet, if I vote for Bush or Kerry, I am voting for someone who I do not want to see serve as President. I would be forced to choose between the lesser of two evils. What am I to do? Max Lerner once wrote, “When you choose the lesser of two evils, always remember that it is still an evil.” While I want to have a real effect on the upcoming election, my conscience dictates that I place my principles first. It is my civic duty as a citizen of the United States to vote for the best candidate, regardless of the political situation. I could not cast a vote for a candidate I do not support with my mind and my heart. So, I will go to the polls on November 2 and give up my power to decide who becomes the next President of the United States of America. But in doing so, I will have placed my principles over politics. I will have cast a vote for limited government, individual freedom, and federalism. I will have cast a vote for the Constitution of the United States. And for that, I think, I can be proud.

“THE TRUE THEORY OF OUR CONSTITUTION IS SURELY THE WISEST AND BEST, THAT THE STATES ARE INDEPENDENT AS TO EVERYTHING WITHIN THEMSELVES, AND UNITED AS TO EVERYTHING RESPECTING FOREIGN NATIONS”

-THOMAS JEFFERSON

RAY COX SPEAKS TO CCU

BY RAWDON BERGQUIST

Last Thursday Representative Ray Cox spoke at the meeting of the Carleton Conservative Union. Ray Cox has represented Northfield (and District 25B) in the State Assembly for the past two years and serves on the Higher Education Finance Committee, the Regulated Industries Committee, and is Vice-chair of the Environmental and Natural Resources Policy Committee. Mr. Cox, a St. Olaf graduate in '73, served on the School Board for 16 years before being elected to the State Assembly in 2002 by a mere 46 votes.

Mr. Cox discussed his current campaign and answered questions from attending students. Mr. Cox described this year's campaign as very tight, and said having the same opponent as in 2002 (David Bly) was like running against an incumbent. District 25B, with two colleges, a number of small towns, and lots of farms, is a very opinionated district with 37% of voters registered as Republicans and 44% registered as Democrats. When asked about polarization among local voters, Mr. Cox replied by saying he thought that frustration was growing among voters as well as politicians over partisan politics, but that the rhetoric was not nearly as loud as at the national level. He stated that the primary difference between himself and his opponent is over spending. "My opponent's policy boils down to tax the rich and spend, which goes down well on some college campuses, but I think the voters will realize that it's not good policy... you can't just tax and spend, that's not the way to solve problems."

Mr. Cox blamed the failure to pass a bonding bill on gridlock in the Senate, caused by uncompromising leadership in both Republican and Democratic camps, but particularly the DFL. "The DFL has been feeling beat-up on as Minnesota has slowly drifted to the right over the past twenty years, and the Senate leadership has decided to vent its frustration by basically saying no to everything." However, in the State House, Mr. Cox applauded the bipartisan effort to move the House version of the bonding bill through with all the appropriate public hearings, as well as going through important bills and business with strong bipartisan support. Mr. Cox offered a critique of the Carleton curriculum, saying that "liberal viewpoints are indoctrinated at Carleton" and had strong criticism of the DFL: "The problem with the DFL is that they have to try and exclude other messages because their message is not a mainstream message."

Mr. Cox discussed other controversial issues in Minnesota with students ranging from marriage rights to tax policy. He expressed his dislike for the Conceal and Carry law saying the title is misleading and the signs are stupid. He sees the proposed defense of marriage referendum as a preemptive strike against the constitution, and he stated that the marriage bill and similar issues should be dealt with by the courts: "A referendum should only be the last resort." Mr. Cox discussed his refusal to sign the No New Taxes Pledge, saying that "if you have the experience of running a small business for 35 years, you know that one shouldn't close doors too early."

Mr. Cox addressed criticism that conservatives don't live up to their 'values' by saying that most of that criticism should be directed to politics at the national level. He also claimed it was unfair to place a label on someone just because of what others have done or said, or assume all members of a particular political party hold identical views. Mr. Cox said his priorities are fiscal responsibility, education, environmental protection, and the promotion of a positive business climate. "We need workers' compensation and insurance reforms to keep Minnesota competitive and dynamic. If you keep businesses healthy, you keep tax revenue flowing in." Mr. Cox runs the Northfield Construction Company and has recently been awarded the "Guardian of Small Business Award" for 2003-2004 by the National Federation of Independent Businesses. He also wants to work within the Republican Party to promote environmental protection, and take it back to the era of Theodore Roosevelt when the Republican Party was at the forefront of the conservation movement. Mr. Cox has been endorsed by the Sierra Club, the Minnesota League of Conservation Voters, and the Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association.

"TO WASTE, TO DESTROY OUR NATURAL RESOURCES, TO SKIN AND EXHAUST THE LAND INSTEAD OF USING IT SO AS TO INCREASE ITS USEFULNESS, WILL RESULT IN UNDERMINING IN THE DAYS OF OUR CHILDREN THE VERY PROSPERITY WHICH WE OUGHT BY RIGHT TO HAND DOWN TO THEM AMPLIFIED AND DEVELOPED." -THEODORE ROOSEVELT

POLL: EXACTLY HOW LIBERAL IS CARLETON?

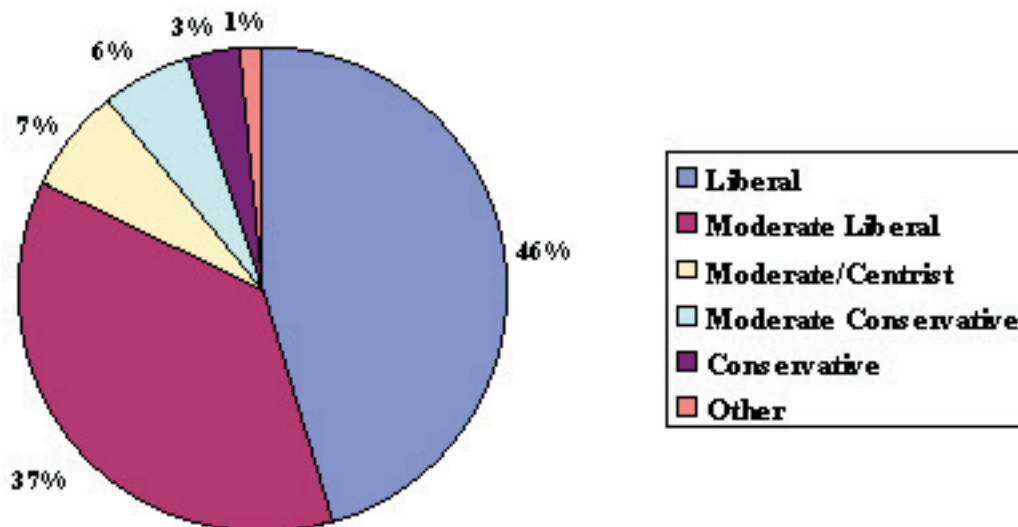
BY EMMA CAREY, JOSH MARKOWITZ, AND ADAM SUNDERLAND

Everybody knows that Carleton is a predominantly “liberal” college. But nobody really knows how “liberal” is “liberal.” So, we here at the Observer went out and asked around in Sayles last Friday to see just how “liberal” Carleton students are. Surprisingly, this was more of a mystery that it may seem to many of you readers out there. After all, there’s a huge difference between having 10 conservatives and 100 of them. For example, two years ago Ray Cox, Northfield’s current state representative, won his election race by a mere 46 votes.

So, we asked 203 students which of the following labels best describes their political orientation: Liberal, Moderate Liberal, Moderate/Centrist, Moderate Conservative, or Conservative. Of this total, 92 answered “Liberal,” 75 “Moderate Liberal,” 14 “Moderate/Centrist,” 12 “Moderate Conservative,” 7 “Conservative,” 2 “Undecided,” and 1 an emphatic “None of the Above.” We should add that these numbers were not manipulated by selective screening or invitation of pollees. In other words, we did not say, “hey, you’re in the CCU—take our poll,” or think to ourselves, “hmm—dreadlocks... must be liberal—pass.” In fact, if anything we were kind of rude and disruptive, like any good poll-takers ought to be.

For those of you more keen on the sharp statistical breakdown, that’s 45% liberal, 37% moderate liberal, 7% moderate/centrist, 6% moderate conservative, 3.5% conservative, and 1.5% other. No big deal, right? Well, maybe, until you realize that almost 10% of our sampling identifies as some brand of conservative. That’s almost 200 conservative students here, potentially, if these numbers bear any degree of accuracy. This would mean that conservatives comprise about as large a minority here as Jews, to give you some perspective. Of course, recent nationwide polls have revealed that more college students these days identify as “Republican” than as “Democrat,” but for Carleton 10% “conservative of some sort” just feels like a veritable mass of counter-culture. And, of course, this probably does not come as such impressive news to some of us here who have always felt the presence and impact of the conservative elements of Carleton’s student body. Nevertheless, as today is Conservative Coming Out Day, we figured this would add a nice piece of “awareness” to the general tone of discourse out there and at least take a stab at a not-too-significant, but still interesting-in-a-curiosity-sort-of-way topic that we’ve all probably wondered about at some point. We hope you have found this poll interesting, perhaps informative, and at the very least amusing. Thank you to all who participated and/or read this far, and Happy Conservative Coming Out Day to all!

Political Ideology of Carleton Students



BUSH IS NOT CONSERVATIVE

BY DAVID HOLMAN

President George W. Bush is not a conservative. OK. So then what IS a conservative? Dictionary.com defines conservative as:

Favoring traditional views and values; tending to oppose change.

Traditional or restrained in style: a conservative dark suit.

Moderate; cautious: a conservative estimate.

So does President George W. Bush meet these criteria? First, does George Bush embody the “traditional views and values” of America? Although I maintain my position that, on the whole, Bush is not conservative, I do admit that he seems to favor “traditional” views in most areas. Bush is a born again Christian and is deeply religious. He is clearly opposed to homosexuals, and he supports a “traditional” family structure. He doesn’t support teaching anything except abstinence for sexual education, and he doesn’t support a woman’s right to choose whether or not to have an abortion. Socially, he does seem to be conservative.

However, his foreign policy is radically different from any traditional American views and values that I’ve encountered. Traditionally, America has been very reluctant to get involved in foreign wars, and it has also been a reliable member of the treaties it signs. It has only deviated significantly from these values in the last 50 years. America has usually been respected by its allies and has been a constructive force in the world. World opinion polls clearly demonstrate increasingly widespread mistrust and hatred of America. Bush responds to threats before they materialize, instead of after those threats have turned into physical actions. President Eisenhower, a conservative, decided not to escalate our involvement in Vietnam and dealt with Middle Eastern crises with successful diplomacy. Although socially conservative, Bush’s foreign policy has abandoned our conservative traditions and embarked on a very new course.

Does Bush oppose change? No. Definitely not. This country has changed more radically in the past three years than at almost any other point in its history. The President has radically changed the focus of our foreign policy, radically changed our taxation structure, radically shifted the relationship of federal aid to states, radically changed our constitutional rights via the Patriot Act, frequently violated the Geneva Convention, violated the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, radically privatized our military, changed the course and very definition of environmental protection, and embarked on a global crusade against anyone who uses violence for political ends. Bush does not oppose change. In fact, the magnitude and extent of the changes enacted by this administration dwarf those of any previous administration in living memory, except, perhaps, that of Franklin Roosevelt.

Let us now examine Bush’s relationship to the second definition of “conservative” listed above. Is he, in fact, “traditional or restrained in style?” Here he fits the description only partly. He usually dresses formally and speaks with proper amounts of emotion. However, he was not very restrained when he dressed like a pilot and landed on a military aircraft carrier. Nor was he very restrained when he goaded the Iraqi insurgents to “bring it on.” He was certainly not very restrained when he got arrested for driving under the influence in my home state of Maine.

Thirdly, is Bush “moderate; cautious?” No way, no how! Bush launched a war in the most volatile region in the world, the Middle East, based on deliberately skewed intelligence. Bush’s tax cuts are not moderate in any sense, as they decrease capital gains tax, estate tax, and shift the burden to the lower and middle class. His attitude of “you’re either with us or against us” is extreme, not moderate. His massive subsidy of big industry, especially the oil industry, depletes our resources at an ever increasing rate without investing hardly anything in developing new science for future energy needs. That is, in fact, dangerous, not “cautious.” His wanton fiscal spending has wasted a government surplus and has created the largest deficit in our nation’s history. That is not “cautious.” That is a betrayal of our grandchildren.

For these reasons George W. Bush is not a conservative. He simply fails to meet even half the criteria. I urge true conservatives to evaluate honestly what conservatism has stood for--fiscal responsibility, strong domestic focus, conservation of resources, reluctance to commit American troops to foreign wars--and agree that this man values none of those qualities. Bush is many things, but a conservative he is not.

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH OUR INNER POLITICAL BEASTS

BY JOSH MARKOWITZ

A friend of mine once told me that in any political system all opinionated people must become conservative at some point, at risk of abandoning their most fundamental principles. To the extent that their ideas gain acceptance and become engrained in the laws and customs of their country, people become increasingly concerned with preserving and expanding their influence. Eventually, those whose programs and aspirations gain full expression in a country's political code will become ardent conservatives, fighting dissenters—whether they are labeled “liberals,” “reactionaries,” or some other such generalization—for the privilege of leaving their now-ideal system untouched. Essentially, my friend proclaimed that the ideological connotations of the word “conservative” in any given time and place cannot derive logically from the word's actual definition.

He offered, that day, the example of Joseph Stalin, the paragon of Soviet conservatism—but only once he had things as he liked them. Here was a man who wrested control of a fledgling country from a group of powerful contenders four turbulent years after the death of its founder, Vladimir Lenin. Once in power he commenced a series of swift reforms to consolidate power and restructure the political, demographic, and economic dynamics of the Soviet Union. In the process, millions were killed, a primarily agrarian economy shifted its focus towards heavy industry, whole populations were uprooted, and a power structure began to materialize around a formidable “cult of personality.” One can certainly commend Stalin's effectiveness, if not his methods. Yet, what happened to this clearly “non-conservative” policy once Stalin had accomplished his primary structural objectives? Did he embark upon an ever-widening campaign of reforms, fashioning himself as a tireless catalyst for “change?” I think we can all fill in the rest of the pertinent details—at least until the “Great Patriotic War” came along and gave him a new mandate on expansions of power and land.

Why is this deceased mad Russian important to our understanding of American “conservatism” today? Because he reminds us to question what we mean when we identify one another with context-dependent labels. What's conservative in Moscow in 1936 has nothing to do with what's conservative in Washington in 2004. In fact, it has a lot more in common (although still not much) with what's liberal in Washington these days. As you can see in this very newspaper, the word “conservative” means many things even to what seems like a pretty homogeneous group of people—namely, white male Carleton students!

Yet, my point in writing this article is not to drain all meaning from a term that's crucial to our current political discourse or to offer some new-agey notion that “being conservative means whatever you want it to mean.” Can it mean I am pro-Iraq-war, pro-business, anti-PATRIOT Act, and pro-choice? Sure. Can it mean I like to dress up like Catwoman and prowl down Division Street while singing “Hakuna Matata” and licking peanut butter off of an old shoe? Perhaps I would do better searching for another term, no matter how fervently I insist that such a lifestyle conserves my sanity, and in style, at that. That aside, I believe there exists a very straightforward definition of modern American conservatism that both includes everyone who honestly identifies as conservative and allows for considerable disagreement among its ranks. It is the following:

All conservatives agree, to some extent, on the value of preserving the governing systems and principles that have guided our country since its inception. Phew! Deep breath...

Examples of these systems and principles are classical liberalism, individualism, federalism, and even, yes, religious devotion. As a result, conservative politics can emphasize any combination of free trade, civil liberty, limited government, and fetus-rights, among many other things. However, these values must be weighed against one another and crafted into delicate positions on current issues. Therein lies a great deal of interpretive work as well as the wild gyrations of human emotions. Hence comes the plethora of people—many of them conservatives—pointing at conservatives and saying, “hey, you're not conservative!” But can we call a self-proclaimed “conservative” hypocritical if he denies any of these so-called conservative tenets or believes in a certain interpretation of them? Not any more than we can if his belief in them, when applied to the conditions of contemporary society, implies a program of blatantly un-conservative change.

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Which brings us to the topic of President Bush's current policies and the notion of being both a conservative and a reformer. In his acceptance speech at this fall's Republican National Convention, Bush said, "Our nation's founding commitment is still our deepest commitment: In our world, and here at home, we will extend the frontiers of freedom." Note the characteristically conservative rhetorical tactic: ground present policy in traditional principles, viewing our society as a linear progression from that of our forefathers. Whether or not we agree on the success of the war in Iraq as an extension of freedom, its intent—as explained by another writer in this paper—remains well in line with certain conservative values.

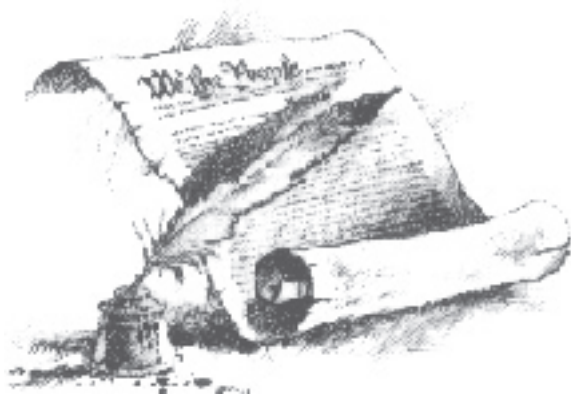
Later in his speech, Bush said, "Many of our most fundamental systems—the tax code, health coverage, pension plans, worker training—were created for the world of yesterday, not tomorrow. We will transform these systems so that all citizens are equipped, prepared, and thus truly free to make your own choices and pursue your own dreams." Again, Bush appealed to the conservative values of enhancing freedom and individual liberty, this time as justification for an audacious round of institutional reforms, designed to in fact bring the country back in line with some founding principles from which he believes it may have strayed.

And it's not like he's saying, "Freedom is great. You're all under arrest." Stated intentions and principles are no substitute for plain logic, which demands that actions match beliefs on pain of contradiction. Although we can find many reasons to disagree with both his reasoning and/or his conclusions (as, in fact, almost everyone does, to some extent), Bush backs them up adequately. After all, there's more than one way to eat a Reese's.

Our understanding of the term "conservatism" can easily mean either too much or too little. Indeed, it is quite difficult to peg down exactly what it means to any given "conservative." However, I believe it provides a useful distinction for a group of people who share something very important in common. I suppose we can compare the relation of conservatism to the individual conservative to that between an animal's genus and its species. The beauty of America is that, once we look beyond this useful but narrow—and, thus, dangerous—ideological label, everyone gets to be their own unique breed of political beast. I am conservative. Hear me roar! Say, is that peanut butter on your shoe?

"TO ANNOUNCE THAT THERE MUST BE NO CRITICISM OF THE PRESIDENT, OR THAT WE ARE TO STAND BY THE PRESIDENT, RIGHT OR WRONG, IS NOT ONLY UNPATRIOTIC AND SERVILE, BUT IS MORALLY TREASONABLE TO THE AMERICAN PUBLIC"

-THEODORE ROOSEVELT



"THE BASIS OF OUR POLITICAL SYSTEM IS THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE TO MAKE AND TO ALTER THEIR CONSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT"

-GEORGE WASHINGTON

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Submit it to the Observer!

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