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The Conservative Baby Boomers' Magazine:  
A History of *The American Spectator* and the Conservative Intellectual Movement,  
1967-2001

By

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Doctor of Philosophy

History

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By

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B.A., Asbury University, 1999  
M.A., Kent State University, 2004

Advisor: Patrick Allitt, Ph.D.

An abstract of  
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the  
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University  
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2013

## Abstract

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This dissertation examines the history of *The American Spectator* (*TAS*), a conservative opinion journal founded by students in 1967, and its relationship to the conservative intellectual movement in America between 1967 and 2001. It argues that a strong opposition to 1960s radicalism defined *TAS*'s editors' conservatism. In addition to a close reading and analysis of *TAS*, my study relies on an extensive analysis of published primary sources such as newspapers, journals, memoirs, and Congressional investigative records, as well as unpublished archival materials.

The dissertation stresses several themes. As *TAS* waged the 1960s generation's culture battles, it did so from a largely secular framework. *TAS* was the only student magazine—right or left—to survive the 1960s and grow into a national publication. It did so because its editors were willing to make new allies outside the conservative movement, able to win the support of a burgeoning network of conservative institutions and philanthropists, and willing to attack opponents, particularly anyone they connected to the 1960s left-wing generation. The magazine's use of satire and irreverent humor also made it distinctive on the right and attracted attention.

The introduction situates the dissertation within its historiographical context, stressing the importance of a generational analysis of the rise of conservatism in late 20<sup>th</sup> century America. The early chapters argue for the formative importance of the intragenerational strife on the campus of Indiana University in the 1960s and the magazine's important role in the slow integration of neoconservatives into the larger conservative intellectual movement in the 1970s. By the 1980s, *TAS* had become a national magazine, but as chapter three argues, it struggled with frustrations and new complexities during the Reagan administration.

The final two chapters examine *TAS*'s turn to investigative journalism in the late 1980s and 1990s. Attacking Anita Hill, Bill and Hillary Clinton, and others, it attracted the attention and support of conservative radio show host Rush Limbaugh. The magazine's circulation and influence grew rapidly until mismanagement and a federal investigation brought about its demise in 2001. An epilogue examines its slow revival in 2002 and subsequent reemergence as a national conservative opinion magazine.

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Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their support, including my parents, Greg and Wanda, and my in-laws, Sonny and Sydnie. David Wheeler, Michael McGowan, and Will Jenkins were constant sources of encouragement. My wife, Teri, read and edited the dissertation and helped in countless other ways during my

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## INTRODUCTION

R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., founded *The American Spectator (TAS)* in 1967. He was a student at Indiana University, dismayed at what seemed to him the radical excesses of some of his contemporaries. Attracting a wide array of conservative contributors who disagreed on many issues but shared his anti-radical outlook, his magazine struggled along on a shoestring budget until 1970. A group of foundations then gave him the funding to place his journal on a surer financial foundation.<sup>1</sup>

In the 1970s, *TAS* attracted neoconservative contributors, increasing the gravity of the journal and enabling it to participate for the first time in national debates and the reorientation of American politics. In the early 1980s, the journal celebrated President Reagan's victories but grew frustrated at what it saw as his lukewarmness toward actual conservative reforms. Moving from the Midwest to Washington, DC in 1985, its editors assumed leadership positions in the conservative movement.

The 1990s witnessed the degeneration of *TAS* into a vitriolic partisan publication, smearing Democratic candidates and incumbents, and taking a special pleasure in trying to undermine the presidency of Bill Clinton. As its intellectual quality deteriorated, ironically, its circulation increased, but its financial and journalistic mismanagement brought it to an abrupt termination in 2001.

This dissertation follows the rise and fall of *TAS*, explaining each of these phases in the journal's history. I ask, first, what did the magazine contribute to American conservatism? What new insights about the conservative movement can be gained from its history? In other words, what about this magazine's history makes it worthy of a full-

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<sup>1</sup> Dinitia Smith, "Spectator Sport: R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.," *New York Times*, July 3, 1994, SM14; Alicia Shepard, "Spectator's Sport," *American Journalism Review* (May 1995): 32-39.

length study? A second set of questions examines the internal structures and conflicts within conservative thought during the period. Put simply, what ideas or values unified conservatism, particularly after the end of the Cold War in 1989? Where did they differ? A third set of questions asks how did *TAS* interpret and respond to cultural issues, particularly sexual orientation, from a generational perspective between 1967 and 2001?<sup>2</sup>

### **Main Arguments and Themes**

This dissertation argues that opposition to 1960s radicalism defined *TAS* editors' conservatism. The magazine's editors came of age in the 1960s, and their conservatism was deeply shaped by their generational experiences. I argue that the magazine's editors waged a long battle against 1960s student radicals, based on a secular conservative framework. This intragenerational struggle reached from Indiana University in the 1960s to the White House in the 1990s. The journal's hyper-partisan anti-Clinton phase in the 1990s thus represented a final battle against what it viewed as the student radicals of the 1960s. Its anti-1960s radicalism—grounded in decades-long strife with aging former student radicals—formed a powerful epoxy for diverse conservative groups, particularly as the Cold War came to an end.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The 2011 *Journal of American History* forum on the state of conservatism proved helpful in framing these questions, see Kim Phillips-Fein, "Conservatism: A State of the Field," *Journal of American History* (December 2011): 723-743; Wilfred M. McClay, "Less Boilerplate, More Symmetry," *JAH* (December 2011): 744-747; Alan Brinkley, "Conservatism as a Growing Field of Scholarship," *JAH* (December 2011): 748-751; Donald T. Critchlow, "Rethinking American Conservatism: Toward a New Narrative," *JAH* (December 2011): 752-755; Martin Durham, "On American Conservatism and Kim Phillips-Fein's Survey of the Field," *JAH* (December 2011): 756-759; Matthew D. Lassiter, "Political History beyond the Red-Blue Divide," *JAH* (December 2011): 760-764; Lisa McGirr, "Now That Historians Know So Much about the Right, How Should We Best Approach the Study of Conservatism?" *JAH* (December 2011): 765-770; and Phillips-Fein, "A Response," *JAH* (December 2011): 771-773.

<sup>3</sup> For more on conservatives' opposition to the legacies of the 1960s, see George G. Rising, "Stuck in the Sixties: Conservatives and the Legacies of the 1960s," (PhD Dissertation, University of Arizona, 2003); and Bernard von Bothmer, "Blaming 'The Sixties': The Political Use of an Era, 1980-2004," (PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 2006). As chapter one explains, the student left of the 1960s strongly opposed the liberalism of Lyndon Johnson and Hubert Humphrey, and writers at *TAS* were aware of these distinctions.

Between 1967 and 2001, *TAS* editors argued that 1960s radicalism was influencing American liberalism, particularly on cultural issues such as feminism and the gay rights movement. Thus linking 1960s radicalism and liberalism (and the Democratic Party) had the effect of amplifying the perceived threat of 1960s student radicals for *TAS* conservatives for the remainder of the twentieth century. Blurring the lines between 1960s radicalism and its initial enemy, 1960s American liberalism, proved rhetorically useful, as the magazine helped create a backlash—against radical 1960s leftists though, not the civil rights movement—which it responded to by strategically embracing or at least considering new ideas and allies from the center.<sup>4</sup>

I pay particular attention to the secular nature of *TAS*'s cultural war against 1960s radicalism. It led calls for a culture war against what it considered the increasingly dominant 1960s culture and sought to unite the right around a conservative new counterculture, but it did so outside the religious right intellectual framework. *TAS* was not a magazine of the Moral Majority. Relying on largely secular rationales, it frequently published articles that put itself at the center of heated debates over feminism and homosexuality—both within conservatism and on the larger political spectrum. Its battle against 1960s radicalism was a secular, not religious, conflict.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Liberalism itself experienced significant changes during the period of this study, due largely to centrifugal pressures created by an emerging postindustrial America in the late-1960s and 1970s. Conservative writers at *TAS* were keenly aware of these changes, and they offered their own interpretations of liberalism, which tended to overemphasize its most extreme elements. In other words, they tended to view liberalism as a monolith of its extreme features. Ironically, conservative writers during the period often accused liberal intellectuals of doing much the same to conservative thought—telescoping a complex range of ideas into one overly simplistic set of ideas. For more on liberalism's development, see Donald T. Critchlow, "Rethinking American Conservatism: Toward a New Narrative," *JAH* (December 2011): 752-755, and Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974–2008* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Charlotte Allen, "What They Preach...and What They Practice: Lifestyles of the Right and Famous," *Washington Post*, October 17, 1993, C1, C5; and Jerry Z. Muller, *Conservatism: An Anthology of Social and Political Thought From David Hume to the Present* (Princeton University Press, 1997), 1-31.

In a second and related major argument, I contend that *TAS* was an important journal that made distinctive contributions to the conservative intellectual movement. It was the first enduring anti-radical intellectual review founded and continuously edited by conservative students of the 1960s generation. This conservative youth generation of the 1960s shaped every aspect of the magazine. It was also the first journal to welcome and actively integrate neoconservatives into the larger conservative intellectual movement in the 1970s. It served as a training ground for scores of future conservative political, institutional, and intellectual leaders.<sup>6</sup> It was self-consciously at the forefront of efforts to keep conservatism unified as the Cold War—with anti-communism as its glue—came to an end. Indeed, it was a vanguard magazine of the culture wars against 1960s radicalism and its aftermath. Finally, in the 1990s, it spearheaded investigations into Bill Clinton, making Paula Jones a national figure and eventually contributing to Clinton's impeachment. *TAS* was a significant magazine for the conservative intellectual movement and for American politics.

Third, I argue that conservative intellectuals at *TAS* experienced sustained internal intellectual conflict between 1967 and 2001. Although they championed and celebrated the election of President Reagan in 1980, conservative writers did not enjoy a lasting period of triumph or enter a period of “conservative consensus.” Disagreements arose almost immediately about how best to implement conservative ideas. Conservative writers felt the need to defend political allies from attacks from the left, while at the same time offering their own criticisms of politicians on the right. For much of the 1980s and 1990s, conservative intellectuals at *TAS* alternated between periods of despondency and

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<sup>6</sup> In their youth, contributors such as William Kristol, George Will, John von Kannon and Adam Meyerson (two future leaders at the Heritage Foundation), John Podhoretz, future editor of *Commentary*, and Malcolm Gladwell, future bestselling author, to name just a few, worked as writers, editors, or staffers.

optimism, all punctuated by continual internal discord. They discovered, in fact, that formulating ideas and policies as a marginalized intellectual movement was much easier than articulating and implementing conservative policies while holding the levers of power.

Other important themes inform this study. *TAS* was the only student magazine founded in the 1960s to survive into the 1980s and 1990s. It did so because its editors were willing to make new allies outside the conservative movement and able to win the support of a burgeoning network of conservative institutions and philanthropists, such as Richard Mellon Scaife.<sup>7</sup> Also, *TAS* adopted a combative style of opinion journalism. Its editors were willing to attack ruthlessly against anyone they connected to 1960s radicalism—both the generation and its values.

It intentionally imitated the idioms and irreverent humor of H.L. Mencken's *The American Mercury* and, to a lesser degree, the blend of wit and seriousness that William F. Buckley Jr., had made distinctive in *National Review*. Humor and a theatrical instinct were crucial ingredients to its success. Its editors aimed to create a conservative counterculture with a distinctive sense of biting humor at the expense of the left. "[*TAS*] has remained what it set out to be," wrote its founder, "an American magazine, alive with the vitality and humor of the American people." Along the way, it established and participated in a dense interconnected web of conservative contacts between journals, think tanks, media, and government.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Karen Rothmyer, "Citizen Scaife," published in *Speak Out Against the New Right*, ed., Herbert Vetter (Boston: Beacon Press, 1982), 35.

<sup>8</sup> R. Emmett, Tyrrell, Jr., ed., *Orthodoxy: The American Spectator's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), xi; and Terry Kirkpatrick, "Mencken's Spirit Reborn," *Wisconsin State Journal*, August 23, 1979, 5.

At its best, in the 1970s, it operated as a serious conservative opinion journal, one that examined politics, culture, literature and the arts, from conservative perspectives, but with a witty, droll personality. At its worst, in the 1990s, its strong opposition to what it considered the aftermath of 1960s radicalism expressed itself in acerbic, narrow minded partisan attacks that disfigured the magazine into a mean-spirited political publication.

### **Conservatism's Secular Culture Wars Magazine**

*TAS* emerged out of the post-World War II conservative movement. Its founders and early staff were all student conservatives in the 1960s who read *National Review* and had roots in the Indiana state chapter of Young Americans for Freedom, the national conservative youth organization. While its editors shared the general values of *National Review* conservatives, the defining feature of their conservatism was an opposition to student radicals on the Indiana University campus. After a radical leftist group won student government elections in 1967, Tyrrell and Stephen Davis, both IU students, created the magazine to publish anti-radical alternatives and also conservative ideas.<sup>9</sup>

They opposed the radical left, but learned from it the importance of showmanship and style. The magazine sponsored annual debates on the IU campus, and in an effort to generate more publicity and to mock the New Left, decided to sabotage a debate in 1968. While a pro-New Left scholar from Columbia University (invited by the magazine) spoke, a student athlete in the audience stood up and threw a pie in the speaker's face. The event caused an uproar, especially after the press discovered that the supposed Columbia professor was actually just an IU student affiliated with the magazine, who had

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<sup>9</sup> Tyrrell, Fundraising Insert, *The Alternative* (September 1967): 2; Mary Ann Wynkoop, *Dissent in the Heartland: The Sixties at Indiana University* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 27; Stephen Davis, "Memories and Tributes," *TAS* (December 2007/January 2008): 27; and Greg Dawson, "Emmett Tyrrell Had No Alternative, So..." *Sunday Herald-Times* (IN), December 5, 1971, 45.

been playfully stringing together New Left jargon and clichés. The next issue of the magazine crowed that it had never before received such extensive publicity.<sup>10</sup>

Between 1967 and 1970 the magazine grew steadily as a distinctive voice for anti-radical students at IU. It attacked, often by name, the local radical student activists, using satire, mockery, and personal attacks, while also publishing a wide range of anti-radicals' opinions on various political and cultural issues. Its principal editor, Tyrrell, sought out other anti-radicals and won the attention and support of established conservatives such as Bill Buckley, Frank Meyer, and William Rusher. Conservative writers associated with the magazine then, both young college students and older, more established contributors, held a wide range of views. For example, editors welcomed opponents and supporters of the Vietnam War and the New Deal. But opposition to 1960s radicalism and its aftermath remained *TAS*'s primary concentration and the common bond of its contributors. "We publish libertarian, conservative, neoconservative, even liberals," explained the magazine, "radicals need not apply."<sup>11</sup> A diverse anti-radical youth culture dominated the magazine during its first phase, then, the period between 1967 and 1970, until generous

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<sup>10</sup> *Indiana Daily Student*, "Right and Left Get Together for Alternative Week Talks," November 11, 1968; *Indiana Daily Student*, "Jordan River Forum," November 11, 1968. Bill Buckley wrote that "by far the most interesting of these is the flock of zany students and graduate students who cluster about R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., and publish one of the most amusing and outrageous and interesting student journals in America." William F. Buckley, Jr., "College Humor on the Right," *LA Times*, February 28, 1971, F7.

<sup>11</sup> Tyrrell, "On Ten Years of Public Service," *TAS* (November 1977): 4, 44. According to *National Review*, "The magazine is catching on now, and has been saluted not only by conservatives but in such publications as *Time* and *The New Republic*. As the list of contributing eminences suggests, the *Spectator*'s constituency ranges from libertarians to Tories to social democrats...The common denominator of the *Spectator*'s contributors is an attachment to constitutional democracy and a cool and critical hostility to the prevalent political crazes." M.J. Sobran, "Talking Back," *National Review* (December 23, 1977): 1506-1507; Richard Starr, "Killer Rabbits and the Continuing Crisis," in *Why I Turned Right?*, ed. Mary Eberstadt (New York: Threshold Editions, 2007), 55-56.

funding by conservative philanthropists such as Richard Scaife and Ruth Lilly, helped transform the magazine into a national monthly in the early 1970s.<sup>12 13</sup>

In the 1970s, the magazine embraced new allies and aggressively excluded other groups. It intentionally and actively worked to identify and negotiate the intellectual space between the disaffected liberalism of the neoconservatives and the anti-1960s radicalism of the conservative intellectual movement. The process was difficult, contested, time-consuming, and intellectually challenging, and the editors at *TAS* were integral to it all. Tyrrell courted prominent neoconservatives such as Irving Kristol and Norman Podhoretz, trying to show that *TAS* shared their deep opposition to the campus radicals and to the New Class. He even developed relationships with their children, inviting a young Bill Kristol and John Podhoretz to write for the magazine.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, though, it assailed feminists and homosexuals with mean-spirited articles. These attacks came from secular redoubts, and they established *TAS* as a leading anti-feminist and anti-gay culture wars magazine.<sup>15</sup>

By the late 1970s, *TAS* had become known as a bridge publication between the conservative movement and the neoconservatives. Ronald Reagan's campaign staff reached out to Tyrrell in 1979 and again in 1980 to broker meetings with influential

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<sup>12</sup> See Shepard, "Spectator's Sport," *AJR* (May 1995): 32-39; Byron York, "The Life and Death of *The American Spectator*," *Atlantic Magazine* (November 2001): 91-110; and David Hoever, *Watch on the Right: Conservative Intellectuals in the Reagan Era* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 207-232. See also Anthony Harrigan, "Sensing the News: Conservative Alternative," *Clovis News-Journal*, March 29, 1972, 14; see also Dawson, "Emmett Tyrrell Had No Alternative, So..." *Sunday Herald-Times* (IN), December 5, 1971, 45; and Buckler, "Conservative Journal is Thriving at IU," *The Louisville Courier-Journal*, April 16, 1971, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Anthony Harrigan, "Sensing the News: Conservative Alternative," *Clovis News-Journal*, March 29, 1972, 14; see also Dawson, "Emmett Tyrrell Had No Alternative, So..." *Sunday Herald-Times* (IN), December 5, 1971, 45; and Buckler, "Conservative Journal is Thriving at IU," *The Louisville Courier-Journal*, April 16, 1971, 5.

<sup>14</sup> *TAS*, "Why Are There Neoconservatives?: A Symposium" (November 1979): 10-19.

<sup>15</sup> James Wolcott, "Young Whippersnappers: Their Clubhouse is *The American Spectator*, and Their Mascot is H. L. Mencken," *Esquire* (September, 1980): 14, 17.



neoconservatives in an effort to recruit their support for the California politician's upcoming national campaign. Although the magazine had been publishing neoconservative writers since the late-1960s, its 1979 forum, "Who are the Neoconservatives?" introduced the group in a formal way and sparked substantial controversy within the larger conservative movement.<sup>16</sup>

The 1980s were frustrating years for *TAS*. Ronald Reagan's election as president marked a high point for the conservative movement, and *TAS* celebrated the victory. But its editors and contributors quickly found themselves bogged down in the complications of political power. They pushed hard to see the Reagan White House implement the conservative policy ideas developed in the journal, but they grew disappointed as the Reagan administration proved too cautious for the likes of most conservative writers.<sup>17</sup>

There was nothing new about intellectuals wrestling with the challenges of applying policy theories to practice in a politically charged environment; liberals were all too familiar with such dilemmas. Indeed, an important source of conservative energy since the 1930s, whether intellectual, political, or activist, came from its ability to criticize liberals in office, without being responsible for implementing alternative policies. But once conservatives had one of their own in office, their intellectual movement struggled to overcome a proliferation of fissures. The Reagan victory in 1980, then, did not usher in a triumphal period for the conservative intellectual movement. On

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<sup>16</sup> Tyrrell, *The Conservative Crack-Up* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 99; The historiography of conservatism in the 1970s has grown substantially in recent years. For some excellent studies, see Laura Kalman, *Right Star Rising: A New Politics, 1974–1980* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2010); Julian E. Zelizer and Bruce J. Schulman, eds., *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); and Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (New York: Scribner, 2008); See also Tyrrell, "Thirty and Still Counting," *TAS* (December 1997): 16.

<sup>17</sup> Janice Castro and Elizabeth Rudolph, "All the President's Magazines," *Time* (December 15, 1980): 78-79; Aram Bakshian, Jr., "Having a Ball: The Reagan Presidency," *TAS* (September 1981): 15-18; and Tyrrell, "The Coming Conservative Crack-Up" *TAS* (September 1987): 17-18.

the contrary, it stimulated internal conflict and pessimism—even disaffection—among writers on the right.<sup>18</sup>

The journal and its editors did benefit, though, from some aspects of Reagan’s administration in the 1980s. Its supporters and contributors wove a web of connections between the journal and the rapidly expanding institutional structures of conservatism, particularly scores of newly formed conservative magazines on college campuses, such as the *Dartmouth Review* and the *Vassar Spectator*. Many young conservative writers looked to *TAS* editors for advice because they recognized that *TAS* was the only student magazine from the 1960s to successfully transition into a national magazine. Without liberals in power to lampoon, the magazine lost its critical edge during this period. Its move from Bloomington, Indiana to Arlington, Virginia in 1985 further negatively affected the magazine’s critical verve, outlook and intellectual vitality.<sup>19</sup> Ultimately, the end of Reagan’s administration left the magazine complaining about opportunities lost and frustrated that more had not been done to advance conservative ideas.<sup>20</sup>

George H.W. Bush, Reagan’s successor in the White House, provoked ambivalence in some writers and apathy among others. If Reagan proved disappointing at the time because of his caution in implementing conservative policy ideas, Bush’s Eisenhower-like centrism bedeviled conservatives at the journal. Internecine conservative conflicts and debates raged in *TAS*’s pages. In short, despite a dozen years of White House control by Republicans and an astonishing victory in the Cold War, the health and

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<sup>18</sup> See Chappell, “The Triumph of Conservatives in a Liberal Age,” in *A Companion to Post-1945 America*, ed. Jean-Christophe Agnew and Roy Rosenzweig (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 303-27; McGirr, “Now That Historians Know So Much about the Right,” 765-770.

<sup>19</sup> Tyrrell, “Thirty and Still Counting,” 16.

<sup>20</sup> Tyrrell, “Conservatives, Take Heart,” *TAS* (October 1987): 14-15; David Kupferschmid, “Alternative Papers Turn Conservative,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 27, 1984, A6, 18; Dinesh D’Souza, “A Conservative Paper Chase,” *TAS* (October 1982): 26-28.

optimism of conservatism diminished throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. The absence of anticommunism and the Cold War appeared in the early 1990s to be breaking up the conservative movement.

Ultimately, though, the magazine served a vital role of helping to maintain a sense of cohesion in the movement in the 1990s precisely because of its long standing, fierce opposition to 1960s radicalism and its aftermath. Angry about cultural losses to the 1960s student left, *TAS*'s anti-radicalism became increasingly strident and myopic after the 1980s as former 1960s student radicals assumed positions of political, educational, and cultural influence. Unity was, nevertheless, difficult during the turbulent period of the 1980s and early 1990s, until *TAS* turned to investigative reporting and began targeting prominent individuals on the left. The journal's searing stories on Anita Hill and later the Clintons helped reenergize conservatism in the 1990s; it also created the "politics of personal destruction," nearly brought down a president, and in the process made it the conservative periodical with the largest circulation.<sup>21</sup>

Its first major investigative piece was an incendiary story about Anita Hill, a woman who accused Clarence Thomas of sexual harassment during Thomas' Supreme Court nomination hearings.<sup>22</sup> Subsequent investigative pieces concentrated on the Clinton family, particularly President Bill Clinton's sexual history as governor of Arkansas. These stories proved tremendously popular with the public, quickly swelled the journal's subscription numbers, and raised its profile. By the mid-1990s it was the

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<sup>21</sup> Clinton first used the phrase "politics of personal destruction" on February 18, 1992, see William Safire, "The Politics of Which Phrases Coined By or Associated with Clinton Will Define His Era?" *New York Times*, June 17, 2001, 18. On *TAS*'s rapid growth, see *The Economist*, "The Press: Healthy Opposition" (December 4, 1993): 32. Similar journals noted *TAS*'s astonishing growth; see Eric Bryant, "The American Spectator," *Library Journal* (September 1, 1993): 230.

<sup>22</sup> Brock, "The Real Anita Hill," *TAS* (March 1992): 18-30. The issue's cover included a drawing of Hill that many considered racist. See Brock, *Blinded by the Right: The Conscience of an Ex-Conservative* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2002), 106.

most popular conservative publication, receiving extensive promotion by the likes of Rush Limbaugh, an influential conservative radio personality.<sup>23</sup>

The journal's attacks on the Clintons were part of its decades-long fight against the New Left of the 1960s. The Clintons' student activism in the 1960s, as well as other factors, made them the perfect foil for the magazine of the 1960s student right. "For a magazine founded by conservative students of the 1960's generation," explained Tyrrell, "the 1990's presidency of this student whiz kid has proved to be one of history's ironies....it was apparent to us, their amused peers, that they were what was called, in the decade of student protest, Coat and Tie Radicals."<sup>24</sup>

The Clinton investigative reporting set in motion a series of events that would ultimately ruin the magazine. These stories were controversial and brought heavy interest and criticism regarding the journalistic standards and integrity of the magazine, though not from all quarters. After *TAS*'s "Troopergate," article, which printed scandalous details about the president's past and dominated national news, "60 Minutes" journalist Mike Wallace asked Tyrrell to supply scoops to the television news program; Tyrrell demurred. In the late 1990s, Justice Department investigations into the funding sources of the "Arkansas Project"—the name Tyrrell gave to the journal's Clinton investigations—along with editorial mismanagement and infighting over finances, eventually forced its demise in 2001. The magazine claimed that the key substance of the Clinton stories was

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<sup>23</sup> David Brock, "Living With the Clintons," *TAS* (January 1994): 18-30. This chapter also touches on the intersection of conservative media and intellectuals; the history of conservative media is a burgeoning field of historical study; see Heather Hendershot, *What's Fair on the Air? Cold War Right-Wing Broadcasting and the Public Interest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); Nicole Hemmer, "Messengers of the Right: Media and the Modern Conservative Movement" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2010); and James McPherson, *The Conservative Resurgence and the Press: The Media's Role in the Rise of the Right*. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2008).

<sup>24</sup> Tyrrell, "Thirty and Still Counting," 16; and Mike Capuzzo, "The Brash Conservatives: Investigative Reporters David Brock and Daniel Wattenberg Are Hot. So Are the Subjects They Cover," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 26, 1994, G1.

accurate and that the Justice Department investigations were political retribution by the Clintons. The magazine spent itself into debt in legal defense fees in the late-1990s and was bought out by George Gilder, who entirely revamped it as a technology economy magazine.<sup>25</sup>

The ideologically-motivated investigative reporting—laced with direct attacks on the personal character of the individuals involved—represented the apotheosis of the journal’s long history of opposition to former 1960s student radicals and personal attacks on its opponents. In the 1960s and 1970s such attacks had an entertaining, sprightly, even occasionally playful quality, but by the 1990s they had become nasty, mean-spirited, and brazenly partisan.

Between 1967 and 2001, then, *TAS* made significant contributions to the conservative movement, and it waged journalistic war on 1960s student radicals, from the campus of Indiana University to the White House. It published nearly every significant conservative intellectual—as well as thousands of lesser-known conservative writers. Its pages offered a forum for writers to interpret major events and issues from conservative perspectives, indeed to decide exactly what constituted conservative views on politics and culture in late-twentieth century America.

### **Historiography**

This dissertation on *TAS* addresses several important questions in the extensive historiography of American conservatism. A central question that continues to inform all studies of modern American conservatism is, as Leo Ribuffo famously asked, “Why is there so much conservatism in the United States?” My history of a 1960s conservative

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<sup>25</sup> See Brock, *Blinded by the Right*, 363; Brock, “The Travelgate Cover-Up,” *TAS* (June 1994): 30-37, 71; and Robert Stacy McCain, “Wolfe Praises *Spectator* Reporting,” *Washington Times*, November 7, 2007, A4.

youth magazine suggests a generational analysis of this question. No scholar has specifically studied the careers of these members of the 1960s youth generation and their impact on the movement.<sup>26</sup>

The field of conservative intellectual history continues to be shaped by George Nash's classic work, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America*, which argued that an identifiable conservative movement developed after 1945 when traditionalists and libertarians, two otherwise disparate groups, began to unify with a third group, anticommunists, around shared opposition to communism during the Cold War. I began this study by asking: if anticommunism was the glue holding together otherwise disparate groups of the postwar conservative movement, then what, if anything, unified conservatism after the Cold War ended?<sup>27</sup>

This work, then, seeks to complement the historiography of American conservatism. It builds on the work of intellectual historians such as Patrick Allitt, David Hoeweler, Jr., and Nash by seeking to understand the internal tensions and unifying ideas of the postwar American conservative intellectual movement. But it uses a generational perspective to do so.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Leo Ribuffo, "Why Is There So Much Conservatism in the United States and Why Do So Few Historians Know Anything About It?" *American Historical Review* (April 1994): 438-449.

<sup>27</sup> Fusionism, an idea developed by Frank Meyer in the 1950s, attempted to reconcile the ostensibly conflicting positions of libertarianism and traditionalism; See also Julian E. Zelizer, "Rethinking the History of American Conservatism," *Reviews in American History* (June 2010): 367-92; and Darren Dochuk, "Revival on the Right: Making Sense of the Conservative Moment in Post World-War II American History," *History Compass* (September 2006): 975-99.

<sup>28</sup> Patrick Allitt, *Catholic Intellectuals and Conservative Politics in America: 1950-1985* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); Hoeweler, *Watch on the Right*, 207-232; George Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1996). Whereas Nash stopped short of offering a definitional framework, scholars more recently, such as Patrick Allitt and Jerry Muller, have endeavored to chart the tradition and enduring themes of conservative thought in America. This study finds Allitt's definition of conservatism and his framework persuasive and helpful. He defines conservatism as "an attitude to social and political change that looks for support to the ideas, beliefs, and habits of the past and puts more faith in the lessons of history than in the abstractions of political philosophy." The conservative intellectual tradition, he contends, features the following recurring

The field of conservative history is particularly well suited to a generational analysis, despite the paucity of such studies thus far. I agree with Allitt, Nash, and Schneider that conservatism in America is best understood as transitional in application—or protean, to use Schneider’s term—while adhering to several core principles. Nash captured this sense by describing conservatism as a “resistance to certain forces perceived to be leftist, revolutionary, and profoundly subversive of what conservatives at the time deemed worth cherishing, defending, and perhaps worth dying for.” Such a supple definition allowed Nash—and this study—to accept the self-definitions of his subjects, accepting as conservatives “various people... either because they called themselves conservatives or because others (who did call themselves conservatives) regarded them as part of their conservative intellectual movement.”<sup>29</sup>

By implication, then, this approach affirms the importance of specific periods and locations to understanding conservative definitions. American conservatism has no concrete definition, but rather it manifests itself in unique ways in each generation or period of history. This generational history of a magazine—founded and published by conservatives who came of age in the 1960s—helps explain the particular blend of conservative values of the late-twentieth century. Furthermore, this analytical approach

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values: anti-utopianism, skepticism about human perfectibility, anti-egalitarianism, skepticism toward democracy, a protective stance toward Western civilization, a fear of social disorder, and a defense of privilege and social hierarchy. Along with Greg Schneider, Allitt stresses the reactive and adaptive nature of conservatism, a characteristic this dissertation emphasizes, as well. Allitt, *The Conservatives*, 1-5.

<sup>29</sup> Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement*, xiv-xv; see especially Burns, “In Retrospect: George Nash’s *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945*,” *Reviews in American History* (September 2004): 447–62. As Burns argues, Nash offers a subtle but important contribution to the methodology of this study in that it affirms a basic respect for internal consistency of the postwar conservative intellectual movement.

suggests that the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s had a heavily generational component.<sup>30</sup>

Generational studies by European historians such as Paul Fussell, Robert Wohl, James Wilkinson, and Tony Judt have demonstrated that the field of intellectual history is particularly well suited for generational study, especially when the generational study centers less on a rigidly defined set of birth date parameters and more on a common set of experiences. Wilkinson's and Judt's excellent studies of intellectuals during and immediately after World War II are strong models for this study. They concentrate on the complex interplay of social and political realities and the creation of ideas. Just as intellectuals' experiences in World War II helped form their ideas, their ideas in turn helped shape the social and political conditions of the post-war world. The sixties played the same role for conservatives at *TAS*. Their ideas were indelibly shaped by battles with their 1960s cohort on the left, which they considered culturally and politically dangerous and radical, and the American social and political context in turn was shaped by the ideas of these maturing conservatives.<sup>31</sup>

I also hope to contribute new insights to several existing interpretations on the rise of the right. My study supports historians who stress the pre-1960s origins of conservatism. As chapter one argues, *TAS* emerged in 1967 from an established, decades-old, conservative movement context, one rich with institutions, journals, leaders, and traditions of activism. As Nash has argued, an identifiable and increasingly complex

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<sup>30</sup> On the student generation of the 1960s, see Rebecca Klatch, *A Generation Divided: The New Left, the New Right, and the 1960s* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999).

<sup>31</sup> See Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975; 2000); Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979); James Wilkinson, *The Intellectual Resistance in Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981); and Tony Judt, *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals, 1944-1956* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1994).



conservative intellectual movement developed in the post-World War II period. A study of *TAS* shows the influence of this movement on young conservatives growing up in the 1950s and 1960s. Tyrrell and many of his colleagues at *TAS* developed their conservatism within this movement culture, revering established conservative writers such as William F. Buckley, Jr., and Frank Meyer. My study, particularly of the founding of the magazine, charts in new ways the connections between these two generations of conservative movement intellectuals.<sup>32</sup>

Relatedly, I also hope to contribute to a growing body of historical work that emphasizes the conservative nature of the 1960s and the 1960s youth generation in America. No longer do scholars view the sixties as solely a liberal decade. Studies by John Andrews and Gregory Schneider stress primarily young conservative political and social activists; my study complements these works by examining one very active group of young conservative intellectuals in the 1960s.<sup>33</sup> Also, by charting their life's work at

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<sup>32</sup> For more on this interpretation, see David L. Chappell, "The Triumph of Conservatives in a Liberal Age," 303-27. For different interpretations, see Allan J. Lichtman, *White Protestant Nation: The Rise of the American Conservative Movement* (New York: Grove Press, 2008); Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary D. Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1991); Dan T. Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995); Dan T. Carter, *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich: Race in the Conservative Counterrevolution, 1963-1994* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 1996); Joseph E. Lowndes, *From the New Deal to the New Right: Race and the Southern Origins of Modern Conservatism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008); Kari Frederickson, *The Dixiecrat Revolt and the End of the Solid South, 1932-1968* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Thomas Frank, *What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America* (New York: Holt, 2004); Ronald P. Formisano, *Boston against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); J. Hardisty, *Mobilizing Resentment: Conservative Resurgence from the John Birch Society to the Promise Keepers* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999); A. J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Perennial, 1985); and June Melby Benowitz, *Days of Discontent: American Women and Right-Wing Politics* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002).

<sup>33</sup> For an excellent new study of the conservative 1960s, see Laura Gifford and Daniel Williams, eds., *The Right Side of the Sixties: Reexamining Conservatism's Decade of Transformation* (New York: Palgrave, 2012); John A. Andrews III, *The Other Side of the Sixties: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of Conservative Politics* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1997); Mary Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties: The Conservative Capture of the GOP* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); and Gregory Schneider, *Cadres for Conservatism: Young Americans for Freedom*

the magazine throughout the twentieth century, I offer the first extended look at the ways they carried the 1960s intragenerational battles with them throughout their long careers.<sup>34</sup>

It also complements newly developing areas of the historiography. As Kim Phillips-Fein has recently pointed out, much work remains to be done understanding the right's formulation and articulation of its opposition to the feminist and gay rights movements. No other mainstream conservative magazine articulated more strident anti-feminism and anti-homosexual opinions than did *TAS*. As the mainstream magazine at the forefront of the right's culture wars, *TAS* often found itself engaged in heated intraconservative debates and fending off fierce criticism from outside the movement. Therefore, chapter two's look at the gay rights debate on the right and chapter four's examination of the Anita Hill controversy—both sparked specifically by the magazine and deeply rooted in young conservatives' experiences in the 1960s—make substantive and new contributions to the literature.<sup>35</sup>

It introduces an extensive roster of conservative intellectuals, many well-known and influential in their day, but not previously studied by historians. It highlights prominent figures at the journal, including R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., the founder and editor-in-chief of the magazine, and Wladyslaw Pleszczynski, the long-time managing editor, to

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*and the Rise of the Contemporary Right* (New York: New York University Press, 1999). See also Jason Lantzer's "The Other Side of Campus: Indiana University's Student Right and the Rise of National Conservatism," *Indiana Magazine of History* 101 (June 2005): 153-178.

<sup>34</sup> Donald T. Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Jonathan M. Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Andrew, *The Other Side of the Sixties*, 238; Laura Jane Gifford, *The Center Cannot Hold: The 1960 Presidential Election and the Rise of Modern Conservatism* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009); Rick Perlstein, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001); Niels Bjerre-Poulsen, *Right Face: Organizing the American Conservative Movement, 1945–1965* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2002).

<sup>35</sup> Jennifer Burns, "In Retrospect: George Nash's The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945," *Reviews in American History* (September 2004): 447–462, esp. 447, 459, 460; See also Phillips-Fein, "Conservatism," 723-743, and the respondents in the 2011 *JAH* forum on conservatism.

name just a few. Other contributors it discusses include major conservative intellectuals such as George Will, Fred Barnes, and William Kristol, a surprising collection of writers such as Tom Wolfe, Malcolm Gladwell, and Ben Stein, and diverse European contributors including Malcolm Muggeridge, Tom Bethell, and Taki Theodoracopulos. Additionally, it offers a useful catalogue of numerous lesser-known conservative writers from the American Midwest. It also introduces writers from the post-1960s generation such as David Brock and Daniel Wattenberg, who came of age in the 1970s and often wrote for conservative college magazines in the early 1980s. These young writers shared with *TAS* editors an intense opposition to 1960s radicalism, which they typically developed in reaction to values and ideas expressed by former 1960s student radicals serving as college professors and administrations in the 1980s.

Like recent intellectual histories by Jennifer Burns and Steven Teles, I attempt to embed the magazine's history within a dense institutional, social, and cultural milieu of the larger conservative movement. *TAS*'s interconnectedness to the proliferating number of conservative think tanks, philanthropic institutions, journals, educational institutions, activist groups, and as chapter five illustrates, even conservative mass media outlets such as the *Rush Limbaugh Show*, offers new insights into the symbiotic network of conservative countercultural efforts of the late-twentieth century.<sup>36</sup> A burgeoning area of conservative studies highlights the role of philanthropists and businesses in supporting the movement. My study of *TAS*'s relationship to conservative benefactors offers new information in this regard, as well.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Phillips-Fein, "Conservatism: A State of the Field," *JAH* (December 2011): 723-743; and Terry Eastland, "Rush Limbaugh: Conservatism's Media Superweapon," *TAS* (September 1992): 22-27.

<sup>37</sup> Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2009); Nicole Hoplin and Ron Robinson, *Funding*

This biography of *TAS* also offers insights into the historiographic subfield of the American culture wars of the late-twentieth century. As Greg Schneider has suggested in passing, the magazine “represented the first shot fired in what would come to be called the ‘culture war’ between the Left and Right, because the main attention of the publication became the condemnation of the New Left and its activities.” The generational analysis of my study suggests a close connection between the culture wars and conservative baby boomers, anticipating a diminishing potency as this generation ages.<sup>38</sup>

In contrast to the impressive work in recent years on the complex religious roots of conservatism’s rise, particularly evangelicalism, I stress a secular conservatism. Certainly the magazine touched on religious themes, but its dominant leitmotif was a secular-based opposition to 1960s student leftists. The fact that the most combative magazine of the right’s culture wars fought from secular bases highlights in new ways the complex relationship between the religious right and the mainstream conservative movement.<sup>39</sup>

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*Fathers: The Unsung Heroes of the Conservative Movement* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2008); Jean Stefancic and Richard Delgado, *No Mercy: How Conservative Think Tanks and Foundations Changed America’s Social Agenda* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998); Jason Stahl, “Selling Conservatism: Think Tanks, Conservative Ideology, and the Undermining of Liberalism, 1945–Present,” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2008); Lee Edwards, *Educating for Liberty: The First Half-Century of the Intercollegiate Studies Institute* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2003); Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); Andrew Rich, *Think Tanks: Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Lee Edwards, *Freedom’s College: The History of Grove City College* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2000); and Lee Edwards, *The Power of Ideas: The Heritage Foundation at Twenty-Five Years* (Ottawa, IL: Jameson Books, 1997).

<sup>38</sup> Schneider, *Cadres for Conservatism*, 115-116.

<sup>39</sup> For example, see Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2011); Susan Friend Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Michelle Nickerson, “Women, Domesticity, and Postwar Conservatism,” *OAH Magazine of History* (January 2003): 17–21; Kurt Schuparra, *Triumph of the Right: The Rise of the California Conservative Movement, 1945–1966* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1998); Bethany Moreton, “Why Is There So Much Sex in Christian Conservatism and Why Do So Few Historians Care

I also engage with historians' efforts to pinpoint a geographic origin for conservatism's rise. Much excellent work has examined the southern roots of conservatism, particularly its suburbs, and recent histories looked to the American West, particularly the Sunbelt region. By contrast, this study foregrounds the Midwest, with several implications. Little has been written on the conservatism of this vast region, but *TAS*'s biography indicates both a vibrant conservative movement in Indiana and a strong reaction to the student radicalism of the late-1960s.<sup>40</sup>

My emphasis on viewing conservatism through the generational lens of *TAS* also contributes to the literature on neoconservatism. Many historians have noted the convergence of neoconservatism with the larger conservative movement in the late-1970s and 1980s, forming a key element of the Reagan coalition. But, I offer the first detailed look at the integral role played in that process by the conservative baby boomers at *TAS*.<sup>41</sup>

*TAS* is uniquely situated to provide new insights into the evolving periodization of the American Right. Much of the literature written in the Cold War-era concentrated on the rise of a conservative movement after 1945; many historians followed this line of thought because it accorded with the long-held assumptions of the liberal-consensus school, while many conservative writers held the same framework because it fit their

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Anything about It?" *Journal of Southern History* (August 2009): 717-38; and Leo P. Ribuffo, "God and Contemporary Politics," *JAH* (March 1993): 1515–1533.

<sup>40</sup> Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); and Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

<sup>41</sup> For example, see Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine That Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010); Gary Dorrien, *The Neoconservative Mind: Politics, Culture, and the War of Ideology* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993); John Ehrman, *Rise of Neoconservatives: Intellectuals and Foreign Affairs* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1995); Murray Friedman, *The Neoconservative Revolution: Jewish Intellectuals and the Shaping of Public Policy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Mark Gerson, *The Neoconservative Vision: From the Cold War to the Culture Wars* (Lanham, MD: Madison, 1996); and Peter Steinfels, *The Neoconservatives: The Men Who Are Changing America's Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979).

Whiggish interpretation of conservatism's rise. Historians have begun to challenge this periodization, though, reaching back chronologically beyond 1945 and finding deep conservative roots—what Allitt calls a “strong, complex, and continuing American conservative tradition.” Contributors to *TAS* were keenly aware of the deep traditions of thought in which they wrote, and I endeavor to identify and chart these connections.<sup>42</sup>

I cross traditional period boundaries by following the magazine's history beyond Ronald Reagan's 1980 electoral victory. As the 2011 *Journal of American History* roundtable on the field of conservatism argues, much work remains to be done on conservative thought after 1980. The magazine's history suggests continued and even accelerated internal conflict in the 1980s and particularly during the Bush administration, which suggests tenuous conservative movement unity, despite Republican control of the White House. The 1980s and 1990s were decades in which conservative baby boomers at *TAS* reached maturity and enjoyed positions of significant political, cultural, and intellectual influence. Especially in light of their principal role in the Clinton scandals of the 1990s, this study suggests intragenerational conflict blended with Republican politics and trumped conservative ideology.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> On “Whiggish interpretation,” see Gregory Schneider, ed., *Conservatism In America Since 1930* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 2; for quote see Allitt, *The Conservatives*, 2. For studies that challenge the standard periodization, see Allitt, *The Conservatives*, especially 1-5; Adam Tate, *Conservatism and Southern Intellectuals, 1789-1861: Liberty, Tradition, and the Good Society* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2005), and Kim E. Nielsen, *Un-American Womanhood: Antiradicalism, Antifeminism, and the First Red Scare* (Columbus, OH: University of Ohio Press, 2001). For older studies that anticipated this new direction of historical inquiry, see Leo Ribuffo, *The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right from the Depression to the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), James T. Patterson, *Congressional Conservatism and the New Deal: The Growth of the Conservative Coalition in Congress, 1933–1939* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1967), and George R. Wolfskill, *Revolt of the Conservatives: A History of the Liberty League, 1934–1940* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1962).

<sup>43</sup> Leo P. Ribuffo, “The Discovery and Rediscovery of American Conservatism Broadly Conceived,” *OAH Magazine of History* (January 2003): 5; Alan Brinkley, “The Problem of American Conservatism,” *AHR* (April 1994): 409–429; Leo P. Ribuffo, “Why Is There So Much Conservatism,” 438-449; See also Julian E. Zelizer, “Rethinking the History of American Conservatism,” *Reviews in American History* (June

Historians of the Right have only recently begun to examine the period after 1980. Many histories of postwar conservatism end in 1980, in part because it contributes to a tidy narrative of conservatism's victory or liberalism's defeat. Lisa McGirr made a similar point recently when she wrote that "another pioneering group of historians have begun the analysis of the conservative movement since 1980, and their preliminary conclusions have focused our attention on the conservative movement's somewhat marginal accomplishments [and] its fragmentation." This dissertation contributes to the developing literature on conservatism after 1980. Instead of triumphalism, it finds conflict and escalating internal tension, a process described in chapters three through five.<sup>44</sup>

The history of conservative journals remains largely unwritten, with the exception of *National Review*, the movement's flagship journal. The "bible of the right," has been the subject of numerous studies, particularly in the past decade. Even individual writers

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2010): 367-92; and Darren Dochuk, "Revival on the Right: Making Sense of the Conservative Moment in Post World-War II American History," *History Compass* (September 2006): 975-99.

<sup>44</sup> McGirr, "Now That Historians Know So Much," 765-770; the literature on post-1980 conservatism tends to concentrate, understandably, on Reagan and political dimensions; see Troy, *Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Meg Jacobs and Julian E. Zelizer, *Conservatives in Power: The Reagan Years, 1981-1989* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010); David T. Courtwright, *No Right Turn: Conservative Politics in a Liberal America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Godfrey Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up: A History of the Conservative Ascendancy in America* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996); W. C. Berman, *America's Right Turn: From Nixon to Bush* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); and David L. Chappell, "The Triumph of Conservatives in a Liberal Age," in *A Companion to Post-1945 America*, eds. Jean-Christophe Agnew and Roy Rosenzweig (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 303-27; John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *The Right Nation: Conservative Power in America* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004); Donald T. Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy: How the GOP Right Made Political History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007) looks at the political history of the right after 1980; Lichtman, *White Protestant Nation*; Donald T. Critchlow and Nancy K. MacLean, *Debating the American Conservative Movement: 1945 to the Present* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009); Gregory L. Schneider, *The Conservative Century: From Reaction to Revolution* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009); Patrick Allitt, *The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009) provides an intellectual history of the post-1980 period; for a general survey of a more narrowly defined version of conservative thought, see Corey Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

and editors at *National Review* have also received lavish attention from historians. Beyond *National Review*, though, the scholarship on journals and magazines on the right remains underdeveloped. The lavish attention on *National Review* is certainly well deserved. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century it was the single most important conservative opinion journal, and the importance of its founder and editor, Bill Buckley, to postwar conservatism cannot be overstated. But, *National Review* was not the only important organ of conservative thought, and its most important contributions occurred during its first three decades, during Buckley's tenure as editor, as the recent histories on *National Review* indicate. Other influential conservative periodicals included *TAS*, *Human Events*, a conservative political newspaper, *The Freeman*, a libertarian monthly, *Modern Age*, a traditionalist quarterly, *Commentary*, the primary neoconservative journal, and *Weekly Standard*, a journal founded in the mid-1990s by former *TAS* writers.<sup>45</sup>

Writing discrete histories of these journals is an important new field of conservative historiography. Two recent works illustrate this approach. Mark Popowski's

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<sup>45</sup> David Frisk's recent book, *If Not Us, Who?: William Rusher, National Review, and the Conservative Movement* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2011) examined the magazine's central role in the post-World War II period, and Jeffrey Hart's *The Making of the American Conservative Mind: National Review and Its Times* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2006) argues for *National Review*'s importance to the larger conservative intellectual movement. Many of the best conservative memoirs center on *National Review*, as well. Priscilla Buckley's *Living It Up with National Review* (Dallas: Spence Publishing Company, 2005) and Richard Brookhiser's *Right Time, Right Place: Coming of Age with William F. Buckley, Jr. and the Conservative Movement* (New York: Basic Books, 2009) offer personal anecdotes and insights into the leading role played by *National Review*. Linda Bridges and John Coyne's recent engaging study, *Strictly Right* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2007) acts as part history and part memoir as it describes the role that William Buckley and *NR* played for the right. Most studies of *NR*'s founder and editor, William Buckley, center on the magazine, as Lee Edwards' biography illustrates. John Judis, whose early biography of Buckley remains the best, foregrounds the conservative journal, too. James Burnham, an integral figure at *NR*, was studied by Daniel Kelly in a brief biography for Intercollegiate Studies Institute's press. ISI's press also published a biography of Frank Meyer, titled *Principles and Heresies* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2002) after Meyer's monthly article in *NR*. Richard Reinsch's intellectual biography of Whittaker Chambers and Sam Tanenhaus's general biography both emphasize the connections between Chambers and *National Review*'s William F. Buckley. On the career of conservative journalist James Kilpatrick, see William P. Hustwit, *James J. Kirkpatrick: Salesman for Segregation* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).



dissertation at Oklahoma State—now published as a monograph—explores the history of *Triumph*, a radical Catholic conservative magazine in the 1960s and 1970s. Although some work had been done on *Triumph*, the journal itself had not received a full treatment. Popowski’s contribution was to identify and to argue in a sustained way that the journal was more aggressively radical within a conservative Catholic framework. Secondly, Popowski argued forcefully for the importance of the magazine, despite its small circulation numbers.<sup>46</sup>

Benjamin Balint’s *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine that Transformed the Jewish Left Into the Neoconservative Right*, published in 2010, examines the magazine’s history and its relationship to American conservatism. Reviewers such as Anthony Grafton and Walter Laqueur praised Balint for his analysis of the articles printed in *Commentary* throughout the magazine’s history and for the ways he connects this one neoconservative magazine to larger developments in American thought and politics. The historian John Ehrman, writing in *The Journal of American History*, also praised the use of *Commentary* as a window on larger changes in Jewish and conservative thought, calling Balint’s book “a model of how to write the history of an intellectual journal.” The Popowski dissertation at Oklahoma State and Balint’s *Running Commentary* offer useful methodological models for this dissertation.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> See Mark Popowski, “Roman Catholic Crusading in Ten Years of Triumph, 1966-1976: A History of a Lay-Directed, Radical Catholic Journal,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 2008); Popowski, *The Rise and Fall of Triumph* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012). For examples of histories of liberal publications, see David Seideman’s *The New Republic: A Voice of Modern Liberalism* (New York: Praeger, 1986); and Ben Yagoda, *About Town: The New Yorker and the World It Made* (New York: Scribner, 2000).

<sup>47</sup> Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine that Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010); and Peter Richardson, *A Bomb in Every Issue: How the Short, Unruly Life of Ramparts Magazine Changed America* (New York: The New Press, 2009).

This dissertation, then, addresses a historiographic lacuna by providing the first history of *TAS* and its relationship to the conservative intellectual movement. In doing so, it fills a gap in the literature, but it also engages in other ways the most recent developments in conservative historiography.<sup>48</sup> It demonstrates, for example, the different paths conservative thinkers walked as the Cold War ended. Jennifer Burns has suggested that there may be far more variety within conservative thought than historians have thus recognized. Additional studies such as this one, which provides a detailed look at a major conservative periodical, can help historians better understand the variety and scope of thought on the Right.<sup>49</sup>

### **Periodization and Methodology**

This study spans the period between 1967 and 2001. It begins in 1967 with the founding of *TAS* in Bloomington, Indiana by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., a graduate student at Indiana University. The year 1967 marks a fitting year to begin a study of the conservative intellectual movement for other reasons, as well. The mid- to late-1960s witnessed dramatic changes in the social, political, and intellectual landscape of America, particularly in American liberalism. Scholars such as Sean Wilentz and Donald Critchlow date the fracturing of American liberalism and the Democratic Party into multiple interest groups to these years. Influenced by the civil rights movement, the initial transition to a

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<sup>48</sup> This dissertation constitutes the first book length study of *TAS*. Journalists have written only a few articles on *TAS*'s history. The most important and helpful to this study is Byron York's insider account of the magazine's history and its downfall. See York, "The Life and Death," 91-110. Another important insider account of *TAS* is David Brock's *Blinded by the Right*. David Hoeverler has written two short but helpful encyclopedia entries, see "*The American Spectator*," in *The Conservative Press in Twentieth-Century America*, eds., Ronald Lora and William Longton (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1999) and "*American Spectator*," in *American Conservatism: An Encyclopedia*, eds., Bruce Frohnen, Jeremy Beer, and Jeffrey Nelson (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006), 33-35, and a chapter about Tyrrell in his book, *Watch on the Right*, 207-232. For a look at *TAS* during its apogee in the mid-1990s, see Shepard, "Spectator's Sport," *AJR* (May 1995): 32-39.

<sup>49</sup> Burns, "In Retrospect," 447-462.

post-industrial economy, and fueled in large part by an intensified opposition to the Vietnam War, some elements of liberalism did shift to the left. Conservatism, particularly its intellectuals, reacted to these shifts, and experienced several changes itself. Tyrrell founded the magazine as a direct response to what he perceived to be the excesses of leftist students on the IU campus in 1967.

The dissertation ends in 2001 for several reasons. Despite achieving record sales and notoriety in the 1990s, *TAS* ceased operating as a primarily conservative magazine in 2001. An entrepreneur and conservative writer, George Gilder, purchased the magazine and converted it into a technology-centered magazine. A combination of factors contributed to this rapid decline, including editorial and financial mismanagement, as well as government inquiries into the magazine's financial role in its investigations into Bill Clinton's past in Arkansas.

The year 2001 serves as an appropriate end point for this intellectual history of conservative writers at *TAS* in other ways, as well. The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 dramatically altered the intellectual, cultural and political landscape of America, including the conservative intellectual movement. This traumatic event reshaped the priorities of conservative writers and politicians, ushering in a twenty-first century conservatism intensely preoccupied with a new set of interests.

The methodology of this dissertation involves a close reading and analysis of the writings of conservative intellectuals in *TAS*. Also central are published primary sources that documented the magazine's public activities and private business, such as the *Indiana Daily Student* newspaper from the 1960s, official Congressional investigation records from the 1990s, and newspapers, memoirs, and journals.

Archival materials from several collections complement the public record. *Wall Street Journal* editor William Bartley and the philosopher Sidney Hook were mentors and friends of *TAS* editors, as well as contributors to the magazine. Their paper collections at the Hoover Institution were particularly helpful. Other collections that provided useful materials included the William Rusher papers at the Library of Congress and the Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, and Bill Clinton papers at their respective presidential libraries. Despite the magazine's secular conservatism, its editors' relationship with the Christian journalist Malcolm Muggeridge made the Muggeridge papers at Wheaton College especially helpful. The special collections department at Indiana University provided a large cache of material on the magazine's early years.<sup>50</sup>

I accept that the diverse ideas expressed in *TAS*—however seemingly contradictory to historians today—enjoyed a legitimate, if often debated, degree of coherence to their conservative authors. These writers saw themselves as making substantive contributions to a conservative journal, even when criticizing conservatism itself. While I strive to maintain a neutral tone—neither agreeing nor disagreeing with their values—I take their ideas seriously and accept that conservative writers viewed their own ideas as serious and as legitimately held positions.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> For a complete list of the manuscript collections consulted, see the bibliography. Other primary sources consulted included books and articles published by writers with especially strong connections to *TAS*. In fact, a signal contribution of this dissertation is its work in identifying and highlighting the writings of myriad lesser-known conservative intellectuals in the late-twentieth century, some of whom wrote books and essays that have not yet been studied by historians. This study identifies and incorporates some of these sources with strong links to the magazine into its larger history of the conservative intellectual movement. Additionally, it uses contemporary writings from other conservative publications, such as *National Review*, *Human Events*, *Modern Age*, and the *Weekly Standard*, as well as the neoconservative journals *Commentary* and *Public Interest*. Other periodicals utilized include *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, etc.

<sup>51</sup> Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement*, xiv.

Chapter one, “An Alternative to Student Radicals: Campus Conservatism and the Founding of *The American Spectator*, 1967-1973,” explores the years between the creation of *TAS* in 1967 and its transition to a national magazine in the early 1970s. The principal issues examined in chapter two, “Ecumenical Conservatism and the Secular Culture Wars: *The American Spectator* in the 1970s,” revolve around the magazine’s role in introducing the neoconservatives to the larger movement and its attacks on feminists and homosexuals.

The election of President Reagan sparked optimism and celebration for conservative writers, but this proved short-lived, a process explained in chapter three, “The Coming Conservative Crack-Up?: *The American Spectator* during the Reagan Years, 1980-1988.” The period between 1988 and 1992 was a transitional period for *TAS* and the conservative intellectual movement. Chapter four, “Right Wing Muckraking and the Culture Wars: *The American Spectator*’s Turn to Investigative Journalism, 1988-1992,” explores this period, arguing that *TAS*’s shift toward investigative reporting and its symbiotic relationship with rising conservative radio talk show host, Rush Limbaugh, helped reenergize conservatism.

The final chapter explores the most controversial and least studied periods in the history of the conservative intellectual movement and the magazine. Chapter five, “‘The Bible of the Clinton-Haters’: Troopergate, the ‘Arkansas Project’ and *The American Spectator*’s Crack-Up, 1993-2001” traces the journal’s foray into investigative reporting on Bill and Hillary Clinton, and its eventual collapse in 2001. A short epilogue, “The Regnery Revival: *The American Spectator* Since 2003” provides a brief history of the magazine’s revival in 2003 under the management of Al Regnery, the conservative

publisher, and offers some conclusions about the dissertation. All chapters emphasize the magazine's unique contributions to the conservative movement, particularly its role as the right's secular magazine of the culture wars.

**Chapter 1:**  
**An Alternative to Student Radicals: Campus Conservatism and the Founding of *The American Spectator*, 1967-1973**

The summer of 1967 was a chaotic and unusually active one for young Americans. Hundreds of thousands waged war in the wet, hot jungles of Southeast Asia. Back home, thousands of others traveled to the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco, experimented with hallucinogenic drugs, and embraced the hippie counterculture's "Summer of Love." In Ann Arbor, Michigan, hundreds of activists gathered for the Students for a Democratic Society annual convention, where they voted to take a more extreme, confrontational stance in the coming year in their efforts to fight injustices at home and abroad.<sup>1</sup>

That same summer, two conservative students at Indiana University, working in an old trailer parked across from the football stadium, created an antiradical magazine to challenge the New Left on their campus. R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., and Stephen Davis called their new publication *The Alternative* because they intended to offer alternatives to the ideas and practices of I.U.'s radical leftist students.<sup>2</sup> They used it to mock and savage with mean-spirited attacks their opponents, while borrowing their tactics when useful. As the IU campus roiled with protests and violence in the late-1960s, the magazine analyzed

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<sup>1</sup> Jack Smith, "SDS Sets Out on Radical Path," *National Guardian* (July 15, 1967): 1, 4. Helpful histories of the magazine during this period include Byron York, "Life and Death of *The American Spectator*," *The Atlantic* (November 2001): 91-110; David Brock's *Blinded by the Right: The Conscience of an Ex-Conservative* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2002); David Hoeweler's "*The American Spectator*," in *The Conservative Press in Twentieth-Century America*, eds., Ronald Lora and William Longton (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1999) and "*American Spectator*," in *American Conservatism: An Encyclopedia*, eds., Bruce Frohnen, Jeremy Beer, and Jeffrey Nelson (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006), 33-35, and a chapter about R. Emmett Tyrrell in his book, *Watch on the Right*, 207-232; and Alicia Shepard, "*Spectator's* Sport," *AJR* (May 1995): 32-39.

<sup>2</sup> "I started *The American Spectator* in Indiana at Indiana University in '67 because I didn't like the looks of student radicalism," Tyrrell later recalled. "I thought student radicalism was going to destroy the universities, and it certainly did set them back. I thought it was going to be a real burden to the best of liberal values, which it was. I didn't think it was a good thing, and I think I was right... [TAS] was founded as a college magazine, and it became the national anti-radical magazine." R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., Interview with Brian Lamb, "Booknotes," *C-SPAN*, May 19, 1992.

events and sought to energize young conservatives in an intra-generational cultural war against student radicalism, not international communism.<sup>3</sup>

Despite operating on a shoe-string budget, the magazine managed to survive and prosper because its editors made shrewd moves. They intentionally cultivated relationships with older conservative writers and others opposed to student radicalism, such as liberal writers associated with *The Public Interest* magazine; these adults appreciated the magazine's access to the youth generation. Supporters, young and old, admired the magazine's irreverent and combative style, which self-consciously mimicked H.L. Mencken's "amused skepticism." Extensive networking and a distinctive product brought publicity and institutional and financial support. Lavish funding, particularly by right-wing philanthropist Richard Mellon Scaife helped *The Alternative* become the most important antiradical youth magazine by the early 1970s.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Conservative Intellectual Movement and 1960s Campus Conservatism**

*The Alternative* emerged from a growing conservative movement in America in the postwar period. In the wake of the Great Depression and Second World War, an unlikely coalition found itself working toward similar goals. Libertarians, such as Friedrich Hayek and Albert Jay Nock, were committed to limited government and concerned about its growth in the 1930s and 1940s. In the postwar period, they discovered common ground with traditionalists, such as Richard Weaver and Russell Kirk, a group worried about the nation's moral condition and seeking to preserve key

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<sup>3</sup> Greg Dawson, "Emmett Tyrrell Had No Alternative, So..." *Sunday Herald-Times* (IN), December 5, 1971, 45; William McGurn, "I Remember Bloomington," *TAS* (December 1987): 98.

<sup>4</sup> Most of the work on conservative youth in the 1960s examines political and social history; for some excellent recent examples, see Laura Gifford and Daniel Williams, eds., *The Right Side of the Sixties: Reexamining Conservatism's Decade of Transformation* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012). By contrast, this chapter provides one of the few studies on young conservative intellectuals in the 1960s.



institutions and traditions. Opposition to communism, foreign and domestic, helped these groups overcome tremendous differences to form an uneasy intellectual and political partnership. Aided by former communists such as Whittaker Chambers, Frank Meyer, and James Burnham, William F. Buckley, Jr., created a conservative coalition magazine, *National Review*, in 1955.<sup>5</sup>

Buckley and *National Review* played the pivotal role in uniting conservatives in the 1950s and 1960s. They smoothed over differences, clarified shared interests, attacked common enemies, denounced extreme fringe members, and supported conservative politicians such as Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan. They wanted to fight communism abroad with a muscular military and at home by reducing the federal government to its 1920s levels. Meyer's "fusionism" provided a helpful intellectual synthesis by arguing that a limited government could only endure with a virtuous citizenry. Conservative businessmen supported the movement by funding its principal institutions.<sup>6</sup>

In the 1960s, this conservative movement supported a growing number of conservative students on college campuses. At Buckley's home in Connecticut, Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), was formed in 1960, for this purpose. Though not the only conservative campus group, it quickly became the largest and most important, in

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<sup>5</sup> On postwar conservatism, see Patrick Allitt, *The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), especially 158-223; Godfrey Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996); and George Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> For an excellent study of the key postwar businessmen who funded the right, see Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009); also useful are sympathetic studies of conservative philanthropists and institutions such as Lee Edwards, *Educating for Liberty: The First Half-Century of the Intercollegiate Studies Institute* (Chicago: Regnery, 2003), and especially Nicole Hoplin and Ron Robinson, *Funding Fathers: The Unsung Heroes of the Conservative Movement* (Chicago: Regnery, 2008).

part because it was well organized and had the backing of Buckley's *National Review*.<sup>7</sup> Local chapters formed on campuses across the U.S., and conservative students drew national headlines for their activism in the early 1960s.<sup>8</sup> Writing in 1961, one major newspaper described a "conservative student revolt" in which on "almost all leading colleges and universities there is a conservative club, affiliated with the Intercollegiate Society of Individualists, or a local chapter of Young Americans for Freedom, or both."<sup>9</sup>

This "upsurge of conservatism," particularly on Midwest campuses, was fueled by anticommunism initially but gradually shifted its attention to opposing student radicals as the decade wore on. Students in the early 1960s "revolt[ed] not only against socialist welfare statism in government, but also against indoctrination by leftist professors."<sup>10</sup> Anticommunism remained the principal glue for the larger conservative movement and on campuses, particularly as the young rightists supported the Vietnam War.<sup>11</sup> But as the activism of radical students on the left increased, aided by a widely shared youthful opposition to the draft, conservative students in the mid-1960s grew concerned about their peers in the New Left. In 1968, "YAF turned away from anticommunist activity to

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<sup>7</sup> On the history of YAF during its early years, see John A. Andrews III, *The Other Side of the Sixties: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of Conservative Politics* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1997); for YAF's history in the 1960s and 1970s, see Gregory Schneider, *Cadres for Conservatism: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of the Contemporary Right* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); for a social and political history beyond YAF, see Steven Koerner, "The Conservative Youth Movement: A Study in Right-Wing Political Culture and Activism, 1950-1980," (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> For contemporary journalistic accounts of campus conservatives, see Edward Cain, *They'd Rather Be Right: Youth and Conservatism* (New York: MacMillan, 1963), and Lawrence Schiff, "The Obedient Rebels: A Study of College Conversions to Conservatism," *Journal of Social Issues* (October 1964): 74-95. For a sympathetic view, see M. Stanton Evans, *Revolt on the Campus* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1961), Evans, "New Left, New Right," in *The Future of Conservatism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968), 103-116; For a critical view, see Michael Harrington, "Pro-Vest and Anti-Guitar: The Sad Truth about Campus Conservatism," *Nugget* (October 1962): 18, 21, 37; and Harrington, "The American Campus: 1962," *Dissent* (Spring 1962): 164-168.

<sup>9</sup> Chesly Manly, "Shift to Conservatism Found on Campuses," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 21, 1961, 1.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> On conservatives and the Vietnam War, see Seth Offenbach, "Defending Freedom in Vietnam: A Conservative Dilemma," in Gifford and Williams, eds., *The Right Side of the Sixties*, 201-220.

deal with the new danger they saw emanating from the campus,” writes historian Greg Schneider.<sup>12</sup>

The shift at the national level described by Schneider developed in the local case of IU. The Bloomington campus was a hotbed of anticommunist crusading as early as the 1950s and then YAF-led activism in the 1960s. “At Indiana University in the 1950s...politically active students had founded conservative campus organizations—some political, some intellectual—that still existed when I became politically active a decade later,” recalled Tyrrell. “Without [that] foundation, it is doubtful that our later antiradical movement or our magazine would have been established.” It was only when New Left groups started dramatic protests and a campus magazine and then won student elections that conservative students began to view student radicals as the most immediate threat.<sup>13</sup>

Beyond just YAF, the conservative movement encouraged students to take action on their own, particularly in starting campus magazines and newspapers. A surprising number of advice booklets and training seminars taught students how to combat communism and fellow travelers, and later, student radicals. Lee and Anne Edwards’ *You Can Make the Difference*, for example, offered students a “political action handbook” and included chapters such as “How to Win Headlines and Influence Reporters” and on how to start a campus publication. The authors insisted that “more young conservatives should

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<sup>12</sup> Schneider, *Cadres of Conservatism*, 108-109.

<sup>13</sup> Tyrrell, *Conservative Crack-Up* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 64; Michael Pakenham, “Offers G.O.P. Dose of Youth For Ills,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 30, 1965, B24.

and must be encouraged to enter the communications media and begin to tip the philosophical scales the other way.”<sup>14</sup>

As a result, young writers like Tyrrell and *The Alternative*'s crowd became politically active within a supportive conservative culture that encouraged magazine startups. “New conservative reviews of exceptional literary merit, written mostly by students, are flowering on major campuses,” reported the *Chicago Tribune* in 1961, noting a practice that would continue for decades because it was part of the movement's culture.<sup>15</sup> These magazines were principally anticommunist, and the quality varied. YAF's *New Guard* mirrored *National Review* and set the standard for quality. Conservative students at San Diego State's magazine, *Evolve*, indulged in conspiracy theories, while students at the University of California at Berkeley published *Tocsin*, an anti-communist magazine that resembled a right-wing gossip rag. Other student magazines stressed a religious-based conservatism. The *Student Statesman*, for example, funded by a Los Angeles-based, politically conservative evangelist, published student articles attacking what it considered threats to western civilization.<sup>16</sup>

The conservative movement and its institutions, then, particularly YAF, laid a foundation from which *The Alternative* emerged. Tyrrell served as executive director of IU's YAF chapter and most of the early contributors also came from the chapter. Connections through YAF helped pave the way for the magazine's editors to find

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<sup>14</sup> Lee and Anne Edwards, *You Can Make the Difference* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1968), 49-74; nearly every major and most minor conservatives had some connection with YAF in the 1960s, including the Edwards.

<sup>15</sup> Manly, “Shift to Conservatism Found on Campuses.” On the quotes about the conservative youth movement culture, see Bernard Weinraub, “Unrest Spurs Growth of Conservative Student Groups,” *New York Times*, October 12, 1969, 70.

<sup>16</sup> See Edward Cain, *They'd Rather Be Right: Youth and Conservatism* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1963), 158-163; on the Mississippi-based student-run Southern magazine, *The Campus Conservative*, and other publications, see Evans, *Revolt on the Campus*, 164-189.

informal advisors such as M. Stanton Evans, *Indianapolis News* editor and author of the Sharon Statement, YAF's founding document, and it was to YAF members that Tyrrell turned at financially critical early junctures.<sup>17</sup>

### **“The Berkeley of the Midwest”<sup>18</sup>**

Indiana University changed dramatically in the 1960s. Early in the decade, students dressed formally for class, and fraternities, athletics, social events, and nonpolitical, parochial topics dominated campus life. Politically active groups—conservative, liberal, and radical—existed, but operated largely at the periphery. The situation changed during the mid-1960s, as an increasing number of radical students demanded greater control over academics and extracurricular activities. Like their counterparts on campuses around the country, they wanted to expand individual independence for their fellow students. Initially the campus chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) targeted goals with wide student support, such as ending dress codes and curfew hours for female students.<sup>19</sup>

Over the next few years, leftist student groups broadened their goals. They protested the Vietnam War in increasingly dramatic fashion and conducted “Free University Series” discussions on leftist topics. The local chapter of a national communist organization, the W.E.B. Du Bois Club, incited controversy as it promoted socialism on

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<sup>17</sup> Donna Gill, “Unrest Shown at Indiana U. Is Typical of U.S. Campuses,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 5, 1968, 1, 4; Greg Dawson, “Emmett Tyrrell Had No Alternative, So...” *Sunday Herald-Times* (IN), December 5, 1971, 45; John Von Kannon, quoted in *Where Have All the Flower Children Gone?*, ed., Sandra Gurvis (Oxford, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2006), 102-103; On Evans and the Sharon Statement, see Jonathan Schoenwald, *Time for Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 243.

<sup>18</sup> Donna Gill, “Unrest Shown at Indiana U. Is Typical of U.S. Campuses,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 5, 1968, 1, 4.

<sup>19</sup> Mary Ann Wynkoop, *Dissent in the Heartland: The Sixties at Indiana University* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 24-25. Wynkoop, who was a student at IU during the 1960s, wrote a thorough and sympathetic history of the student left on campus. Little has been written on the student right activists on campus, outside of Jason Lantzer's “The Other Side of Campus: Indiana University's Student Right and the Rise of National Conservatism,” *Indiana Magazine of History* (June 2005): 153-178.

campus and publicly defied the administration. Dramatic protest marches became the norm during the 1966-1967 school year, as New Left students worked to inject political awareness into campus life. They founded two important publications, *The Inside Agitator* and the *Spectator*; both published New Left ideas and activities. Such radical student papers were increasingly common on campuses nationwide.<sup>20</sup>

From their perspective, they were well-intentioned activists working to correct injustices on the IU campus and beyond. Racism on the IU campus was widespread; black students were excluded from many organizations or systematically denied equal treatment. An active Ku Klux Klan outside Bloomington in the 1960s remained a violent threat. The Vietnam War was proving a disaster for young Americans, who faced the very real prospect of forced conscription to fight for a questionable cause in a faraway land; to evade conscription meant breaking the law and often leaving loved ones for exile in Canada. Many SDS members on IU's campus also blamed poverty, income disparities, and discrimination against minorities on American capitalism and the political system. As the historian of the IU student left, Mary Ann Wynkoop, explains, "students who believed in racial justice and peace worked together in various organizations [and] embraced change, experimented with new ways of looking at old problems, and welcomed the idea that even though this was a great country, it could be even better."<sup>21</sup> They felt stymied in their reform efforts by what they considered the conservative IU administration, faculty, and students. The leftist professors who actively supported them

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<sup>20</sup> "Student Senate," *Arbutus*, Indiana University Yearbook, 1967, 146-157; *The Inside Agitator*, "THE ALTERNATIVE: A Study in Hot Air," May 18, 1968; Greg Dawson, "Emmett Tyrrell Had No Alternative, So..." *Sunday Herald-Times* (IN), December 5, 1971, 45; Robert Reinhold, "Campus Editors Now Expressing Bold Views," *New York Times*, December 3, 1969, 37.

<sup>21</sup> Wynkoop, *Dissent in the Heartland*, xi; see also Fritz Ringer, *Trouble in Academe: A Memoir* (New York: toExcel, 1999), 18-29.

were too few, according to SDS groups. In 1967 the IU president, Elvis Stahr, compared the New Left groups on his campus to the Hitler Youth in 1930s Germany, suggesting both threatened academic freedom.<sup>22</sup>

The campus witnessed a significant increase in activism by New Left groups during the 1966-1967 academic year.<sup>23</sup> The SDS chapter was led by a graduate student named Guy Loftman (b. 1945), who came from an upper-middle class family. While at IU, he was heavily influenced by the 1962 Port Huron Statement, the founding document of the SDS, and during the mid-1960s he moved steadily to the extreme left. He formed a new SDS-backed political party, the Progressive Reform Party (PRP), and challenged the long dominant fraternity-based parties. Capitalizing on low voter turnout and disaffection with the Vietnam War, PRP won control of the student senate and Loftman became the first SDS member to win election as student body president at a major university. Using the summer term, when most students were away from campus, PRP pushed for rapid changes in student government, hoping to raise students' awareness of national and international social and political issues—or as the PRP stated, to “re-integrate the academic community with the ‘outside world.’”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Stahr, “Assaulting the Ramparts of Academic Freedom,” in Thomas D. Clark, ed., *Indiana University: Historical Documents Since 1816* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1977), 747. Wynkoop, *Dissent in the Heartland*, 45.

<sup>23</sup> Conservative groups fought back, often in support of the Vietnam War and anticommunism. They sponsored a “Bleed-in” to encourage blood donations for the troops and “Operation Cheer-up” to send cookies to soldiers. *Arbutus*, 1966, 10-11, 218-219, 40-4; The FBI investigated the Du Bois Club, and the IU administration formally shut down the local chapter in the summer of 1966, though its members continued to work on campus in different groups. See Wynkoop, *Dissent in the Heartland*, 32-33, 157; Lantzer, “The Other Side of Campus,” 153-178.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Wynkoop, *Dissent in the Heartland*, 27. Loftman was a passionate advocate of reform who aimed to “create an Indiana University in which each student will have maximum opportunity to develop himself intellectually and personally as he sees fit [in] an environment in which all in the University community can work together in mutual harmony and respect.” See Loftman, “President Loftman’s Reply,” Box 1, Subjects, 1967-1968, General 1968, Eggshell Press Records, 1966-1968, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

His PRP victory came just as New Left groups across the nation were embracing radical goals and tactics. They shared a sense of disillusionment, anger with the Vietnam War, and rejection of postwar American institutions, and a belief that nonviolent, measured protests were ineffective. As a result, New Left students became more radicalized. “In a short time” in 1966 and 1967, two former SDS members later wrote, “the very language of rational persuasion and nonviolence came to be regarded with suspicion by many in SDS, as it did throughout the New Left.”<sup>25</sup> At its annual convention in Ann Arbor, Michigan, the SDS organization formally voted to engage in more aggressive, confrontational tactics to end the Vietnam War and to bring about what they called a “participatory democracy.”<sup>26</sup> Radical leftist student groups varied in their goals and tactics at IU, but in 1967 many increasingly saw public confrontation as the best means to achieve the dramatic reforms.<sup>27</sup> By the spring of 1968, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that IU’s new nickname was the “Berkeley of the Midwest.”<sup>28</sup>

### **Campus Conservatives Respond**

Robert “Bob” Tyrrell (b. 1941) witnessed these changes first hand as an undergraduate and graduate student between 1961 and 1969. A champion high school swimmer from Oak Park, Illinois, just west of Chicago, Tyrrell came from an Irish Catholic family active in the Republican Party and with libertarian leanings.<sup>29</sup> His main

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<sup>25</sup> Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *American Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press), 172.

<sup>26</sup> Smith, “SDS Sets Out on Radical Path,” July 15, 1967.

<sup>27</sup> Wynkoop, 44-45; *Arbutus*, 1966, 12-13; “Campus Politics,” *Arbutus*, 1967, 100-101; “Student Senate,” *Arbutus*, 1967, 108-109; Walter Trohan, “New Left,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 9, 1967, H20; “Indiana U. Suspends 8 Students in Ruckus,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 4, 1966, A7.

<sup>28</sup> The clothing styles changed dramatically during the period. Compare photographs in the IU student yearbook, *Arbutus*, between 1963 and 1967, for example; Donna Gill, “Unrest Shown at Indiana U. Is Typical of U.S. Campuses,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 5, 1968, 1, 4.

<sup>29</sup> Tyrrell, interview with Brian Lamb, “Booknotes,” *C-SPAN*, May 19, 1992; John Corry, “Family Resemblances,” *TAS* (April 2007): 67-68; “God and Man in Bloomington,” *Time* (March 7, 1977): 94.



concentration at IU in the early 1960s was swimming, not campus politics. The IU swim team, led by legendary coach James “Doc” Counsilman, was nationally elite; Tyrrell regularly trained next to Olympic athletes and, as he later emphasized, absorbed a winning culture. Counsilman, a New Deal Democrat, promoted a liberal arts education, regularly exposing his athletes to the arts and challenging them to think deeply. “I came to cultural politics after a youth spent not in scholarly study or in student activities but in a swimming pool, where my teammates and I would go through three- to six-mile workouts daily,” Tyrrell explained, and “during workouts Mozart or Puccini might lilt over the public address system of the Indiana University indoor pool.”<sup>30</sup>

Tyrrell began graduate work in history in 1965, just as conflict on the Bloomington campus began to escalate. He quickly assumed leadership positions in YAF and among campus conservatives. “My adventures with the conservative movement began once my adventures in the pool were over,” he recalled.

“Sometime in the spring of 1966 I looked up from dusty pages to behold an astonishing sight. On a campus where serious scholarship had theretofore coexisted with the collegiate rituals of beer drinking and flirtation, there appeared an expanding crowd of bug-eyed messiahs heralding a New Age wherein war would be passé and the citizenry would convene daily to monitor the government’s business, maybe even the world’s business...this was the message of what was called in the early 1960s the New Left, a reduction ad insanum of Liberalism, and both Liberalism and conservatism roused its hackles...in a swift passage of months, from the fall of 1966 through 1967, their influence, spread within academe, contaminating scholarship, social life, and university administration.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Tyrrell, *Conservative Crack-Up*, 43-44; Tyrrell, interview with Brian Lamb, “Booknotes,” *C-SPAN*, May 19, 1992.

<sup>31</sup> Tyrrell, *Conservative Crack-Up*, 47-49; According to one interview Tyrrell gave in early 1971, “he was ‘culturally a hippie,’” in the early 1960s until witnessing friends using LSD in Greenwich Village soured him on the counterculture. See Warren Buckler, “Conservative Journal is Thriving at IU,” *The Louisville Courier-Journal*, April 16, 1971, 5, in General Correspondence, Box 92, Folder 3: Tyrrell, R. Emmett, Jr., 1969-1976, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

The increasing activism of student radicals, then, represented by Loftman and PRP electoral victories, galvanized Tyrrell and IU conservatives into action. With the help of the Greek system, they formed a new coalition party of conservatives and moderates called Impact, and prepared to challenge the PRP during the upcoming 1967-1968 academic year. Tyrrell worked to build the party, too, but he channeled his energies into starting a magazine. With *The Inside Agitator* and the *Spectator* offering intellectual support for SDS activities on campus, he saw a need for a corresponding publication for nonradical students.<sup>32</sup> “I started the magazine...with no past history either as a writer or as an ideological crusader,” he explained the following year, “it merely seemed like the best way to present to the Academy an 'alternative.’”<sup>33</sup>

Tyrrell approached a fellow conservative, Stephen Davis, whom he had met a few months before at a YAF rally on campus. Davis was an undergraduate and a devoted partier “more interested in the debauched side of Western civilization...think Animal House.” After the semester, he tried unsuccessfully to join the military, though not for ideological reasons. “Having had an older roommate who had served in Nam, 101st Airborne, war dangers were eclipsed by his tales of R&R in Bangkok,” he recalled.<sup>34</sup> But he failed the physical and returned to campus that summer, sharing rent on a jalopy trailer with Tyrrell. Parked across from the football stadium, Tyrrell outlined his plan to form an

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<sup>32</sup> Robert Kriebel, “Right at IU Finds Voice With Chuckle In It To Counteract the Campus Left,” *Lafayette Journal and Courier*, June 3, 1968, Box 163, Collection C304, Subject Files, 1962-1968, Student Publications, 1966-1968, Indiana University President’s Office Records, 1962-1968, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana; the official campus student paper, the *IDS*, funded by tuition dollars, was scorned by SDS-affiliated groups and YAF-affiliated groups alike. Both sides saw it as insufficiently fair toward their positions.

<sup>33</sup> Russell Kirk, “Conservative Minds At Work,” *National Review* (July 30, 1968): 752; *Tribune*, May 5, 1968, 4; Ronald Burr, interview by Carl Rutan, “*The American Spectator*,” C-SPAN, May 23, 1986; John Von Kannon, remarks at 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary dinner, “Bush Campaign Speech,” C-SPAN, November 4, 1987.

<sup>34</sup> William McGurn, “I Remember Bloomington,” *TAS* (December 1987): 94-99; Greg Dawson, “Emmett Tyrrell Had No Alternative, So...” *Sunday Herald-Times* (IN), December 5, 1971, 45.

anti-New Left magazine designed to appeal to a broad range of students opposed to the leftist student radicals, eschewing religious moralism and racism. They spent the summer writing, editing, and pasting together the new magazine.<sup>35</sup>

They called it *The Alternative* because they intended to counter New Left ideas with their own. The name also resonated with the cultural sensibilities of the era. Like Tyrrell, Davis opposed the New Left and their protests. “We were an army of two arrayed against the militant left on campus, SDS,” recalled Davis years later. But he exaggerated. In fact, the administration, faculty, community, state legislature, and many students shared *The Alternative*’s dislike of IU’s student left.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, the new magazine was the only antiradical publication on campus. Selling the first issue from Ballantine Hall on campus for 15 cents, the magazine found an audience and others willing to contribute. Though students knew that conservatives published the magazine, they appreciated its ecumenical approach to friends and its narrowly directed attacks on enemies.<sup>37</sup>

The first issue of *The Alternative* was published at the start of the fall semester in September, 1967. It announced the magazine’s opposition to Loftman’s student radicals on campus. *The Alternative* intended to “offer more civilized substitutes to the panaceas

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<sup>35</sup> “All the talk that young people would usher in an age of peace and gentleness was nonsense, we felt,” recalled Tyrrell about his motivations for founding the magazine. “In 1967, we said that radical students are not idealistic, but violent, anti-intellectual, anti-aesthetic and totalitarian.” Quoted in Buckler, “Conservative Journal is Thriving at IU,” *The Louisville Courier-Journal*, April 16, 1971, 5.

<sup>36</sup> IU President Stahr wrote to a local businessman: “While to me [TAS] seems exaggerated in many respects and in the overall impression it seeks to create, I would not think of trying to discourage its circulation. As merely an example of why I think it exaggerated, the statement that ‘a pitifully small band of students are fighting [SDS leader Guy] Loftman at I.U.’ is hardly borne out by the recent student election in which Loftman’s campus party was soundly defeated.” Elvis J. Stahr to William H. Ball, April 15, 1968, Box 163, Collection C304, Subject Files, 1962-1968, Student Publications, 1966-1968, Indiana University President’s Office Records, 1962-1968, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

<sup>37</sup> Elvis J. Stahr to William H. Ball, April 15, 1968, Indiana University President’s Office Records; Greg Dawson, “Emmett Tyrrell Had No Alternative, So...” *Sunday Herald-Times* (IN), December 5, 1971, 45.

averred by disturbed adolescents of the new left.” Tyrrell’s first editorial lambasted Loftman and the PRP, calling the group “IU’s pestiferous totalitarians,” and promising to attack the PRP’s agenda and to “offer a serviceable alternative...for every crude solution” Loftman tried to “foist” on the student body.<sup>38</sup> *The Alternative* never concentrated primarily on anti-communism or allegations of a communist plot to appeal to readers.<sup>39</sup> Instead, as Tyrrell explained in a fundraising letter to YAF supporters, the journal “represent[ed] the efforts of responsible Indiana University students” to counter the “doctrines of anarchy and revolution” of the radical IU students.<sup>40</sup>

They quickly attracted some talented allies. John Von Kannon (b. 1950) joined *The Alternative* while studying government at IU. He came from a conservative family and was politically active at a young age. In 1964 at the age of 15, he had organized his Chicago-area precinct for Barry Goldwater. As an undergraduate in Indiana he devoted time to YAF and other conservative causes. The intensity of the New Left on campus bothered him and like so many other young conservatives in the period, he felt isolated. “There weren’t many self-proclaimed conservatives in those days,” he recalled, “there were probably a lot more on campus back then, but they felt that if they spoke out it would hurt their grades...I even de-pledged a fraternity [because of political differences]. That’s where the community of fellow conservatives came in—we shared common values.” Von Kannon was one such conservative willing to speak out. He wrote a column

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<sup>38</sup> Tyrrell, “Search for An Alternative,” *The Alternative* (September 1967): 2, 10. The opposition to the New Left was not just opportunism or cynical—they earnestly believed Guy Loftman, the PRP, the Black Panthers, and other New Left groups threatened the foundation and future of the United States and Western Civilization.

<sup>39</sup> “An Alternative to Execrable,” *The Alternative* (October/November 1967): 2.

<sup>40</sup> Fundraising letter, September 23, 1967, copy in author’s possession; Wynkoop, *Dissent in the Heartland*, 27.

for the official campus paper, *Indiana Daily Student (IDS)*, and Tyrrell made him the business manager and later managing editor for *The Alternative*.<sup>41</sup>

From its earliest issues, it demonstrated a penchant for cruel, ad hominem attacks on its opponents, particularly on Loftman. As the outspoken SDS leader and a confrontational personality, Loftman inspired tremendous hatred and attacks from the magazine, which refused to capitalize his name. *The Alternative* mercilessly skewered him as a “gaping primate,” criticized his personal hygiene and wrote that “he could appear no more primitive had he a bone through his nose.” It proposed a fictitious “Student Committee To Tar and Feather guy r. loftman;” at one point Tyrrell wrote an editorial calling for him to commit suicide.<sup>42</sup>

Student radicals read *The Alternative* and fought back. They challenged the magazine’s interpretation of policy issues on campus and took exception to the extreme rhetoric. Referring to Tyrrell’s editorial calling for Loftman’s suicide, *The Inside Agitator* dismissed the “style and attitude of the [writing as] about as pleasing as a whiff of hydrogen sulfide.” They criticized the lack of substance in the magazine. It was full of attempted right-wing humor, ad hominem attacks, and screeds against the New Left, they argued. *The Inside Agitator* “at least tries to be nice and to discuss our opponents’ positions in a somewhat fair manner,” complained the SDS publication.<sup>43</sup>

This was a fair complaint. *The Alternative*’s editors observed little decorum or decency with student radicals, toward whom they felt a profound personal and cultural

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<sup>41</sup> Von Kannon, quoted in *Where Have All the Flower Children Gone?*, 102-103.

<sup>42</sup> “The Student Committee to Tar and Feather,” *The Alternative* (January-February, 1968): 2; “loftman as a man of honor,” *The Alternative* (April/May 1968): 2; The national press commented on the personal hygiene of the New Left, see Walter Trohan, “New Left,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 9, 1967, H20.

<sup>43</sup> “For all its finely-printed pages, this literary attempt at conservative logic, humor, and sarcasm is nothing more than a vicious rag,” wrote the SDS publication. *The Alternative*’s “prevailing tone is one of vicious pedantry... The style and attitude of the [writing] is about as pleasing as a whiff of hydrogen sulfide.” *The Inside Agitator*, “*The Alternative: A Study in Hot Air*,” May 18, 1968, 5.

dislike. They resented what they viewed as arrogance by Loftman and his party of student radicals. The PRP thought they knew what was best for IU students, argued Tyrrell, and they found ways to push through their policies regardless of student support. This represented a dangerous tendency in the late 1960s, he suggested, in which liberals and their ideological “slums, the new left” were “convinced that [they] knew better than the individual how his life should be directed.”<sup>44</sup> Tyrrell took to calling the New Leftist group Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) the “Students for a Demagogic Society.”<sup>45</sup> He pounced on every violent or aggressive blockade, boycott, march, or rally as further proof that sixties radicalism resembled interwar German fascism and the Stalinist purges of the 1930s.

For the magazine’s editors, the conflict was also intra-generational. They felt little connection to their cohorts on the left. Tyrrell, for example, excoriated what he considered the romantic patina surrounding his generational cohort. “Our generation, that tinglingly aware generation set on ushering in the Age of Aquarius,” he mocked, was not unique or special. “Could it be that we are not the chosen generation,” he asked, “is it possible that in spite of our genius and purity” no positive changes would result? He saw nothing special or unique about his college cohort, except perhaps for its penchant for social disruptions. “In reforming our incredibly complicated society,” he wrote, “we [college students] are all just a little over our heads, [and] teachers who fail to educate us to this stuffy fact are derelict in their calling.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Unsigned review of *America in the Sixties*, by Ronald Berman, *The Alternative* (September/October 1968): 10; “Freedom: The Groove That Became a Rut,” *The Alternative* (December/January 1968): 4.

<sup>45</sup> “Freedom: The Groove That Became a Rut,” *The Alternative*: 12; “Euhemerism: The Chicken, The Egg, and the Eagle,” *The Alternative* (September/October 1968): 6.

<sup>46</sup> Tyrrell, “The Spring of Our Discontent: Its Etiology,” *The Alternative* (September/October 1969): 304.

The editors were jealous, too, at the disproportionate attention paid to the other side, particularly the notion that student radicals represented the entire generation. “We feel ineffably too much time is devoted by the media to drooling over ‘our generation,’” explained Tyrrell, “every idiot with a microphone scurries around asking us what we think about world problems.”<sup>47</sup> Even decades later in the early 1990s, this sense of being overlooked during the 1960s plagued the editors. “Not a lot has been written about the antiradical students of the 1960s, although they, not the radicals, typified their generation,” Tyrrell insisted. And his magazine, in particular, he thought, was overlooked for its role in the late 1960s and early 1970s. “During the campus protests of the Nixon years most of the key antiradicals at one time or another entered into liason with our magazine...either by writing for it or attending one of our periodic conferences.”<sup>48</sup>

The generation’s radical leftist groups, argued the magazine, were harming the university with excessive politicization. Von Kannon, writing in *The Alternative*, bemoaned that an “incessant theme in Our Generation’s simian chorus is ‘make education relevant.’”<sup>49</sup> IU’s campus conservative writers, by contrast, wanted to depoliticize the classroom curriculum. They stressed the importance of classroom education in the core disciplines to the stability of society. “In a society such as ours where the government and the legal system are constructed on a moral base,” wrote the journal in 1968, “the community has the right to expect that its young people will be taught to appreciate this base and to comprehend rationally its significance.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *The Alternative*, “A Splendid American: James Farley,” (May/June 1969): 14.

<sup>48</sup> Tyrrell, *The Conservative Crack-Up*, 56; See also Tyrrell to Rusher, April 26, 1969, General Correspondence, Box 92, Folder 3: Tyrrell, R. Emmett, Jr., 1969-1976, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

<sup>49</sup> Von Kannon, “My Most Favorite Class at Indiana University,” *The Alternative* (November/December 1969): 9.

<sup>50</sup> Tyrrell, “The Alter Native,” *The Alternative* (January/February 1968): 7.

During the magazine's first year of publication, the Bloomington campus churned with controversy. SDS members protested Dow Chemical recruiters on October 30, 1967, the company that made napalm, and blocked other students from interviewing for jobs. Campus officials eventually asked police to clear the protestors, a move which prompted more protests by SDS against the administration in subsequent days. While police cleared the Dow protestors, across campus more student radicals planned a more dramatic protest of Dean Rusk, the Secretary of State. Anti-war demonstrators repeatedly interrupted his speech, heckling him with shouts of "murderer" and "stop the bombing." Rusk tried unsuccessfully to engage the disruptive students, but the auditorium was chaotic, complete with a fist fight in the balcony and a middle-aged woman clubbing a heckler with an umbrella.<sup>51</sup>

In the aftermath of these events, the IU campus debated the role of dissent and protest. A petition circulated campus gathering signatures of a formal apology to Secretary Rusk for "great discourtesies shown by certain members of the University community;" two students later delivered it to Washington. At a specially convened "Freedom to Dissent" debate, radical leftist students insisted that because they considered the war in Vietnam immoral, they would continue to heckle, protest, and engage in civil disobedience. Conservative and moderate students insisted that the right to protest had limits, especially when disruptions inhibited others' rights. At a faculty-led forum on "Responsibilities of Civil Disobedience," the debate continued.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> "I.U. to Put 40 on Probation After Protest," *Chicago Tribune*, November 9, 1967, 3; "Demonstrators and Stahr Meet; Each Awaits Further Action," *IDS*, November 2, 1967, 1; "Anti-War Protestors Heckle Rusk Speech at Indiana U," *Chicago Tribune*, November 1, 1967, 7.

<sup>52</sup> Dottie Marsh, "Petitions Apologize to Rusk," *IDS*, November 2, 1967, 1; Marsh, "'Freedom to Dissent' Debated," *IDS*, November 10, 1967, 8; "Faculty Group Plans 'Vietnam Weekend,'" *IDS*, November 17, 1967, 5.



*The Alternative* weighed in on the controversy. The Rusk and Dow protests confirmed, it argued, its opinion about the danger posed by the New Left. The episodes gave “this campus a better idea of what the New Left is trying to do, and this may be more important than the events by themselves.” The New Left bullied opponents and suppressed free speech, according to the magazine, and IU administrators were correct to discipline the disruptive protestors. “The IU administration acted as it had to and disciplined the students,” wrote Janis Starcs (b. 1943), a Latvian immigrant and IU student, “I doubt that either students or administrators would welcome ‘anarchy on the campus’ as a political issue next year.” Loftman and his SDS members threatened student government and campus stability, he worried. “The miasma from the fever swamps of the New Left” and the “fanaticism of these apocalyptic gurus needs to be contained.”<sup>53</sup>

The editors demonstrated an early skill at astutely switching between idealism and a tactical self-censorship. With so much conflict pulsating throughout campus, particularly over the Vietnam War, *The Alternative* continued to center on the excesses of leftist student radicals, not the war itself. Understanding that its contributors and readers were ambivalent toward the war, the editors continued to oppose the draft, a far more popular position on campus. (Many young conservatives, as well as some older movement leaders such as Buckley and Kirk, were anti-draft because they viewed it as an excessive government infringement of individual liberty.) This was a shrewd decision, because it allowed the magazine to highlight what was increasingly a popular attitude on campus—opposition to attitudes, positions, and tactics of leftist student radicals.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Janis Starcs, “The Possessed,” *The Alternative* (November/December 1967): 2, 10.

<sup>54</sup> The anti-draft pieces proved very popular, and *The Alternative* frequently printed variations on the position. For example, Arnold Steinberg argued in one piece for the superiority of an all-volunteer army over a conscripted one, see Steinberg, “The Case Against the Draft,” *The Alternative* (May 1971): 14;

Although the magazine opposed the draft—a stance popular on the right and left—campus conservatives generally supported the war. Bob Turner led one particularly active pro-war group on campus, Student Committee for Victory in Vietnam (SCVVN). A prominent conservative on campus and a YAF member, Turner also contributed to *The Alternative*. He disagreed with the New Left’s disruptive tactics during the Rusk speech, and like the magazine, he sensed that such extreme tactics alienated moderate students. When he informed his SCVVN members that Howard Zinn would be speaking on campus December 1, 1967, he insisted that they show respect and allow for a civilized dialogue. “I feel that the actions of the left at Dean Rusk’s convocation helped our cause a great deal,” he explained, and “we are offering a rebuttal to Professor Zinn’s speech, but we will do it in a peaceful way.”<sup>55</sup>

The reaction against Loftman’s PRP spread far beyond *The Alternative*. In the spring of 1968, the antiradical coalition party Impact defeated PRP.<sup>56</sup> Tyrrell and the magazine played a role in the victory, and they felt triumphant. “We are, as I see it, one of the first major colleges ever to throw an entrenched SDS administration out of student government,” he wrote to the influential conservative, Russell Kirk. “We have successfully captured the imagination and admiration of moderate students. And now,

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David Friedman (b. 1945), the son of Milton Friedman, went further, arguing for the privatization of the entire national defense system, see Friedman, “The Problem of National Defense in a Free Society,” *The Alternative* (May 1971): 9-11; Alan Rinzler, ed., *Manifesto Addressed to the President of the United States from the Youth of America*, (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 52; *The Alternative*, “The Alternative Interviews An American Gothic: William F. Buckley, Jr.” (May/June 1968): 5-8.

<sup>55</sup> “Victory Group Elects Offers,” *IDS*, November 17, 1967, 5; On conservatives and the Vietnam War, see Offenbach, “Defending Freedom in Vietnam: A Conservative Dilemma,” in Gifford and Williams, eds., *The Right Side of the Sixties*, 201-220.

<sup>56</sup> Donna Gill, “Unrest Shown at Indiana U. Is Typical of U.S. Campuses,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 5, 1968, 1, 4.

through the magazine, my colleagues and I are going to challenge the faculty, administration, and alumni, to afford an 'alternative.'"<sup>57</sup>

Similar coalition parties formed on other campuses in the ensuing years. “A coalition of politically liberal and conservative college students announced today the formation of an organization to fight violence and destruction on Connecticut campuses,” reported the *New York Times*, “the organization would act as a steering committee for counter-revolutionary efforts, providing information, manpower and legal aid to troubled campuses.” In 1968, Columbia University suspended classes when the campus became a battleground between radical students, like future Weatherman Mark Rudd, protesting administration plans to build in a poor neighborhood, and a coalition of antiradical students, including otherwise nonpolitical fraternity boys.<sup>58</sup> *The Alternative* followed the Columbia crisis with regular stories; it expressed outrage at what it considered the violence and intimidation of the New Left and the weak response of the Columbia administration. Frank Meyer’s son, John, fought alongside the antiradical coalition and later wrote for *The Alternative*.<sup>59</sup>

*The Alternative*’s editors understood that in order for the magazine to remain a meeting place for diverse groups opposed to the New Left, it had to avoid partisanship as much as possible. Here, too, the editors recognized the need to subordinate their ideals for readership realities. Although the editors were conservatives, they remained non-partisan during the 1968 election. Outside the magazine’s pages, they supported Ronald

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<sup>57</sup> Russell Kirk, “Conservative Minds At Work,” *National Review* (July 30, 1968): 752.

<sup>58</sup> Joseph Treaster, “A Coalition Seeks Quiet On Campus,” *New York Times*, January 22, 1971, 41.

<sup>59</sup> R.L. Crossland, “Playing it Straight at Columbia U.,” *The Alternative* (November 1970): 16-17; David Carpenter, “A Letter to the Grateful Administration of Columbia University from One of Their Counter-Revolutionaries,” *The Alternative* (November 1970): 16-17; John Meyer, “The Origins of Dissolution,” *The Alternative* (December 1970): 11-12. With his byline, *The Alternative*’s editors added that “he was one of those crazed fascists trying to save the late Columbia University.”

Reagan's abortive bid for the Republican nomination.<sup>60</sup> But, the journal never endorsed a candidate. It clearly opposed George Wallace, the Southern segregationist, Robert Kennedy, the popular heir to the Kennedy legacy, and Vice President Hubert Humphrey. It published no articles on Richard Nixon and mentioned him only peripherally three times prior to the election. On partisan matters, it sought to mimic the detached, critical position of H. L. Mencken in the 1920s, one that valued political apathy, particularly on the part of the average citizen.

Editors also largely avoided the issue of religion, which was a divisive topic for young conservatives in the 1960s. The initial meeting of YAF in September of 1960 had also struggled over the importance of mentioning God in the Sharon Statement, and young conservatives still chafed at the thought of religiously-motivated prohibitions against non-violent, individual behaviors.<sup>61</sup> *The Alternative* trod carefully in this area. Cultural libertarianism was a value widely embraced by 1960s youth, right and left, even by some religious conservatives. "As a matter of fact, I'm a believing Catholic," explained Tyrrell years later. "That comes as somewhat of a shock to people who compare me to Mencken. I try to lead a decent, Christian life, but I don't claim to be able to tell you how to do it."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Tyrrell crossed paths with Robert Kennedy shortly before the presidential candidate's assassination. After a speech criticizing American foreign policy at IU in 1968, Kennedy mistook Tyrrell for his escort and asked to be guided to his car. "I have forgotten what it was that we talked about as I led him through the maze of curtains backstage," Tyrrell recalled, but it struck him that "here was Bobby Kennedy dependent on the good will of a young man whose reactionary politics he had just excoriated." He tossed a Reagan presidential button on Kennedy's lap just as the Democrat's car pulled away; see Tyrrell, *Conservative Crack-Up*, 74-75.

<sup>61</sup> On the Sharon Statement, see Andrews, *The Other Side of the Sixties*, 53-74; for an example of a student conservative publication that took a more religious track, see *Right On!*, "Murder Fund Must Be Stopped," October 19, 1971: 1, on Reel 103, The Right Wing Collection of the University of Iowa Libraries, 1918-1977, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.

<sup>62</sup> Tyrrell, interview with Brian Lamb, *CSPAN*, June 7, 1992.

Like Mencken, in fact, the magazine criticized what it considered parochialism and extremism on the right, what it called “ritualistic rightists.” It mocked conservatives who were unwilling or unable to adapt to the changing times. “The problem with the Ritualistic Rightist is that he wishes [the 1920s] had never ended,” ridiculed Tyrrell, such that “to the editor of *American Opinion*, Coca-Cola and mah-jongg sound like an orgy.”<sup>63</sup> *The Alternative* ran from these aspects of the American right, preferring instead to blend what it considered Mencken’s cynical but worldly-wise outlook with the sophisticated, intellectually rigorous modern conservatism of *National Review*.

The magazine’s fight against student radicals, explains historian Greg Schneider, “represented the first shot fired in what would come to be called the ‘culture war’ between the Left and the Right.” The editors indeed viewed themselves as waging a battle to defend American culture; they offered a secular defense of traditional American culture. As conservatives publishing an antiradical magazine, the editors tended to view religion as a divisive issue.<sup>64</sup>

Early in 1969, the IU Board of Trustees voted to raise tuition costs, a decision that sparked massive protests by students who viewed it as vindictive. They were partly correct—budget cuts at the federal and state level, combined with the anger of Republican state legislatures at the state of campuses, led to the tuition increases. *The Alternative* celebrated the move. It argued that “the Hoosier adult is fed up with the

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<sup>63</sup> *The Alternative*, “In the Shadow of Yesterday’s Foolishness,” (October 1971): 3; the magazine also abhorred the conspiracy theorists at the John Birch society, a secret group who believed communists were running America.

<sup>64</sup> Schneider, *Cadres of Conservatism*, 115-116. Scholars have stressed the religious dimensions of the culture wars and conservatism. For recent works on this interpretative theme, see Darren Dochuk’s award winning *From the Bible Belt to the Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of the Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2012), Daniel Williams, *God’s Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), and especially Allan Lichtman, *White Protestant Nation: The Rise of the American Conservative Movement* (New York: Grove Press, 2008).

babbling of revolutionary clichés” by the leftist radicals, and that the Indiana public shared the magazine’s anger over these New Left protestors. “The taxpayer who fought in Korea or World War II doesn’t cotton to the idea of some students’ efforts to tear the system apart,” wrote Tyrrell.<sup>65</sup>

In 1969, the IU campus did seem to be on the brink of disorder. Arsonists set fire to the graduate library in February and again in May 1969, destroying more than 30,000 books and causing more than one million dollars in damage. The second fire occurred on May Day and coincided with dramatic student protests over tuition increases, and the public blamed student radicals. From the “first whiff of smoke, regardless of who set the fire, state-wide solicitude for impoverished students froze,” noted the journal.

Nevertheless, the protests escalated, particularly after President Nixon announced the extension of the Vietnam War into Cambodia. National guardsmen killed four students at Kent State University in early May, and the nation’s campuses, IU included, erupted in massive protests.<sup>66</sup>

In May 1969, one hundred and fifty members of the local IU chapter of the Black Panthers stormed the administration building, Ballantine Hall, and held prominent administrators hostage over the issue of a pending increase in tuition and continued racial discrimination on campus. The Indiana state governor sent the state police, alerted the National Guard, and the local riot police were mobilized, but the standoff ended peacefully after several hours.<sup>67</sup> Race riots in large cities across the country during the

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<sup>65</sup> “I.U. As Others See It,” *The Alternative* (September/October 1969): 302-303; Saturday Evening Club Axiological Committee, “New Left Thought,” *The Alternative* (September/October 1968): 7.

<sup>66</sup> Tyrrell, “The Spring of Our Discontent: Its Etiology,” *The Alternative* (September/October 1969): 312. Editorials in Indianapolis newspapers, reflecting public sentiment, blamed New Left students.

<sup>67</sup> “Indiana Students Act,” *NYT*, May 9, 1969, 29; “9 Indicted at Indiana U.,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 4, 1969, 15; *NYT* May 10, 1969, 14; Wynkoop, *Dissent in the Heartland*, 85-86. Seven students, named the

long hot summers of the 1960s and violent shootouts between Black Panthers and police in California in the late 1960s pointed to the increasing radicalization of American society, *The Alternative* reasoned.<sup>68</sup> As the IU Black Panthers staged other dramatic protests, *The Alternative*'s writers became convinced that the basic stability of society was now at stake.<sup>69</sup>

The magazine distinguished between the goals and the methods of the Civil Rights movement. It opposed the confrontation of even the early Civil Rights movement, but thought the movement was “honorable when it sought equal rights, protection, and opportunity under the law.”<sup>70</sup> Likewise, it admired the early career of Martin Luther King, Jr., but despised what it considered his radicalized direction after 1965. The issue published after his death in 1968 included an admiring eulogy to the slain leader. The editors remembered King as a man “who in an age of doubt—averred faith, in an age of indolence---averred devotion, in an age of infidelity—averred truth, in an age of violence—averred peace, and who has not died in vain.”<sup>71</sup>

Editors frequently condemned white racists, whom they considered right-wing radicals, despite an active KKK presence in the surrounding Indiana counties.<sup>72</sup> Tyrrell

“Bloomington Seven,” were eventually indicted for the incident, and their trials that summer became a *cause celebre* for radical students, white and black, in Bloomington.

<sup>68</sup> “Freedom: The Groove That Became a Rut,” *The Alternative* (December/January 1968): 12. Anti-radicalism dominated *The Alternative*'s pages and even framed its interpretation of the civil rights issues. They wrote little about the Civil Rights movement. They frequently argued that the Civil Rights movement had accomplished all reasonable legal results with the passage of Civil Rights legislation in 1964 and 1965. Since then, they contended, the movement had become radicalized and overtaken by violent groups such as the Black Panthers.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*; Janis Starc, “Black Power and the New Left,” *The Alternative* (October/November 1967): 5, 10.

<sup>70</sup> Steve “Jefferson” Davis, “Ethnic Power,” *The Alternative* (October/November 1967): 8.

<sup>71</sup> Editors, “In Memoriam to Martin Luther King, Jr.,” *The Alternative* (April-May 1968): 12; by contrast, the University of Georgia’s short lived *Right On!* was an openly racist conservative student publication, see *Right On!*, Fundraising Letter, May 1971, on Reel 103, The Right Wing Collection of the University of Iowa Libraries, 1918-1977, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.

<sup>72</sup> *The Alternative*, “Governor Whitcomb,” (February/March 1969): 6.

condemned the race hatred stirred up by demagogues like George Wallace, whom he ridiculed as a “defrocked Klansman” and “drooling George.” They were aware that the press spotlighted the violent racism of their generational peers in the South. In ruthlessly mocking Wallace as an ignorant, racist populist, they distanced themselves from the racist groups in Indiana and Southerners.<sup>73</sup>

As campus protests escalated during the 1969-1970 school year, *The Alternative*'s editors borrowed New Left tactics. In October, SDS members staged violent and disruptive protests. Clark Kerr, a former University of California administrator, delivered a lecture at IU on problems facing modern universities. SDS members heckled, booed, and hissed during his speech, and distracted audience members with pantomime. Tensions escalated, and then the lights abruptly went out. With only a few lights on behind Kerr, a male wearing a mask and devil costume ran forward, hit Kerr in the face with a custard pie, and escaped through a side door. An audience member gave chase, caught the masked man outside the lecture hall, and held him until the police arrived. The pie thrower was James Retherford, a recent IU graduate and former editor of *The Spectator*, one of the SDS-backed publications.<sup>74</sup>

This inspired editors at *The Alternative* to plan their own “right-wing guerilla theater.”<sup>75</sup> Each November the magazine sponsored a series of debates, called Alternative

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<sup>73</sup> *The Alternative*, “American Needs Wallace,” (October/November 1968): 4-5.

<sup>74</sup> “Pie Hits Campus Speaker,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 15, 1969; Patrick Siddons, “Pie Hits Clark Kerr During Speech at IU,” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, October 15, 1969, A1, A4; *The Washington Post*, “Custard Pie Stops Lecture by Kerr,” October 15, 1969, A9. The following day witnessed more disruptions. “A roving gang of members of the Students for a Democratic Society introduced... violence here yesterday as anti-war groups observed Vietnam Moratorium day,” reported the *Louisville Courier-Journal*. The group blocked traffic, vandalized the Bloomington selective service office, and the ROTC building. Later, New Left students protested Retherford’s arrest. These events drew regional and national headlines for student radicals at IU, see Siddons, “Disorder, Peaceful Protest Mingle at IU,” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, October 16, 1969, A1, A6.

<sup>75</sup> Von Kannon, quoted in *Where Have All the Flower Children Gone?*, 102-103.



Week, with the left over various topics; these were conservative teach-ins, of a sort. Bill Rusher, publisher of *National Review* and Frank Meyer, a senior editor at *National Review*, accepted invitations to participate in the debates, which were scheduled for November 1969, just a few weeks after the pie throwing incident.<sup>76</sup>

During the first day, Tyrrell debated Dr. Rudolph Montag, a New Left professor from Columbia University, on the topic of social problems in American cities. As both spoke and answered questions, a student in the audience stood up, rushed forward yelling “dirty Communist” and hit Montag square in the face with a pie, before escaping outside with students chasing him. The episode stunned the campus because it came from the right, not the left, and it immediately made regional and national news. IU administrators were mortified, just as they had been when Retherford attacked Kerr, and they contacted Columbia to apologize.<sup>77</sup>

They discovered the whole thing was a hoax. Columbia University reported that it had no Rudolph Montag on its faculty. In fact, Montag was really Roy Calkin (1944-1995), a former Marine, current IU freshman and friend of Bob Tyrrell. During the debate, per the plan, he pieced together New Left slogans in nonsensical ways, and yet to the amusement of editors, audience members still applauded and asked him serious questions.<sup>78</sup> A student critic later pointed out in the campus paper that the farce showed

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<sup>76</sup> *IDS*, “Alternative Week Sponsors Debates,” November 1969; In November 1968, William Buckley accepted the magazine’s invitation to debate University of California Berkeley professor Michael Scriven, see Karen Carle, “Alternative Week Plans,” *IDS*, November 5, 1969, 8; *Chicago Tribune*, “Indiana U. Speaker Hit by Pie,” November 13, 1969; A2.

<sup>77</sup> Tyrrell, “*The Alternative’s* Gallery of Frauds,” *The Alternative* (February/March 1970): 2, 12-13; *IDS*, “Alternative Week Sponsors Debates,” November 1969; *Chicago Tribune*, “Indiana U. Speaker Hit by Pie,” November 13, 1969; A2; *The Anderson Herald*, “War Protests Set for Indiana Today,” November 13, 1969, 34.

<sup>78</sup> Siddons, “Pie-Tossing Hoax: Funny or Unfunny?” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, November 16, 1969, B1-2; The editors recorded the event and Bill Rusher insisted on selling copies of it, but the quality of the audio was too poor for mass production. See Tyrrell, “*The Alternative’s* Gallery of Frauds,” *The Alternative*

only that “an avowed conservative can debate his own stereotype of a liberal.”<sup>79</sup> Von Kannon disagreed but admitted that it was a “publicity stunt” that worked; it generated “publicity on all the networks in the state and the newspapers across the country.”<sup>80</sup>

Von Kannon also stressed that the episode highlighted what *The Alternative* considered the media’s predilection for covering the sensational. Serious events on the campus that night had received no press coverage, but an outlandish hoax made national newspapers. “It showed how the media is keyed to violent action and macabre phenomena,” he wrote.<sup>81</sup> This remained a recurring theme at the magazine, which expressed frustration that the New Left, despite being a small minority of students, received intense coverage because of their antics. Von Kannon also thought that the national media had a “youth stereotype” that excluded the type of young conservatives that clustered around *The Alternative*. Conservatives were “neither screaming leftist, threatening to liberate the solar system or [George] Wallacite yokels,” wrote Von Kannon, and therefore “they are what the media considers irrelevant and boring.” It took dramatic action, then, for the conservative magazine to get attention. There was substance to this critique, but also an element of envy at the attention their co-generationalists received.<sup>82</sup>

After a considerable controversy on campus, the hoax proved a boon to *The Alternative*. Stunts like these were something different for student conservatives, and

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(February/March 1970): 2, 12-13; and Rusher to Tyrrell, December 2, 1969, General Correspondence, Box 92, Folder 3: Tyrrell, R. Emmett, Jr., 1969-1976, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

<sup>79</sup> Carl Deckard, “Letter to the Editor,” *IDS*, November 1969; Siddons, “Pie-Tossing Hoax: Funny or Unfunny?” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, November 16, 1969, B1-2.

<sup>80</sup> Von Kannon, “Letter to the Editor,” *IDS*, November 1969; Jon McKesson, “Second I.U. Pie-Tossing Episode Revealed as Hoax,” *The Indianapolis Star*, November 13, 1969, 37.

<sup>81</sup> Von Kannon, “Letter to the Editor,” *IDS*, November 1969; Siddons, “Pie-Tossing Hoax: Funny or Unfunny?” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, November 16, 1969, B1-2.

<sup>82</sup> Von Kannon, “Some ‘Youth Meetings’ the Media Ignores,” *The Alternative* (February, 1972): 10.

many on the right found it refreshing to see this type of humor at the expense of the student left. It helped attract the attention and admiration of older conservatives.<sup>83</sup> Other conservatives, though, viewed it with concern. IU's YAF chapter publicly denounced the stunt, claiming it lacked substance and humiliated otherwise sympathetic local newspapers who covered it as a serious story.<sup>84</sup> The episode illustrated the magazine's dramatic side; it wanted to entertain and make its own headlines. "We certainly have stolen the show from the theatrical new left," boasted Tyrrell, "What's wrong with our being theatrical?"<sup>85</sup>

This impulse often conflicted with its larger goal to offer serious and substantive analysis of the problems affecting college students. When it came to student radicals, it had analytic blind spots. It tended to blur important distinctions between groups on the left, often linking the New Left and liberalism. The New Left was a diverse group, with conflicting views and degrees of extremism; they deeply opposed postwar American liberalism and actually defined themselves in contrast to it. *The Alternative* recognized some differences: the New Left was a radical group fundamentally at odds with the best traditions of New Deal liberalism. But it also believed that student radicals were making inroads into the Democratic Party and slowly changing liberalism. They thought they had already witnessed the New Left's influence over the university faculty and administration increase. The violent street riots and general disorder at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968 seemed to confirm for campus conservatives at *The*

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<sup>83</sup> The 1969 *Alternative* Week entered the magazine's lore. See Von Kannon, quoted in *Where Have All the Flower Children Gone?*, 102-103.

<sup>84</sup> Robb Frank, James Rock, and Lynne Morgan, "Letter to the Editor," *IDS*, November, 1969, General Correspondence, Box 92, Folder 3: Tyrrell, R. Emmett, Jr., 1969-1976, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

<sup>85</sup> Tyrrell quoted in Siddons, "Pie-Tossing Hoax: Funny or Unfunny?" *Louisville Courier-Journal*, November 16, 1969, B1-2.

*Alternative* the radicalization of American liberalism. The narrative, then, stressed the decline of postwar American liberalism in the late-1960s. Such analysis, though, competed for attention with the magazine's irreverent humor and impulses to entertain.<sup>86</sup>

**“Conservative Journal is Thriving at IU”<sup>87</sup>**

*The Alternative* was not the only antiradical campus magazine created during the period. As young conservatives came of age witnessing the radical student left on campuses in the mid- to late 1960s, they engaged in grassroots efforts to fight back. “At colleges in the Boston area, the Midwest, and on the West Coast, conservative students have started newspapers, formed clubs, moved into student government and begun an effort to attract undergraduates angry about the radical left,” reported the *New York Times* in 1969, and “dozens of conservative newspapers have begun competing with traditionally liberal dailies on such campuses as Stanford, the University of Wisconsin and the University of California at Berkeley.” New student publications included *Renaissance*, distributed to several North Carolina colleges, and the University of Wisconsin's *Badger-Herald*.<sup>88</sup>

Like *The Alternative*, these publications were primarily antiradical, not anticommunist, magazines. They vigorously opposed communism, to be sure, but they discovered, just like *The Alternative*'s editors, that the radicalism of the left was alienating mainstream students. “Students who wouldn't agree with their tactics, or saw themselves threatened by the left, would have joined fraternities in the 'fifties and had beer parties,” explained Stanford University senior Patrick Shea. “Now they're joining

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<sup>86</sup> *The Alternative*, “Brayings from the Left,” (February/March 1970): 15.

<sup>87</sup> Buckler, “Conservative Journal is Thriving at IU,” *The Louisville Courier-Journal*, April 16, 1971, 5.

<sup>88</sup> Weinraub, “Unrest Spurs Growth of Conservative Student Groups,” *New York Times*, October 12, 1969, 70.

the right.” Another young conservative explained that antiradicalism had more power than simply anticommunism to attract supporters. “Very definitely the feeling is not so much pro-conservative but anti-radical...the issue of anti-violence unites a hell of a lot of people,” explained Douglas Cooper. “If they listen to us, and agree with us about keeping order on the campus, they might listen to other things too. This is what we’re aiming for.”<sup>89</sup>

Nevertheless, despite these many conservative campus publications started in the 1960s, the only one to survive the era was *The Alternative*.<sup>90</sup> It was not easy. The magazine struggled to overcome tremendous financial problems. As a grassroots, student magazine, Tyrrell explained in a letter to Russell Kirk, “it is operated on the most amateur and fiscally hazardous basis imaginable.”<sup>91</sup> Each issue cost approximately \$300 to publish, and by November 1967 the editors were unable to pay the printer. Small money from local advertisers, such as bars and restaurants, helped, but selling copies at fifteen cents apiece to students on campus was critical to meeting the shortfall. “The fire of campus conservatism may be snuffed out if *The Alternative*, a monthly right-wing magazine, cannot raise \$300 to pay for its November printing cost,” reported the *IDS*.<sup>92</sup>

The editors were initially pessimistic. “It seems that it might be folding,” said Tyrrell after only six months. He was discovering the financial strains opinion magazines faced in selling enough copies and advertising to stay in the black. Also, as an off campus publication, the staff was having trouble getting permission to sell in Ballantine Hall, the

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Chesly Manly, “Shift to Conservatism Found on Campuses,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 21, 1961, 2.

<sup>91</sup> Tyrrell letter quoted in Russell Kirk’s “Conservative Minds At Work,” *National Review* (July 30, 1968): 752.

<sup>92</sup> *IDS*, “Right-Wing Campus Magazine May Fold If It Can’t Pay Debts,” January 11, 1968, 1.

hub of campus traffic. It was sold in fraternities and other buildings, but the access to Ballantine, in particular, was critical. Tyrrell turned to his YAF supporters for help. “The financial situation of *The Alternative*,” the *IDS* reported, “was discussed by R. Emmett Tyrrell at the group’s meeting last night.”<sup>93</sup>

Ultimately, several factors helped the magazine to stay solvent and grow. The editors, particularly Tyrrell, realized that long term success required courting older conservatives and like-minded antiradicals and raising money from sympathetic benefactors. He and his small editorial staff actively worked to develop relationships with their intellectual influences and mentors. “The conservative movement provided superb role models in William F. Buckley, Jr., Milton Friedman, and...Russell Kirk [for example]. Coming from an older generation, they became our counselors and friends.” Editors sought out these established writers for advice and interviews by sending letters and magazine copies. They published the interviews, which helped sell copies, legitimize the magazine, and educate young readers. The interviews were respectful, advice seeking, and thoughtful. They also published favorable book reviews and frequently quoted them in articles. This tactic proved very successful in getting their elders’ attention, highlighting *The Alternative*’s distinctive style, getting free publicity, and eventually attracting financial supporters.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> *IDS*, “*Alternative* Needs Advertising Funds,” January 12, 1968, 1; Editors wrote to supporters for assistance in distributing the paper on campus, which in turn prompted letters to the administration. A Fort Wayne, Indiana, doctor and IU alum, Justin Arata, for example, wrote to IU president Stahr to express support for *The Alternative*. “I, too, am concerned about the Laufmans [sic] and their likes who seem to desire to tear down law and order,” see Arata to Stahr, March 16, 1968, Box 163, Collection C304, Subject Files, 1962-1968, Student Publications, 1966-1968, Indiana University President’s Office Records, 1962-1968, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

<sup>94</sup> Tyrrell, *Conservative Crack-Up*, 59; See also York, “Life and Death of *The American Spectator*,” 91-110; Von Kannon to Rusher, September 2, 1969, General Correspondence, Box 95, Folder 3: Von Kannon, Baron, 1969-80, 88, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

It also contrasted sharply with their generational counterparts on the left. Student radicals in the 1960s, particularly members of SDS and the black power movement, had fractious relationships with their elders. The phrase “Don’t trust anyone over thirty” was more than just a slogan of the era—it reflected the poor, unsupportive relationships between young and old on the left and radical left. Historians Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin—former student radicals and SDS members—later described the extent to which student radicals felt disconnected from their elders. “Although young Americans in the 1960s were not the first generation in history to feel that they were more sensitive to hypocrisy and injustice than their elders,” wrote Isserman and Kazin, “they were certainly unique in the degree to which they expressed their newly awakened political aspirations in terms of generational identity.” Generational identity on the radical left was closely connected to the distance between young and old.<sup>95</sup>

While student radicals struggled to trust adults over thirty, *The Alternative’s* crowd felt no such generation gap. Instead, they often developed close connections with the older generation of conservatives and antiradicals. They revered Bill Buckley, in particular. Tyrrell first got the attention of Buckley when, in 1966, he responded to a *National Review* fund-raising letter by sending a personal check for \$264,000 to Buckley, despite having less than \$30 in his checking account. The *National Review* editor found it amusing and eventually agreed to sit down for an interview.<sup>96</sup>

In the spring of 1968, Tyrrell and contributing writer Steve Tesich (1942-1996) traveled to New York to interview Buckley and to seek his advice on running the

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<sup>95</sup> On the intergenerational conflicts and the generational gap, see Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press), 166, 169, 171, 176; and Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987).

<sup>96</sup> On Tyrrell’s check to Buckley, see “God and Man in Bloomington,” *Time* (March 7, 1977): 93.

magazine.<sup>97</sup> Buckley was impressed. After reading a few issues, he recognized that they represented a conservatism uniquely attuned to the sensibilities of the era's youth.<sup>98</sup> Wanting to support the fledgling paper, *National Review* began to advertise in nearly every issue of *The Alternative*. Buckley—famous for his tireless travel schedule—visited IU at the invitation of the magazine to debate on campus.<sup>99</sup> He devoted one of his nationally syndicated columns to praising the IU magazine. “By far the most interesting of these is the flock of zany students and graduate students who cluster about R. Emmett Tyrrell Jr.,” wrote Buckley, “and publish one of the most amusing and outrageous and interesting student journals in America.” He described the style as a “sort of Liberated-Disrespectful, absorbing no doubt much that the left has done in consecrating iconoclasm, and reflecting the hunger of the American college student for a little anti-left-cliché liberation.”<sup>100</sup> The magazine excelled at exactly what Buckley had advised was necessary for success—writing with humor, wit, and “journalistic flair.”<sup>101</sup> “*The Alternative* is one of the few luxuries you can indulge yourself, to be reminded of...the happy discovery that the other side is very very vulnerable to student wit.”<sup>102</sup>

Tyrrell grasped quickly the importance of networking. He introduced the magazine to major conservative leaders he met at YAF functions. He arranged a talk with

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<sup>97</sup> Tesich, a Serbian emigrant, was an early literary editor at the magazine; he later won an Academy Award in 1979 for his screenplay, *Breaking Away*, a fictionalized story based in part on his time with *The Alternative*'s crowd; see Tyrrell, “Steve Tesich, RIP,” *TAS* (August 1996): 17.

<sup>98</sup> *The Alternative*, “*The Alternative* Interviews An American Gothic: William F. Buckley, Jr.,” (May/June 1968): 5-8. Tyrrell resembled a young Buckley in many ways. Both came from Irish Catholic families and were conservatives from a young age. Both founded and developed what would become prominent conservative journals.

<sup>99</sup> Kevin Berry, “The Expressive William Buckley,” *The Alternative* (December 1968-January 1969): 6-7

<sup>100</sup> William F. Buckley, Jr., “College Humor on the Right,” *LA Times*, February 28, 1971, F7.

<sup>101</sup> “In Praise of WFB,” *The Alternative*, December 1971, 20.

<sup>102</sup> William F. Buckley, Jr., “College Humor on the Right,” *LA Times*, February 28, 1971, F7.



Milton Friedman in the University of Chicago professor's office in the late 1960s.<sup>103</sup> He wrote directly to other conservative leaders with a letter of introduction and magazine copies. Russell Kirk was impressed with the introductory materials he received from Bloomington. In his *National Review* column, he brought attention to the magazine and its battles against campus radicals. He called *The Alternative* a “vigorous publication...not lacking in wit” which posed a strong challenge to the “noisiness of the New Left.” Kirk's recommendation in the flagship conservative journal was valuable. He even included a Bloomington mailing address for subscription inquires.<sup>104</sup>

The editors' strategy of courting older conservatives was paying dividends. William Rusher, the publisher of *National Review*, agreed to an interview with Tyrrell and was likewise impressed. Like so many others conducted by the editors, the Rusher interview revealed that older conservatives were concerned about the New Left on campuses and that such radicalism was damaging the left. Rusher thought that sensible, non-radical liberals did still exist and that “many of them are appalled by what is going on on the campuses and are resisting it.”<sup>105</sup>

Impressed by the upstart magazine, Rusher wrote to his *National Review* editors about the IU product. “I have been dimly aware of their publication, *The Alternative*, for

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<sup>103</sup> He liked Friedman, but found the economist's economic advice on running a successful magazine—that the magazine must find a way to turn a profit—unhelpful. Constant fundraising was essential to keep most magazines in the black, see Tyrrell, *Conservative Crack-Up*, 59.

<sup>104</sup> Russell Kirk, “Conservative Minds At Work,” *National Review*, July 30, 1968, 752; Tyrrell continued to send unsolicited copies to potential readers and influential figures. After running a respectful interview with former New Deal Democrat Jim Farley, he mailed a copy to Harry Truman, then in retirement in Missouri. The former president wrote back praising the interview. Truman to Tyrrell, reprinted in *The Alternative* (September/October 1969): 310.

<sup>105</sup> “William A. Rusher: Still Another Interview,” *The Alternative* (August/September 1969): 9-12. Tyrrell astutely emphasized his access to the college generation in his correspondence with older writers. “Well the Age of Aquarius is upon us at Indiana University and I have been in the trenches,” he wrote Rusher to thank him for the interview. “Well it's back to my generation with all its awareness and sweetness, but thank you so very much for your generous time.” See Tyrrell to Rusher, April 26, 1969, General Correspondence, Box 92, Folder 3: Tyrrell, R. Emmett, Jr., 1969-1976, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington DC.

about a year, and I gather that several of you know them far better than I do. But better late than never...”<sup>106</sup> He visited Bloomington and was “powerfully impressed with the flair and cleverness of their publication,” and recommended hiring Tyrrell to contribute a youth-oriented regular column for *National Review* “to sound off (with appropriate editing) from the standpoint of conservative students.” From Rusher’s perspective, *The Alternative*’s style, voice, and perspective made it distinctive on the right. “If we really want to be ‘relevant’ to the present student generation, this strikes me as a far better way to do it than by publishing effusions about the Woodstock Festival,” wrote Rusher. “As a matter of fact, I think it would give our publication quite a dose of monkey glands!”<sup>107</sup>

The column idea did not develop further, but the connections between the two magazines continued to deepen, particularly with Frank Meyer, *National Review* senior editor. In the fall of 1969, shortly after the raucous music festival, Tyrrell and another young conservative, William Kristol, visited Meyer’s isolated home in rural Woodstock, New York. Buckley called the place “mission control” because so many conversations and so much work for the conservative movement and *National Review* took place there. The young writers talked with Meyer throughout the night about conservatism, politics, literature, and the arts. Meyer’s break with the communist party in the 1930s had famously left him unwilling to sleep at night for fear of assassination, and so guests like Tyrrell and Kristol kept his schedule, eating, drinking, and talking the night away. For Tyrrell, it represented a chance to broaden his contacts with a well-connected

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<sup>106</sup> Rusher to *National Review* editors, November 12, 1969, William Rusher Papers, Box 122, File 8, Library of Congress, Washington DC; also quoted in David Frisk, *If Not Us, Who? William Rusher, National Review, and the Conservative Movement* (Wilmington, DE: ISI books, 2012), 473.

<sup>107</sup> Rusher to *National Review* editors, November 12, 1969, William Rusher Papers; also quoted in Frisk, *If Not Us, Who?*, 256. Later, Rusher suggested the magazine experiment with investigative journalism. “Is there any chance of doing a little counter-muckraking...to create a little journalistic controversy?” he asked. See Rusher to Tyrrell, June 9, 1970, General Correspondence, Box 92, Folder 3: Tyrrell, R. Emmett, Jr., 1969-1976, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

conservative figure, get advice, and to conduct an interview he could later publish.<sup>108</sup>

Meyer became a mentor and friend to the magazine, whose editors shared his interest in expanding the boundaries of conservative unity.<sup>109</sup>

In addition to shrewd networking by Tyrrell and his editors, the distinctive personality of the magazine contributed to its success. Conservatives in the period resented being labeled as boring, and *The Alternative* struck many as a combative, humorous, and irreverent corrective. Its founder was instinctively combative and irreverent. His outlook toward conflict with the radical left contrasted starkly with the melancholy of many conservatives. “I entered the conservative movement from an athletic background in which I had never been on a team that had lost a championship or even a dual meet,” he explained, and by contrast, many movement conservatives “were usually appalling fatalists [who] did not expect to win... Well, the hell with that!” He gave the magazine a confident swagger that garnered attention.<sup>110</sup>

Tyrrell was convinced that a distinctive culture and style, not just sound ideas and policies, were keys to a successful magazine challenging the student radicals on the left. He found an iconoclastic political style in “a literary tradition of amused skepticism that conformed to our needs and our sensibilities [in] the politically debonair world of the 1920s *American Mercury* and the early *New Yorker*.” This approach blended satire and

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<sup>108</sup> “Frank S. Meyer: An Interview,” *The Alternative* (August/September 1969): 3-4, 13; Tyrrell, *After the Hangover* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 156-157.

<sup>109</sup> When Meyer died of lung cancer at the age of 62, Jameson G. Campaigne, Jr. (b. 1944), a founding member of YAF and a contributor to *The Alternative*, remembered him as a mentor and a friend. “He demanded much of his charges, America’s next generation of conservative leadership,” he eulogized, “but did so with the kindness and subtlety of a Socrates.” See Campaigne, “Frank Meyer, RIP,” *The Alternative* (September 1972): 14-15.

<sup>110</sup> Tyrrell, *Conservative Crack-Up*, 45; Tyrrell, interview with Brian Lamb, “Booknotes,” *C-SPAN*, May 19, 1992.

humor with a fierce combativeness, best represented by the Baltimore journalist H.L. Mencken (1880-1956).<sup>111</sup>

The style appealed to some students and even older Americans in the late-1960s and 1970s. The approach included the use of obscure words (chrestomathy, prandial, etc.), acerbic insults, and witty insights into current affairs, all with an affected air of aloof skepticism.<sup>112</sup> The majority of young editors at similar campus magazines in the 1960s tried to copy Buckley's style.<sup>113</sup> Tyrrell wrote the majority of articles in the early years, and his choice of Mencken over Buckley, and his practiced skill at doing so, made his magazine distinctive. The Pulitzer Prize winning columnist for the *Chicago Tribune*, Mike Royko, enjoyed reading *The Alternative* in the late 1960s because of Tyrrell's writing style. Years later he explained:

Although I didn't agree with many of his positions, I enjoyed reading it. That's because he was obviously an admirer of the great H.L. Mencken [and] he did the best imitation of Mencken's style of any writer I've read. At that time, Tyrrell was something of a lonely voice from somewhere in Indiana, tweaking most of the prevailing liberal views. But even when he tweaked mine, I enjoyed it because he was funny. And if there is anything that has always been in short supply, it is a funny conservative. Most of them...are as humorous as an unchained pit bull.<sup>114</sup>

Many aspects of the magazine aimed to be irreverent and humorous. The cover page of the first issue, for example, pictured a hippie's circular peace sign transformed into a US bomber plane with the slogan, "DROP IT," written along the top of the circle.

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<sup>111</sup> Tyrrell, *Conservative Crack-Up*, 28, 57; Tyrrell learned the value of political culture from his study of Roosevelt's administration, which "influenced not just the politics of the country but the culture of the country," see Tyrrell, Interview with Brian Lamb, *CSPAN*, June 7, 1992.

<sup>112</sup> Tyrrell reassessed Mencken in 2002 when he read *The Skeptic: the Life of H.L. Mencken*, by Terry Teachout—a *TAS* contributor. The book convinced him that Mencken was excessively dark and pessimistic; See Tyrrell, "The Dark Sage: Reconsidering H.L. Mencken," *TAS* (November/December 2002): 50-53.

<sup>113</sup> For example, James Roberts ran a short lived magazine at his Ohio campus, but offered little that stood out. He admitted to being a "rather shameless imitator of the Buckley style, and the rather forced prose gyrations I perpetrated on campus must have been cloying, even to those who were sympathetic to my point of view." See Roberts, *The Conservative Decade: Emerging Leaders of the 1980s* (Westport, CT: Arlington House Publishers, 1980), 29.

<sup>114</sup> Mike Royko, "Head for the Hills for Reagan Tribute," *Chicago Tribune*, May 19, 1989, 3.

Early mastheads listed as contributors N.K. Khrushchev, George Washington Plunkitt, and Anthony Comstock. The editors and contributors adopted unusual names to be distinct. “When we founded it in '67 it was to put on the liberal professors and to put on the radical students,” remembered Tyrrell, “We used these kind of fancy names—the Baron [John] von Kannon, R. Emmett Tyrell Jr., and suddenly it was 1970 and R. Emmett Tyrell was my name.” Though Bob to everyone who knew him personally, he found himself stuck with his print name thanks to the magazine’s success.<sup>115</sup>

The editors proved skilled at cultivating the perception of a countercultural style for the right. For example, the magazine frequently described its offices as an irreverent base of operation. “The Establishment” was an old farmhouse just outside of Bloomington in a small town called Ellettsville. Magazine articles often depicted young conservatives drinking beer, debating, visiting with guests like Meyer, Buckley, or Stan Evans, or just listening to Beethoven and arguing about great orchestral conductors.<sup>116</sup> In many ways it anticipated the conservative counterculture students at Dartmouth University would create in the early 1980s with the *Dartmouth Review* magazine.<sup>117</sup>

Not everyone found the farmhouse or the magazine funny, particularly the personal attacks it regularly included. Instead, SDS groups found the magazine pompous, vacuous, and mean-spirited. “The cover of the April-May *Alternative* shows a group of raggedly PRP members puffing grass. The picture could have more accurately described

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<sup>115</sup> Tyrrell, Interview with Brian Lamb, *CSPAN*, June 7, 1992; Von Kannon came from a wealthy family that ran a marketing firm in Chicago, see Von Kannon, quoted in *Where Have All the Flower Children Gone?*, 102-103.

<sup>116</sup> Kevin Berry, “The Expressive William Buckley,” *The Alternative* (December 1968/January 1969): 6-7.

<sup>117</sup> The similarities between the two campus magazines are extensive, at least for *TAS*’s campus phase. The great difference is that while the *Dartmouth Review* remained a campus magazine, *TAS* developed into one of the few national conservative opinion journals and made an impact that far exceeded its campus roots; James Panero and Stefan Beck, eds., *The Dartmouth Review Pleads Innocent* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006).

the state of the *Alternative* and other rites of the Right,” explained the PRP’s official publication. “For all its finely-printed pages, this literary attempt at conservative logic, humor, and sarcasm is nothing more than a vicious rag.”<sup>118</sup> SDS members ridiculed Tyrrell, in particular, for his use of obscure words in leveling attacks that lacked substance and for his attempts to appear funny.<sup>119</sup>

But with others at IU and elsewhere, the magazine’s efforts at irreverent political humor resonated. “We were glad to receive our copy of *The Alternative* this week,” editorialized *The Daily Student* in early 1968, “We think we know what “*The Alternative* is an alternative to. It is nominally a conservative voice, but it is also a spoof on this sometimes pompous business of journalism. Keep it up, fellows.”<sup>120</sup>

The editors’ networking with influential older allies and its irreverent, combative humor and writing style helped it attract the attention and support of sympathetic businessmen and philanthropists. More than any other factor, these benefactors kept the magazine afloat through its many lean times with advertising dollars and donations. Sarkes Tarzian, a first generation Armenian immigrant who made a fortune in postwar communications technology and lived in Bloomington, became a loyal supporter of the magazine.<sup>121</sup> Other companies, such as McGill Manufacturing Company in Valpraiso, Indiana, a ball bearing making plant, supported *The Alternative*.

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<sup>118</sup> *The Inside Agitator*, “*The Alternative: A Study in Hot Air*,” May 18, 1968, 5.

<sup>119</sup> Dan Caine and Aaron Leve, “The Other President’s Ball,” *The Inside Agitator*, December 9, 1967, 3; and *The Inside Agitator*, “Tee Vee Night (A Satire),” November 18, 1967, 5-6. This clever satirical piece mocked Tyrrell as “the intelligent, witty, world-weary oh-so-blasé, intellectual editor of *The Alternative*” and what the SDS considered his preference for attacking instead of engaging in serious debate.

<sup>120</sup> *IDS*, “We’re Glad to See ‘*The Alternative*’ Again,” February 8, 1968, 4; see also Kriebel, “Right at IU Finds Voice With Chuckle In It To Counteract the Campus Left,” June 3, 1968, Indiana University President’s Office Records, 1962-1968, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

<sup>121</sup> For more on the Tarzian family, see Delbert Miller, *The History of Sarkes Tarzian, Inc.: The Story of Sarkes Tarzian and Mary Tarzian and the Industrial Company They Built* (Bloomington, IN: Miller, 1993) and Norman Sklarewitz, “Hometown TV Man,” *The Rotarian* (June 1955): 19-20.

A far more generous benefactor was Ruth Lilly, the wife of Indiana-based pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly. In the magazine's second year she donated \$3,000 and advised the editors to register the magazine as a charity, which would allow for tax-deductible donations. In 1968, Tyrrell filed the paperwork to create a 501(c)(3) charity, a common status for opinion journals, right and left, in the United States.<sup>122</sup>

The most important revenue source was Richard Mellon Scaife, the Pittsburgh-based heir to fortune in banking and manufacturing. Scaife's lieutenant, Richard Larry, heard about the campus magazine from a friend in Indiana, and decided to pass word along to his boss. "The campuses were in uproar, the left was in its glory, and here was *The Alternative*, taking on these people and their ideas in a way that nobody else at the time, at least that we were aware of, was doing—with humor and sarcasm," explained Scaife. "It was having some effect on the campus there in Indiana, and we felt that it could have a broader impact." Scaife gave an initial gift of \$25,000 in 1970, and continued to give lavishly for nearly thirty years. His money solidified *The Alternative's* finances and positioned it to expand rapidly.<sup>123</sup>

These large contributions came only after the magazine had struggled for several years as a grassroots magazine and because it had already carved a niche for itself in the

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<sup>122</sup> See Internal Revenue Service to The Alternative Educational Foundation, Inc., January 23, 1969, General Correspondence, Box 7, Folder 2: American Spectator, 1973-88, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; On Lilly's first donation and advice to Tyrrell, see York, "Life and Death," 91-110; see also Tyrrell, "Mrs. Eli Lilly, R.I.P.," *TAS* (June 1973): 5; On the Lilly family, see James Madison, *Eli Lilly: A Life, 1885-1977* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1989), and E.J. Kahn, Jr., *All in a Century: The First 100 Years of Eli Lilly and Company* (West Cornwall, CT: Kahn, 1975).

<sup>123</sup> Larry quoted in York, "Life and Death," 91-110; see also Karen Rothmyer, "Citizen Scaife," published in *Speak Out Against the New Right*, ed., Herbert Vetter (Boston: Beacon Press, 1982), 22-35; The Alternative Educational Foundation, Inc., "The First Ten Years," 1977, General Correspondence, Box 7, Folder 2, American Spectator, 1973-88, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; Scaife funded scores of other conservative ventures, including conservative student magazines founded in the 1980s. See Richard Brookhiser, "A Mugging in the Groves: The Story of the Yale Literary Magazine," *TAS* (June 1984): 18-19.

marketplace. Scaife recognized the magazine's distinctiveness and used his money to ensure its continued existence.<sup>124</sup> His contributions were enormous and made a tremendous difference, allowing the magazine to be refitted for a larger audience. The staff initially planned to make it a regional magazine, but that quickly expanded to a national scope. "By 1970 it had become obvious that there were cells of enlightenment on campuses across the country, notably at Harvard and the University of Chicago," Tyrrell explained, "so I suggested recasting *The Alternative*, which had been an off-campus antiradical magazine at Indiana University, and presenting it to a national audience."<sup>125</sup> After a six month hiatus, the fourth volume debuted in the fall of 1970 with a new, more polished design and longer issues, but with the same attention on combating student radicals.<sup>126</sup>

The Lilly and Scaife money also gave the editors the resources to recruit from a wider pool of writers, including talented young conservatives and antiradicals from the elite universities. As more of these national writers were published, the number of local contributors declined. "After making organizational changes to include our associates in Cambridge, Chicago, New York, and Washington, we blossomed for the first time as a national magazine in the fall of 1970." The editors recognized that by concentrating on combating student radicals and the influence of the New Left, it gave the magazine wider appeal. "Our contributors constitute a varied lot, all of whom stand on the common

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<sup>124</sup> On other conservative student journals in the 1960s, see Bernard Weinraub, "Unrest Spurs Growth of Conservative Student Groups," *New York Times*, October 12, 1969, 70; Schneider, *Cadres of Conservatism*.

<sup>125</sup> Tyrrell, "The Alternative, Since Yesterday," *The Alternative* (June/September 1974), 4; The Alternative Educational Foundation, Inc., "The First Ten Years," 1977, William A. Rusher Papers; and York, "Life and Death," 91-110.

<sup>126</sup> Burr, interview by Carl Rutan, "The American Spectator," C-SPAN, May 23, 1986; Von Kannon, remarks at 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary dinner, "Bush Campaign Speech," C-SPAN, November 4, 1987; York, "Life and Death," 91-110; the redesigned issue debuted in November 1970.



ground of respect for the democratic process (especially the American democratic process) and appreciation for cultural excellence,” explained Tyrrell. “Some are Democrats and some are Republicans. We publish liberals and conservatives.”<sup>127</sup>

During this early phase (late-1960s and early 1970s), the editors realized that in discovering, publishing, and training young writers they were filling a need for the conservative movement that appealed to their elders and donors. As a result, they aggressively networked with sympathetic potential writers and increasingly marketed this youth development feature. More than *National Review*, *The Alternative* prided itself on identifying talented writers and then provided them a platform and experience. For example, Tyrrell hired a young George Will (b. 1941) to write feature pieces in 1970. The son of a college professor, Will spent the 1960s as an undergraduate and graduate student, earning a Ph.D. in Political Science from Princeton University in 1968. When Tyrrell reached out in 1970, Will worked as a staffer for Gordon Allott, a Republican senator from Colorado. Will’s work with *The Alternative* marked the first time he wrote a regular column. At the time he defined himself as a Whig, by which he meant that he favored using government to promote virtue and nationalism. His articles stirred intra-conservative controversy and letters to the editors, and raised Will’s profile.<sup>128</sup>

Other young writers outside Indiana recruited by the magazine and given important writing exposure included John Coyne and Aram Bakshian (b. 1944). Both young men parlayed their exposure in the magazine into jobs as speechwriters in the White House, first for Spiro Agnew, then President Nixon, and finally for Gerald Ford.

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<sup>127</sup> Tyrrell, “*The Alternative*, Since Yesterday,” *The Alternative* (June/September 1974): 4; On the impact of the Lilly and Scaife money, see York, “Life and Death,” 91-110.

<sup>128</sup> George Will, “The Woman Problem,” *The Alternative* (December 1970): 9. The *Washington Post* soon invited him to write a regular column, and in 1977 he won a Pulitzer Prize for Journalism Commentary.

Agnew also asked Tyrrell to join the administration as a fulltime speechwriter; Tyrrell declined, but he did travel with Agnew on Air Force Two and draft a few speeches.<sup>129</sup>

The magazine provided not only publishing opportunities to young writers, it also exposed readers to new ideas, writers, and experiences. Writers associated with *The Alternative* frequently wrote small reflection essays about new experiences in the intellectual and political world. For example, in the summer of 1970, a contributor named Arnold Steinberg (b. 1945) joined the campaign staff of James Buckley, the brother of William Buckley, and a candidate for the US senate seat in New York. He wrote an insider's account of the campaign describing Buckley's improbable victory, using his article to teach other young conservatives some of the lessons he had learned.<sup>130</sup>

The experience gained by magazine staffers proved invaluable and aided the conservative movement for decades. In 1972, Tyrrell promoted Von Kannon from managing editor to publisher of the magazine—the position in charge of generating funds. Tyrrell had been advised by Milton Friedman to make the magazine profitable in some way, but finding revenue streams for an opinion magazine was challenging. He hoped his new publisher could help. “One of my first fundraising ventures was to the corporate headquarters of McDonald's in suburban Chicago,” but the trip did not go well, Von Kannon recalled.<sup>131</sup> Raising money proved difficult, but he learned on the job. “I also learned a lot about strategy and communications, how to raise money, how to sell our ideas and institutions.” This experience gained as a young man with *The Alternative*

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<sup>129</sup> Tyrrell, *Conservative Crack-Up*, 159, 161.

<sup>130</sup> Arnie Steinberg, “The Journey with Senator Jim Buckley,” *The Alternative* (January 1971): 13; Steinberg in *Manifesto Addressed to the President of the United States from the Youth of America*, (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 170; Steinberg edited YAF's monthly journal, *New Guard*, from 1967 to 1969.

<sup>131</sup> Von Kannon, “Patterns of Corporate Philanthropy,” book review, *The American Spectator* (September 1989): 39.

later helped him at the Heritage Foundation, the premier conservative think tank in America, where Von Kannon eventually became a vice president.<sup>132</sup>

The reach and readership of the magazine expanded in the late-1960s and early 1970s, as young conservatives were drawn to its combative style and wit. Tyrrell frequently mailed unsolicited copies to campuses across the country.<sup>133</sup> Karl Rove (b. 1950), an undergraduate at the University of Utah, discovered the magazine in the fall of 1969. He shared *The Alternative*'s sense of being overshadowed by their peers on the left. He recalled the magazine's impact on young conservatives at conflict-ridden campuses:

It was lonely for those of us on the right. The left had energy, excitement, the cool causes, the trendy professors and, more importantly, the best-looking girls. The left was hip—and conservatives were not...But there was a ray of iconoclastic light from, of all places, Bloomington, Indiana. Funny, irreverent, smart, and tough, *The Alternative* gave campus conservatives that most precious of commodities... hope. It was the sure knowledge there were others like us out there—except they were cooler, hipper, and with access to enough money to publish one whacked-out magazine that cheered our hearts by trashing our enemies. This picture didn't cause envy. It was confirmation that the world was full of possibilities, even for conservative nerds with acne and bad social skills. Each issue raised questions about what was really important, as well as some not-so-important things. The sprightly magazine from Bloomington helped us grow confident in our movement, energetic in pursuit of our goals, and optimistic about the ultimate outcome of the struggle.<sup>134</sup>

It bears repeating that *The Alternative* emerged in direct response to student radicalism on the IU campus. Established conservative publications such as *National Review* and *Human Events* and those aimed at young conservatives such as *New Guard* and *The New Individualist* targeted primarily anti-communism and anti-liberalism. In this regard *The Alternative* reflected Midwestern sensibilities, particularly its fundamental

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<sup>132</sup> Von Kannon, quoted in *Where Have All the Flower Children Gone?*, 102-103.

<sup>133</sup> Tyrrell to Rusher, November 6, 1970, General Correspondence, Box 92, Folder 3: Tyrrell, R. Emmett, Jr., 1969-1976, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington DC.

<sup>134</sup> Karl Rove, "Memories and Tributes: A 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Symposium," *TAS* (December 2007/January 2008): 28-29. On Rove's college years, see his autobiography, *Courage and Consequence: My Life as a Conservative in the Fight* (New York: Threshold, 2010), 23-43.

opposition to radicalism.<sup>135</sup> The region was “built into every joist and lattice of this magazine,” explained Tyrrell. What were these regional features? According to historian R. Douglas Hunt, “the political activism of the Midwest has seldom been on the far left or right of the spectrum. Rather, it has been a moderating, centering force.” Midwesterners, according to Hunt, have tended to dislike radicalism.<sup>136</sup>

It was within this context that the editors developed an interest in another group of writers opposed to student radicalism. Irving Kristol and Daniel Bell were Jewish liberal intellectuals based in New York who edited *The Public Interest*, initially designed to be a non-ideological journal that studied the effectiveness of social policies from a social science perspective. It also took a strong stance against the New Left on American campuses, and it was this common ground that most appealed to the young conservatives in Bloomington. The experience of battling their co-generationalists on campus gave Tyrrell and his fellow editors an appreciation for potential allies in the fight.<sup>137</sup> Along

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<sup>135</sup> The magazine’s founding in Indiana highlights the importance of the Midwest to the postwar conservative resurgence. Although YAF, the most important conservative student group of the 1960s, originated in Connecticut, many of its key leaders and most active groups hailed from Indiana, Wisconsin, and Ohio. For example, Tom Charles Huston and Jameson Campaigne, both Hoosiers and contributors to *The Alternative*, held key YAF leadership positions in the 1960s. Students on Wisconsin and Ohio campuses—and other Midwestern states—were among the most active in YAF and other conservative groups in the 1960s. The politician they most admired, Ronald Reagan, was also a product of the Midwest, as were conservative institutions such as the Liberty Fund and the Volker Fund. Though outside the more studied strongholds of the right such as the Bible Belt, the Sunbelt and the South, these Midwesterners stressed largely a secular-based conservatism and opposition to radicalism. On YAF’s Midwest-based leadership, see Michael Pakenham, “Offers G.O.P. Dose of Youth For Ills,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 30, 1965, B24. On conservatism in the sunbelt, see Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); and Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Koerner also notes this Midwestern leadership, see Koerner, “The Conservative Youth Movement,” 221-222; on the Missouri-based Volker Fund, see Hoplin and Robinson, *Funding Fathers*, 15-33; on the Indianapolis-based Liberty Fund and its founder, Pierre Goodrich, see Goodrich, *Liberty Fund Basic Memorandum* (Indianapolis: Pierre Goodrich, 1961); Schneider, *Cadres of Conservatism*, 101-104, 117.

<sup>136</sup> See Hunt, “Midwestern Distinctiveness,” in *The American Midwest: Essays on Regional History*, eds., Andrew Cayton and Susan Gray (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 167.

<sup>137</sup> Schneider, *Cadres of Conservatism*, 115-116.

with the core conservative journals, *The Public Interest* became essential reading at The Establishment. Despite their differences, the two magazines shared a dislike for New Left students and the professors who supported them. They also shared a sense that the New Left was pulling liberalism in radical directions and alienating moderate Democrats.

In the summer of 1969, Bob Tyrrell traveled to New York to take a summer school course from Sidney Hook. Hook was a social democrat and an atheist who opposed student radicals and wrote for *The Public Interest*. “I took a summer class from him in 1969 and left convinced that, though the snobbery of Mencken and [journalist George] Nathan was great fun,” recalled Tyrrell, “liberty, democracy, intelligently debated, and academic excellence as advocated by Hook were to be the fundamental values” of *The Alternative* going forward. As Tyrrell met others in *The Public Interest* orbit, he saw more and more common ground.<sup>138</sup>

Just as he had with his conservative elders, Tyrrell introduced his magazine by mail and initiated relationships with writers from *The Public Interest* and then worked to secure interviews. Kristol agreed to an interview in New York and liked Tyrrell and the magazine.<sup>139</sup> When *The Alternative* published the full interview, complete with a glowing introduction by Tyrrell, in May 1969, it caused controversy. Stan Evans, editor of an Indianapolis daily and informal advisor to *The Alternative*, disagreed with publishing it on the grounds that Kristol was too liberal. But the editors’ stood by their decision, ran other interviews and articles in subsequent issues, and continued to develop ties with

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<sup>138</sup> Tyrrell, *Conservative Crack-Up*, 60; see also The Alternative Educational Foundation, Inc., “The First Ten Years,” 1977, William A. Risher Papers.

<sup>139</sup> Tyrrell, *Conservative Crack-Up*, 60; York makes a similar point about Tyrrell’s introductory letters, see York, “Life and Death,” 91-110.

New York writers. *The Public Interest* began paying for advertising space in *The Alternative* later that year.<sup>140</sup>

The young editors also befriended the children of these New York writers. In the summer of 1969, Tyrrell asked William Kristol (b. 1952), a sixteen year-old freshman at Harvard and the son of Irving, to become a contributor. Bill Kristol had obvious talent and shared the magazine's values; his articles lambasted the New Left at Harvard and elsewhere. In later years the children of Edward Banfield and Norman Podhoretz, among others, would work for the magazine in various capacities.<sup>141</sup>

By the early 1970s, *The Alternative* was the nation's premier antiradical student magazine. Its tactic of initiating and building relationships with other conservatives paid dividends. In 1970, for example, when an editor of a new book on American youth, Alan Rinzler, solicited suggestions for the names of some important young conservative voices, Buckley suggested Tyrrell.<sup>142</sup>

*The Alternative* also enjoyed positive national press from outside *National Review*. Anthony Harrigan, a southern libertarian and businessman, well-known in his day, discovered the magazine and found it refreshing because of its youth, style, and attacks on the student left. He used his nationally syndicated column on conservative issues to promote the magazine. He wrote:

“*The Alternative* [is] an amusing journal of ideas and politics edited by and for young conservatives. Discerning readers from Harvard to Stanford are discovering the wit and wisdom of editor R. Emmett Tyrrell Jr. and his colleagues. Good writing and fresh thinking should emerge from the American

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<sup>140</sup> “A Conversation with Irving Kristol,” *The Alternative* (May/June 1969): 7, 10-12; Alfred Regnery, *Upstream: The Ascendancy of American Conservatism* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2008), 275-276.

<sup>141</sup> Tyrrell, review of Frank Meyer's “*The Conservative Mainstream*,” *The Alternative* (November/December 1969): 7; “Frank S. Meyer: An Interview,” *The Alternative* (September/October 1969): 9.

<sup>142</sup> Allan Rinzler, ed., *Manifesto Addressed to the President of the United States from the Youth of America*, (New York: Macmillan, 1970).

heartland. *The Alternative*, however, is not just another little magazine for a student audience. *The Alternative* is unique among conservative journals in that its favorite instrument of iconoclasm is humor. Tyrrell and Co. make fun of the orthodoxies of the liberal establishmentarians who control the media and cultural institutions. Indeed the editors of the magazine are delightfully outrageous in their handling of personalities and issues....As I see it, *The Alternative* is giving the conservative movement a transfusion of enthusiasm and energy...It should be in every college library and every fraternity lounge...These young men in their twenties are proof of the vitality of the conservative movement in America. They are demonstrating that a new generation has the capacity and desire to accent the positive about the United States and its civilization.”<sup>143</sup>

The campus battles of the 1960s placed a unique stamp on *The Alternative*, creating a deep enmity with the student radicals of the period. The magazine was started to fight an intra-generational cultural and political war, not to fight communism. It survived because it ruthlessly attacked opponents with a distinctive rhetorical style that resonated with audiences of the era. Other factors helped it along. It emerged from the postwar conservative movement and capitalized on the advantages that foundation afforded. It skillfully courted older conservatives, who in turn helped fund and publicize the magazine. It attracted important sponsors and published the early writings of future conservative opinion makers.

Its formative experiences fighting the New Left gave the magazine a heightened awareness for potential allies. Instead of publishing only conservative writers, it sought out and published writers who shared a dislike for the student left. They were the first on the right to see in *The Public Interest* a possible source of support and collaboration in the fight against student radicals, well before the term “neoconservative” existed. In the early

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<sup>143</sup> Anthony Harrigan, “Sensing the News: Conservative Alternative,” *Clovis News-Journal*, March 29, 1972, 14; see also Dawson, “Emmett Tyrrell Had No Alternative, So...” *Sunday Herald-Times* (IN), December 5, 1971, 45; and Buckler, “Conservative Journal is Thriving at IU,” *The Louisville Courier-Journal*, April 16, 1971, 5.

1970s, YAF broke apart over factional infighting and declining membership.<sup>144</sup> By contrast, *The Alternative* thrived and its antiradicalism evolved gradually into an ecumenical conservatism in the 1970s. As the next chapter argues, during the 1970s *The Alternative* became a key transition point for neoconservatives in their shift toward the conservative movement.

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<sup>144</sup> Schneider, *Cadres of Conservatism*, 115-116, 126, see especially 127-141 for more on YAF's internal conflicts; for an interesting contemporary view of the libertarian-conservative tensions of the early 1970s, see Jerome Tuccille, *It Usually Begins with Ayn Rand* (New York: Stein and Day, 1971).



**Chapter 2:**  
**Ecumenical Conservatism and the Secular Culture Wars:**  
*The American Spectator in the 1970s*

In the 1970s, *The American Spectator* slowly transitioned from a campus antiradical magazine into a national conservative opinion journal. During this period, it achieved a modest influence within the conservative intellectual movement, but made little impact beyond the right. Saved from yearly deficits by right wing philanthropists, the magazine's editors tested different intellectual options in an effort to carve out a publication niche.

*TAS* editors played a small but important role within the conservative movement by helping to bridge the intellectual differences between conservatives and neoconservatives.<sup>1</sup> They published the two groups alongside one another and promoted an ecumenical conservative outlook toward the potential new allies.<sup>2</sup> At the same time,

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<sup>1</sup> Most histories of postwar conservatism overlook the role of *TAS* as a bridge for neoconservatism. Notable exceptions include George Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1996; originally published by Basic Books, 1976), 313-314; and Patrick Allitt, *The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 191-223. This chapter builds on and complements these works. Tyrrell, "Introduction," in *Orthodoxy: The American Spectator Anniversary Anthology*, ed. Robert E. Tyrrell (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), xi; Alfred Regnery, *TAS* publisher in the 2000s, described *TAS* as a "bridge for a whole procession of liberals in their trek to the right." See Regnery, *Upstream: The Ascendancy of American Conservatism* (New York: Threshold, 2008), 276. Helpful histories of the magazine during this period include Byron York, "Life and Death of *The American Spectator*," *The Atlantic* (November 2001): 91-110; David Brock's *Blinded by the Right: The Conscience of an Ex-Conservative* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2002); David Hoeveler's "*The American Spectator*," in *The Conservative Press in Twentieth-Century America*, eds., Ronald Lora and William Longton (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1999) and "*American Spectator*," in *American Conservatism: An Encyclopedia*, eds., Bruce Frohnen, Jeremy Beer, and Jeffrey Nelson (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006), 33-35, and a chapter about R. Emmett Tyrrell in his book, *Watch on the Right*, 207-232; and Alicia Shepard, "*Spectator's Sport*," *AJR* (May 1995): 32-39.

<sup>2</sup> For the recent historiography of neoconservatism, see Nathan Abrams, *Norman Podhoretz and Commentary Magazine: The Rise and Fall of the Neocons* (New York: Continuum, 2010); Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010); Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine That Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010); Gary Dorrien, *The Neoconservative Mind: Politics, Culture, and the War of Ideology* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993); John Ehrman, *Rise of Neoconservatives: Intellectuals and Foreign Affairs* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995); Murray Friedman, *The Neoconservative Revolution: Jewish Intellectuals and the Shaping of Public Policy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005);

however, they aggressively excluded other groups by viciously attacking the gay and feminist movements. They published mean-spirited articles that developed a secular rationale for the right's opposition to these minority groups and solidified the magazine's place as a leading mainstream culture warrior on the right.<sup>3</sup>

These efforts resulted directly from *TAS*'s continued intragenerational battle with the 1960s student left. As the only conservative journal founded and edited by the 1960s generation conservatives, it recognized before *National Review* the value of making common cause with neoconservatives, potential allies who shared a strong disdain for student radicals and fretted over the leftward drift of liberalism. Also, it considered its gay and feminist opposition an extension of its war against student radicals and believed it was defending traditional American culture against a new, permissive culture advanced by its cogenerationists from the 1960s. The magazine saw itself as fighting a culture war, not *for* religious values, but *against* what it considered the values of 1960s student radicalism.<sup>4</sup>

As *TAS* struggled to gain even a small national reach in the 1970s, it faced criticism, particularly from libertarians who could have been allies. It also enjoyed occasional praise for its iconoclastic style and satirical tone from some mainstream

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Mark Gerson, *The Neoconservative Vision: From the Cold War to the Culture Wars* (Lanham, MD: Madison, 1996); Peter Steinfels, *The Neoconservatives: The Men Who Are Changing America's Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979).

<sup>3</sup> In a *Journal of American History* symposium, Kim Phillips-Fein argues that much work remains to be done in understanding the right's formulation and articulation of its opposition to the feminists and gay rights movements. No other mainstream conservative magazine articulated more strident anti-feminism and anti-homosexual opinions than did *The American Spectator*. As this chapter argues, *TAS* was the mainstream magazine at the forefront of the right's culture wars and it often found itself engaged in heated intra-conservative debates and fending off fierce criticism from outside the movement. See Phillips-Fein, "Conservatism: A State of the Field," *JAH*, 98 (December 2011): 723-743.

<sup>4</sup> This chapter offers the first detailed look at the integral role played by conservative baby boomers in the neoconservative alliance, see Phillips-Fein, "Conservatism: A State of the Field," 723-743.

outlets that overlooked the magazine's vulgar attacks on gays and feminists.<sup>5</sup> Buoyed by such recognition, the editors emphasized the magazines's youthful bent, recruited an increasingly broad range of writers, and even explored potential transatlantic conservative allies. Opposition to 1960s radicalism and its aftermath remained the primary concentration, though.<sup>6</sup>

### **Neoconservatism, TAS, and the Conservative Intellectual Movement**

The emergence of the neoconservatives reinvigorated the American conservative intellectual movement in the 1970s. A loose collection of liberal social scientists, many of them Jewish and former communists, drifted to the right in the 1970s, gradually accepting the name, neoconservatives. Their work appeared in the pages of Irving Kristol's *Public Interest* in the 1960s and then, in the 1970s, in Norman Podhoretz's *Commentary*.<sup>7</sup> They brought to conservatism new ideas, perspectives, concerns, and intellectual gravitas. "The conservative intellectual movement gained important allies in the sixties and seventies, the neoconservatives," writes historian Patrick Allitt, "They offered a cogent analysis of the era's crisis and became the theoretical branch of an electoral coalition that would dominate American politics for the remainder of the century."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> An Associated Press columnist wrote that "good satire is a rare—and difficult—form of literature. But Robert Emmett Tyrrell has just the right bite in his magazine, *The American Spectator*." See Terry Kirkpatrick, "Mencken's Spirit Reborn," *Wisconsin State Journal*, August 23, 1979, 5.

<sup>6</sup> Tyrrell, "On Ten Years of Public Service," *TAS* (November 1977): 4, 44. According to *National Review*, "The magazine is catching on now, and has been saluted not only by conservatives but in such publications as *Time* and *The New Republic*. As the list of contributing eminences suggests, the *Spectator*'s constituency ranges from libertarians to Tories to social democrats.... The common denominator of the *Spectator*'s contributors is an attachment to constitutional democracy and a cool and critical hostility to the prevalent political crazes." M.J. Sobran, "Talking Back," *National Review* (December 23, 1977): 1506-1507.

<sup>7</sup> See Abrams, *Norman Podhoretz and Commentary Magazine*, 93-132; Greg Schneider, *Cadres for Conservatism: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of the Contemporary Right* (New York: New York University Press), 115-116.

<sup>8</sup> See "The Movement Gains Allies, 1964-1980," in Allitt, *The Conservatives*, 191-223.

Like *TAS*, their conservatism took shape primarily in direct response to student radicals and the domestic social turmoil of the mid-1960s to early 1970s. “Perhaps the most disillusioning experience of all, for those who were to move in a neo-conservative direction, was the youth rebellion of the 1960s, and the counterculture associated with it.” Other factors also contributed to their rightward movement, particularly their conviction that the Great Society social welfare programs had failed; as they published empirical study after study, they slowly grew disappointed with the efficacy of government programs. Frustrations with foreign policy, especially after the fall of South Vietnam in 1975, also played a role.<sup>9</sup>

But it was the campus and social turmoil led by students and young Americans that acted as the primary catalyst. “Above all, this new awareness of conservative values” by the neoconservatives, wrote George Nash, “must be attributed to the fiery, polarizing effects of the student revolt in the universities.” As the young conservatives at *TAS* grappled with the New Left and student radicalism on their Bloomington campus and around the nation, they found kindred minds and common cause with these disillusioned liberals.<sup>10</sup>

As chapter one explained, as early as 1968, the anti-radical emphasis of the magazine had prompted Tyrrell to interview Kristol. “By 1968 some of the younger members of the conservative movement were beginning to notice Irving as a potential ally,” Tyrrell later recalled, “Most of the older conservatives were wary, but then those of us in conservatism’s young generation...it was easier for us to see merit in Irving’s

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<sup>9</sup> Irving Kristol, “Looking Back on Neo-Conservatism: Notes and Reflections,” *TAS* (November 1977): 6; for more on Kristol’s relationship with neoconservatism, see Kristol, *Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), especially chapter 1, “An Autobiographical Memoir,” 3-40.

<sup>10</sup> Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 303.

skepticism, and to those of us caught in the campus upheavals Irving appeared as a guru.”<sup>11</sup> *TAS*’s editors quickly embraced the neoconservatives and then actively worked throughout the 1970s to welcome the group into the conservative fold. By the end of the decade, the editors had established their position as a bridge publication *within* the conservative movement. During the 1970s, “The young whippersnappers of *The American Spectator*,” noted *Esquire* magazine in 1980, “became the youth axis of the conservative and neoconservative establishment.”<sup>12</sup>

The magazine, then, spearheaded efforts to promote mutual acceptance between the disaffected liberals and movement conservatives in the 1970s. Under Robert Bartley’s (1937-2003) direction, *The Wall Street Journal*’s editorial pages also featured some neoconservative writers in the 1970s, as did William Buckley’s *National Review*. But only *TAS* regularly published movement conservatives—a varied group, itself—*together* with neoconservatives and intentionally sought to integrate the two groups. This inclusive approach proved inviting to the neoconservatives. “Our political culture badly needs an alternative perspective to the standard positions of the Left and the Right,” wrote Norman Podhoretz in 1975, “and I think *The Alternative* is more and more being true to its name in developing such a perspective.”<sup>13</sup> Other neoconservatives agreed. “By the middle 1970s, Tyrrell’s magazine was becoming a favorite of neoconservatives,” writes *National*

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<sup>11</sup> Tyrrell, *The Conservative Crackup* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 79; Greg Dawson, “Emmett Tyrrell Had No Alternative, So . . .,” *Sunday Herald-Times* (IN), December 5, 1971, 45.

<sup>12</sup> James Wolcott, “Young Whippersnappers: Their Clubhouse is *The American Spectator*, and Their Mascot is H. L. Mencken,” *Esquire* (September, 1980): 14, 17.

<sup>13</sup> Norman Podhoretz, “Advertisement Endorsement,” *TAS* (December 1975): 23. Older conservatives such as Bartley, Buckley, and William Rusher provided advice to *TAS* editors. For example, Bartley wrote to Tyrrell with legal information and advice regarding libel in order to protect *TAS*; See Bartley to Tyrrell, April 24, 1975, Box 56, Correspondence Folder, Robert L. Bartley papers, Hoover Institution Archive, Palo Alto, CA. Another mentor, British journalist Malcolm Muggeridge advised the editors to “be a magazine which keeps one guessing.” See Tyrrell to Muggeridge, February 16, 1976, Correspondence Papers SC04B38F18-2, Box 38, Folder 18-2, Malcolm Muggeridge Papers, Wheaton College, Chicago, Illinois.

*Review*'s John Miller, "Contributors included Elliott Abrams, Harvey Mansfield, Michael Novak, and James Q. Wilson."<sup>14</sup>

By contrast, the neoconservatives appeared only sporadically in *National Review* prior to 1979. The first significant overture toward the neoconservatives was published in March 1971, several years after *TAS*, under the heading, "Come On In, the Water's Fine."<sup>15</sup> A few scattered pieces followed in the 1970s, but always with a cautious tone and with few, if any, compared to *TAS*, by neoconservative authors themselves. Irving Kristol, for example, was not published in *National Review* until 1981.<sup>16</sup>

*TAS* devoted entire issues to introducing its readers to these potential allies. There was a didactic quality to these issues—an intentional effort to educate conservative readers on their shared interests with neoconservatives. The 1972 summer issue, for example, introduced "Irving Kristol and the *Public Interest* Crowd." Tyrrell approached the *Wall Street Journal*'s Bartley about a contribution to the proposed forum.<sup>17</sup> "I'll have to think a bit about the *Public Interest* piece," replied Bartley, "It's tempting (in fact, I've thought about doing something similar for our own paper)."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> John Miller, *A Gift of Freedom: How the John M. Olin Foundation Changed America* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2006), 140-141.

<sup>15</sup> *National Review*, "Come On In, the Water's Fine" (March 9, 1971): 249-250.

<sup>16</sup> See *National Review*, "Irving Kristol at Work" (June 8, 1973): 621; For an example of Buckley discussing the neoconservatives in *National Review*, see Buckley, "Hooray!" *National Review* (October 13, 1978): 1302-1303. By the late 1970s, *National Review* was exploring neoconservatism in more detail; see Michael Novak, "Pious Socialists," *National Review* (February 22, 1980): 22. For Kristol's first published piece in *National Review*, see Kristol, J.A. Parker, John Chamberlain, et al, "George Gilder's Wealth and Poverty: A Symposium," *National Review* (April 17, 1981): 414-415.

<sup>17</sup> "In a couple of months we want to devote the better part of an issue to the social critics and social scientists who are associated with Irving Kristol. The theme will be something about 'the emergence of responsible intellectuals...'" See Tyrrell to Bartley, February 11, 1972, Box 56, Correspondence Folder, Robert L. Bartley Papers, Hoover Institution Archive, Palo Alto, CA.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Bartley to Tyrrell, February 17, 1972, Box 56, Correspondence Folder, Robert L. Bartley Papers, Hoover Institution Archive, Palo Alto, CA.

Bartley eventually did contribute a piece, as did Buckley and several neoconservatives.<sup>19</sup> An alliance with movement conservatives was possible and much needed, argued contributors, and a neoconservative such as Kristol offered “that unique kind of thinker around whom can rally liberals and conservatives.” Disagreements remained, conceded the editors, between neoconservatives and movement conservatives, principally surrounding the role of government. But Kristol was a first-rate thinker, one widely respected in academia and beyond, and he was someone who helped explain the confusion of the 1960s. “Again and again,” explained Tyrrell, “Kristol returns to the theme that denatured authority is the cause of alienation, anomie, and the dispirited withdrawal of the *desengages*.”<sup>20</sup> This explanation had a powerful appeal to baby boomer conservatives with *TAS*.

Kristol was one of the two most important neoconservatives promoted by *TAS*; the other was Norman Podhoretz. *TAS*'s managing editor Adam Meyerson (b. 1953) introduced readers to the editor of *Commentary* magazine in 1974 with an admiring piece. Podhoretz had been a typical liberal Democratic intellectual until the student protests and New Left activism of the mid-1960s, explained Meyerson, when he became an outspoken liberal critic of the “rampages of the New Left [and] the implications of their counterculture.” Meyerson reminded readers of the turmoil and New Left protests of the 1960s, which he described as the “greatest totalitarian threat to our nation” in the 1960s. It was heated rhetoric, designed to remind conservative readers of the radicalism

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.; Bartley, “Irving Kristol and the Public Interest Crowd,” *TAS* (June/September 1972): 5-6.

<sup>20</sup> Tyrrell, “Review of Irving Kristol’s *On the Democratic Idea in America*,” *TAS* (June/September 1972): 8-9; Irving Kristol’s *Two Cheers for Capitalism*, an early neoconservative classic collection of Kristol editorials from *The Wall Street Journal*, received a positive review by Paul Seabury, a Berkeley political scientist. Kristol’s principal targets, as Seabury and other *TAS* writers pointed out, were the government and the New Class elites, who also happened to be villains in the eyes of *TAS* readers. Paul Seabury, “Picking on Irving,” *TAS* (March 1979): 5-8.

of the prior decade, and to situate Podhoretz on their side in those contentious years. Conservatives, then, had an ally in *Commentary*'s editor, Meyerson tried to explain.<sup>21</sup>

The rightward movement of these liberals occurred more slowly than some contemporary writers recognized. George Nash's classic history of conservative intellectuals, for example, was overly optimistic, perhaps prescriptively so, about the neoconservative-conservative alliance, an ongoing process when he wrote in the mid-1970s.<sup>22</sup> A participant himself in these events, he highlighted Irving Kristol's leadership among the neoconservatives, the positive conservative reception of Edward Banfield's *The Unheavenly City* (1970), *National Review*'s publication of some neoconservatives in 1972, and praised *TAS*'s role in the rapprochement.<sup>23</sup>

Nash, both a *TAS* reader and a student at Harvard at the time, attended a *TAS*-sponsored conference in the fall of 1971 designed to promote dialogue between neoconservatives and conservatives. This "Education for Democracy" forum in Cambridge, Massachusetts, was modeled on its "Alternative Week" conferences in

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<sup>21</sup> Adam Meyerson, "Norman Podhoretz: An Appreciation," *TAS* (December 1974): 16-17. See also Roger Starr, "Norman's Conquest," *TAS* (November 1979): 7-9. Meyerson described *Commentary* as a magazine of writers who "assaulted the rallying cries of the New Left and the counterculture." These writers included the likes of Alexander Bickel, James Q. Wilson, Daniel Moynihan, and Robert Nisbet, and together with Podhoretz, they fought intramural intellectual battles within liberalism in which they defended the American economy and society, he explained. For more on Podhoretz, see Thomas Jeffers, *Norman Podhoretz: A Biography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). See also James Roberts, *The Conservative Decade: Emerging Leaders of the 1980s* (Westport, CT: Arlington House Publishers, 1980), 100, 105; Tyrrell, *The Conservative Crackup*, 93.

<sup>22</sup> On the prescriptive aspects of Nash's classic history, see Jennifer Burns, "In Retrospect: George Nash's The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945," *Reviews in American History* 32 (Sept. 2004): 447-62. Burns points to embedded arguments in Nash's work, particularly in his definition of what constituted a conservative intellectual.

<sup>23</sup> See "Can the Vital Center Hold?" in *Conservative Intellectual Movement*, George Nash, 302-328. While Banfield's book had been a crossover hit, he already had his feet in both camps. For a probing examination of Banfield's relationship with conservatism and neoconservatism, see Charles Kessler, ed., *Edward Banfield: An Appreciation* (Claremont, CA: Henry Salvatori Center for the Study of the Individual Freedom in the Modern World, April 2002). While the neoconservatives were disillusioned with sixties radicals and the War on Poverty, Banfield was a disillusioned New Dealer who wrote critical empirical social science studies in the 1940s and 1950s. Moreover, Banfield was never a communist. Nevertheless, as a Harvard social scientist, former liberal, and friend of so many neoconservatives, he certainly shared traits with them.



Bloomington in the late 1960s. Nash later described it as an example of the new alignment taking place on the right. He noted, for example, that William Kristol, a *TAS* editor and the son of Irving Kristol, helped organize the conference. It surely was a marker of rapprochement, but as other participants noted, it did not go smoothly. Norman Podhoretz, editor of *Commentary*, attended and attacked Tyrrell and the conservatives for what he then considered their reactionary, repressive politics.<sup>24</sup>

Some of the conflict reflected political and policy differences, to be sure. But in other ways tensions stemmed from mutual distrust. It was true that *National Review* had favorably reviewed some neoconservative books and published some neoconservative pieces in 1972, but these were far from enthusiastic endorsements. *National Review* otherwise kept the neoconservatives at arm's length until the late 1970s.<sup>25</sup> Also, conservatives, particularly those at *National Review*, had been stung by the recent break with Garry Wills, a talented writer and Buckley protégé who moved to the left and broke with *National Review* in the 1960s. Distrust on the right was also shaped by a fear that the neoconservatives were only temporarily flirting with movement conservatives. The fact that many neoconservatives supported Democrats Hubert Humphrey in 1968 and George

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<sup>24</sup> The Cambridge conference was one of three such that *TAS* sponsored in 1971, see “The Alternative Educational Foundation, Inc.: The First Ten Years,” 1977, Box 7, Folder 2, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 313-314; Tyrrell, *The Conservative Crackup*, 84. When Nash finished graduate school at Harvard, *TAS* and *National Review* tried to help him find a job. Initially Nash wrote that he was interested in a “‘writing arrangement’ for me in Bloomington,” but instead he accepted a position with the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library writing as the Hoover biographer. See George Nash to Tyrrell, October 3, 1974, Box 92, Folder 3, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; Rusher to Tyrrell, October 17, 1974, Box 92, Folder 3, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

<sup>25</sup> For example, in the late 1970s, *National Review* questioned the stability of the neoconservatives. “They are insufficiently rooted in serious political realities, in general principle, or coherent intellectual tradition. The result is that with each shift the New York intellectuals undergo a kind of lesion of intellectual legitimacy.” See *National Review*, “A Split in the Family” (December 15, 1970): 1335.

McGovern in 1972 exacerbated concerns on the right.<sup>26</sup> When *TAS* published *Public Interest*'s managing editor Marc Plattner, *TAS* editors found themselves defending the young neoconservative writer and their decision to publish him. In response to a critical letter by Bill Rusher, Tyrrell wrote, "the only place I would take issue with you is when you imply that Marc is a liberal. I would hesitate to so abuse him, because Marc is pretty antagonistic to that camp." Rusher was not persuaded.<sup>27</sup>

*TAS* editors buffered the process along, helping both sides slowly accept one another. While some on the right viewed the neoconservatives as interlopers and were skeptical of *TAS*'s intermediary efforts, the neoconservatives nursed long held biases against conservatives, whom they viewed as right-wing extremists. *TAS* editors tried to smooth out differences, persuading the neoconservatives, for example, that the conservative movement was not ruled by John Birchers. "I have scars on my person where conservatives pummeled me for allowing dangerous radicals like Irving Kristol aboard. And I bear other scars where the neoconservatives throttled me for being so reactionary," recalled Tyrrell. "At any rate both groups are now happily to the right, and I suppose it is my good manners that prevent me from reminding the colleagues of my prophetic vision and enduring moderation."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Paul Gottfried, a traditionalist conservative, explained that "a source of frustration for modern traditionalists is that both the political spectrum and the thrust of topical issues are always moving away from them." See Gottfried, "On Neoconservatism," *Modern Age* (Winter 1983): 36-41; Tyrrell, *The Conservative Crackup*, 80-81.

<sup>27</sup> Tyrrell to Rusher, January 30, 1976, Box 92, Folder 3, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; "I am glad to know Marc Plattner isn't a liberal, but his general remarks (e.g., about Jerry Brown) would have fooled me." Rusher to Tyrrell, February 4, 1976, Box 92, Folder 3, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

<sup>28</sup> David Theroux, "The Movement," *TLR* (May 1979): 12-13; Libertarianism itself experienced tremendous fissures in the 1970s, beginning with the now famous disruptions at the 1969 and 1970 YAF conventions. For an example of contributing factors to the neoconservatives' distrust of conservatives, see Daniel Bell, ed., *The Radical Right: The New American Right* (New York: Anchor Books, 1964). Tyrrell, *The Conservative Crackup*, 80-83; Tyrrell, "Introduction," in *Orthodoxy: The American Spectator Anniversary Anthology*, ed. Robert E. Tyrrell (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), xi.

*TAS*'s editors, especially Tyrrell, made an important contribution in this regard. "Bob Tyrrell was good company whenever he visited New York," *National Review*'s Richard Brookhiser later recalled, "He boasted, truly, that he was the first conservative to reach out to the unhappy liberals who later became neoconservatives."<sup>29</sup> With roots firmly planted in the conservative movement, *TAS*'s editors were secure in their credentials with the right; *TAS* was indisputably a movement magazine, indeed, the only one to survive the 1960s and grow to national status. This gave editors some measure of security in their editorial decisions to print the two groups together and to argue for a big tent approach.<sup>30</sup> Writing in *Commentary* magazine's 1976 symposium on liberalism and conservatism, Tyrrell argued for *TAS*'s ecumenical approach to conservatism. "To neglect ideological distinctions," he argued, "is not to reveal oneself as philosophically frivolous but rather as deeply serious about deeply serious matters."<sup>31</sup> By the mid-1970s, even some outside observers were referring to *TAS* as "a kind of young man's *Public Interest* magazine."<sup>32</sup>

William Buckley applauded Tyrrell and his magazine for drawing attention to the shared ground between the neoconservatives and the conservative movement. He singled out the magazine's emphasis on the importance of Irving Kristol "at the center not so much of a movement as of a consolidation of political and social attitudes," noted

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<sup>29</sup> Richard Brookhiser, *Right Time, Right Place: Coming of Age with William F. Buckley, Jr. and the Conservative Movement* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 179-180

<sup>30</sup> "Tyrrell went out of his way to find writers from outside the conservative movement who showed promise—sometimes making dyed-in-the-wool conservatives uneasy," explained Alfred Regnery, a baby boomer reader of *TAS* and later publisher of the magazine in the 2000s. "The historic consequence was that this magazine became the first stop for Cold War liberals journeying rightward, such as Irving Kristol, Midge Decter, James Q. Wilson, Jeane Kirkpatrick, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Alfred Regnery, "The Class of 1967," *TAS* (October 19, 2007): 6.

<sup>31</sup> Tyrrell, "What is a Liberal—Who is a Conservative? A Symposium," *Commentary* (September 1976): 101-102.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Lenzner, "The Menu was Conservative: Roast Liberal, with Bon Mots," *Boston Globe*, December 8, 1977, 1, 41.

Buckley, “and Mr. Tyrrell is adroit in summoning their attention—our attention—to the phenomenon of Irving Kristol, who quite simply is writing more sense in the *Public Interest* these days than anybody I can think of.”<sup>33</sup> Although *National Review* would not publish a Kristol essay until the 1980s, Buckley was endorsing, in fact, *TAS*’s efforts to hammer out common ground with the neoconservatives.

By the mid-1970s, the *TAS* editors began to self-identify periodically with the neoconservatives. Although Tyrrell had described himself as a libertarian or libertarian-conservative in the past, he told an interviewer with the national publication *People’s Weekly* that he shared much in common with the neoconservatives. “Wrinkling his nose at labels, [Tyrrell] defines ‘neoconservative’ as ‘an old liberal for whom the center has moved left.’ That, he says, is what happened to him in 1967.”<sup>34</sup> Buckley and others also began to describe *TAS* as a neoconservative publication. As early as 1976, Buckley described the magazine as “a wonderfully lively highbrow, iconoclastic, *neoconservative*, brawling staid monthly called *The Alternative*, whose guiding spirit is R. Emmett Tyrrell, and which publishes more interesting academicians saying interesting things than any monthly one can think of.”<sup>35</sup> Still, the label was not entirely accurate. Less a neoconservative magazine, *TAS* was a conservative movement magazine that published neoconservatives before other movement magazines. But Tyrrell, Von Kannon, and the

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<sup>33</sup> Buckley, “Irving Kristol,” *TAS* (June 1972): 7; Bill Rusher agreed. The June/September 1974 *TAS* issue, which featured cover stories by neoconservatives Arnold Beichman, Ben Wattenberg, and Irving Kristol, Rusher called “a series of masterpieces...I really do think you are getting somewhere.” Rusher to Tyrrell, May 21, 1974, Box 92, Folder 3, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

<sup>34</sup> Linda Witt, “On the Move: The Whales are Safe, but Politicians Aren’t (From Bob Tyrrell’s Editorial Harpoons),” *People Weekly* (November 5, 1979):121-124; For another example of self-identification as a “neo-conservative journal of opinion,” see Meyerson, “Former Aide Attacks Agnew’s Anti-Israel Views,” *TAS* Press Release, September 7, 1976, in Box 59, Folder: *Alternative Magazine*, White House Central Files, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, Grand Rapids, MI.

<sup>35</sup> Italics added. Buckley, “Evidence of a Smear of Innocent Victim,” August 30, 1976, in Box 7, Folder 2, General Correspondence, *American Spectator*, 1973-1988, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; The *Boston Globe* also grouped *TAS* with neoconservative publications, see David Wilson, “Plenty of Targets for Right in this Year of Tax Revolt,” *Boston Globe*, June 19, 1978, 15.

other editors understood that identifying with an increasingly influential group like the neoconservatives bolstered *TAS*'s reputation and visibility in the late 1970s. The small magazine benefitted immensely from the association.

*TAS* editors' efforts to incorporate neoconservative ideas into mainstream conservatism in the 1970s shared similarities with the integration of former communist intellectuals such as Frank Meyer, James Burnham, and Whittaker Chambers into a coherent conservative intellectual movement by Buckley in the 1940s and 1950s.

Whatever Tyrrell's writing lacked in comparison to Buckley, as editors both excelled at strengthening conservative thought through the active inclusion of new allies and ideas. Both editors also had to corral independent thinkers and forge new alliances.<sup>36</sup>

A generational factor related to *National Review* also affected *TAS*'s early association with the neoconservatives. As thirty-somethings in the 1970s, the young generation running *TAS* had lost some faith in their elders in the movement. They felt, in part, that aside from Buckley, the movement lacked sufficient brain power. The death of Frank Meyer in 1972 and James Burnham's debilitating stroke in 1978 accented this point. In deciding to pursue relationships with the neoconservatives, then, *TAS*'s baby boomer conservatives saw intellectual reinforcements. The magazine committed to forging an alliance around a shared opposition to the politics and culture of 1960s radicals.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *Time* magazine also noted connections between the two editors, Tyrrell and Buckley. The title of one of its pieces on Tyrrell, "God and Man in Bloomington," played on Buckley's first book, *God and Man at Yale: The Superstitions of Academic Freedom*, (Chicago: Regnery, 1951); see *Time*, "God and Man in Bloomington" (March 7, 1977): 93-94. For more on Buckley, see John Judis, *William F. Buckley, Jr.: Patron Saint of the Conservatives* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001).

<sup>37</sup> William Rusher frequently noted *TAS*'s generational difference with *National Review*. "You and your crew are some of the finest writers on the Right today, and you may salvage some of us old fogeys yet." Rusher to Tyrrell, October 24, 1973, Box 92, Folder 3, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; Tyrrell, *The Conservative Crackup*, 91.

Because of frequent criticism, editorial freedom was particularly crucial. *TAS* remained a diverse conservative organ in the 1970s. Readers appreciated this quality and frequently referenced it in their letters to the editors.<sup>38</sup> “There is enough here to make anyone of any political or social school both joyful and hopping mad,” wrote *Library Journal*. “In a word, it is one of the few magazines which dares to focus on both popular and terribly unpopular viewpoints. The result is a fascinating, intelligent, and totally readable approach to current affairs. It is highly recommended.”<sup>39</sup>

This editorial ethos became a distinctive quality of the magazine, distinguishing it from other ideological conservative magazines such as *The Libertarian Review (TLR)* and *Triumph*, politically centered periodicals like *Human Events*, and even *National Review*. “Our pages are lively because our writers work with full confidence that they are free to speak their minds, boasted the magazine in 1977, “never do we heave out a manuscript for its dangerous ideas, unless those ideas are anti-democratic or downright foolish.”<sup>40</sup> It filled a distinctive niche on the right as an ecumenical conservative magazine.<sup>41</sup>

### **Training Young Writers**

Tyrrell proved adept at recruiting the children of neoconservatives. In 1973 he called Ben Stein (b. 1944), the son of neoconservative and Nixon administration

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<sup>38</sup> Sobran, “Talking Back,” *National Review* (December 23, 1977): 1506-1507. In a 1977 interview with *Time*, Tyrrell said “We are not after the right-wing yahoos or the left-wing zealots.” *Time*, “God and Man in Bloomington” (March 7, 1977): 93-94.

<sup>39</sup> Bill Katz, “LJ: Magazines,” *Library Journal*, February 1, 1975, Box 7, Folder 2, General Correspondence, *American Spectator*, 1973-1988, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

<sup>40</sup> Tyrrell, “On Ten Years of Public Service,” *TAS* (November 1977): 4, 44; In the 1980s and 1990s, particularly after its move east to Washington, the magazine slowly lost this distinctive quality and became stridently partisan. See Chapter 3.

<sup>41</sup> Tyrrell, “Introduction,” in *Orthodoxy*, xi. The editors thought such an approach might prove financially beneficial. “Part of the reason for the magazine’s success,” Tyrrell said, is that it is “one of the places where you can read the neo-conservative or the old-liberal point of view,” quoted in Patrick Siddons, “An Alternative,” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, July 21, 1976, C1, Correspondence Papers SC04B38F21, Box 38, Folder 21, Malcolm Muggeridge Papers, Wheaton College, Chicago, Illinois.

economist Herbert Stein (1916-1999), to introduce himself. Stein worked as a speechwriter for Nixon's daughters in the White House and then began writing movie reviews for a few publications. Tyrrell wanted Stein to review films, too, and his call began a long friendship. "He said he had read my op-ed pieces in the *Wall Street Journal* and the [*New York Times*] and liked them. But he also said he thought that since my mother and father were so smart, I would probably be smart, too." Stein agreed to write movie reviews; he later became a featured regular columnist and ardent supporter of the magazine. Tyrrell and *TAS* editors similarly initiated relationships with other neoconservative offspring and scores of young writers.<sup>42</sup>

Other young neoconservatives worked at the magazine as part of an intentional effort by the magazine to develop more conservative talent. Elizabeth Kristol (b. 1956), the daughter of Irving Kristol and Gertrude Himmelfarb, interned during the summer of 1976. Two children of neoconservative writers contributed as artists to the magazine.<sup>43</sup> Edward Banfield's son also worked for *TAS*. Elliott Banfield was an artist, and Tyrrell enlisted him to do the cover art and illustrations. "My career in graphics began in the early 1970's, when I was given the opportunity to make drawings for *The American Spectator*," explained Banfield, before illustrating for the *New York Times*, *Wall Street*

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<sup>42</sup> See Ben Stein, "Ben Stein's Diary," *TAS* (August/September 2003): 62-63; Ben Stein, "Memories and Tributes," *TAS* (December 2007/January 2008): 29. Stein's father called a friend, Robert Bartley, *The Wall Street Journal* editor, to request a favor in publishing his son's first movie review. Stein's movie reviews eventually opened doors to Hollywood, and in the 1980s he gained fame playing a small part as Matthew Broderick's monotone teacher in "Ferris Bueller's Day Off." See Jude Wanniski, "Herb Stein, R.I.P.," Memo to Supply Side University, September 1999; Bartley to Tyrrell, July 25, 1973, Box 56, Correspondence Folder, Robert L. Bartley Papers, Hoover Institution Archive, Palo Alto, CA.

<sup>43</sup> *The Washington Monthly* and historian Alan Crawford commented on *TAS*'s dense web of connections with neoconservative children. See "We Always Knew These Were Family Magazines," *Washington Monthly* (July/August 1982): 37.

*Journal*, and *Claremont Review of Books*.<sup>44</sup> Daniel Patrick Moynihan's son, Timothy, a sculptor, made a large papier-mache statue of H.L. Mencken to serve as the magazine's mascot.<sup>45</sup>

The magazine also introduced young writers to other conservative editors and Republican politicians. Tyrrell helped his former managing editor Adam Meyerson get a position at the *Wall Street Journal*. "I would like to mention to you one more time the name of Adam Meyerson," Tyrrell wrote Bob Bartley, "you could lure him away [from Harvard Business School] with the promise of riches and an occasional free visit to a local massage parlor."<sup>46</sup> In 1978, for example, Tyrrell introduced groups of his writers to Richard Nixon, with whom Tyrrell had formed a relationship.<sup>47</sup> This occurred during Nixon's years living in Manhattan as part of his image rehabilitation efforts. Invited guests included William Kristol, Robert Bartley, Leslie Lenkowsky, and Elliott Abrams.<sup>48</sup>

Publishing young writers, neoconservative and conservative, remained a strong point of emphasis, even well after donors gave editors the resources to publish anyone.

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<sup>44</sup> Elliott Banfield, Brief Autobiography," September, 2012, <http://www.elliottbanfield.com/About%20the%20Artist.html>, (accessed May 1, 2013).

<sup>45</sup> Linda Witt, "On the Move: The Whales are Safe, but Politicians Aren't (From Bob Tyrrell's Editorial Harpoons)," *People Weekly* (November 5, 1979): 121-124. [See also Tyrrell to Huntington Cairns, November 18, 1976](#), Box 109, General Correspondence, Folder 13: Tyrrell, R. Emmett, Jr., 1976, Huntington Cairns Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

<sup>46</sup> Tyrrell to Bartley, August 16, 1978, Box 56, Correspondence Folder, Robert L. Bartley Papers, Hoover Institution Archive, Palo Alto, CA; Editors at *National Review* and *TAS* traded resumes of prospective assistant editors and staffers, see Rusher to Tyrrell, May 30, 1974, Box 92, Folder 3, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

<sup>47</sup> Nixon had contacted Tyrrell after discovering the magazine in 1978 and requested Tyrrell fly to California so the two could talk. "It was not my idea but I would not sniff at the opportunity to see the Napoleon of our age," he wrote. Tyrrell to Cairns, July 31, 1978, Box 109, Folder 14, Huntington Cairns Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; "I only hope and pray that the man has not read [*TAS*] in recent years," Tyrrell quipped, "I would hate to be his first victim of homicide." Tyrrell to Rusher, August 18, 1978, Box 92, Folder 4, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

<sup>48</sup> Sidney Blumenthal, *Rise of the Counterestablishment: The Conservative Ascent to Political Power* (New York: Union Square Press, 1986), 165. Conrad Black, *Richard Nixon: A Life in Full* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007), 1020.



*TAS* editors, though, wanted to provide an outlet for up-and-coming writers.<sup>49</sup> “A whole gaggle of successful conservative journalists received their training, and in many cases their philosophical orientation, in the shabby yet lively office of *The American Spectator*,” explained conservative writer James Roberts in 1980.<sup>50</sup> There were relatively few major conservative periodicals, and thus *TAS* offered opportunities for gaining experience at a national journal and the chance for publication. “The advantage of working for a small magazine is that eventually you get a chance to do every job—from sorting the mail and dropping the boss off for his afternoon handball game, to setting type, proofing copy, writing headlines, and editing,” wrote Richard Starr, a *TAS* editor in the late 1970s who later worked for *Public Interest* and the *Weekly Standard*. “One of my earliest editorial tasks was retyping Sidney Hook’s review of Norman Podhoretz’s *The Present Danger*.”<sup>51</sup>

*TAS* played an integral role in the early careers of scores of young conservative and neoconservative writers in the 1970s. For example, the George H. W. Bush presidential speechwriter, Joseph Duggan, began his career as a *TAS* assistant editor. “My debt to Bob Tyrrell and *The Alternative* is of course enormous, and I intend to continue writing for the magazine as often as possible,” he wrote after accepting an editorial position with the *Greensboro Record* (N.C.).<sup>52</sup> Another young writer, Fred Barnes, co-

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<sup>49</sup> According to *TAS*’s tax exempt status documents, “Part of the foundation’s central program has been training journalists and helping to place them in newspapers, magazines, and broadcasting,” see “The Alternative Educational Foundation, Inc.: The First Ten Years,” 1977, in Box 7, Folder 2, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; *TAS*, “A Dinner Story” (February 1978): 41-43.

<sup>50</sup> Roberts, *The Conservative Decade*, 100, 105, 107; Ronald Burr, interview by Carl Rutan, “*The American Spectator*,” C-SPAN, May 23, 1986.

<sup>51</sup> Richard Starr, “Killer Rabbits and the Continuing Crisis,” in *Why I Turned Right: Leading Baby Boom Conservatives Chronicle Their Political Journeys*, ed. Mary Eberstadt (New York: Threshold Editions, 2007), 57.

<sup>52</sup> On *TAS*’s role in Duggan’s early career, see Joseph Duggan to Huntington Cairns, April 27, 1977, in Box 109, Folder 14, Huntington Cairns Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; Joseph Duggan to

founder of *The Weekly Standard* with William Kristol in 1995, earned his journalistic bona fides at *TAS*. He first discovered *TAS* in the 1970s and “knew instantly I wanted to write for *The Spectator*.” Editors turned down his initial submission, but he quickly became a frequent contributor. “I was amazed at the feedback my pieces got” from editors and readers. “*The Spectator* had a small circulation in those days but what mattered was its large number of readers,” he recalled. “Editors of other magazines read *The Spectator* and asked me to do freelance pieces for them,” he explained, and “soon I left the newspaper business for *The New Republic* and now *The Weekly Standard*. But I got my start at *The Spectator*.” For many others, such as the *Washington Post*’s Roger Rosenblatt (b. 1940), *Newsweek* columnist George Will, *The Weekly Standard* editor Richard Starr, and *National Review*’s Richard Brookhiser, *TAS* provided experience, training, and exposure.<sup>53</sup>

Other editorial decisions provoked conflict. Some movement conservatives took exception to George Will, the magazine’s young Washington-based columnist in the early 1970s. Will was a conservative, but a movement outlier. Calling himself a Whig, he defended using the federal government to promote citizenship and patriotism. *TAS* editors saw Will’s talent—he would win a Pulitzer Prize as a columnist with the *Washington Post* in 1977—and they liked his zeal in attacking the left. Not all on the right agreed. “Two conservatives were particularly neuralgic about George: M. Stanton Evans, the conservative journalist and activist, and *National Review* book editor, Frank S. Meyer,” recalled Tyrrell, “After George’s every essay, both would ring me up and burn my ears

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Malcolm and Kitty Muggeridge, May 12, 1977, SC04B38F18-3, Box 38, Folder 18-3, Malcolm Muggeridge Papers, Wheaton College, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>53</sup> Fred Barnes, “Memories and Tributes,” *TAS* (December 2007/January 2008): 26. Ronald Burr, interview by Carl Rutan, “*The American Spectator*,” C-SPAN, May 23, 1986; Brookhiser, *Right Time, Right Place*, 30; Starr, “Killer Rabbits and the Continuing Crisis,” 45-62.

over one or another of the heresies he had allegedly committed. It was thrilling to see how George would painstakingly shape an essay to give the conservatives maximum displeasure while advancing positions that fundamentally agreed with them.”<sup>54</sup>

### **TAS and the First Shots of the Culture Wars<sup>55</sup>**

While *TAS* promoted big tent conservatism, one inclusive of the newest allies from the left, in the 1970s, it also led the right’s culture war against the feminist and gay rights movements. It viciously attacked feminists and gay Americans, not from religious principles, but from secular, traditional, prejudices rooted in American history and culture. Its efforts sparked tremendous controversy within the conservative movement and led to a furious debate, particularly with libertarians at *TLR*.<sup>56</sup>

In the 1970s, *TAS* became openly hostile to the women’s rights movement, which it claimed was a product of the 1960s counterculture. Although the feminist movement’s roots stretched back well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *TAS* conservatives saw in it something new and strange. In part, this perspective resulted from the magazine’s practice of targeting the more extreme aspects of the movement and linking them to radical movements from the 1960s. Writing about the feminist movement, according to Tyrrell in 1977, made him “doubt we can soon shake the moonshine of the sixties.”<sup>57</sup> Singling out extreme examples of leftist thought and action and then mocking them was a common

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<sup>54</sup> Tyrrell, *The Conservative Crackup*, 81-82. There is no full, proper biography of Will, equivocal to Judis’s biography of Buckley. For a look at Will’s intellectual development, see Larry Chappell, *George F. Will* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997).

<sup>55</sup> Greg Schneider has suggested that *TAS* “represented the first shot fired in what would come to be called the ‘culture war’ between the Left and Right.” See Schneider, *Cadres for Conservatism*, 115-116.

<sup>56</sup> *TAS*, “‘Queer-Baiting...’ Reconsidered,” (October 1973): 13-19; Brudnoy, “*The Alternative: An American Spectacle*,” *TLR* (November 1977): 28-32. *National Review* followed up on *TAS*’s forum with its own, also featuring David Brudnoy. See David Brudnoy and Ernest Van Den Haag, “Reflections on the Issue of Gay Rights,” *National Review* (July 19, 1974): 802-806.

<sup>57</sup> Tyrrell, “Hoosier Cantos,” *TAS* (February 1977): 4. The most trenchant neoconservative critic of the feminist movement was Midge Decter. See Decter, “The Liberated Woman,” *Commentary* (October 1970): 33-44.

tactic at the magazine, whether the issues were gender, homosexuality, or other disadvantaged groups.<sup>58</sup>

The women's rights movement was a particularly energetic battleground in the 1970s. Conservatives, led by the indefatigable Phyllis Schlafly, successfully opposed ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment on the grounds that it would erode important protections for women, ostensibly resulting in unisex bathrooms and the military draft. The *Roe v Wade* decision highlighted the connections between women's rights and abortion, wedding the two together in the minds of many conservatives.<sup>59</sup>

*TAS* conservatives distinguished themselves from *National Review* and other mainstream conservative journals by attacking the feminist movement and its leaders, frequently resorting to ad hominem attacks. They found an oppositional foil in Bella Abzug (1920-1998). A former congresswoman, Democratic activist, and feminist leader, Abzug frequently took extreme positions and made controversial statements. She played a prominent role in feminist causes during the 1970s, particularly in organizing the National Women's Conference—a rally to advance the feminist movement agenda—in Texas in 1977. A confrontational personality, combined with an asserted feminism, made her an appealing target for *TAS*.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> The magazine's campaign against women would culminate in the early 1990s with its attacks on Anita Hill; On *TAS* and Anita Hill, see Chapter 4. For a quirky take on gender issues, see Mary Norton, "Education for a Different Whom," *TAS* (January 1978): 14-16.

<sup>59</sup> See Sean Wilentz, *Age of Reagan: A History, 1974-2008* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 88-89; Patrick Allitt, "American Intellectual History and Social Thought Since 1945," in *A Companion to Post-1945 America*, eds. Jean-Christophe Agnew and Roy Rosenzweig (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 134-152.

<sup>60</sup> Tyrrell, "Howl," *TAS* (October 1976): 4-34; *National Review*, by contrast, targeted Kate Millet, a bisexual feminist writer and gay movement leader, for ridicule; see Mano, "Kate Millett," *National Review* (June 22, 1979): 820-821. For an example of *National Review*'s more serious treatment of feminism, see M.J. Sobran, "Inside *Ms.*: Of *Ms.* And Men," *National Review* (May 24, 1974): 579-581.

Editors found that attacks on women shored up support on the right and attracted publicity. And, on these fronts it lurched ahead of *National Review* and other conservative magazines, attacking the women's rights movement with vitriol. It attempted to cloak its attacks as waggish humor. "Women's Liberation...these women are angry," wrote Tyrrell. He attacked Abzug, with language more extreme than *National Review* published, criticizing not only her politics, but also her physical appearance. He called her a hate-filled, yelling agitator, with "constantly shifting eyes lurking beneath a forehead of Maginot Line-like concrete." Her clothing itself brought rebuke. Tyrrell wrote that "her style of dress harmonizes exquisitely with the ugliness of her message...she is the most perfectly produced demagogue ever imagined."<sup>61</sup> But to *TAS*'s opponents, these attacks were right-wing mean-spiritedness. "Reading Tyrrell and his cronies, one is reminded of Mencken at his most bullying," *Esquire* magazine later explained.<sup>62</sup>

*The Rocky Mountain News*, one of Denver's two major dailies in the 1970s, reprinted a Tyrrell column on feminism in late 1979 and incurred a backlash. "Women of the Fevered Brow" offended female readers as an example of callous, right wing sexism. It included lines such as "women's liberation is probably the most successful pestilence since Prohibition, a movement that was likewise under feminine stewardship."<sup>63</sup> Picket lines formed in front of the paper's offices in Denver to protest the paper's decision to publish the article by the *TAS* editor. "The reaction was so amusing," noted *TAS*, "that several of our Denver readers wrote us about the letters to the editor, the picketing of the

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<sup>61</sup> Tyrrell, "Howl," *TAS*, October 1976, 4-34; Tyrrell, *Public Nuisances* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 116.

<sup>62</sup> James Wolcott, "Young Whippersnappers: Their Clubhouse is *The American Spectator*, and Their Mascot is H. L. Mencken," *Esquire* (September 1980): 14, 17.

<sup>63</sup> Tyrrell, "Call It Women's Glib," *New York Times*, April 16, 1979, A17.

News, and the follow-up story.” Readers of the Denver newspaper were “both sad and angry that the News would print...[such] blatant and ugly sexism.” But *TAS* mocked the outcry in Denver. It published pictures of the female protesters, described as “Tyrrell’s Contented Customers,” and crowed that *TAS* “is unlikely to become required reading for the sensitive and idealist of the Republic.”<sup>64</sup>

Just as it did with the feminist movement, *TAS*’s approach to the gay rights movement hardened during the 1970s and escalated in intensity. It first addressed the issue in February 1973 when it published two articles with alternative positions on the topic. David Brudnoy’s “Queer-Baiting for Faith, Fun, and Profit” took a hardline libertarian view of the issue, arguing vigorously against legal discriminations against homosexuals. His article traced the history of homosexual taboos and discrimination, and taking a purely libertarian tack, it argued that homosexuals ought to be left alone to do as they pleased in the privacy of their own homes. Brudnoy (1940-2004) also wrote for *National Review* and other right wing publications in 1970s.<sup>65</sup> As a counterpiece, Gary North’s “The Perseverance of the Family” argued that homosexuality threatened the security of the American family, which he considered the building block of Western

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<sup>64</sup> *TAS*, “Tyrrell’s Contented Customers” (January 1980): 40; in private correspondence, the editors joked about angry editorial letters from women offended by the magazine’s articles; see Tyrrell to Huntington Cairns, November 19, 1976, Box 109, General Correspondence, Folder 13: Tyrrell, R. Emmett, Jr., 1976, Huntington Cairns Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

<sup>65</sup> Brudnoy taught at Boston University and hosted a popular Boston-area radio talk show. He was a closeted homosexual until a battle with AIDS in the 1990s prompted him to reveal his sexual orientation. He hosted a popular Boston radio show until his death from cancer in 2004. See Mark Freeney, “Brudnoy, Icon of Airwaves, Dies,” *Boston Globe*, December 10, 2004. See also Brudnoy’s surprisingly candid autobiography, *Life is Not a Rehearsal* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), which describes the challenges he faced as a gay conservative man. It also anticipated themes in David Brock’s autobiography, *Blinded by the Right* (2003).

Civilization. Conservatives defended institutions, he argued, and no institution was more important than the family.<sup>66</sup>

The articles generated heated letters to the editors throughout 1973, each escalating in moral fervor over how conservatism ought to view the homosexual movement. Brudnoy's call for a libertarian toleration attracted particular venom. "The whole thing turned into a Bloomington, Indiana equivalent of the never-ending letters-to-the-editors wars in *Commentary*," recalled Brudnoy. He continued to contribute articles and remain, remarkably, on the masthead, but the experience soured his view of *TAS*.<sup>67</sup>

But *TAS*'s editors had found a popular topic with mainstream conservative readers, and they tacked hard to the right on it. In one sense it provided cover with conservatives concerned about the magazine's welcoming embrace of the neoconservatives. It was also consistent, though, with its dislike for the minority rights social movements that emerged in the wake of the 1960s counterculture. Editors viewed these minority and social movements as part of a continuing battle with 1960s student radicals. They thought themselves still in conflict with their generation's left wing.<sup>68</sup>

*TAS*'s strongest critics wrote for another magazine affiliated with the conservative movement, *TLR*. It took *TAS* to task on the gay issue, and its popular writer, Brudnoy,

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<sup>66</sup> David Brudnoy, "Queer-Baiting for Faith, Fun, and Profit," *TAS* (February 1973): 8-12; Gary North, "The Perseverance of the Family," *TAS* (February 1973): 5-8.

<sup>67</sup> From the *TAS* editors' perspectives, they had provided equal opportunity to opposing sides. Brudnoy saw it differently and complained in another right wing journal. "*The Alternative* had covered its rear by seeing to it that my historical resume and prescription for change was preceded by a standard traditionalist paean," he complained, "Readers could take comfort in knowing that the journal stuck to the straight and (very, very) narrow even as it allowed one of its 'associates' to amuse himself with a call for tolerance." Brudnoy, "*The Alternative: An American Spectacle*," *TLR* (November 1977): 28-32.

<sup>68</sup> "Queer-Baiting... Reconsidered," *TAS* (October 1973): 13-19; the response to the Brudnoy conflict by a representative of Young Americans for Freedom, James Newman, was insightful: "It is unfortunate for the 'Gay Rights Movement' that the New Left has picked up their cause." See James Newman, *TAS* (April 1973): 25. There are interesting similarities between Brudnoy in the 1970s and David Brock in the 1990s. Both were closeted gay conservative writers at *TAS*, and both eventually broke with the magazine over its anti-gay culture. Brudnoy, "*The Alternative: An American Spectacle*," *TLR* (November 1977): 32.

became *TAS*'s principal antagonist. "*The Alternative* speaks more and more to a terrified, ignorant Middle America," argued Brudnoy, "and in the gay issue it has found the perfect vehicle to reaffirm its commitment to those values which most reinforce the worst of the past and most impede worthy change for the future." Privately he pleaded with the editors in Bloomington to keep a libertarian principled-distance from a private social issue, but the opposite happened.<sup>69</sup>

The tipping point came in late 1976 with "The Lavender Menace," a hostile and graphic anti-gay article. Its author, Stephen Maloney, a freelance writer who published stories with *TAS*, *Penthouse*, and *Ms. Magazine*, unleashed an extended attack on gay men and the "tawdry, libertine, and barbaric" gay rights movement. He wrote that "gay sexuality [was] almost wedded to lavatories" and that "sexual relations often appear more fecal than genital, reminiscent of the 'sexuality' of an incontinent two-year-old." In fact, his article itself almost bordered on the voyeuristic, with its descriptions of gay public baths and concern over age and genital size. "There is little self-control (or self-knowledge) in most homosexual literature and activity," he argued, "and a corresponding unconcern for the survival of civilization."<sup>70</sup>

*TLR* responded with a lengthy attack on *TAS*, written by Brudnoy after he received scores of libertarian readers' requests to respond to a magazine on whose masthead his name still appeared. Attack he did, with a withering dissection of what he

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<sup>69</sup> Brudnoy, "*The Alternative: An American Spectacle*," *TLR* (November 1977): 30, 32. Airing these disputes, he wrote: "*The Alternative* and its editor were off and running. References, invariably snide, usually stupid, always philistine, to homosexuals and the 'so-called homosexual rights' matter, appeared so frequently in the journal in late 1975 and early 1976 that I wrote to Tyrrell and urged him to get off the track of that particular manic engine. No response... The depths to which *The Alternative* was anxious to go in furthering its assault—that I didn't know."

<sup>70</sup> Stephen Maloney, "The Lavender Menace," *TAS* (December 1976): 12-15.



described as *TAS*'s "war against homosexuals."<sup>71</sup> His complaints were not just ideological. He challenged Maloney's sources and interpretations, and even accused *TAS* editors of manipulating quotations from tolerant libertarian writers to sound intolerant.<sup>72</sup> "I take [it] to be the views of *The Alternative's* editor as enunciated by a stooge," argued Brudnoy, "[It] is replete with errors [and] is utterly one-sided in its presentation of 'evidence,' and it is selective beyond endurance, concentrating repeatedly on any seamy side of homosexuality and dismissing or ignoring any other."<sup>73</sup>

He also linked the escalation of *TAS*'s anti-gay campaign to changes in contemporary culture. In 1975, for example, *Time* magazine's cover story, "Gays on the March," highlighted the growing gay rights movement and provoked a backlash on the right. Anita Bryant, a pop singer who had scored a few minor hits in the 1960s, became the face of a fierce Christian opposition to gay rights in Florida school districts.<sup>74</sup> Brudnoy linked *TAS* to these developments, accusing the magazine of allowing opportunism and homosexual bigotry to ruin the magazine.

The *Alternative* found in Maloney's... balderdash the perfect expression of its own fears, hatreds, bigotries. While he flails away at 'gay liberation,' a 'pink-blooded American 'liberation' movement' (how they must have howled at that in Bloomington), the magazine publishing him sinks close to the level of the Miami bumper stickers in the late Dade County fight: 'Kill a Queer for Christ,' the bumper stickers read, in support of Ms. Bryant's witch-hunt. Kill decency for a good hoot, the magazine proclaims in publishing Maloney's article.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Libertarians sent Brudnoy copies of their own correspondence with *TAS* editors, as well. Brudnoy, "The *Alternative*: An American Spectacle," *TLR* (November 1977): 29, 31.

<sup>72</sup> At particular issue was Maloney's use of the psychiatrist Evelyn Hooker to support his position. Brudnoy pointed out that Hooker in fact disagreed with Maloney's extreme anti-gay views. Brudnoy, "The *Alternative*: An American Spectacle," *TLR* (November 1977): 32.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>74</sup> For an interesting look at Bryant's place in the religious right's larger construction of its culture war rhetoric, see Matthew Lassiter, "Inventing Family Values," in *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s*, eds. Bruce Schulman and Julian Zelizer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 13-28.

<sup>75</sup> Brudnoy, "The *Alternative*: An American Spectacle," *TLR* (November 1977): 30.

The Maloney article was too much, and Brudnoy publicly denounced and finally broke with *TAS*. The magazine had changed in just a few short years in the 1970s on the gay issue, he observed. “Once *The Alternative* might have been expected to wend its way through the competing ideologies,” he lamented, “locate a sane point that would dismiss the myths yet affirm the libertarian verities, and do what many of the older conservative journals cannot and will not do. But that time has passed.” Its hostility to rights for gay Americans was too extreme for libertarians, he concluded. “But on this issue the conservatives are hopeless. R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr. and his *Alternative* mouth the words and think the thoughts of unrestrained bigotry. *The Alternative* is an American spectacle—a spectacle of ignorance and traditionalism masquerading as whimsy and ‘libertarianism.’”<sup>76</sup>

He published in *TLR* his private correspondence with Tyrrell, who described homosexuality as a “puerile fantasy, a throwback to the polymorphous perversity of early childhood. For those fetched by it, it is doubtless pleasurable or at least satisfying, but it is childish.”<sup>77</sup> Brudnoy urged *TAS* to soften its stance. “If you like, consider this a resignation from the magazine. If you prefer that we not come to that pass, kindly write to me at your early convenience and let me know what you intend to do about the matter,” he wrote. “I am, as always, your friend, and one who wishes you and yours continued happiness; whether I can remain the magazine's friend depends. On you.”<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Brudnoy, “*The Alternative: An American Spectacle*,” *TLR* (November 1977): 32.

<sup>77</sup> Tyrrell to Brudnoy, January 7, 1977, published in Brudnoy, “*The Alternative*,” *TLR*, 32.

<sup>78</sup> Brudnoy to Tyrrell, December 31, 1976, published in Brudnoy, “*The Alternative*,” *TLR*, 29.

But *TAS* was now at the forefront a sharp cultural wedge for the right, a position it would maintain for decades.<sup>79</sup> Whereas religious publications like *Triumph* and newsletters for evangelical groups argued from the Bible or from Church teachings, *TAS* had staked out a largely secular position at the vanguard. “I am entirely willing to allow homosexuals their fantasies as long as they keep these private or at least discreet. When they make their childishness a matter of civil rights ... they are no longer merely innocent and amusing but arrantly pernicious to liberty,” responded Tyrrell to Brudnoy’s demands. “The ‘gay movement’ has become even more preposterous than the women’s movement...[gays have] no legitimate claim on the citizenry’s attention or solicitude or the canons of liberty that safeguard political and, social expression.” Regarding Brudnoy’s threat to break with *TAS*, Tyrrell obliged with “P.S. If you want to quit the masthead, that is your decision.”<sup>80</sup>

*TAS*’s approach to the gay movement was a more extreme version of *National Review*’s articles on the subject. Like *TAS*, *National Review* published hostile rhetoric that ridiculed gay men, in particular. For example, columnist D. Keith Mano’s mocking review of *Blueboy* magazine’s Man of the Year beauty pageant for gay men in 1979 featured tasteless attacks. Mano joked about gay sex—“their love-making must be vehement, athletic: even hazardous, I think”—and gay fitness—“I guess it’s easier to stay in shape when you have a man-wife.”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Michael Novak, a sociologist and fellow at the conservative American Enterprise Institute in the 1970s, wrote sanitized version of Maloney’s piece in 1978 for *TAS*. Though it called for more sensitivity toward gays, it largely echoed Maloney’s essential points. See Novak, “Men Without Women,” *TAS* (October 1978): 14-17.

<sup>80</sup> Tyrrell to Brudnoy, January 7, 1977, published in Brudnoy, “*The Alternative*” *TLR*, 28-29.

<sup>81</sup> D. Keith Mano, “The Gay Beauty Pageant,” *National Review* (November 23, 1979): 1509-1510. Mano wrote several articles in *National Review* in his column, “The Gimlet Eye.” Comparing *National Review* and *TAS*, Brookhiser wrote that *TAS*’s “tone was simultaneously meaner, and more fey...” See Brookhiser, *Right Time, Right Place*, 31.

But also like *TAS*, *National Review* published occasionally sensitive, serious pieces that reflected on the harmful discrimination gay men felt within the conservative movement. Gay men were potential allies to the libertarian impulses in the conservative movement, argued one *National Review* contributor, but the conservative movement—including *National Review*, the author stipulated—was too hostile to homosexuality.<sup>82</sup>

*Commentary* magazine and some neoconservative writers took a muted but nonetheless disapproving view of the gay movement. “Like every movement inspired by the political culture of the 60s, Gay Lib had its radicals, its moderates, and its fellow travelers,” wrote Midge Decter in *Commentary*, echoing *TAS*. She lamented the emergence of the gay liberation movement and what she considered “the extraordinary, growing assimilation into the everyday homosexual world of the twin pathologies of the need to brutalize and the need to be brutalized—the newly ubiquitous S-M.” Also like *TAS*, Decter described what she considered a drug-fueled “kind of promiscuity that is implicit in the homosexual’s flight from women [and] efforts at self-obliteration.” The tone lacked *TAS*’s mean-spirited edge, but it, too, was harshly critical of the gay movement.<sup>83</sup>

It bears repeating that *TAS* escalated its anti-gay and anti-feminist rhetoric during the 1970s from secular positions. As one of the few national magazines of movement

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<sup>82</sup> Published under a pseudonym, see Jere Real, “Gay Rights and Conservative Politics,” *National Review* (March 17, 1978): 343-345. For example, the article stated that “Even *National Review* (with its recent items about some obscure British pedophile league) conjures up erroneously created fears about child molestation,” wrote one when data show that most child molestation is by heterosexuals and virtually all child abuse is at the hands of angry parents.” See also See David Brudnoy and Ernest Van Den Haag, “Reflections on the Issue of Gay Rights,” *National Review* (July 19, 1974): 802-806.

<sup>83</sup> Decter preferred what she considered the pre-gay movement homosexuals who avoided politics and demonstrations, see Midge Decter, “The Boys on the Beach,” *Commentary* (September 1980): 35-48. For another example of neoconservative analysis of homosexuality, see Samuel McCracken, “Are Homosexuals Gay?” *Commentary* (January 1979): 19-29. Like Decter, McCracken’s *Commentary* article lacked the mean-spiritedness of *TAS*, but still included graphic and disapproving analysis of gay sexual practices.

conservatives in the 1970s, it was secular and nonsectarian.<sup>84</sup> In addition to positioning itself at the head of the anti-feminist and anti-gay fronts among mainstream conservative publications, it also shifted over time in its position over another hot social issue of the 1970s, pornography. Until the mid-1970s, it did not seriously address the subject, except occasionally joking about its editors' and readers' exposure to pornography. It boasted about the fact that Larry Flynt subscribed to the magazine and that it received a favorable review in one of Flynt's pornographic magazines, *Chic*. "Sincere, in-depth opinion pieces run alongside blisteringly funny character assassinations," wrote *Chic*'s Jay Kinney, "and if it's often difficult to distinguish between the deadly serious and the tongue-in-cheek, trying is half the fun." Reprinting a portion of the *Chic* story, *TAS* quipped, "A Larry Flynt publication that *somebody* [sic] quotes."<sup>85</sup> Editors gradually began to publish articles distancing the magazine from Flynt and his industry from a secular position. Pornography should be opposed, went their arguments, because of its negative social effects, not from moral or biblical considerations.<sup>86</sup>

*TAS*'s shift in position provoked more attacks from its libertarian allies. A 1977 editorial by Tyrrell called for leaving regulation of pornography up to the discretion of local communities. Calling himself a "strict libertarian," he nevertheless called for

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<sup>84</sup> The neoconservatives, who tended to be Jewish, turned first to the thoroughly secular *TAS*, not *National Review*, a largely Catholic mainstream conservative journal. On the Catholic influences in *National Review*, see Patrick Allitt, *Catholic Intellectuals and Conservative Politics in America, 1950-1985* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).

<sup>85</sup> "Left-leaning anarchist that I am, it pains me to admit that the brightest political satire extant is being written by a crew of hard-line conservatives in Bloomington, Indiana." Jay Kinney, "Yucking It Up With the Right," *Chic*, June 1977, SC04B38F18-3, Box 38, Folder 18-3, Malcolm Muggeridge Papers, Wheaton College, Chicago, Illinois; Advertisement, *TAS* (August/September 1977): 25; For an early forum on pornography, see Alan Reynolds and Robert McTiernan in *TAS* (March 1974): 9, 17.

<sup>86</sup> By comparison, *TAS*'s secular conservative approach to Flynt and pornography would not have appeared in another 1970s conservative magazine, *Triumph*, or in the Christian Right's newsletters; On *Triumph*'s history in the 1970s, see Mark Popowski, "Roman Catholic Crusading in Ten Years of *Triumph*, 1966-1976: A History of a Lay-Directed, Radical Catholic Journal" (Ph.D. dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 2008); Advertisement, *TAS* (August/September 1977): 25; Tyrrell, "Poet on a Fuzzy Toilet Seat Cover," *TAS* (April 1977): 4, 34, 39.

restrictions, writing, that “one can make pornography less accessible without banning it totally.” *TLR* challenged him on this point. “Tyrrell is a garden-variety statist [and] no libertarian...nor is he, for that matter a liberal or a conservative,” wrote Jeff Riggenschach (b. 1947), a writer affiliated with the Ludwig von Mises Institute, “he takes no principled political position of any kind, but merely searches for opportunities to heap Menckenesque derision.”<sup>87</sup>

### **Awards, Funding, and *TAS* Making It**

Despite criticism of its libertarian flank, the magazine received some national recognition and praise in the 1970s. Its editor-in-chief, Tyrrell, published essays in the *New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Washington Post*, where he and *TAS* were often lauded as a new spokesman for American Midwestern conservatism.<sup>88</sup> The awards reflected the small but growing influence of *TAS*. In 1975, the American Institute for Public Service awarded Tyrrell a Jefferson Award for Public Service. The organization’s president, Samuel Beard, managed to reach Tyrrell by phone in London, where the young editor was partying with fellow conservatives David Keene, Pat Buchanan, and Von Kannon. Tyrrell learned that he had been selected by a 70 member panel headed by Jacqueline Onassis for the Greatest Public Service Performed by an American 35 Years or Under Award. According to Von Kannon, after the call Tyrrell “strutted and roared his approval at the news.” He received the award in the Old Supreme Court Chamber in the Capital, surrounded by many of the liberal establishment figures he and his magazine

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<sup>87</sup> Jeff Riggenschach, “Calling the Kettles Black,” *TLR* (June 1979): 40-41.

<sup>88</sup> Choice, “Periodicals for College Libraries,” January 1976, Box 109, General Correspondence, Folder 13: Tyrrell, R. Emmett, Jr., 1976, Huntington Cairns Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; Tyrrell, “Calvin Coolidge, ‘the Last Great President,’” *New York Times*, July 8, 1972, 25; See also Tyrrell, “Beyond the Mists of Pessimism,” *Wall Street Journal*, December 31, 1974; Mike Royko, “Great Gatsby, Nixon-Style,” *Chicago Daily News*, September 18, 1972, Box 92, Folder 3, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

frequently lampooned. His acceptance speech, in what was becoming his shtick, was a sophomoric jab at his liberal audience. Along with repeated references to bartenders, he praised the common wisdom and love for individual freedom of the American people.<sup>89</sup>

These episodes illustrated the lingering effect of the magazine's college years. *TAS* was an opinion journal on the make and not yet quite comfortable dealing with success and interacting with the intellectual, cultural, and media elites. The magazine and its editor wrestled with a perennial ambivalence about mainstream media. They vilified and denounced it and yet craved its acceptance. Conservative publications, including *TAS*, boasted about awards.<sup>90</sup> Alan Crawford, writing in the *Conservative Digest*, described Tyrrell as “a rising star on the Right...the Capital ceremonies formally marked [*TAS*'s] arrival as a national publication as important on the right as *The Nation* or *The New Republic* on the left.”<sup>91</sup> This was an exaggeration by a conservative ally, but it did highlight the growing importance within the conservative movement of the magazine.<sup>92</sup>

More favorable press from establishment sources came in 1977, when *Time* magazine ran a feature piece on Tyrrell and the magazine. The article was titled “God and Man in Bloomington,” making a connection between the young editor and the new conservative journal and William F. Buckley's *God and Man at Yale*. *Time* called *TAS* “one of the nation's most energetic and sprightly journals,” and praised the broad range

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<sup>89</sup> John Von Kannon, “An Embarrassed Note from the Publisher,” *TAS* (October 1975): 19-21. Russell Kirk thought the award a noteworthy accomplishment and praised Tyrrell and *TAS*. See Kirk, “What's Happening to the Literary Mob?” *National Review* (September 26, 1975): 1057. *National Review* editors also noted the award; see *National Review*, “On the Record” (August 15, 1975): 861.

<sup>90</sup> Von Kannon and Meyerson, “Conservative Editor Receives National Public Service Award,” *TAS* Press Release, Box 56, Correspondence Folder, Robert L. Bartley papers, Hoover Institution Archive, Palo Alto, CA; Von Kannon, “An Embarrassed Note from the Publisher,” *TAS* (October 1975): 19-21.

<sup>91</sup> Alan Crawford, “Lampooning Liberals Pays Off,” *Conservative Digest*, April 1976, Box 109, General Correspondence, Folder 13: Tyrrell, R. Emmett, Jr., 1976, Huntington Cairns Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

<sup>92</sup> For more right wing recognition, see William F. Buckley, Jr., “The Struggle, Then and Now,” *TAS* (November 1977): 5; M.J. Sobran, “Talking Back,” *National Review* (December 23, 1977): 1506-1507.

of opinions it expressed.<sup>93</sup> The Junior Chamber of Commerce selected Tyrrell as one of its ten outstanding young men in 1978. He was also named one of the fifty future leaders of America in 1979 by *Time* magazine.<sup>94</sup>

Occasionally positive reviews came from unexpected sources. Newspapers and journals on the right and left frequently noted the range of opinions and the witty, Mencken-like writing style.<sup>95</sup> *The New Republic* liked the magazine's spunk. "It is a monthly review of politics and the arts, of somewhat conservative bias, which has no right to exist, but does exist, and which does just drop into one's ken, reminding one that the world is not yet dying of boredom. It is great, in a dotty way."<sup>96</sup>

A critical component of the magazine's growth and success in the 1970s was the continued financial support of right wing philanthropists. Money from the pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly's estate and especially from Richard Mellon Scaife, heir to the Mellon banking fortune, funded the rise from Bloomington campus magazine to national campus magazine to national opinion monthly.<sup>97</sup> The young editors quickly learned that such

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<sup>93</sup> *Time*, "God and Man in Bloomington" (March 7, 1977): 93-94; The *Time* story led to a temporary spike in circulation requests, see Tyrrell to Huntington Cairns, March 23, 1977, Box 109, Folder 14, Huntington Cairns Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; The *Boston Globe* called *TAS* a "conservative rag" and generally criticized the writing, though concluded that readers would "certainly find [*TAS*'s] writing spirited." See George Higgins, "A Fifth is Enough for Any Man," *Boston Globe*, August 16, 1980, 12, SC04B38F18-5, Box 38, Folder 18-5, Malcolm Muggeridge Papers, Wheaton College, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>94</sup> Lee Edwards, "Two Conservative Alternatives," *The Orange County Register*, December 18, 1977, E10; A 35-year-old Bill Clinton also made *Time*'s list. See *Time*, "50 Faces for America's Future," (August 6, 1979): 36.

<sup>95</sup> The *New York Times*' Arthur Krock wrote "Not since Mencken, I think, has journalism of this quality appeared very often." Krock to Tyrrell, September 19, 1973, Box 92, Folder 3, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

<sup>96</sup> *The New Republic*, "Washington Diarist" (November 1977): 46. Another writer for *The New Republic*, Doris Grumbach, also liked the Mencken satire. Tyrrell's *TAS* editorials were in a "florid but still entertaining style (in the Mencken manner, at its best)." See Grumbach, "Fine Print," *The New Republic* (April 5, 1975): 29-30.

<sup>97</sup> "It is to the foundation's financial supporters that we owe the greatest thanks," wrote Von Kannon, "Our growth is a product of their confidence." See Von Kannon, in "The Alternative Educational Foundation, Inc.: The First Ten Years," 1977, Box 7, Folder 2, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; On the passing of Mrs. Ruth Lilly, the spouse of the company president,



donors were a necessity. “No little magazine alive is financially viable unless it is trash,” Tyrrell told *Time* magazine in 1979, “I successfully deluded myself into thinking I would get good writers and the readership of intellectuals. No use going for the ultimate delusion that we could make money.”<sup>98</sup>

Donations proved crucial because *TAS*, like most journals, annually lost money. It ran annual deficits between \$150,000 and \$250,000. “In the red from day one, the *Spectator* now loses \$250,000 a year,” noted *People Weekly* in a 1979 feature on Tyrrell. Like *National Review*, *TAS* regularly solicited donations from readers to meet the shortfalls. “It is manifest that the conservative supporters of the *Spectator* realize its importance because year after year they heed the pleas to bail the magazine out of its financial crisis,” explained future Reagan-appointee James Roberts, “American conservatives read Tyrrell’s magazine and see in it an oasis of hope in an otherwise dreary media landscape.”<sup>99</sup>

Major donors, then, covered the bulk of the expenses and allowed the magazine to thrive. Scaife alone donated more than one million dollars to the magazine between 1971 and 1981.<sup>100</sup> Other powerful donors followed, including Roger Milliken, a successful

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Tyrrell eulogized her in the magazine as a “dignified and gracious woman” with a “reasoned belief in traditional American principles” who used her financial resources to support “serious intellectual and cultural interests.” Tyrrell, “Mrs. Eli Lilly, R.I.P.,” *TAS* (June/September 1973): 5.

<sup>98</sup> *Time*, “God and Man in Bloomington” (March 7, 1977): 93-94; John Von Kannon, presenter at “Bush Campaign Speech,” C-SPAN, November 4, 1987. On conservative philanthropists, see Nicole Hoplin and Ron Robinson, *Funding Fathers: The Unsung Heroes of the Conservative Movement* (Chicago: Regnery, 2008).

<sup>99</sup> James Roberts, *The Conservative Decade: Emerging Leaders of the 1980s* (Westport, CT: Arlington House Publishers, 1980), 107, and Linda Witt, “On the Move: The Whales are Safe, but Politicians Aren’t (from Bob Tyrrell’s Editorial Harpoons),” *People Weekly* (November 5, 1979): 121-124.

<sup>100</sup> Karen Rothmyer, “Citizen Scaife,” published in *Speak Out Against the New Right*, ed., Herbert Vetter (Boston: Beacon Press, 1982), 35. *TAS* editors also raised money by selling paraphernalia that tweaked opponents, see Rusher to Von Kannon, March 26, 1980, Box 95, Folder 3, Von Kannon, Baron, 1969-1980, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; Also, on the editors’ publicity theatrics, see Von Kannon, “Alternative Editor Makes CIA Disclosure,” *TAS* Press Release,

southern industrialist, Henry Salvatori, a wealthy Reagan supporter, and Joseph Coors, a beer magnate from Colorado.<sup>101</sup> “You put them together,” recalled the publisher John Von Kannon, the publisher responsible for raising money, “and you’ve got probably ninety percent of the contributions budget from that time.”<sup>102</sup> Tyrrell would later praise the conservative benefactors as the “Medicis of the Age.”<sup>103</sup>

Another important contributor was the conservative John M. Olin Foundation. The foundation’s 1975 memorandum on its philanthropic vision—nicknamed the “Fat Memo” because of its length—described a detailed plan to fund conservative intellectual projects. The Fat Memo identified *TAS* as one of its designated publications “to increase the dissemination and understanding of [conservative] ideas.” *TAS* received—via its tax exempt Alternative Educational Foundation—an initial grant of \$10,000 in 1975; more money followed in subsequent years. The eventual head of the Olin Foundation in the 1980s, James Piereson, taught in Bloomington at IU in the 1970s, where he met *TAS* editors and began to read the magazine.<sup>104</sup>

Despite dependence on a handful of right wing donors, the magazine maintained editorial freedom to publish as it wished. Among major conservative journals, its pages

September 12, 1975, Box 59, Folder: *Alternative Magazine*, White House Central Files, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, Grand Rapids, MI.

<sup>101</sup> On important Republican and conservative readers of *TAS*, see Lou Ann Sabatier to Leonard Garment, January 7, 1987, Box 7, Folder 1, *The American Spectator*, 1987-1994, Leonard Garment Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; Advertisement, *TAS* (June 1979): 35; see also the Publisher’s Note, *TAS* (August/September 1978): 4.

<sup>102</sup> Von Kannon quoted in Byron York’s insider account of the magazine’s collapse in 2001, see “The Life and Death of *The American Spectator*,” *The Atlantic* (November 2001): 94-95. On the Coors family, see Russ Bellant, *The Coors Connection: How Coors Family Philanthropy Undermines Democratic Pluralism* (Boston: South End Press, 1988, 1991), 93.

<sup>103</sup> Tyrrell, “Introduction,” in *Orthodoxy*, xi. As part of its requirements as a tax exempt organization, *TAS* produced a brief summary of its work, see “The Alternative Educational Foundation, Inc.: The First Ten Years,” 1977, Box 7, Folder 2, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; *TAS*, “A Dinner Story” (February 1978): 41-43.

<sup>104</sup> Miller, *A Gift of Freedom*, 39-41, 140-141; *TAS* helped its own cause by publishing articles that urged business leaders to support conservative intellectual endeavors; see George Pearson, “The Business of America: Investment in Ideas,” *TAS* (June/July 1975): 25-26.

published the widest range of conservative and liberal writers. Tyrrell liked to boast about its editorial independence. “Rest assured, *The Alternative* is the property of no political party, cabal, or moon-struck Jeremiah,” he bragged. “We are bankrolled by no labor union, no tycoon, no university, and no government cornucopia.”<sup>105</sup>

Although the magazine grew in popularity within the conservative movement, it failed to attract large numbers of paid subscribers. Its circulation grew from a few thousand in the early 1970s (along with several thousand more in free subscriptions) to 20,000 paid subscriptions by the end of 1978.<sup>106</sup> In some ways this represented a strong growth rate for an intellectual review based in rural Indiana just ten years removed from being a college campus magazine. It accomplished this growth by advertising heavily in conservative publications such as *National Review*, and by sending unsolicited, free subscriptions to influential conservatives and sympathetic business leaders. Direct mail to likely subscribers via subscription lists from conservative magazines also helped. *National Review* was willing to part with lists of lapsed subscribers, but unwilling to share its current subscription list.<sup>107</sup> Tyrrell frequently told interviewers in the 1970s that *TAS*'s editors were comfortable with the circulation levels because their goal was to be

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<sup>105</sup> Tyrrell, “*The Alternative, Since Yesterday*,” *The Alternative* (June/September 1974): 4. Tyrrell quipped, “there is no sinister force about the place, not even a small band of Black Handers.” The journal was independent, then, according to the editor, “owned by no mysterious junto—though this is not to say that I would turn up my nose on a reasonable offer.” These passages would prove eerily prescient in the 1990s, when allegations to the contrary helped ruin Tyrrell’s creation. See Chapter 5.

<sup>106</sup> Tyrrell to Rusher, November 6, 1970, Box 92, Folder 3: Tyrrell, R. Emmett, Jr., 1969-1976, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; James Roberts, *The Conservative Decade: Emerging Leaders of the 1980s* (Westport, CT: Arlington House Publishers, 1980), 100.

<sup>107</sup> In reply to Von Kannon’s request, Rusher wrote “The trouble is that it is our most precious possession, and *National Review*’s board of directors (with, it is only fair to add, Bill’s enthusiastic assent, as well as my own) long ago ruled that it was never to be made available to any other publication, however meritorious or close to us personally, or for that matter to any other sort of entity that might conceivably be deemed to be competing with *National Review* in any way whatever.” Rusher to Von Kannon, February 6, 1979, Box 95, Folder 3, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; see also Von Kannon to William Buckley, January 19, 1979, Box 95, Folder 3, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

“read intensively, not extensively.”<sup>108</sup> But such an outlook was more by necessity than conviction. In fact, for a magazine with a national reach, *TAS*’s circulation numbers in the 1970s were anemic. By comparison, for example, in the 1970s *National Review*’s circulation was approximately 90,000 and *Commentary*’s 65,000.<sup>109</sup>

Editors changed the magazine’s name to better suit its maturing readership and increased profile. The shifting cultural tides also influenced the decision, and jettisoning the original name seemed necessary. “By November 1977 the word ‘alternative’ had acquired such an esoteric fragrance that in order to discourage unsolicited manuscripts from florists, beauticians, and other creative types,” a new name was needed explained the masthead. They described this as a “cultural loss to the 1960s.”<sup>110</sup>

They considered several names before settling on *The American Spectator*. They initially wanted to buy Mencken’s 1920s-era *The American Mercury*, but publishing baron Alfred Knopf warned that the *Mercury* magazine had acquired an anti-Semitic reputation in recent decades.<sup>111</sup> Mencken’s other great magazine, *The American Spectator*, was more suitable. In 1974, it added “*An American Spectator*” to the title, “in

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<sup>108</sup> Quoted in Linda Witt, “On the Move: The Whales are Safe, but Politicians Aren’t (from Bob Tyrrell’s Editorial Harpoons),” *People Weekly* (November 5, 1979): 121-124. Advertisement, *TAS* (June 1979): 35; see also the Publisher’s Note, *TAS* (August/September 1978): 4; Tyrrell, “*The Alternative*, Since Yesterday,” *TAS* (June/September 1974): 4-35.

<sup>109</sup> *The Standard Periodical Directory: Fourth Edition* (New York: Oxford Publishing Company, 1973), 673, 1061. For comparative purposes, the magazine with the largest circulation in 1979 was *TV Guide* (20,443,254); *Newsweek* had 2,947,406 and the *New Yorker* had (494, 127). See *The World Almanac and Book of Facts, 1979* (New York: Newspaper Enterprise Association, Inc, 1979), 429-430.

<sup>110</sup> *TAS*, “Masthead” (November 1977): 3; Tyrrell, “Introduction,” in *Orthodoxy*, x.

<sup>111</sup> *Alton Telegraph*, “Robert Tyrrell Can Cut You to Shreds,” July 21, 1979, C-3, “The Alternative Educational Foundation, Inc.: The First Ten Years,” 1977, Box 7, Folder 2, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; Tyrrell, *The Conservative Crackup*, 78; On Mencken, see Terry Teachout, *The Skeptic: A Life of H.L. Mencken* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002).

admiration of Britain's conservative *Spectator*." Then in November 1977, the magazine made its third and final name change, becoming simply, *The American Spectator*.<sup>112</sup>

*TAS* editors' ecumenical view of the conservative movement extended to possible transatlantic allies. Editors made a point to recruit European writers, particularly British, new and established, to contribute. Frequent trips to London and the continent allowed editors to build relationships with their European counterparts. Tyrrell, in particular, had "an endless appetite for travel to New York, Washington, and the capitals of Europe, where he would seek out and assiduously pay court to his heroes," recalled Starr, a *TAS* editor in the late 1970s. "In Europe he would call on [journalists] Luigi Barzini, Jean-Francois Revel, [and] Malcolm Muggeridge."<sup>113</sup> Peregrine Worsthorne, an editor of *The Sunday Telegraph*, and Muggeridge, a former Communist-turned-Catholic convert, published important essays in *TAS*. Gradually the magazine's editors built relationships in England, in particular, taking advantage of growing transatlantic conservative tides that would lift Margaret Thatcher to office in 1979 and Ronald Reagan the following year.<sup>114</sup>

In 1977, Tyrrell edited a collection of essays by international writers on what they considered the problematic nature of socialized public services. *The Future That Doesn't Work* offered a bleak assessment of the British health care system. The purpose of the book was to argue against a national health care system in America, but as British

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<sup>112</sup> The editors worried that the two name changes might affect circulation. "I think you are probably right about changing the name of the magazine and I am sure you are going to get away with it," wrote Malcolm Muggeridge, "Everybody I speak to speaks well of it." Muggeridge to Tyrrell, July 12, 1977, SC04B38F18-3, Box 38, Folder 18-3, Malcolm Muggeridge Papers, Wheaton College, Chicago, Illinois; Tyrrell, *The Conservative Crackup*, 58; *Time*, "God and Man in Bloomington" (March 7, 1977): 93-94; "Note from the Publisher," *TAS* (August/September 1977): 29. For an interesting history of the British magazine, see Simon Courtauld, *To Convey Intelligence: The Spectator, 1928-1998* (London: Profile Books, 1999).

<sup>113</sup> Starr, "Killer Rabbits and the Continuing Crisis," 55.

<sup>114</sup> Peregrine Worsthorne, "In Defense of Class," *TAS* (December 1977): 5-7; Malcolm Muggeridge, "Operation Death-Wish," *TAS* (November 1977): 7-9; see also Muggeridge, "The Decade of the Great Liberal Death Wish," *Esquire* (December 1970), 154-159.

reviewers noted, the premise of the book was faulty. The NHS worked comparatively well in England, and was popular, too. Nevertheless, to the surprise of its publisher, Doubleday, it sold briskly. Ronald Butts, though, a London *Times* columnist and a conservative, found Tyrrell's book provocative. "Tyrrell, a young man of great mental energy and enthusiasm who is both founder and editor of a small circulation journal of the intellectual right [which] is like nothing familiar to us in contemporary British journalism," explained Butts, "Its true descent is rather from the polemicists and satirists of the eighteenth century, and Mr. Tyrrell's philippic against Professor J. K. Galbraith in the June/July issue is more in the spirit of Swift than our present notion of courtesy, and perhaps our libel laws, would allow today."<sup>115</sup>

In these and other ways *TAS* modestly extended its influence in the 1970s. David Wood, political editor of the London *Times*, for example, read *TAS* and occasionally found useful insights into British political life. Writing amidst a sea change in British politics, which eventually brought Margaret Thatcher to power in 1979, Wood noted in his *Times* column a *TAS* piece by Arnold Beichman that persuasively argued, he thought, that "the farther the British party of the right moves towards the middle ground of politics, the farther left they drive the rival party for power, if only because both parties need a distinctive electoral cry and the appearance of the left's case being conceded by its opponents."<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Ronald Butt, "Is Social Democracy the Right Medicine for Curing All Our Ills?" *The London Times*, July 28, 1977, 14; Tyrrell, ed., *The Future That Doesn't Work: Social Democracy's Failures in Britain* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977); When Irving Kristol heard of Tyrrell's British project, he suggested names of potential contributors. See Tyrrell, *Conservative Crackup*, 71. On Doubleday, see Tyrrell to Cairns, June 23, 1977, Box 109, Folder 14, Huntington Cairns Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; Ad for *TAS* Reprints (August/September 1978): 40.

<sup>116</sup> David Wood, "Conservatives and the Union Dilemma," *The London Times*, October 10, 1977, 13.

Other essays affected major debates. A *TAS* article by Adam Meyerson highlighting private agricultural co-operatives as a market-based solution to economic troubles attracted the attention of the British Labour Party in Parliament. Raymond Fletcher, a Labour MP from Ilkeston, read the piece and was intrigued by the idea that a conservative American journal supported co-ops. He wrote the *London Times* to suggest that Meyerson's article in *TAS* might point the way for the Labour Party to institute co-operative solutions to large scale industries. "If what Mr. Meyerson describes as an 'ideal' can be expanded beyond retailing—and profitably—why should Labour's idea of doing so generate nightmares?"<sup>117</sup>

In other ways the magazine affected major debates, primarily in the US. Its neoconservative writers published detailed assessments of social programs, for example, and other writers heaped scorn on what they considered a radicalized environmental movement. Along with *National Review*, it deconstructed détente and championed anti-communism. But even when responding in ways that mirrored *National Review*, the magazine's style and aggressive rhetoric set it apart. It became more partisan in the 1970s, as well, shedding its reluctance to endorse what its editors considered suitably conservative candidates. "By the mid-1970s," observed Tyrrell, "*The American Spectator* had become absorbed with the public policy debates of the period."<sup>118</sup>

Its base in the Midwest was unusual for a major national journal, but it gave *TAS* a helpful distance from the hurly burly of the Washington beltway and New York environs. "It is downright exciting to observe that it is located far enough away from the swales where intellectuals clump and clog to offer a prospect that we may get a fresh

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<sup>117</sup> Raymond Fletcher, "Labour Takes a Step Towards the Co-op," *The London Times*, June 12, 1978, 14; See Adam Meyerson, "Co-op Capitalism," *TAS* (April 1978): 18.

<sup>118</sup> Tyrrell, "Thirty and Still Counting," *TAS* (December 1997): 16.

examination of some high priority problems,” wrote the distinguished political science professor Charles S. Hyneman, “Cancel my subscription if you move East.”<sup>119</sup>

### **Steinfels, Reagan, and *TAS***

The neoconservatives became a major national topic in 1979. Several important developments occurred during that year as other publications and scholars took notice of the changing intellectual and political landscape. *Esquire* magazine put Kristol on the cover of its February 13, 1979 edition and included a lengthy story on neoconservatism by reporter Geoffrey Norman. It was in this article that another neoconservative, James Q. Wilson, referred to Kristol as the “godfather of neoconservatism,” a title that stuck. Also in 1979, the first serious study of neoconservatism was published. *The Neoconservatives*, written by Peter Steinfels, the editor of *Commonweal*, the nation’s premier lay Catholic journal, was well reviewed in the important national publications.<sup>120</sup>

Steinfels’ book did not mention *TAS* or its editors for two primary reasons. First, *TAS* was still too marginal a magazine; it lacked sufficient national exposure or influence outside of conservative circles to command his attention. Second, Steinfels concentrated on identifying and defining the neoconservatives as individuals and as a group. Because it was not his primary subject, he gave only brief attention to the neoconservatives’ fluid

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<sup>119</sup> “The Midwest is built into every joist and lattice of this magazine,” argued the editors, which they defined as “common sense, individualism, and a general cussedness.” In fact, a robust scholarship on regional history identifies a more complex and fluid set of distinctive qualities of the Midwest. According to historian R. Douglas Hunt, “the political activism of the Midwest has seldom been on the far left or right of the spectrum. Rather, it has been a moderating, centering force.” See Hunt, “Midwestern Distinctiveness,” in *The American Midwest: Essays on Regional History*, eds., Andrew Cayton and Susan Gray (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 167. Charles Hyneman, quoted in *TAS* (December 1973): 22.

<sup>120</sup> Geoffrey Norman, “The Godfather of Neoconservatism (And His Family),” *Esquire* (February 13, 1979): 37-42; Marc Plattner, “Book Review, *The Neoconservatives*,” *TAS* (September 1979): 26-27; Peter Steinfels, “The Reasonable Right,” *Esquire* (February 13, 1979): 24-30; and Peter Steinfels, *The Neoconservatives: The Men Who are Changing America’s Politics*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979).



position within the conservative intellectual movement. For these reasons, *TAS* garnered not a single line.<sup>121</sup>

By contrast, Steinfels' book received expansive coverage in *TAS*. Marc Plattner, a frequent *TAS* contributor in the 1970s and former managing editor of the neoconservative *Public Interest*, wrote the initial review. He praised Steinfels' cataloging of the key neoconservative thinkers, their individual histories, and their collective impact. He especially liked Steinfels' stress on American political shifts in the 1960s, from which neoconservatism emerged.<sup>122</sup> Nevertheless, Steinfels' book was problematic, argued Plattner. He drew attention to Steinfels' stated bias against neoconservatism and personal attacks on its key intellectuals, particularly Daniel Patrick Moynihan. He quibbled with Steinfels' analysis of some neoconservative ideas about the new class, but he primarily objected to what he considered was an insufficiently systematic critique. This was not exactly a blistering attack, in part because the book offered a fairly strong history of a recently developed group, despite Steinfels' leftist point of view.<sup>123</sup>

*TAS* editors also commissioned a special symposium in direct response to Steinfels' book in November 1979 titled, "Why Are There Neoconservatives?" The forum served several purposes. First, it aimed to rebut what the editors felt were important errors in Steinfels' book. These symposium contributors—primarily young writers affiliated in various ways with the neoconservatives—would attempt to set the

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<sup>121</sup> Steinfels found little substance in the conservative movement; instead, he thought the neoconservatives offered "the serious and intelligent conservatism America has lacked." See Steinfels, *The Neoconservatives: The Men Who Are Changing America's Politics*, 15-21, 48.

<sup>122</sup> Plattner noticed and appreciated Steinfels' attempts to take the neoconservative ideas seriously, Marc Plattner, "Book Review, *The Neoconservatives*," *TAS* (September 1979): 26-27.

<sup>123</sup> The passage that Plattner and others pointed to was Steinfels' first paragraph, which explained that the book's premise was that neoconservatism "justifies a politics which, should it prevail, threatens to attenuate and diminish the promise of American democracy." Steinfels, *The Neoconservatives*, 1; see Marc Plattner, "Book Review, *The Neoconservatives*," *TAS* (September 1979): 26-27.

record straight on several counts. Second, it wanted to further educate its conservative readers on neoconservatives; if Steinfels had been too critical of the neoconservatives, the symposium was yet another chance for the magazine to put a positive spin on the group so much in the news. Third, and perhaps most importantly, it allowed the editors to foreground *TAS* in the neoconservative discussions within the conservative movement and indirectly address Steinfels' omission of the magazine.<sup>124</sup>

The editors selected writers whose biographies refuted Steinfels' claim that neoconservative ideas were limited to the World War II generation. The young neoconservative contributors included writers such as Elliott Abrams, a Washington attorney who would achieve ignominy with the Iran-Contra scandal in the 1980s; Roger Kaplan, a staffer with the conservative philanthropic Smith Richardson Foundation; Adam Meyerson, former managing editor at *TAS* and a future Heritage Foundation Vice President; and, among others, Stephen Miller, a Resident Fellow with the American Enterprise Institute. Naomi Decter, daughter of Norman Podhoretz and Midge Decter, two influential neoconservatives, also contributed. These writers made it "clear that the neoconservative contagion had spread from Irving's generation to Liberal youth," wrote Tyrrell in response to one of Steinfels' points.<sup>125</sup>

Several themes—now familiar to longtime *TAS* readers—emerged from the respondents. In the 1970s, neoconservatives opposed what they considered the aftermath of 1960s radicalism, explained contributors, and they were proud of America's might, its

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<sup>124</sup> Introducing the symposium, Tyrrell explained that it was meant as a corrective to Steinfels' and others' description of neoconservatives. "They want to portray neoconservatism as a very narrowly based operation, intellectually limited, and not to be touched by any young intellectual desirous of advancement in the realm of higher cerebration," he explained. See *TAS*, "Why Are There Neoconservatives?: A Symposium," (November 1979): 10-19.

<sup>125</sup> "I was in a position to expose [Steinfels'] prejudices for the flapdoodle they were," Tyrrell later explained, "Half the writers in *The American Spectator* were neoconservatives." See Tyrrell, *The Conservative Crackup*, 97; *TAS*, "Why Are There Neoconservatives?" (November 1979): 10-19.

accomplishments, and its capitalist system.<sup>126</sup> They were strongly—even increasingly—anti-statist, but not entirely. They supported the New Deal and the civil rights movement, but thought the War on Poverty a disaster and Affirmative Action misguided. “It is this that separates neoconservatives from conservatives,” explained Abrams, “this support for a minimum of social provision, distributed usually through the state.” By contrast, the difference between neoconservatives and liberals was that liberals had shifted their support from “basic social provision to wholesale income redistribution,” as Abrams concisely put it, and “this fits the liberals’ view of egalitarianism, but has no place in the neoconservatives’ view.”<sup>127</sup> Other contributors emphasized the right’s shared disdain for liberal elite culture with neoconservatives.<sup>128</sup>

The symposium drew positive attention to the magazine, educated conservatives and built intellectual bridges. The Republican Party’s desperate, post-Watergate condition, combined with the weak economy created ideal conditions for a conservative, neoconservative, and Republican synthesis, argued Karl O’Lessker, but it would not be easy. For all the shared goals, conservatives often disagreed with the neoconservatives’ acceptance of the New Deal social safety net, he cautioned, and the policy details would

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<sup>126</sup> Contributors described an intellectual shift away from the left that had occurred in the late-1960s or early-1970s. Liberals in the 1970s, they thought, disliked and felt ashamed of American power, wealth, capitalism, and institutions, and wanted to achieve a social democracy in which the state increasingly took away from individuals decisions in the name of serving a higher good, thought in utopian terms, and favored the collective society over the individual. See *TAS*, “Why Are There Neoconservatives?” (November 1979): 10-19.

<sup>127</sup> Neoconservatives opposed the growth of the state on largely practical grounds, meaning that they had tested government programs and often found them wanting; *TAS*, “Why Are There Neoconservatives?” (November 1979): 10-19.

<sup>128</sup> There was a deep antagonism toward liberal elite culture among the neoconservatives, ironic in part because—whatever their penurious origins at City College in New York—neoconservatives had climbed into the upper crust of American intellectual life, certainly by the 1970s. And yet they looked with disdain at many aspects of liberal elites, including their childrearing, which they alleged produced radical, unstable children. On the relationship between neoconservatives and their children, see Midge Decter, *An Old Wife’s Tale: My Seven Decades in Love and War* (New York: ReganBooks, 2001); See also Decter’s *Liberal Parents, Radical Children*, (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1975). “Why Are There Neoconservatives?” *TAS* (November 1979) 10-19.

be tricky, but they could be worked through. Doing so enabled the GOP to “formulate coherent policies that are at once clear alternatives to liberal Democratic orthodoxy and supportive of existing institutions.”<sup>129</sup>

Discussions of intellectual and political alliances with the neoconservatives intensified intraconservative criticism of *TAS* in 1979, not from *National Review* but from the sectarian *TLR*.<sup>130</sup> Influential libertarians such as the economist Murray Rothbard, journalist Felix Morely, and David Theroux, then with the flagship libertarian think tank, the Cato Institute, contributed to *TLR*.<sup>131</sup> They criticized what they considered *TAS*'s betrayal of libertarian-conservative values for temporary electoral benefits aligning with the neoconservatives. “The clown Tyrrell represents the myth of the American Right...Conservatives have had the money, the leadership, and the organizations, but the culmination of decades of this charade is a bumbling red-neck-in-white-collar embarrassment from Bloomington, Indiana,” wrote Theroux. “With the recent advent of ‘neoconservatism’ (the ‘New Deal Right’), the conservatives have attempted to attach themselves to what appears to be a new formulation of their cherished vision of the authoritarian society.”<sup>132</sup> Another article compared Tyrrell to “a faceless dummy from a

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<sup>129</sup> The Republican Party was already in dire straits, he wrote, and “may be in danger of practically ceasing to exist” in the near future. At the same time, he explained, too many intellectual obstacles prevented the Democrats from adopting neoconservative ideas. Karl O’Lessker, “Neoconservatism: Which Party’s Line?” *TAS* (March 1979): 8-10.

<sup>130</sup> Published between 1972 and 1984, *TLR* was a libertarian journal particularly interested in the conservative intellectual movement. It published and was affiliated in various ways with most major and minor libertarian writers of the 1970s and 1980s. As a struggling magazine of the conservative movement that did not survive longterm, its history provides an interesting contrast with *TAS*'s. See <http://www.libertarianism.org/lr/> (accessed on June 25, 2013).

<sup>131</sup> Theroux later became an award-winning libertarian writer and founder of the influential libertarian think tank, The Independent Institute. See [http://www.independent.org/aboutus/person\\_detail.asp?id=531](http://www.independent.org/aboutus/person_detail.asp?id=531) (accessed on June 25, 2013).

<sup>132</sup> David Theroux, “The Movement,” *TLR* (May 1979): 12-13.

department store window somewhere in downtown Bloomington, Indiana” and “somebody’s obnoxious country cousin from Bloomington, Indiana.”<sup>133</sup>

By 1980, though, more temperate libertarians were cautiously entertaining the prospects of working with neoconservatives. They remained deeply skeptical. “As far as I can determine, neoconservatism is just the current variation of what is usually called social democracy,” noted Bruce Bartlett, future Reagan domestic adviser, in *TLR*. “Social democrats try to be both socialist and anti-Communist, but usually end up just being contradictory. But perhaps, on reflection, wrote Bartlett, common ground was possible. “At first glance, it may appear that neoconservatism has little, if anything, in common with libertarianism,” he suggested. But “insofar as we are working toward the common end of cutting taxes, eliminating government waste, cutting back on government regulations and promoting economic growth, I see nothing wrong with making common cause.”<sup>134</sup>

By the late 1970s, movement conservatives viewed *TAS* as the bridge publication for neoconservatives on their path to the right, and as a result, Ronald Reagan’s staffers turned to the magazine’s editors for assistance in connecting with the neoconservatives during the 1980 presidential campaign. Just one of many such groups contacted by Reagan’s campaign for help, *TAS* editors helped assuage the reflexive concerns of the neoconservatives by showing that Reagan was a sensible, cool-headed conservative. Although Irving Kristol withheld his support, others, such as Norman Podhoretz, cautiously attended, partly out of curiosity about Reagan’s candidacy. “Tyrrell’s purpose in arranging for Reagan to meet with ‘the intellectuals’ was to allay some of these

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<sup>133</sup> Jeff Rigenbach, “Calling the Kettles Black,” *TLR* (June 1979): 38, 40-41.

<sup>134</sup> Bruce Bartlett, “The Public Trough: Libertarianism and Neoconservatism,” *TLR* (January 1980): 16-17.

anxieties,” recalled Podhoretz, “I was very curious to get a good look at the man in the hope that, given the absence of anyone better, I would be able to root for him with a clear conscience, and even at best a whole heart.” The initial meeting did not go well. “Rather than being reassured, most of us left wondering whether he had any brains at all,” he remembered. Despite his first impression, by the 1980 election Podhoretz became an enthusiastic Reagan supporter.<sup>135</sup>

*TAS*’s editor-in-chief, Tyrrell, precisely because of his magazine’s intentional efforts to broaden the conservative movement in the 1970s, played an important role in bringing these groups together. “It was a genuine achievement to persuade the New York thinkers that Reagan was not some sort of southern-California John Bircher but, rather, a political figure to be taken seriously,” acknowledged Byron York in an otherwise scathing assessment of the magazine years later.<sup>136</sup>

In many ways the pages of *TAS* in the 1970s anticipated the Reagan coalition of conservatives, libertarians, and disaffected Democrats. Richard Starr, a future editor of *The Weekly Standard* who worked for *TAS* in the 1970s, recalled:

With a succession of talented young managing editors, Bob ran an astonishingly ecumenical magazine. He published everyone from eighteen-year-olds (movie reviewer John Podhoretz) to eighty-year olds (philosopher Sidney Hook). His pages were open to all varieties of right-wing thinkers, from Old South Agrarians to New York intellectuals, from Mittel Europa nostalgists to libertarians, to apostles of the high-tech entrepreneurial future. And though the magazine was decidedly conservative, its contributors were just as often liberal historians like Bob’s academic mentor in Bloomington, the Truman biographer Robert Ferrell,

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<sup>135</sup> Norman Podhoretz, “The Riddle of Ronald Reagan,” *The Weekly Standard* (November 9, 1998): 23. “In June of 1978 Governor Reagan’s aide, Peter Hannaford, asked me to host a dinner party at which the candidate might be introduced to leading neoconservatives,” recalled Tyrrell, “I flew to New York and put together a soiree at the Union League Club.” Tyrrell, *The Conservative Crackup*, 99. See also, Reagan to Tyrrell, January 3, 1980, and Tyrrell to Reagan, December 10, 1979, Box 705, Correspondence 1980, Tyrrell-Tyson, Ronald Reagan Presidential Papers, Texas A&M, College Station, Texas.

<sup>136</sup> York, “Life and Death”, 96. The magazine had long supported Reagan, who read *TAS* and occasionally wrote the editors to express appreciation for particular articles, see Reagan correspondence, *TAS* (March 1977): 36.

Scoop Jackson Democrats, and young Social Democrats from the anticommunist wing of the labor movement. Only McGovernites, feminists, and the humorless hard left need not apply. If the mix seems familiar now, it's because this same collection of types would soon come together in the Reagan coalition, which was prefigured, in miniature form, in Bob's pages.<sup>137</sup>

TAS editors provided additional aid to the Reagan campaign in the summer of 1980, this time to arrange meetings between Reagan and European intellectuals on the right. *TAS* in the 1970s developed transatlantic relationships with conservatives or sympathetic liberals, and by the end of the decade the magazine published a robust selection of the European right, including Europe's own right-leaning liberals in the 1970s, such as Jean-Francois Revel and Olivier Todd, French journalists who slowly moved to the right in the 1970s. The editors helped these European liberals along in their rightward evolution, but it was not a smooth or quick process. Just as with the American neoconservatives, their European counterparts had well-founded prejudices against what they viewed as the reactionary right. Tyrrell and the magazine worked to persuade the neoconservatives on both sides of the Atlantic that the conservative movement was a big tent and that it had expelled its extreme members.<sup>138</sup>

William Casey (1913-1987), a well-connected Republican attorney who represented *TAS* occasionally, solicited help from Tyrrell and Albert Jolis (1912-2000), a conservative businessman who had made a fortune mining diamonds in the Congo. "I helped orchestrate a trip for [Reagan] to meet European intellectuals such as Luigi Barzini in Rome and luminaries such as Malcolm Muggeridge in London," Tyrrell later

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<sup>137</sup> Starr, "Killer Rabbits and the Continuing Crisis," 55-56.

<sup>138</sup> See Tyrrell to Reagan, June 1, 1980, Box 705, Correspondence 1980, Tyrrell-Tyson, Ronald Reagan Presidential Papers, Texas A&M, College Station, Texas. Tyrrell, *The Conservative Crackup*, 83-84, "Not even the European neoconservatives would let up" from venting their fears about the reactionary right, recalled Tyrrell. "Ever the pensive Frenchman, Revel seemed to shed only one old left-wing prejudice a year. The last to go was his animus against capitalistic acts between consenting adults. It was about 1977 when the erstwhile socialist accepted the free market."

recalled. This was a slight exaggeration. In fact, the meetings were Jolis's idea. He had worked with Casey in the OSS during the Second World War, and in 1980, he contacted Casey to suggest meetings as a way to mitigate the negative coverage Reagan was then receiving in the European press. Jolis worked with Tyrrell, who was traveling in London, and with Melvin Lasky, editor of the British anti-communist magazine, *Encounter*, to arrange meetings in London and Paris with various intellectuals and journalists. The meetings went well and included a meeting with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, which Jolis, not Tyrrell, attended with Casey. Nevertheless, Tyrrell's knowledge of European intellectuals on the right or sympathetic with the right—built through *TAS*'s publications—positioned him to assist in these small ways the Reagan camp.<sup>139</sup>

The magazine's efforts to integrate neoconservatives and movement conservatives, then, paid dividends during and after the 1980 election. The neoconservatives brought with them an awareness and experience with both bureaucracy and academia, two areas sorely lacking on the right. *TAS* benefitted from its relationship with the neoconservatives in other ways. It brought press coverage, much of it positive. Most importantly from the editors' perspective, it improved the magazine's reputation and attracted readership from the nation's leading intellectuals and politicians. "To those of us who had been part of the old conservative movement, this attention was a very agreeable surprise," recalled Tyrrell. "Suddenly the moment was ours. We felt in

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<sup>139</sup> Jolis recalled that Thatcher greeted them saying "Do tell me, how is dear Ron, and how is the campaign going?" See Albert Jolis, *A Clutch of Red Diamonds: A Twentieth Century Odyssey* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 339-341; *Ibid.*, 41-42; and Michael Ledeen, "Unselfish Service of Bert Jolis," *Washington Times*, September 30, 2000, A13.



command. We were the beneficiaries of Liberalism's Crack-up and of our own hard work."<sup>140</sup>

At the end of 1980, *TAS* had secured a position of influence within the conservative movement. In ten years, the magazine had matured from an antiradical college magazine into a conservative opinion journal with a modest national circulation. No longer recruiting writers largely from Bloomington and other campuses, *TAS* published a wide range of conservative, neoconservative, and liberal writers, and even a significant number of European intellectuals. Its campaign against the gay and feminist movements strengthened its bona fides as a secular conservative defender of traditional values.<sup>141</sup>

It stood at the forefront of efforts to integrate the neoconservatives into the conservative intellectual movement. More than any other publication during the 1970s, *TAS* acted as an intermediary meeting point for mainstream conservatives and the disaffected liberals increasingly known as the neoconservatives. It was able to envision and embrace this role because its editors' conservatism was shaped in reaction to 1960s student radicalism. Like the neoconservatives, its primary enemy remained 1960s student radicals and their supporters. Based in the Midwest, the magazine's distance from the Washington-New York power corridor also helped it see the value of an ecumenical conservatism.

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<sup>140</sup> Tyrrell, *The Conservative Crackup*, 92-93, 96, 87-88. "We aim to be read intensively, not extensively" Tyrrell told *Time* Magazine in 1977. *Time*, "God and Man in Bloomington" (March 7, 1977): 93-94.

<sup>141</sup> James Wolcott, "Young Whippersnappers: Their Clubhouse is *The American Spectator*, and Their Mascot is H. L. Mencken," *Esquire* (September 1980): 14, 17; Tyrrell, "Our Forty-Five Years," *TAS* (February 2013): 5.

*TAS* vigorously opposed communism, but anticommunism was never its *raison d'être*. Instead, the magazine saw as its primary challenge a battle against 1960s radicals and the aftermath of their countercultural values, particular on liberalism. This preoccupation resulted from the generational identity of the magazine—it was endelibly stamped by the intragenerational campus conflicts of the 1960s—and it also inclined the magazine toward others with similar concerns, principally the neoconservatives. For its part, *TAS* continued looking for opportunities to fight against their leftist generational cohorts.<sup>142</sup>

After Reagan's election, would the magazine prosper with one of its own readers in the White House? The answer, as the next chapter argues, is complex. *TAS* editors, contributors, and supporters assumed influential positions, but the magazine's influence remained limited. The Reagan years were ultimately not triumphal ones for the magazine. *TAS*'s optimism at the end of 1980 was gradually replaced by pessimism over the magazine's inability to significantly influence Reagan and build an enduring conservative counterculture.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Bill Katz, "LJ: Magazines," *Library Journal*, February 1, 1975, in Box 7, Folder 2, General Correspondence, *American Spectator*, William A. Rusher Papers, 1973-1988, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; Ronald Burr, interview by Carl Rutan, "*The American Spectator*," C-SPAN, May 23, 1986; Tyrrell, "On Ten Years of Public Service," *TAS* (November 1977): 4, 44.

<sup>143</sup> Janice Castro, and Elizabeth Rudolph, "All the President's Magazines," *Time* (December 15, 1980): 78. *TAS*, "Where Do We Go From Here? A Symposium," (December 1982): 46-52.

### **Chapter 3: The Wasted Opportunity: *The American Spectator* during the Reagan Years, 1980-1988**

During Ronald Reagan's administration, *The American Spectator* experienced political frustration but extended its influence on the right. Since its founding in 1967, *TAS* had grown from a local campus antiradical paper into an influential magazine within the conservative intellectual movement, despite a modest national circulation. After Reagan's election in 1980, *Time* listed *TAS* as one of the "conservative publications enjoying a new legitimacy."<sup>1</sup> The magazine's editors had longed supported Reagan, and they believed that *TAS* was poised to help guide a conservative political and cultural renaissance in the 1980s.<sup>2</sup>

Instead, *TAS* editors faced disappointment during the period. In issue after issue, the editors published policy proposals, urging Reagan to support conservative causes and institutions, but they found the president unwilling to grant them serious attention or to enact what the editors considered sufficiently conservative reforms. The administration skillfully pacified the unhappy editors with occasional meetings and dinners at the White House, but otherwise ignored and marginalized them. Still, *TAS* editors were reluctant to

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<sup>1</sup> Janice Castro and Elizabeth Rudolph, "All the President's Magazines," *Time* (December 15, 1980): 78-79. The *Washington Post* listed *TAS* as the new "In" magazine; the "Out" was *The New Republic*, see Nina Hyde, "The List," *Washington Post*, December 31, 1981, D1. Helpful histories of the magazine during this period include Byron York, "Life and Death of *The American Spectator*," *The Atlantic* (November 2001): 91-110; David Brock's *Blinded by the Right: The Conscience of an Ex-Conservative* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2002); David Hoeveler's "The *American Spectator*," in *The Conservative Press in Twentieth-Century America*, eds., Ronald Lora and William Longton (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1999) and "American *Spectator*," in *American Conservatism: An Encyclopedia*, eds., Bruce Frohnen, Jeremy Beer, and Jeffrey Nelson (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006), 33-35, and a chapter about R. Emmett Tyrrell in his book, *Watch on the Right*, 207-232; and Alicia Shepard, "Spectator's Sport," *AJR* (May 1995): 32-39.

<sup>2</sup> For an example of triumphal enthusiasm at *TAS*, see Aram Bakshian, Jr., "Having a Ball: The Reagan Presidency," *TAS* (September 1981): 15-18, and Jude Wanniski, "Reagan's Advice Squad: Fourteen People Who Should Lead the Country—a Missive to President Reagan," *TAS* (October 1980): 17-20. For an example from the *NR* editors, see "Hail to the Chief," *NR* (November 14, 1980): 1369-1370. On the conservative movement during the 1980s, see Patrick Allitt, *The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 224-254; and Godfrey Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up: A History of the Conservative Ascendancy in America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996), 245-276.

criticize Reagan; instead, they often found themselves defending the administration against liberal opponents.<sup>3</sup>

Within the conservative movement, however, *TAS* exercised increasing influence during the Reagan years. Editors aggressively fought the culture wars, particularly against former 1960s student radicals, now in professional positions, and minority groups. Unlike the religious right in the 1980s, though, the magazine argued from a largely secular perspective. Also, building on its history of expanding the conservative movement, the magazine's editors promoted transatlantic conservatism by building relationships with sympathetic European writers, and they provided opportunities for young American writers to gain valuable training and experience contributing to *TAS*. As maturing adults in the 1980s, the editors mentored a new generation of young editors at dozens of small conservative campus publications, such as *The Dartmouth Review*.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Little has been written on the Reagan administration's relationship with the conservative press, particularly the responses of right wing editors to balancing Republican Party interests and conservative ideology. As this chapter illustrates, the Reagan White House largely succeeded in muffling criticisms from *TAS* editors. On Reagan's relationship to the broader conservative movement, see the insightful essays in W. Elliot Brownlee and Hugh Davis Graham, eds., *The Reagan Presidency: Pragmatic Conservatism and Its Legacies* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2003). See also Julian E. Zelizer, "Rethinking the History of American Conservatism," *Reviews in American History* (June 2010): 367-92; and Darren Dochuk, "Revival on the Right: Making Sense of the Conservative Movement in Post-World War II American History," *History Compass* (September 2006): 975-99.

<sup>4</sup> *TAS* and its orbit of writers and editors created a dense network of connections between conservative journals, institutions, media, and political offices, particularly during the 1980s. For more on the key conservative institutions, see Jason Stahl, "Selling Conservatism: Think Tanks, Conservative Ideology, and the Undermining of Liberalism, 1945–Present," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2008), especially chapter two on the 1980s, pages 78-116; Andrew Rich, *Think Tanks: Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Jean Stefancic and Richard Delgado, *No Mercy: How Conservative Think Tanks and Foundations Changed America's Social Agenda* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998). For a sympathetic insider's account on conservative movement institutions, see Lee Edwards, *Educating for Liberty: The First Half-Century of the Intercollegiate Studies Institute* (Chicago: Regnery, 2003); and Edwards, *The Power of Ideas: The Heritage Foundation at Twenty-Five Years* (Ottawa, IL: Jameson Books, 1997). On the connections between these institutions and conservative philanthropists, see Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009); and Nicole Hoplin and Ron Robinson, *Funding Fathers: The Unsung Heroes of the Conservative Movement* (Chicago: Regnery, 2008). For an example of *TAS*'s view in 1981 of conservative institutions, see Fred Baldwin, "Rising Above Principle: The Conservative Public Interest Law Firm," *TAS* (August 1981): 12-16.

Nevertheless, *TAS* struggled through the 1980s, and its history during this period demonstrates that Reagan's "revolution" was far from a success from conservative perspectives.<sup>5</sup> Circulation levels remained stagnant and only donations from supporters kept the magazine financially solvent, as editors discovered that it was more difficult to sell when its own candidates were in power. Moving from Indiana to Washington in 1985 helped attract donors and writers, but only at the expense of losing some of the magazine's distinctiveness. As early as 1987, *TAS* editors viewed the Reagan administration as a lost opportunity to create a counterculture of conservative ideas, values, and policies. Still reluctant to blame Reagan, *TAS* editor-in-chief R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr. blamed fellow conservatives for a lack of commitment and unity as a movement. The end of the Cold War only exacerbated fears of a "coming conservative crack-up," but the magazine's longstanding opposition to 1960s radicalism suggested a powerful new source of post-Cold War unity.<sup>6</sup>

### **Triumphalism on the Right? *TAS* and Conservative Editors at the White House**

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<sup>5</sup> This chapter contributes to a new and growing feature of the historiography by concentrating on conservatism *after* Reagan's election and challenging the view of the 1980s as a period of triumph on the right. For example, Lisa McGirr recently wrote that "another pioneering group of historians have begun the analysis of the conservative movement since 1980, and their preliminary conclusions have focused our attention on the conservative movement's somewhat marginal accomplishments [and] its fragmentation." This chapter on *TAS* in the 1980s offers a specific case study that supports McGirr's and others' contention. See Lisa McGirr, "Now That Historians Know So Much about the Right, How Should We Best Approach the Study of Conservatism?," *Journal of American History* (December 2011): 765-770; Phillips-Fein, "Conservatism: A State of the Field," *JAH* (December 2011): 723-743; Wilfred M. McClay, "Less Boilerplate, More Symmetry," *JAH* (December 2011): 744-747; Alan Brinkley, "Conservatism as a Growing Field of Scholarship," *JAH* (December 2011): 748-751; Donald T. Critchlow, "Rethinking American Conservatism: Toward a New Narrative," *JAH* (December 2011): 752-755; Martin Durham, "On American Conservatism and Kim Phillips-Fein's Survey of the Field," *JAH* (December 2011): 756-759; Matthew D. Lassiter, "Political History beyond the Red-Blue Divide," *JAH* (December 2011): 760-764; and Kim Phillips-Fein, "A Response," *JAH* (December 2011): 771-773. See also David Chappell, "The Triumph of Conservatives in a Liberal Age," in *A Companion to Post-1945 America*, eds., Jean-Christophe Agnew and Roy Rosenzweig (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 303-27.

<sup>6</sup> R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., "The Coming Conservative Crack-Up" *TAS* (September 1987): 17-18. For a shorter version of this article, see Tyrrell, "A Conservative Crack-Up?" *Wall Street Journal*, May 27, 1987, 22.

Ronald Reagan's defeat of Jimmy Carter in November of 1980 appeared to mark a positive change in the fortunes of *TAS* and conservatism. The magazine shared in the initial conservative excitement over the victory, a mood bolstered by the administration's early support for long advocated conservative positions. Reagan successfully guided significant tax cuts through Congress in 1981 (and again in 1983) and reversed longstanding federal support for unions by firing the air traffic controllers, whose Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization union went on strike in 1981. *TAS* editors and writers pushed for deeper cuts but were happy to see any tax cuts passed.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, conservative editors at magazines like *TAS* and *National Review* quickly grew frustrated. *TAS*'s editors struggled to balance supporting and challenging Ronald Reagan. The editors opted to publicly back the president the majority of the time, but behind the scenes they cajoled and occasionally admonished the president to pay more attention to conservative principles. For example, *TAS* editors pushed for more extensive tax cuts, further reductions in federal spending, deregulation of industries, and a more aggressive foreign policy.<sup>8</sup> But Reagan's second year in office, set amidst a deep economic recession, prompted the president to make politically expedient compromises, including compromises on spending bills with Congress. The economic situation became

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<sup>7</sup> For a detailed, contemporary account of the Reagan tax cuts, see Paul Craig Roberts, *The Supply-Side Revolution: An Insider's Account of Policymaking in Washington* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984); For a recent history of Reagan's standoff with the Air Traffic Controllers' Union, praised by conservatives, liberals, and academics, see Joseph McCartin, *Collision Course: Ronald Reagan, the Air Traffic Controllers, and the Strike that Changed America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); for a useful scholarly overview, see John Ehrman, *The Eighties: America in the Age of Reagan* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 49-89.

<sup>8</sup> Conservative intellectuals had long argued that removing government regulations on private businesses would have a stimulative effect on the economy. See Clinton Oster, Jr., "Airline Deregulation Considered," *TAS* (December 1983): 24-25, 28.

so dire in 1982 that Reagan accepted a modest tax increase in exchange for promised spending cuts by Democrats in the future.<sup>9</sup>

By 1982, the discontent among *TAS*'s and other conservative editors was increasing. But unwilling to recognize that Reagan himself was making politically sensible compromises, they directed their frustrations at the president's staffers. "These pragmatic Republicans have [been] pretty successful isolating him from his former allies, and they want him to utter no agitating thoughts about 'getting the government off our backs' or 'strengthening our defenses.'"<sup>10</sup> From the *TAS* editors' perspective, then, they and the other conservative editors were vying for influence over Reagan against the pragmatic politicians in the White House, such as high ranking staffers Michael Deaver, Jim Baker, and Donald Regan. By the spring of 1982, discontent among right wing editors was growing and public criticism was becoming more common. "I have watched the president become less and less the Ronald Reagan of Campaign '80 and more and more the captive of the Republicans of furrowed brow," sniped Tyrrell.<sup>11</sup>

This worried conservatives, but even more troubling was their sense that Reagan was paying too little attention to the writers and editors who had helped put him in office and who regularly defended him from critics. In an uncharacteristically threatening letter, co-signed by Irving Kristol and Bill Buckley, Tyrrell implored the president to pay more attention, perhaps by meeting with an advisory council of conservative editors.

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<sup>9</sup> See Donald Regan, *For the Record: From Wall Street to Washington* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), especially 173-85. On the political history of the Reagan administration, see Kenneth Thompson, ed., *The Reagan Presidency: Ten Intimate Perspectives of Ronald Reagan* (Lanham, MD: United Press of America, 1997) and Larry Berman, ed., *Looking Back on the Reagan Presidency* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

<sup>10</sup> Tyrrell, "Is Ronald Reagan a Gerald Ford?" *The Washington Post*, April 26, 1982, A17.

<sup>11</sup> On conservative editors' complaints, see R. Emmet Tyrrell, "Is Ronald Reagan A Gerald Ford?" *Washington Post*, April 26, 1982, A17. See also Michael Deaver, *Behind the Scenes* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1987), especially 126; also see Regan, *For the Record*, 173-85.

I have done all that I can from organizing dinners for you to leading the charge in my column and *The American Spectator*...but I can now tell you that from the hard right to the moderate conservatives there is a growing sense of unease over the drift of the Reagan administration. I urge you to bring in Irving Kristol and two or three other sober and sensible conservatives to discuss how this drift might be ended. This is not like the Ashbrook break in 1972. This is far more serious.<sup>12</sup>

With the 1982 midterm elections looming, this stern letter got Reagan's attention. But instead of moving to the right in actual policies, the White House found it took only personal attention from the president to placate Tyrrell. Reagan personally called Tyrrell at the *TAS* offices in Bloomington and "professed his belief that he has remained true to his conservative principles and friends," boasted the *TAS* editor. The conversation was amiable, despite Tyrrell's critical columns. The president deflected criticisms that moderate Republicans were too influential in the White House, saying that he had already hired many good conservatives and complaining that "it was not easy for him to attract conservatives to government, particularly conservatives from the business community [because] many were reluctant to leave their jobs."<sup>13</sup> Finally, Reagan agreed to a meeting with Tyrrell's selection of conservative editors. "He'll send...a list of several people who'd like to have a meeting," Reagan told his staff.<sup>14</sup> For Tyrrell and the *TAS* editors, this small degree of White House access was enough to tone down criticisms and calm conservatives' concerns. "I will be trying to make the case that he must not allow himself to be cut off from his conservative intellectual supporters," Tyrrell boasted in a letter to

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<sup>12</sup> Tyrrell to Reagan, August 6, 1982, White House Office of Records Management: Presidential Handwriting File, Box 003, Folder 036, Ronald Reagan Presidential Papers, Texas A&M, College Station, Texas. In 1972 Nixon temporarily faced a threat on his right flank from conservative Representative John Ashbrook for the GOP presidential nomination; see Allan Lichtman, *White Protestant Nation: The Rise of the American Conservative Movement* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2008), 295-286.

<sup>13</sup> For a contemporary account of the conversation, see Tyrrell, "...And Telephoning Journalists," *Washington Post*, August 23, 1982, A15.

<sup>14</sup> Reagan handwritten note, August 6, 1982, WHORM: Presidential Handwriting File, Box 003, Folder 036, Ronald Reagan Presidential Papers, Texas A&M, College Station, Texas.



Malcolm Muggeridge, British journalist and friend, “It is probably futile, but I shall give it the old college try, heave-ho.”<sup>15</sup>

The White House effectively handled disgruntled editors from *TAS* and other conservative publications during the period. Reagan had enjoyed the support of Tyrrell and *TAS* since the late 1960s, and he correctly anticipated that the editors would remain in his camp with only a minimal amount of attention. Reagan had actually read the magazine in the 1970s, even writing occasional letters to the editors in response to *TAS* articles. In the 1980s he periodically thanked or praised the magazine’s editors, but his comments were merely placating platitudes and did not reflect actual direct influence over the president’s decisions.<sup>16</sup>

Tyrrell and his group of conservative editors finally got their luncheon meeting with the president on September 22, 1982, in the cabinet room. *NR* publisher Bill Rusher had also been asking the White House for such a meeting, and he attended, as well. In addition to *TAS* and *NR*, *Commentary*, *Policy Review* and *Public Interest* were the invited magazines. The meeting appeared to go well, as Reagan respectfully listened while the right wing editors shared their concerns. Tyrrell, ignoring what he saw as the disapproval of the pragmatic, “grim assistant presidents” sitting near Reagan, urged the president to stick to conservative policies, particularly by cutting taxes and federal expenditures.<sup>17</sup> Reagan dutifully paid attention and seemed agreeable to Tyrrell’s idea of regular meetings, even asking his staffer David Gergen to put it on the schedule. In letters to Tyrrell and *NR*’s Rusher, the president continued to seem amenable. “He also reiterated

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<sup>15</sup> Tyrrell to Muggeridge, September 17, 1982, Correspondence Papers SC04B38F19-2, Box 38, Folder 19-2, Malcolm Muggeridge Papers, Wheaton College, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>16</sup> Reagan to Tyrrell, July 17, 1982, quoted in *TAS* (December 1982): 45.

<sup>17</sup> Tyrrell, *The Conservative Crack-Up* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 108; See also Tyrrell, “A Great Gentleman,” *TAS* (July/August 2004): 77-78.

his interest when responding to Rusher,” wrote Rusher biographer David Frisk. “‘I agree with you about doing this more often.’ But the series never happened.”<sup>18</sup> Tyrrell and Rusher continued to push for regular meetings, but to no avail. With one meeting, Reagan had temporarily pacified the opinion shapers on his right flank ahead of the midterm elections.

*TAS* editors were never willing to give up these indulgences by breaking with the president. From Tyrrell’s perspective, a regular “series of luncheons with conservative editors to keep the President *au courant* with the conservative point of view,” in addition to providing access and influence with the president, would also help build the prestige and reputation of the conservative alternative media.<sup>19</sup> This remained a theme of Tyrrell’s and *TAS*’s—the need to capitalize on a conservative in the White House by intentionally building a durable conservative media and cultural institutions. “We are losing the opportunity to strengthen the intellectual and media foundations of your movement through the machinery of your presidency,” complained the *TAS* editor-in-chief in 1983, “The opportunity is being lost...to enhance the prestige of your defenders so that when these black cats are heaved across the path of your presidency your defenders can speak with great authority. I hope some attempt at this will be made.”<sup>20</sup> The president offered soothing promises—“your letter makes great good sense and I shall pay it heed,” Reagan replied—but it was simply not a priority, or politically sensible, to cater too much to conservatives already in his corner. *TAS* and its young editor were discovering the

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<sup>18</sup> David Frisk, *If Not Us, Who? William Rusher, National Review, and the Conservative Movement* (Wilmington, DE: ISI books, 2012), 366-367. Frisk’s excellent biography of Rusher relies heavily on Tyrrell’s *Conservative Crack-Up* for details about the meeting with Reagan.

<sup>19</sup> Tyrrell, *Conservative Crack-Up*, 106-07.

<sup>20</sup> Tyrrell to Reagan, July 14, 1983, WHORM: Presidential Handwriting File, Box 7, Folder 91, Reagan Presidential Papers, Texas A&M, College Station, Texas.

complex challenges attendant to being in power, a lesson long ago learned at the liberal magazines, such as *The Nation* and *The New Republic*, that *TAS* had so frequently pilloried. Gone, too, were the days of lobbing ideologically pure rhetorical bombs at Jimmy Carter's White House.<sup>21</sup>

Although Tyrrell would continue to visit the White House and talk with Reagan, the regular meetings with conservative editors never materialized. Unwilling to blame Reagan, the man ultimately responsible, he instead blamed the president's staffers, particularly Deaver, Gergen, and Ed Meese.<sup>22</sup> After the meeting, Gergen suggested that instead of making the arrangements through him, as the president had asked, Tyrrell "probably would be more comfortable dealing with a staff member friendlier to me...he enlisted the overworked but 'friendlier' Ed Meese to schedule further meetings and we were lost in Ed's congested briefcase. Our group never met again."<sup>23</sup> Tyrrell, nevertheless, continued to look for opportunities to prod gently. "I wish that we could get those conservative writers back with you," he wrote in a post script to one letter, "There has not been much follow up, but hang in there on the defense budget I'm too old to fight in the trenches!"<sup>24</sup> *TAS* editors later heard rumors that the pragmatic politicians in the White House were intentionally keeping the monthly editions of *TAS* from the president. "Senior staff members tried to keep him from reading his *American Spectator*," recalled the magazine's publisher in 2004, "and our circulation people had to devise a scheme to

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<sup>21</sup> Reagan to Tyrrell, July 25, 1983, WHORM: Presidential Handwriting File, Box 7, Folder 91, Reagan Presidential Papers, Texas A&M, College Station, Texas.

<sup>22</sup> The *TAS* editor-in-chief's trips to the White House included various dinners, receptions, and cocktails. Ronald Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, ed., by Douglas Brinkley (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 266; and Tyrrell, "The Plot to Destroy Dan Rather and Me," *TAS* (October 1982): 5-6.

<sup>23</sup> Tyrrell, *Conservative Crack-Up*, 106-108.

<sup>24</sup> Tyrrell to Reagan, April 4, 1983, WHORM: Presidential Handwriting File, Box 6, Records, Folder 77, Reagan Presidential Papers, Texas A&M, College Station, Texas.

sneak a copy to him every month.”<sup>25</sup> But such unlikely theories rested on the assumption that Reagan lacked political awareness or was not in control of his White House, the very criticisms that *TAS* editors themselves denounced when offered by liberal critics. The magazine’s editors were unwilling or unable to see that for Reagan, Republican political realities were far more important than theoretical conservative ideology.

Despite these frustrations, *TAS* continued to support the administration and look for gentle ways to encourage conservative policies. The economy finally began to improve in 1983, thanks in no small part to Reagan’s decision to follow Jimmy Carter’s tightening of the money supply, painfully squeezing inflation out of the monetary system. *TAS* editors and many conservatives believed the economic growth was also due to Reagan’s supply-side economics, a fiscal policy that favored tax cuts to stimulate private business investments and opposed to deficit spending through government programs.<sup>26</sup>

To assess the first two years of Reagan’s economic policy and to encourage the administration not to abandon supply-side policies as the economy improved, *TAS* editors commissioned a symposium asking if supply-side economics was dead, or “more importantly, has Ronald Reagan been persuaded that supply-side economics is dead?,” under the assumption that “after nearly three years at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue Ronald Reagan is finding it ever harder to keep up with what the rest of us think.”<sup>27</sup> The

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<sup>25</sup> Alfred Regnery, “Our Giant,” *TAS* (July/August 2004): 4.

<sup>26</sup> Demand-side, or Keynesian economics, by contrast, emphasized both tax cuts and increased public expenditures to “prime the pump” by putting money in consumers’ hands. On the differences between demand- and supply-side economics, see Patrick Allitt, *The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), especially 183-187, 228-234; and also Godfrey Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up: A History of the Conservative Ascendancy in America* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996), especially chapter eight, “The Strange Death of John Maynard Keynes,” 186-215.

<sup>27</sup> Tyrrell, “Is Supply-Side Economics Dead? A Symposium,” *TAS* (November 1983): 10. Editors invited responses from an impressive array of conservative intellectuals and economists, including Malcolm Forbes, editor of the business magazine, Jack Kemp, the champion of supply-side policies in the

symposium's tone was pessimistic. Several writers lamented that supply-side policies had not yet even been genuinely tried. They complained that despite Reagan's initial 1981 tax cuts, the president had negated their effect by raising taxes the next year, allowing increases in other taxes such as social security and by not effectively fighting inflation. "If a substantial tax rate cut is the heart of supply-side economics," concluded Martin Anderson, "it has yet to be tried." Others complained about what they viewed as the administration's unwillingness to slow down congressional spending and its inability to halt deficit growth. The symposium, then, expressed a general dissatisfaction with the president's economic agenda. To a certain extent, this type of criticism was not unexpected by the president's conservative intellectual allies, who were unlikely to be fully satisfied absent the degree of tax cuts and reforms that political realities prohibited.<sup>28</sup>

Contributors clearly fretted that the political climate and the president had turned against supply-side economics, particularly as concerns mounted in Washington about annual deficits and the national debt. "It isn't good politics to be linked to supply-side economics," wrote Fred Barnes, "supply-side is now an epithet."<sup>29</sup> A related complaint was that Reagan himself seemed to be hedging his support, as well. The supply-side

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House, Arthur Laffer, an economist to Reagan and conservative tax cut guru, and economists Herbert Stein and Jude Wanniski, among others. Many of these influential economists wrote for *The Wall Street Journal's* editorial pages, and *TAS* editors made a point to invite *The Wall Street Journal's* editorial page editor, Robert Bartley, to participate. Tyrrell to Robert Barley, July 19, 1983, Box 57, Correspondence, Robert L. Bartley Papers, Hoover Institution Archive, Palo Alto, CA; "Is Supply-Side Economics Dead? A Symposium," *TAS* (November 1983): 10-23.

<sup>28</sup> Martin Anderson, "Is Supply-Side Economics Dead? A Symposium," *TAS* (November 1983): 10-11. On Reagan's difficult tax policy debates with Congress—the complications *TAS* contributors gave short shrift to—see Jeffrey Birhbaum and Alan Murray, *Showdown at Gucci Gulch: Lawmakers, Lobbyists, and the Unlikely Triumph of Tax Reform* (New York: Vintage Books, 1987).

<sup>29</sup> Fred Barnes, "Is Supply-Side Economics Dead? A Symposium," *TAS* (November 1983): 11.

movement's "greatest asset in 1981 was Reagan's enthusiastic support," wrote influential columnist Robert Novak, "its greatest liability today is his disaffection."<sup>30</sup>

There were only a few sanguine threads to the symposium. For all of Reagan's shortcomings, in their view, several contributors conceded that the president appeared to have changed the terms of the taxation debate. Even Democrats appeared now to talk about lowering various tax rates as a means to create incentive. "In one sense, we are all supply-siders now," enthused Jack Kemp, "no one any longer can seriously doubt that when you tax something you get less of it, and that when you subsidize something you get more of it."<sup>31</sup>

The editors sent Reagan an early edition of the issue, framing it in the best possible light. But while accurate in one sense, it was hardly in keeping with the tone of the symposium to cast it as positive for the president. Tyrrell wrote,

As yet another service to my favorite President, I have commissioned this symposium on supply-side economics (aka Reaganomics) and it is the judgment of the assembled sages that you have won: you have shifted the economic dialogue away from the statist hashish to incentives, etc. The symposium will appear in our November issue, but I wanted you to see it first. You have done the Republic a great service and deserve a toast and a celebration....P.S. I truly believe we have money on the run! Stay with it, we are with you.<sup>32</sup>

The forum made no discernible impact on White House policy. In fact, Reagan's obligatory response to Tyrrell suggested he had not actually even read the symposium. "Thanks for sending me the 'preprint' and for your letter," wrote the president politely, "I'm grateful for your kind words. I'm pleased too with the opinions of the 'assembled

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<sup>30</sup> Robert Novak, "Is Supply-Side Economics Dead? A Symposium," *TAS* (November 1983): 16-17.

<sup>31</sup> Jack Kemp, "Is Supply-Side Economics Dead? A Symposium," *TAS* (November 1983): 15.

<sup>32</sup> Tyrrell to Reagan, September 30, 1983, WHORM: Presidential Handwriting File, Box 7, Folder 99, Reagan Presidential Papers, Texas A&M, College Station, Texas.

sages.”<sup>33</sup> Even a casual reading of the first few pieces would have disabused Reagan of the notion that, as Tyrrell claimed, the symposium’s conclusions were positive.<sup>34</sup> Instead, it appears likely Reagan took Tyrrell’s word for it. More revealing were his comments in his reply letter, in which he offered his own assessment of supply-side economics.

You know, Bob, I’m not sure I really understood simon-pure ‘supply-side,’ or that I agreed with every facet. It’s always seemed to me that when government goes beyond a certain percentage of what it takes as its share of the people’s earnings we have trouble. I guess a simple explanation of what I’ve been trying to do is peel government down to bare essentials—necessities if you will—and then set the tax revenues accordingly...I think we’ve learned that government’s wants are limitless.<sup>35</sup>

Tyrrell never published these words from Reagan in *TAS*. Aside from the folksy language, it more or less confirmed the negative comments by the symposium’s critics. Reagan was not a committed supply-sider. He was a politician primarily interested in keeping his base of political support in check, which he succeeded in doing with *TAS*. The magazine’s editors were co-opted with relative ease by the White House, and they were reluctant to admit it. Instead of the magazine directly influencing the Reagan administration’s policies, the president and his White House indirectly influenced the magazine’s editorial positions.<sup>36</sup>

### ***TAS, The Dartmouth Review, and Young Conservatives***

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<sup>33</sup> Reagan to Tyrrell, October 6, 1983, WHORM: Presidential Handwriting File, Box 7, Folder 99, Reagan Presidential Papers, Texas A&M, College Station, Texas.

<sup>34</sup> In fact, many of the essays were dense, theoretical, and heavy with statistics. Although as recent studies have shown, Reagan was far more intellectually sophisticated than his critics recognized, he had clear weaknesses sorting through economic details. On Reagan’s intellectual vitality, see John Patrick Diggins, *Ronald Reagan: Fate, Freedom, and the Making of History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007). Diggins notes that “Reagan would have had a hard time cutting federal spending in the best of circumstances,” 339; and that “The Reagan Presidency reopened the American mind to the bounties of the free market,” 341.

<sup>35</sup> Reagan to Tyrrell, October 6, 1983, WHORM: Presidential Handwriting File, Box 7, Folder 99, Reagan Presidential Papers, Texas A&M, College Station, Texas.

<sup>36</sup> Reagan to Tyrrell, October 6, 1983, WHORM: Presidential Handwriting File, Box 7, Folder 99, Reagan Presidential Papers, Texas A&M, College Station, Texas.; see also Reagan, *Reagan: A Life in Letters*, eds., Kiron Skinner, Annelise Anderson, and Martin Anderson (New York: Free Press, 2003), 317-318. On the deficit issue, see Gregory Fossedal, “The Deficit Reduction Industry,” *TAS* (May 1984): 12-15.

By contrast, the magazine exerted significant power within the conservative intellectual movement during the 1980s. Its editors continued their campaign to develop talented young conservatives, including promoting the formation of a spate of new right wing campus magazines.<sup>37</sup> Reagan's victory buoyed the spirits of young conservatives, reinvigorating campus publishing efforts. Students started dozens of papers, many of them short-lived, on campuses across the nation, including the *Amherst Spectator*, *Harvard Salient*, *The Vassar Spectator*, *The Northwestern Review*, the *Washington Spectator*, and *The Stanford Review*.<sup>38</sup> Young conservative writers gained valuable experience working for these campus papers, for example, Rich Lowry, Buckley's hand-picked successor as editor of *NR*, started at the University of Virginia's *Virginia Advocate*, and John Podhoretz, edited the University of Chicago's *Counterpoint* before eventually succeeding his father, Norman Podhoretz, as editor of *Commentary* magazine.<sup>39</sup>

*TAS* editors, now in their thirties and early forties, found themselves in the position of inspiring, mentoring and supporting this new generation of campus writers.

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<sup>37</sup> According to *TAS*'s tax-exempt status documents, "Part of the foundation's central program has been training journalists and helping to place them in newspapers, magazines, and broadcasting," see "The Alternative Educational Foundation, Inc.: The First Ten Years," 1977, in Box 7, Folder 2, William A. Rusher Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; *TAS*, "A Dinner Story" (February 1978): 41-43.

<sup>38</sup> Most studies of conservative youth have targeted Young Americans for Freedom and the Young Republicans. This study addresses a gap in the historiography on conservative youth activities. The best history of conservative youth remains Gregory Schneider's study of YAF, but it covers only briefly the 1980s and largely does not address campus publications. See Gregory Schneider, *Cadres for Conservatism: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of the Contemporary Right* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 160-176; The most thorough history of campus conservatives beyond the YAF organization is Steven Koerner's dissertation, but it stops with Reagan's election in 1980. See Koerner, "The Conservative Youth Movement: A Study in Right-Wing Political Culture and Activism, 1950-1980," (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2001). Larry Gordon, "The Right Presses Case on Campus," *Los Angeles Times*, May 1, 1989, 1, 16-17.

<sup>39</sup> See William Henry III, and Joelle Attinger, "Conservative Rebels on Campus," *Time* (November 8, 1982): 80. As Tod Lindberg, a neoconservative editor with *The Public Interest* noted in the pages of *TAS* in 1983, the new campus publications on the right were actually quite diverse, representing the various strands of conservative thought. See Tod Lindberg, "The Dartmouth Review and the Campus Right," *TAS* (January 1983): 19-21.



*NR*'s Bill Buckley remained the biggest intellectual star on the right, and campus conservatives revered him, just as *TAS* editors had in the late 1960s.<sup>40</sup> But *TAS*'s campus origins in Bloomington and its combative style made it particularly relevant to young writers, who wanted to learn how it had managed to survive and grow. Indeed, despite scores of campus magazines started in the 1960s, right and left, *TAS* was the only one still publishing in the 1980s.<sup>41</sup> "One of the longest-surviving of the formerly radical underground papers, the *Berkeley Barb*, recently folded after spending most of its existence as an above-ground venture," reported the *Los Angeles Times*. "A paper that still survives is the conservative *American Spectator*, then a counter-counterculture student paper at the University of Indiana, now a national monthly."<sup>42</sup>

Aspiring campus conservatives were intellectually shaped by *TAS*. For example, the editor-in-chief of *The Vassar Spectator*, Marc Thiessen, explained that he became a conservative while at Vassar in the 1980s, in part after discovering *TAS*. "[At Vassar] I began to read magazines like...*National Review* and *The American Spectator* with an open mind, not just hearing, but listening to the opinions presented by the right. To my great surprise, I found myself agreeing with many of the views presented."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> See *The Hawkeye Review*, "Quotations from Chairman Bill," (May 6, 1983): 9. An abundance of studies and memoirs correctly cover the important history and extensive influence of *NR*; but as this study suggests, *TAS* (and other publications) also played important roles in the conservative intellectual movement.

<sup>41</sup> David Kupferschmid, "Alternative Papers Turn Conservative," *Los Angeles Times*, December 27, 1984, A6, 18; Dinesh D'Souza, "A Conservative Paper Chase," *TAS* (October 1982): 26-28; Henry and Attinger, "Conservative Rebels on Campus," *Time*, 80.

<sup>42</sup> Kupferschmid, "Alternative Papers Turn Conservative," A6, 18; reprinted in the conservative political magazine *Human Events* (April 13, 1985): 14-15. "*The Spectator* has always been a good read, the perfect magazine to go with a beer. It seems to invite first-rate writers to kick off their shoes and make themselves at home. The results are charming," wrote Joe Sobran, "Most of the radical 'underground' papers of the Sixties, which all sounded alike, have long since folded. *The Spectator* carries on, still a popping good read." Joseph Sobran, "Unusual Articles," *NR* (January 22, 1988): 62-63.

<sup>43</sup> Marc Thiessen, "A Letter from the Editor," *The Vassar Spectator* (August/September 1987): 5.

Some campus papers in the 1980s intentionally modeled themselves on the style, tactics, and layout of *TAS*, even copying advertising strategies. “Most of the [campus] publications today try to mimic *The American Spectator*,” explained Ron Burr, *TAS* publisher, in 1986, and “they call our office frequently [for advice and guidance] and they run ads for *The American Spectator* in their publications.”<sup>44</sup> Tyrrell, after years of asking older conservatives to serve on *TAS*’s advisory board members on the masthead, now found young campus editors requesting the same service from him.<sup>45</sup> Journalists for major publications, writing about the rapid growth of conservative campus magazines in the 1980s, often commented on the supportive dynamics of these inter-generational relationships on the right. “Many of the campus papers are called *Review* or *Spectator* and resemble one of those two conservative publications,” wrote the *Los Angeles Times*, “the young writers aspire to jobs there.”<sup>46</sup>

Campus editors shared another important quality with *TAS* editors—opposition to 1960s radicalism. But where *TAS* editors had fought—and continued to fight—intra-generationally against 1960s radicalism, young conservatives in the 1980s battled *inter-*

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<sup>44</sup> Ronald Burr, interview by Carl Rutan, “*The American Spectator*,” C-SPAN, May 23, 1986; Lynn Emmerman, “Right Takes Fight to Campus Journals,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 11, 1982, B4. For an example of these *TAS* paid advertisements, see *California Review* (January 1983): 7; See *The Vassar Spectator*, “Thank You,” (December 1988): 4; For an example of young editors mimicking Tyrrell’s editorial writing style, see Brian A. Brown, “Blah, Blah, Blah,” *The Vassar Spectator* (November 1985): 15. *The Hawkeye Review*, “Advertisement: Who Reads *The Hawkeye Review*?” (December 1984): 11. *TAS* editors supported these new magazines by purchasing advertisement space. For an example, see *The Hawkeye Review*, *TAS* Advertisement (May 6, 1983): 16; and Jonathan H. Mann, “Introduction,” *The Vassar Spectator* (March 1983): 2.

<sup>45</sup> See Ron Burr, Letter to Editor, *California Review* (January 1983): 3. The University of California San Diego’s the *California Review* also published *TAS* writers such as Tom Bethell, “Beyond the Ochre and Umber,” *California Review* (January 1983): 2; Tyrrell served on *The Vassar Spectator*’s Board of Advisors and Ron Burr on the Board of Directors; *The Vassar Spectator*, “Editors’ Announcement,” (May 1989): 15.

<sup>46</sup> Larry Gordon, “The Right Presses Case on Campus,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 1, 1989, 1, 16-17. C. Brandon Crocker, “Three Years at the *Review*,” *California Review* (June 1985): 7; The *Columbia Journalism Review* observed that *The Hawkeye Review* “apes its *National Review* and *American Spectator* daddies.” Philip Weiss, “Rolling Back the Radicals in Iowa City,” *Columbia Journalism Review* (September/October 1986): 40.

generationally against what they considered faculty and administration composed of former 1960s radicals. Both conservative generations, then, saw themselves fighting the political culture and aftermath of 1960s radicalism, embodied in what one young Ivy League conservative called the “college faculties which are now basically products of the 60s.”<sup>47</sup> Additionally, both groups borrowed tactics from 1960s student radicals to combat opponents and to attract outside attention and donors.<sup>48</sup>

Like *TAS*, young editors also linked campus programs directed at women, homosexuals, and other minority groups to the aftermath of 1960s radicalism.<sup>49</sup> “The college campus is a battle zone again—this time the ’60s against the ’80s,” observed the *Los Angeles Times* in one of many articles about the proliferation of campus conservative magazines in the 1980s. “It’s a battle of ’60s radicalism—now faded gracefully into the established liberal wisdom—versus a contentious, no-holds-barred, freewheeling political conservatism.”<sup>50</sup> Also like *TAS*, young editors were unwilling or unable to discern important differences between liberals, preferring instead to see the left as a monolithic group led by the values of 1960s radicalism.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Adam Lieberman, “Young Author Analyzes Conservatism,” *TDR* (April 30, 1986): 8. For another example, see William Rice, “The New Generation Gap,” *California Review* (November/December 1985): 2; and for an interesting perspective on the 1980s generation by one of its own members, see Jonathan D. Rubin, “The ‘I’ Generation and Other Whimsies,” *The Vassar Spectator* (October 1985): 3. See also D’Souza, “A Small Circle of Friends,” *TAS* (July 1985): 17-19.

<sup>48</sup> This was a point frequently noted in the early coverage of *TAS* and campus publications in the 1980s. For an example, see Peter Shaw, “Graves of Academe,” *Commentary* (April 1985): 75-77.

<sup>49</sup> Kupferschmid, “Alternative Papers Turn Conservative,” A6, 18. See also James Ralph Papp, “Feminism’s Corruption of English or Is Anybody Their?” *California Review* (February 1984): 10.

<sup>50</sup> Karla Vallance, “Campus: Confrontation This Time, The Rebel’s On the Right Campus,” *Christian Science Monitor*, January 27, 1983, B1-B2. For an example of opposition to former 1960s radicals, see Thomas J. Edwards, “That Darling of the Left,” *California Review* (November/December 1983): 4; Kupferschmid, “Alternative Papers Turn Conservative,” A6, 18. Defending campus conservative magazines, *NR* argued that college campuses in the 1980s were dominated by “the institutionalization of Sixties special-interest groups which—though negligible elsewhere—have entrenched themselves on many campuses.” See *NR*, “Putting the Bite on *The Dartmouth Review*,” (June 25, 1982): 744-745.

<sup>51</sup> For example, see Milton Copulas, “The Larouche Network,” *The Washington Spectator* (June 1985): 7-8.

There were differences, however, between *TAS* and the new campus magazines. Since its founding, *TAS* had been principally interested in fighting 1960s radicalism and its aftermath; it wrote about foreign policy and myriad other issues, but its primary contribution as a political journal was in fighting a culture war against its editors' co-generationalists on the left. As described above, campus writers in the 1980s shared *TAS*'s disdain for the former 1960s student radical generation, but they were also intensely interested in foreign policy, particularly supporting anticommunists in Central America.<sup>52</sup> Campus magazines in the 1980s also tended to be more religiously inclined—reflecting the influence of the Religious Right in the 1980s—than *TAS*, which largely followed secular positions.<sup>53</sup>

Also in contrast to *TAS*, the new campus magazines of the 1980s specifically targeted *conservative* readers, contributors, and supporters, and they often described themselves as conservatives. The University of Iowa's *The Hawkeye Review* illustrated this insular quality. "We extend a warm invitation to all conservative students, staff, and faculty who would like to write articles for the *Review*," explained the inaugural issue. "We are young conservatives, colorful mavericks, and rebels with a cause."<sup>54</sup> Vassar University's *The Vassar Spectator* also appealed primarily to conservatives, not to moderates. Its editors explained that it had "obligations towards the conservatives on campus [and that] *The Spectator* will try to be a strong conservative voice."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> The 1980s campus magazines, however, were angry at the 1960s-style protests by students and faculty on the left against Reagan's foreign policy, particularly when the protests involved shooting down speakers. See A. Barry Demuth, "Reflections on the Protest at UCSD," *California Review* (June 1985): 5; *The Vassar Spectator* (April 1985): 1-16.

<sup>53</sup> More religious, consistent with moral majority religious right; For example, the masthead stated that it was "devoted to God, America, and the University of Washington," *The Washington Spectator* (June 1985): 2. Also, John-Mark Westley, "A Reasonable Faith," *The Washington Spectator* (January 1985): 11.

<sup>54</sup> Jeffrey L. Renander, "Editorial," *The Hawkeye Review* (May 6, 1983): 2.

<sup>55</sup> *The Vassar Spectator*, "Conservatism: The New Path," (November 1983): 1.

Between its founding in 1967 and the 1980s, *TAS* intentionally did the opposite, recruiting writers and readers from beyond the conservative movement in an intentional effort to broaden the right. As late as the mid-1980s, *TAS* publisher Ron Burr objected to describing the magazine as solely conservative; it was a magazine of the conservative intellectual movement, but its editors consistently pursued ecumenical, antiradical positions and defined themselves in opposition to former 1960s student radicals. Reagan-era campus papers were self-consciously radical conservatives. Their rhetoric sounded more like Barry Goldwater's acceptance speech at the 1964 Republican convention in San Francisco, in which he defended conservatives' extremism, than like the ecumenical appeals of *TAS* editors in favor of the neoconservatives.<sup>56</sup>

There were other important differences. Whereas *TAS* had operated with little interference from the IU administration in the 1960s, campus conservative magazines in the 1980s frequently clashed with administrators and faculty. Magazine staffs faced censorship, legal action, discrimination, and occasionally disciplinary hearings, in large part because they targeted faculty and administration more often than students for criticisms. The University of Iowa's administration abruptly prohibited distribution of the *Hawkeye Review* in the dormitories after several months of publication and unfettered distribution.<sup>57</sup> *The Vassar Spectator* had its funds frozen and was ordered not to distribute an issue after it accused Anthony Grate, a student leader on campus, of anti-Semitism and compared him to Adolph Hitler. Marc Thiessen, the student editor, kept *NR* and *TAS*

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<sup>56</sup> Burr, interview by Rutan, C-SPAN, May 23, 1986; Tyrrell, "Introduction," in *Orthodoxy: The American Spectator Anniversary Anthology*, ed., Tyrrell (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), xi; On Goldwater and postwar conservative extremism, see Rick Perlstein, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (New York: Nation Books, 2001), 371-405.

<sup>57</sup> Jeffrey L. Renander, "Censorship: University of Iowa Style," *The Hawkeye Review* (December 1983): 2; and Renander, "First Amendment Endangered at the UI," *The Hawkeye Review* (February 1984): 1.

informed of the controversy. Tyrrell drew attention to *The Vassar Spectator*'s struggles with the Vassar administration in one of his columns.<sup>58</sup>

Nevertheless, there were strong similarities between *TAS* and many of the campus magazines of the 1980s. They shared an optimism, at least early in the decade, that conservative journalism, media, and educational institutions might grow large enough to challenge the news and ideas offered by the important cultural centers of the country. "The truly interesting question," wrote *The Vassar Spectator*'s editors on the future of conservatism, "is whether it can become, once again, the dominant public philosophy, one that defines the parameters for public discussion of those issues."<sup>59</sup> They also followed *TAS*'s example in publishing tasteless antifeminist and antigay rhetoric, a practice that occasionally led to libel threats from their targets' attorneys.<sup>60</sup>

The campus paper that most closely resembled *TAS* was *The Washington Spectator*, a short-lived publication from the University of Washington. It copied *TAS*'s outlook and layout, including using many of the same 19<sup>th</sup> century woodcut prints for artwork—such prints were in the public domain and therefore free of cost. *The Washington Spectator* used similar or identical language to *TAS*'s in describing its mission. "*The Spectator* can, without peeking into bedrooms, bathrooms and brothels, inject humor that can be sophisticated without being highbrow, and brawlingly sarcastic without being libelous, explained one editorial, using language probably culled from a frequently reprinted *TAS* advertisement. "*The Spectator* will do its part to liven things up

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<sup>58</sup> John P. McCormick, "Spectator Editors Distribute Banned Issue," *The Miscellany News*, September 16, 1988, 1-2. For the controversial piece, see *The Vassar Spectator*, "Hypocrite of the Month: Vassar Student Anthony Grate, (April/May 1988): 7. The article quoted Grate saying that he hated the Jews and other anti-Semitic comments; Tyrrell, "The Continuing Crisis," *TAS* (November 1988): 9.

<sup>59</sup> *The Vassar Spectator*, "Conservatism: The New Path," (November 1983): 7.

<sup>60</sup> Jerry Taylor, "Hailings from the Queendom of Lesbiana," *The Hawkeye Review* (September 1983): 11.

a bit,” it continued, quoting and paraphrasing Tyrrell editorials from 1982, “We are independent—linked to no political party, business or labor group, religion, or student organization.”<sup>61</sup>

*TAS* editors also aided the most important and well publicized of new student publications, *The Dartmouth Review*, founded in 1980.<sup>62</sup> Tyrrell accepted a request to join the *TDR* masthead as an advisory board member and helped improve the quality of the magazine’s editing. Unlike *TAS* a generation earlier, which had been formed by students in reaction to student radicals, *TDR* was formed by students primarily in reaction to faculty and administration, particularly in reaction to a controversy over the selection of board of trustee members for the university. The Dartmouth magazine gained national notoriety quickly by publishing material insensitive to feminists, African Americans, and homosexuals, and by engaging in pitched battles, in print, legally, and occasionally physically, with the faculty and administration.<sup>63</sup> Because of its aggressive and offensive tactics, it received more national publicity than the other new campus magazines. Many of its editors and contributors would later gain national prominence, such as author Dinesh D’Souza and radio host Laura Ingraham, both editors in the early 1980s, and

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<sup>61</sup> John Carlson, Lisa Sullivan, and Steve Sego, “Publishers’ Statement,” *The Washington Spectator* (January 1983): 2; For general information on *TWS*, see *The Washington Spectator*, “*The Spectator*: One Year Later,” (February 1984): 3.

<sup>62</sup> On the key moments in the magazine’s first decade, see former editor Harmeet Dhillon Singh’s memoir, “Shanties, Shakespeare, and Sex Kits,” *Policy Review* (Fall 1989): 58-64; For an example of the importance of *TDR* among other campus magazines, see James D. Spounias, “Professorial Proselytizing,” *California Review* (June 1985): 14-15.

<sup>63</sup> Dinesh D’Souza, “A Conservative Paper Chase,” *TAS* (October 1982): 26-28. D’Souza explicitly made these connections. For example, he wrote that “the ‘60s radicals on the faculty at Dartmouth have formed an alliance with discontented women, minority students, and homosexuals who believe that Dartmouth is a white male enclave that is insufficiently accommodating of their diverse pursuits.” See D’Souza, “Shanty Raids at Dartmouth: How a College Prank Became an Ideological War,” *Policy Review* (March 1986), 28-34.

later, *The New Criterion*'s managing editor James Panero and Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial writer Joseph Rago.<sup>64</sup>

*TDR* editors unequivocally believed they were fighting against the values of the 1960s, embodied in the Dartmouth faculty and administration. An early editor, D'Souza, argued that, "Nowhere has the conflict between institutionalized 1960s radicalism and activist conservatism been as acute as at Dartmouth."<sup>65</sup> Writing with D'Souza, Gregory Fossedal, a founding editor, explained that *TDR* was founded to rebel against the legacy of 1960s radicalism. "The Sixties anti-achievement ethos did not bypass the Ivy League," they explained, "It established the same hegemony in Cambridge and New Haven that it did in Madison and Berkeley. The students and faculty members who fought The System became... The System."<sup>66</sup> Co-founder Ben Hart, the son of *NR* editor Jeffrey Hart, put it more succinctly: "It's the Sixties against the Eighties at Dartmouth... Bet on the Eighties."<sup>67</sup>

Beyond a shared opposition to former 1960s radicals, *TAS* and *TDR* shared several qualities. Both emerged in reaction to their belief that leftist extremism threatened

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<sup>64</sup> Jeffrey Hart, "Dartmouth's J-School," and Dinesh D'Souza, "The Early Days," in *The Dartmouth Review Pleads Innocent: Twenty-Five Years of Being Threatened, Impugned, Vandalized, Sued, Suspended, and Bitten at the Ivy League's Most Controversial Newspaper*, eds., James Panero and Stefan Beck (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006), 315-317, 323-327. See also Dudley Clendinen, "Conservative Paper Stirs Dartmouth," *The New York Times*, October 13, 1981, A18; and Dennis Williams and Diane Weathers, "God and Man at Dartmouth," *Newsweek* (June 1, 1981): 64; and see especially Benjamin Hart's memoir about the first few years of *TDR*, Hart, *Poisoned Ivy* (New York: Stein and Day, 1984).

<sup>65</sup> D'Souza, "Shanty Raids at Dartmouth: How a College Prank Became an Ideological War," 28-34. Writing in *TAS*, D'Souza called the faculty and administration "the rebellious dreamy children of the sixties [who] became the wheezy washouts of the seventies and eighties." See Dinesh D'Souza, "A Conservative Paper Chase," 26-28. See D'Souza and Fossedal, "Dartmouth's Restoration," *NR* (September 18, 1981): 1071-1077, 1097.

<sup>66</sup> See D'Souza and Fossedal, "Dartmouth's Restoration," 1071-1077, 1097.

<sup>67</sup> Quote in See D'Souza and Fossedal, "Dartmouth's Restoration," 1071-1077, 1097. Hart elaborated on this anti-Sixties concept in *Poisoned Ivy*, see especially chapter 4, "A Stale Whiff from the Sixties," pages 51-58. "Hart's quick survey of the scene on other campuses convinces me that our most prestigious schools will be the slowest to spurn the lingering embrace of the 1960s' Zeitgeist." See John H. Fund, "The New Campus Revolution," *Reason* (April 1986): 52-53.



education and freedom and cultivated an alternative counterculture for conservatives. Both relied on theatrics—intentionally borrowed from 1960s student radicals—to gain publicity and undermine their opponents. Supporters and critics alike frequently described their writings as lively and occasionally confrontational. Staffs at both magazines revered Buckley and *NR* and were anglophiles. Additionally, both were dependent on funding from conservative benefactors and foundations, though *TDR* enjoyed greater financial support from the Dartmouth alumni.<sup>68</sup>

There were also important differences between the two publications. Like the other campus magazines in the 1980s, and unlike *TAS*, *TDR* viewed itself as a radical conservative magazine, not a coalition-building publication, and it clashed more intergenerationally than intragenerationally. Also, where *TAS* emerged from a large public state university in the Midwest, *TDR* was centered in a small, Ivy League university in the Northeast. Finally, *TAS*'s founding editors stayed with the magazine, expanding it from a campus publication to a national affair. But *TDR* stayed a distinctly campus publication, changing editors frequently as students matriculated through the college.<sup>69</sup>

Despite an otherwise supportive relationship, *TAS* occasionally published criticisms of *TDR*, creating tension between the two magazines. The first conflict followed an essay by an editor of the neoconservative *The Public Interest*, Tod Lindberg, published in *TAS*, who criticized *TDR* as an extreme right wing paper that was “consistently tasteless [with] a juvenile sense of humor,” particularly regarding the gay

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<sup>68</sup> D’Souza, “The Early Days,” 323-327. See also Dudley Clendinen, “Conservative Paper Stirs Dartmouth,” *The New York Times*, October 13, 1981, A18; and Dennis Williams and Diane Weathers, “God and Man at Dartmouth,” *Newsweek* (June 1, 1981): 64; and John H. Fund, “The New Campus Revolution,” 52-53.

<sup>69</sup> On the founding of *TDR*, see chapter ten, “Heretics: The Rise of *The Dartmouth Review*,” in Charles Sykes, *The Hollow Men: Politics and Corruption in Higher Education* (Washington DC: Regnery Gateway, 1990), 231-242.

rights issue.”<sup>70</sup> This immediately produced letters of rebuke from *TDR* allies. One of *TDR*’s founders, Keeney Jones, correctly pointed out the hypocrisy of *TAS* calling another magazine tasteless regarding homosexuality. A scathing and dismissive review of *TDR* co-founder Ben Hart’s memoir, *Poisoned Ivy*, by former *TAS* editor Malcolm Gladwell also produced an angry exchange of letters, one by Hart’s father, Jeffrey Hart, a *TAS* supporter and *NR* editor, who expressed disappointment that *TAS* published the Gladwell review.<sup>71</sup>

Gladwell was at the center of another conflict between the two publications the following year. When the Dartmouth administration refused to remove shanties constructed on a campus green by leftist students to protest South African apartheid in 1986, *TDR* staffers destroyed the shanties with sledgehammers one night, prompting an intense controversy and national story. The violence by the conservative editors was radical and extreme compared to any of *TAS*’s stunts; it made the *TAS*’s staged pie-throwing in 1969 pale by comparison.<sup>72</sup> Gladwell’s article on the affair was far less critical than his review of Hart’s book had been. He primarily criticized the timing, sensitivity, and execution of the stunt, pointing out, for example, that it occurred on the eve of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in January. His article prompted a spiteful letter from

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<sup>70</sup> Tod Lindberg, “*The Dartmouth Review* and the Campus Right,” *TAS* (January 1983): 19-21. Lindberg’s stinging assessment was astonishing because it could easily have been used to describe *TAS* at any point in its history, and indeed, it mirrored the language of *TAS*’s own critics.

<sup>71</sup> H.W. Crocker III, “Correspondence,” *TAS* (March 1983): 42-43. Keeney Jones, “Correspondence,” *TAS* (March 1983): 42-43. Tod Lindberg, “Response,” *TAS* (March 1983): 43; Gladwell, Review of *Poisoned Ivy*, by Hart, *TAS* (May 1985): 39-41; for the spirited exchange between Jeffrey Hart and Gladwell, see Hart and Gladwell, “Poisoned Ivy,” *TAS* (September 1985): 7, 49.

<sup>72</sup> Harmeet Dhillon Singh, “Shanties, Shakespeare, and Sex Kits,” 58-64; for an example of the national press coverage, see Sidney Blumenthal, “Conservatives Debate Style, Tactics After Dartmouth Incident,” *Washington Post*, February 6, 1986, A3. In 1969, *TAS* organized a conservative teach-in, where they staged a pie-throwing incident at a speaker, a fellow conservative pretending to be a New Left-sympathetic Columbia professor. See chapter one.

Laura Ingraham, a former *TDR* editor, who questioned why *TAS* would “continue to feature so dry and solemn a youngster as Gladwell.”<sup>73</sup>

*TAS* editors’ support for *TDR* was not unqualified, then; they were willing to publish critical pieces about their conservative allies. Some college magazines followed *TAS*’s lead. “Clearly, *The Dartmouth Review* has a tremendous capacity to be bigoted and generally idiotic,” wrote *The Vassar Spectator*, “Shrill conservatism is just as repugnant as shrill bleeding heart liberalism. Irresponsible articles and violent action has no place in the conservative—or liberal—pantheon.”<sup>74</sup> *NR*, by contrast, defended the conservative Dartmouth students’ actions. Instead of outright condemning the destruction of the shanties, it attacked the administration for allowing the shanties to remain standing in violation of campus policies.<sup>75</sup> Writing in the Heritage Foundation’s *Policy Review*, D’Souza also largely defended the shanty raids as a “college prank.”<sup>76</sup> Gradually, though, *TAS*’s critical position became the accepted one on the right. By 1989, even former *TDR* editors conceded that the “shanty-bashing was not the wisest solution.”<sup>77</sup>

An important way *TAS* promoted upstart campus magazines was by participating in training sessions specifically designed to equip young conservatives with the knowledge, skills, and connections to start their own campus publication. *TAS* had a long

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<sup>73</sup> For the initial article and the testy correspondence that followed, see Gladwell, “Fast Times at Dartmouth High,” *TAS* (April 1986): 28-29; Laura Ingraham, “Correspondence,” *TAS* (June 1986): 52; Malcolm Gladwell, “Response,” *TAS* (June 1986): 52-53; the Dartmouth College president read Gladwell’s article and wrote *TAS* to challenge several points.

<sup>74</sup> David R. Gabor, “Conflict on the Green,” *The Vassar Spectator* (March 1986): 5. Founder and former editor of *TDR*, Gregory Fossedal, broke with his former magazine’s position on South Africa when he published an anti-apartheid article in *TAS* in 1986, just as the shanty controversy was in the news. See Gregory A. Fossedal, “Shanty Talk,” *TAS* (May 1986): 28-29; see also Salim Muwakkil, “Building on Divestment Chic,” *In These Times* (May 14/20, 1986): 3-8.

<sup>75</sup> *NR*’s only note of criticism—“while conservatives should not imitate the street theater of the Left, one can certainly appreciate their emotions even as one frowns on their political imprudence.” See *NR*, “The Usual Fiasco at Dartmouth,” (February 28, 1986): 20-21.

<sup>76</sup> D’Souza, “Shanty Raids at Dartmouth,” *Policy Review* (March 1986): 28-34.

<sup>77</sup> Harmeet Dhillon Singh, “Shanties, Shakespeare, and Sex Kits,” 58-64;

history of sponsoring campus debates and training sessions, including their conservative teach-ins in the late 1960s, and sessions at Harvard and Chicago in the early 1970s. In the winter of 1982, for example, the magazine's editors partnered with the Institute for Educational Affairs (IEA), an institution that promoted campus conservative causes, to organize and participate in a magazine training session.<sup>78</sup> "On January 16," wrote *TDR*, "editors will appear at a seminar in New York which is aimed at teaching prospective student editors in New England colleges the nuts and bolts of funding and editing college newspapers."<sup>79</sup>

Along with the Dartmouth students, young editors from Yale, Amherst, the University of Louisville, and the University of Chicago—more than 40 students from fifteen difference campuses—attended the initial 1982 training conference. The event provided young conservatives networking opportunities, intellectual support, camaraderie, and practical advice on how to raise money, sell advertising, manage distribution, etc. *TAS* editors and contributors spoke about *TAS*'s own history as a campus magazine and the challenges they had to overcome. "Campus conservatives got a big boost last week when *The American Spectator* and the Educational Information Institute organized a seminar on campus journalism in New York," reported *NR*, "budding campus

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<sup>78</sup> On *TAS*'s conservative teach-ins, see chapter one; On the joint *TAS*-IEA conferences, see David Corn, "The Greening of Right-Wing Journalism," *In These Times*, (May 12-18, 1982): 12-13. *NR*, "This Week," (February 5, 1982): 90; Lynn Emmerman, "Right Takes Fight to Campus Journals," *Chicago Tribune*, April 11, 1982, B4. *TAS*, "Student Journalism Conference," (April 1982): 40-41. The IEA was led by two *TAS* board members, Irving Kristol and William Simon. See Walter Goodman, "Irving Kristol: Patron Saint of the New Right," *New York Times*, December 1981, A90.

<sup>79</sup> Editors, "Christmas, Poland, and Trustee Nominees," *TDR* (January 18, 1982): 6; Similar conferences, formerly called the Annual National Conference for Student Editors, were held in the following years. See Midge Decter, "The New Conservative Journalism," *The Hawkeye Review* (October/November 1983): 10.

journalists from all over the country were in attendance...Experiences were shared, advice given.”<sup>80</sup>

David Corn, a liberal journalist and recent graduate of Brown University, and a future Washington bureau chief for the liberal *Mother Jones*, infiltrated the conference under false pretenses and reported on what he witnessed. He noted the respect the young conservatives had for Tyrrell and *TAS* because of its history as the only campus publication in the postwar conservative movement to survive and become a national opinion magazine. The “guiding spirit of the conference” was Tyrrell, observed Corn, and his message to the young conservatives was to resist liberalism’s advances. Wladyslaw Pleszczynski, *TAS*’s managing editor, echoed Tyrrell’s charge. “Assume you’ll be arguing from a point of intellectual strength, if political weakness,” he extolled. William McGurn, the Assistant Managing Editor, and future head speechwriter for President George W. Bush, challenged students to prepare for battle with liberals. “By being an alternative paper, you come into a lot of abuse. Above all, you have to maintain your integrity. But a few slurs won’t hurt. We’re all for a few slurs. But you can’t be too strident. The people will dismiss you. You can’t print Ku Klux Klan literature. We’ve offended a lot of people, but we’ve offended the right people.”<sup>81</sup>

Corn described a “Tyrrellian attitude” at the conference of denigrating and aggressively confronting liberals. Sessions included discussion about how to deal with liberal critics, particularly when campus editors were accused of bigotry. *TAS*’s Tom Bethell taught hardball tactics. “If someone accuses you of being a racist or a sexist, and

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<sup>80</sup> *NR*, “This Week,” (February 5, 1982): 90; David Corn, “The Greening of Right-Wing Journalism,” *In These Times* (May 12-18, 1982): 12-13; Lynn Emmerman, “Right Takes Fight to Campus Journals,” *B4*; *TAS*, “Student Journalism Conference,” (April 1982): 40-41.

<sup>81</sup> David Corn, “The Greening of Right-Wing Journalism,” 12-13. Lynn Emmerman, “Right Takes Fight to Campus Journals,” *B4*; *TAS*, “Student Journalism Conference,” (April 1982): 40-41.

you are certain you are not, accuse them back of McCarthyism.” A longtime *TAS* contributing editor and future Fox News commentator, William Kristol explained how he would deal with false accusations. “I should take it as an insult, and it is proper to be indignant on your own behalf.” Corn walked away from the conference feeling that more than the practical advice, the overriding theme of the conference reflected the “intellectual thug” Tyrrell’s outlook. Young conservative journalists “were advised to ridicule, not debate, liberals.” But such conferences led by *TAS* served important purposes by identifying talented young writers, building networks, and encouraging and equipping editors at myriad campus publications.<sup>82</sup>

The financial connections made at these conferences were critical to the success of the campus journals. *TAS*’s co-sponsor, IEA, frequently offered funding to conference attendees who could demonstrate a publication plan and rationale. IEA itself received money from companies such as General Electric and Procter and Gamble, as well as right wing philanthropic Scaife Foundation and Coors Foundation, both contributors to *TAS*, as well. Individual campus publications could generally receive a few thousand dollars each, *The Hawkeye Review*, for example, was granted \$4,865; these were small amounts compared to the funding *TAS* collected, but it was crucial, nonetheless.<sup>83</sup> It occasionally raised questions from rival campus papers, though. Vassar College’s left-leaning investigative student magazine, *Unscrewed*, questioned the financial connections between

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<sup>82</sup> David Corn, “The Greening of Right-Wing Journalism,” 12-13. Lynn Emmerman, “Right Takes Fight to Campus Journals,” B4; *TAS*, “Student Journalism Conference,” 40-41.

<sup>83</sup> Albert Scardino, “A Look at the Conservative Alternative,” *Columbia Journalism Review* (September/October): 35-39; Philip Weiss, “Rolling Back the Radicals in Iowa City,” *Columbia Journalism Review* (September/October 1986): 39-40. See Bernard Weinraub, “Foundations Assist Conservative Cause,” *New York Times*, January 20, 1981, 25. See Walter Goodman, “Irving Kristol: Patron Saint of the New Right,” A90.

*The Vassar Spectator*, *TAS*, and the IEA. “Whose ‘neglected ideas’ does the [*Vassar Spectator*] serve?” it asked.<sup>84</sup>

*The Vassar Spectator* was another of *TAS*’s protégé magazines. It hosted another conference promoting college conservative magazines in April 1988. Called The National Conference of Conservative Student Newspaper Editors, the weekend conference was funded by the conservative IEA and included participants from more than thirty campus conservative magazines across the nation. Tyrrell was invited as a featured speaker, in large part because he alone in the conservative movement had started a campus magazine that succeeded. He was more than a teacher to these young editors; he was a success story, and they wanted to follow his example in making a career as a conservative magazine editor on the right.<sup>85</sup>

Tyrrell’s speech recycled the recurring themes of his *TAS* editorials, blaming the former 1960s student radicals for myriad American problems in the 1980s, offered a secular defense of traditional Western culture, and attacked post-1960s liberals, more with heated rhetoric than substance.<sup>86</sup> In the keynote address, Bill Buckley advised the student editors to follow *TAS*’s example. “[Buckley] reflected on a visit he had paid to Tyrrell when Tyrrell was still a student at the University of Indiana,” noted *The Vassar Spectator*, “Tyrrell founded *The American Spectator* as a campus paper, *The Alternative*. It has since grown to be one of the most respected political journals in America. Buckley told the audience that this was because of Tyrrell’s unbending insistence on quality. Only

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<sup>84</sup> The IEA told *Unscrewed* that it had not contributed to *The Vassar Spectator*. *Unscrewed*, “The Right Voice?” (May 1983): 3.

<sup>85</sup> Editor’s Note, *The Vassar Spectator* (November/December 1988): 12.

<sup>86</sup> *The Vassar Spectator* reprinted the *TAS* editor’s speech along with a photo of his visit to campus; the article resembled *TAS*’s piece covering Buckley’s first visit to Bloomington in 1968. Tyrrell, “Liberalism, Disturbing Your Neighbor, and the Attack on the Great Books,” *The Vassar Spectator* (November/December 1988): 12.

top quality writing went into his publication. He urged the editors to do the same with their publications.”<sup>87</sup>

In addition to helping campus conservatives through training conferences, *TAS* published scores of young conservatives from these campus magazines and other backgrounds, often providing these young writers their first byline in a national conservative magazine. “Bob Tyrrell of *The American Spectator* gave me my start as a writer...Despite the much-discussed conservative ascendancy in the 1980s, there were precious few institutions in which you could make a life for yourself,” recalled John Podhoretz, future editor of *Commentary*, “you needed an entrée, and one article in *Commentary* or *The American Spectator* was it.”<sup>88</sup> The founding editor of *TDR*, Gregory Fossedal, for example, was featured in *TAS* writing about campus conservative journals and other topics.<sup>89</sup>

Other staffers and contributors gained valuable experience at *TAS* before leaving for positions elsewhere. John Von Kannon, after serving as publisher for a decade, left in 1980 to join the Heritage Foundation, the preeminent conservative think tank in Washington, as a senior staffer.<sup>90</sup> Malcolm Gladwell worked as assistant managing editor between 1984 and 1985, and contributed articles throughout the 1980s. He later worked

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<sup>87</sup> *The Vassar Spectator*, “Buckley Speaks at Vassar—400 Students Protest,” (November/December 1988): 13.

<sup>88</sup> John Podhoretz, *Hell of a Ride: Backstage at the White House Follies, 1989-1993* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 237, 219.

<sup>89</sup> Gregory Fossedal, “The Campus: Young Turk Tunes,” *TAS* (October 1984): 28-29.

<sup>90</sup> On John Von Kannon’s biography, see Mike Magner, “Spotlight Shines on Conservative Icon,” *National Journal* (February 16, 2012), [http://www.nationaljournal.com/daily/john-von-kannon-spotlight-shines-on-conservative-icon-20120215?mrefid=site\\_search](http://www.nationaljournal.com/daily/john-von-kannon-spotlight-shines-on-conservative-icon-20120215?mrefid=site_search) (accessed June 17, 2013); and John Von Kannon Biography on the Heritage Foundation’s website, available at <http://www.heritage.org/about/staff/v/john-von-kannon>.



at *The Washington Post* before landing a long-term position with *The New Yorker* and writing several bestselling nonfiction books.<sup>91</sup>

Wladyslaw (Wlady) Pleszczynski (b. 1949) was the most important young addition to the magazine in the 1980s. His parents were Polish Jews who had survived the German concentration camps during the Second World War, moving to California after the war. He primarily grew up in Santa Barbara, California, before earning a BA in history from the local state university. He first encountered *TAS* when he left California to do graduate work in Soviet studies at Indiana University. Sharing the magazine's disdain for former 1960s student radicals, he joined the magazine in August of 1980 and quickly became the managing editor. In this capacity, he essentially ran the day-to-day editorial functions of the magazine. He recruited writers, planned and commissioned pieces, and edited all submissions. Because Tyrrell and most of the writers frequently worked from home or the road, Pleszczynski was the central figure in the daily direction of the magazine in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>92</sup>

Editors also worked to help young conservatives affiliated with the magazine gain important political positions in the Reagan administration. Tyrrell, for example, wrote to the Reagan White House Communication Director, Pat Buchanan, on behalf of Bill Kristol, who had been a contributing editor on the *TAS* masthead since the late 1960s. "Thanks for calling Bill Kristol to mind. Met him years ago; Takes after his old man,

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<sup>91</sup> On his time in Bloomington with the magazine, see Gladwell, "I Remember Bloomington," *TAS* (December 1987): 99.

<sup>92</sup> Wladyslaw Pleszczynski, interview by Carl Rutan, "Book Discussion on *The American Spectator*, C-SPAN, May 26, 1986; Dinitia Smith, "Spectator Sport: R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.," *New York Times*, July 3, 1994, SM14-18. At *TAS* and most magazines, managing editors do the bulk of the daily editorial tasks, and publishers handle the financial aspects, including billing, advertisements, and funding. Byron York makes this point, as well, in York, "Life and Death of *The American Spectator*," *The Atlantic* (November 2001): 94-95. See also Wladyslaw Pleszczynski, "Shall We Dance," *TAS* (December 2007/January 2008): 6.

which is A+,” replied Buchanan, “Will keep him in mind.”<sup>93</sup> Kristol was eventually hired in the Reagan Administration’s Department of Education to work under William Bennett in 1985. Tyrrell made similar efforts for Gordon Jackson, a fellow Midwesterner who wrote for *TAS*. “He is a first-rate guy and a solid right-winger—solider than even I,” Tyrrell wrote to Buchanan.<sup>94</sup>

### ***TAS and Its Elders***

While the magazine supported young conservatives, it continued to rely on the advice and support of older intellectuals and conservatives. The magazine’s antiradical tradition, rooted in its founding as an alternative to campus radicals at IU in the 1960s, stressed working with and often printing a wide range of writers, even outside the conservative movement. This tradition allowed the magazine to be the first to welcome neoconservatives into the conservative intellectual movement in the 1970s.<sup>95</sup>

It also allowed the editors to develop relationships with a diverse group of intellectuals, including conservative Bill Buckley, neoconservative Irving Kristol, and social democrat Sidney Hook. The influence of Buckley was unmistakable on the magazine and its editor-in-chief Tyrrell. The *NR* editor-in-chief gave *TAS* advice and support in the late 1960s and 1970s, helping the magazine get established and raise its profile. As journalist Sidney Blumenthal reported in 1986,

*The Spectator* is perhaps the most important journal of the younger conservative generation, occupying a unique niche within the Counter-Establishment. While the older generation speaks in a self-consciously grave tone, the voice of *The American Spectator* is self-consciously outrageous....Like many young

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<sup>93</sup> Patrick Buchanan to Tyrrell, WHORM: Alpha File, Reagan Presidential Papers, Texas A&M, College Station, Texas.

<sup>94</sup> Tyrrell to Buchanan, July 23, 1986, WHORM: Alpha File, Reagan Presidential Papers, Texas A&M, College Station, Texas.

<sup>95</sup> On the magazine’s antiradical founding, see chapter one, and on its role with the neoconservatives in the 1970s, see chapter two.

conservatives, the figure he tries to emulate is William F. Buckley, Jr., whose early posturing established him as a liberal nemesis. By mimicking the Buckley manner, the youthful set hope to capture a similar fame. Covering the Buckley stations of the cross is now an established ritual: the precious liberal-bashing tract (God and Man at Yale); the affected Englishness; the conspicuous use of big words. They offer themselves as originals, one after another, with eyes cocked at the Buckley icon... Tyrrell has the rare ability to deal exclusively in invective and derision without achieving satiric effect. His efforts have proven so noteworthy that he was hailed by Jeane Kirkpatrick as 'a major neoconservative voice of the new generation.'<sup>96</sup>

Sidney Hook (1902-1989), a liberal anticommunist philosopher, was also an important older influence on the magazine. A former communist who moved to the center-right, Hook's career roughly anticipated the careers of neoconservatives such as Irving Kristol and Norman Podhoretz. Like the neoconservatives, Hook viewed the 1960s New Left as dangerous and destructive. Tyrrell's relationship with Hook began in 1969 and became close in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>97</sup> He visited Hook's California home on several occasions, carried on an extensive correspondence, and frequently published Hook or took suggestions on books to review.<sup>98</sup> He learned from Hook the importance of supporting younger writers.<sup>99</sup>

Hook also helped the magazine in other ways. When *TAS* assistant publisher Lou Ann Sabatier developed an information package for a subscription drive, Hook agreed to contribute a lengthy, ringing endorsement of the magazine. "As I grow older, my time becomes shorter, and eyesight weaker," wrote Hook, "I must economize on time and on

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<sup>96</sup> Sidney Blumenthal, *The Rise of the Counter-establishment: The Conservative Ascent to Political Power* (New York: Union Square Press, 1986; 2008), 164.

<sup>97</sup> For more on Sidney Hook, see his autobiography, Hook, *Out of Step: An Unquiet Life in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987); Richard Bernstein, "Sidney Hook, Political Philosopher, is Dead at 86," *New York Times*, July 14, 1989, D15; Tom Bethell, "A Stroll with Sidney Hook," *TAS* (May 1987): 11-13; William McGurn, "Review of Sidney Hook's *Out of Step*," *TAS* (June 1987): 36-38.

<sup>98</sup> Tyrrell to Sidney Hook, December 2, 1982, Box 5, Folder 50, Sidney Hook Papers, Hoover Institution Archive, Palo Alto, CA; Tyrrell, "Let Us Now Praise Sidney Hook," *The Washington Post*, October 25, 1982, A13.

<sup>99</sup> Tyrrell to Hook, June 30, 1986, Box 5, Folder 50, Sidney Hook Papers, Hoover Institution Archive, Palo Alto, CA; Tyrrell, *Conservative Crack-Up*, 60; and Tyrrell, "Let Us Now Praise Sidney Hook," A13.

my reading of periodicals. But *The American Spectator* still remains high on my list.”<sup>100</sup>

Though not a movement conservative, Hook’s influence on the magazine’s editors was important, particularly in the 1980s.

Despite the steady support from the older generation of intellectuals and conservative philanthropists, Tyrrell felt neglected during the 1980s. In part this reflected the fact that baby boomer conservatives at the magazine, now in their thirties and forties, were increasingly in leadership positions. Bill Buckley, for example, in the late 1980s began to pull back from his famously busy schedule of writing and speaking on behalf of the conservative movement. “I do not know what the outcome of the struggles we face will be,” wrote Tyrrell in 1986. “I feel strongly that the generation of conservatives, neoconservatives, and unradicalized liberals that is in its late fifties and early sixties has failed to support the young people who are now taking the brunt of the left’s attacks or who are systemically being banished.”<sup>101</sup> The conservative intellectual movement was beginning a transition in leadership in the 1980s from the generation who came of age in World War II, men like Buckley, Russell Kirk, and William Rusher, to the generation of who came of age in the 1960s, men like Tyrrell, George Will, and William Kristol. The *TAS* generation was increasingly being looked to by younger conservatives for leadership.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Sidney Hook, “Why Do I Read *The American Spectator*?” 1988, Box 38, Folder 13, Sidney Hook Papers, Hoover Institution Archive, Palo Alto, CA; Wladyslaw Pleszczynski to Hook, July 11, 1988, Box 5, Folder 50, Sidney Hook Papers, Hoover Institution Archive, Palo Alto, CA; Tyrrell to Sidney Hook, June 30, 1986, Box 5, Folder 50, Sidney Hook Papers, Hoover Institution Archive, Palo Alto, CA.

<sup>101</sup> Tyrrell to Sidney Hook, June 30, 1986, Box 5, Folder 50, Sidney Hook Papers, Hoover Institution Archive, Palo Alto, CA.

<sup>102</sup> “In part the conservatives’ problem in the 1980s was generational,” wrote Tyrrell in 1992, older leaders like Kristol and Buckley “did not understand the need to confer authority on a new generation of forty-year-old leaders, and the forty-year-olds—being conservative and thus depressingly respectful of their elders—were not sufficiently brutal to slay them and wrest that authority.” Tyrrell, *The Conservative Crack-Up*, 238-240.

### TAS and Transatlantic, Ecumenical Conservatism

*TAS* editors continued to promote an ecumenical conservative movement, inviting potential new supporters to make common cause with the magazine. In the 1970s, the magazine had played an important role within conservatism by helping to integrate the neoconservatives into the larger movement.<sup>103</sup> This work was by no means complete in the 1980s, as deep fractures threatened to divide the right throughout Reagan's tenure in the White House, particularly between the neoconservatives and paleoconservatives.<sup>104</sup> Assessing the landscape of conservative publications in the late 1980s, *NR*'s Ernest Van Den Haag, a conservative sociologist, wrote:

Among conservative magazines the Paleos have *Modern Age*, *Chronicles*, *The Intercollegiate Review*; the Neos have *Commentary*, *The Public Interest*, *The National Interest*, *The New Criterion*. *National Review* occupies a special position. It put conservatism back on the intellectual map long before a distinction between Paleos and Neos could begin to matter and is hospitable to both Neos and Paleos, as the leading conservative ought to be. *The American Spectator* too is hospitable to all conservative currents and publishes first-rate articles.<sup>105</sup>

As part of this ecumenical tradition, the magazine worked to build transatlantic ties with European conservatives and neoconservatives. Tyrrell traveled extensively in Europe making connections, and when he found allies he worked to integrate them into the American conservative movement, often publishing them in *TAS*, including British journalist Malcolm Muggeridge and Italian writer Luigi Barzini.<sup>106</sup> Facilitating

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<sup>103</sup> *The Washington Monthly* and historian Alan Crawford commented on *TAS*'s dense web of connections with neoconservative children. See "We Always Knew These Were Family Magazines," *Washington Monthly* (July/August 1982): 37.

<sup>104</sup> For an example of *TAS*'s continued efforts to acquaint movement conservatives with the neoconservatives, see Morris Freedman, "Elliot Cohen and *Commentary*'s Campus," *TAS* (August 1981): 16-23. On the persistent divisions between the paleoconservatives and neoconservatives in the 1980s, see Allitt, *The Conservatives*, 245-252.

<sup>105</sup> Ernest Van Den Haag, "The War Between Paleos and Neos," *NR* (February 24, 1989): 23.

<sup>106</sup> For sympathetic biographies of Muggeridge, see Gregory Wolfe, *Malcolm Muggeridge: A Biography* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2003); and Richard Ingrams, *Muggeridge: The Biography* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1995).

introductions also proved a crucial role for *TAS*. For example, he built a relationship with Patrick Wajzman (b. 1946), a baby boomer and editor of *Politique Internationale*, a French foreign policy journal, as well as other French publications, and then introduced Wajzman to the other American conservative editors.<sup>107</sup>

Building connections with allies, especially unlikely allies outside the American conservative movement, was a strength of *TAS* throughout the 1980s. The Reagan administration was also at work to improve in a general way relations with the post-World War II generation of young Europeans. Charles Wick, Reagan's longtime friend, was using his position as head of the United States Information Agency to cast America and Reagan's policies in the best possible light. To critics it looked like propaganda; to Wick and the administration, it was a well-intentioned effort to counter Soviet misinformation about the U.S.<sup>108</sup>

Tyrrell also participated in one of Wick's USIA-funded trips to Europe. The trip accomplished two goals. First, it built conservative alliances across the Atlantic. "I have just returned from a USIA sponsored journey to Europe wherein I put together meetings in Paris, London, and Rome with a group of our *National Review-Commentary-American Spectator* writers and their European equivalents," he wrote. "In June we will bring the Europeans here. My idea was to fortify lasting relationships between like-minded young writers on both sides of the Atlantic so as to strengthen the NATO alliance at its

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<sup>107</sup> Tyrrell, "The French Robin Hood," *The Washington Post*, July 13, 1981, A13; Tyrrell, "Cautiously Walking the Street of Rome," *The Indianapolis Star*, September 9, 1981; and Tyrrell to Patrick Wajzman, April 13, 1984, Box 57, Correspondence, Bartley Papers, Hoover Institution Archive, Palo Alto, CA.

<sup>108</sup> Judith Miller, "U.S. Is Planning Bid to Win Over Europe's Young," *New York Times*, April 4, 1983, A1; See also Douglas Martin, "Charles Wick, 90, Information Agency Head," *New York Times*, July 24, 2008, B6.

foundations.”<sup>109</sup> When Tyrrell brought the group of European writers to New York in June 1983, he introduced them to the conservatives writers at *The Wall Street Journal*.<sup>110</sup>

*TAS* featured several European writers in the 1980s. A British writer prominent at the magazine was Tom Bethell.<sup>111</sup> Born in London, he graduated from Oxford in 1962 and moved to New Orleans, Louisiana in the 1960s to study and write about jazz music. Though he intended to stay only a brief time in America, he later changed his mind, eventually becoming an American citizen. In the 1970s, he transitioned to writing political journalism for several publications, including *Harpers, NR, Washington Monthly*, and *TAS*. By the 1980s, he was the full time Washington-based correspondent for *TAS*, adding another prominent British voice to the masthead. Though a conservative, he tended to see Reagan as less of a conservative than others at the magazine. Instead of blaming Reagan’s senior staffers for diluting the president’s conservative agenda, he argued that Reagan’s “tendency is to govern much more in the center than his rhetoric” suggested. His willingness to attack both Republicans and Democrats in *TAS* consistently provoked controversy.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Tyrrell to Reagan, April 4, 1983, WHORM: Presidential Handwriting File, Box 6, Folder 77, Reagan Presidential Papers, Texas A&M, College Station, Texas.

<sup>110</sup> Tyrrell to Robert Barley, June 21, 1983, Box 57, Correspondence, Bartley Papers, Hoover Institution Archive, Palo Alto, CA; Reagan to Tyrrell, April 12, 1983, WHORM: Presidential Handwriting File, Box 6, Folder 77, Reagan Presidential Papers, Texas A&M, College Station, Texas.

<sup>111</sup> *TAS*’s relationships were particularly strong with British writers. Occasionally while promoting Anglo-American conservatism, *TAS* allowed its pages to provide space for testy intellectual disputes among allies. For an example, see the exchange between Peregrine (Perry) Worsthorne, the Tory writer and editor of the conservative *Sunday Telegraph* in London, and Lord Chalfont, a former British minister of state, over American neoconservatism. Craig Whitney, “London Journal: If Not to the Manner Born, Then to the Money,” *The New York Times*, December 7, 1988, A4; Peregrine Worsthorne, “A Tory Critique of Neoconservatives,” *TAS* (October 1985): 14-17; and Lord Chalfont, Mark Falcoff, Melvyn Krauss, et al, “Peregrine Worsthorne Meets His Critics,” *TAS* (December 1985): 34-38. With a comparatively small number of conservative journals in America, and among them, even a smaller number willing to publish such divergent conservative views, *TAS* served an important function as a platform for intra-conservative debate about substantive policy issues.

<sup>112</sup> Tom Bethell, interview by Brian Lamb, “Book Discussion on *The American Spectator*,” C-SPAN, May 28, 1986; For an example of Bethell’s *TAS* articles creating controversy in the Capital, see his exchange with the moderate GOP senator from Wyoming, Alan Simpson, over the issue of immigration

Another iconoclastic European who was a *TAS* fixture during the 1980s was the Greek writer Taki, or Peter Theodoracopulos (1937). Heir to the shipping magnate, John Theodoracopulos, he had gone to American schools before returning home as an athletic prodigy to play sports for the Greek national team, including skiing and karate. A conservative, anti-communist and an anglophile, he left Greece in the 1970s for London and New York, where he established himself as an international jet setting playboy and opinion journalist. A larger than life figure, he wrote for the British *Spectator* in London, a high society gossip column in New York, served time in a British prison for cocaine possession, won international karate championships, and advised *The New York Times* on the virtues of wealthy men keeping mistresses. He wowed staid American conservatives, first writing for *NR* in the 1970s and then for *TAS* in the 1980s. His athletic background—he still boxed and won karate championships well after middle age—his bon vivant lifestyle, and his willingness to share his strong opinions with others appealed to Tyrrell and was consistently with the magazine’s secular conservative traditions.<sup>113</sup>

### **The Midwestern Magazine’s Move to DC**

*TAS*’s circulation remained small during the 1980s, though its readership now included the key opinion makers in government and the media, including the White House. Circulation initially spiked with Reagan’s election, doubling from 20,000 in 1980 to 41,000 in 1982, but then leveled off for the remainder of Reagan’s administration. The

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and abortion. See Tom Bethell, “Senator Simpson’s Reward,” *TAS* (February 1986): 11-13; Bethell, “Strange New Respect: Cont’d,” *TAS* (March 1986): 9. Alan Simpson, “Senator Simpson Fights Back,” *TAS* (April 1986): 25-27.

<sup>113</sup> Anthony Haden-Guest, “Review of Princes, Playboys, and High-Class Tarts by Taki,” *TAS* (August 1984): 34-36; John Tierney, “Kept Women: Nearly Extinct For a Reason,” *New York Times*, April 8, 2000, B1; *New York Times*, “Columnist Jailed for Drugs,” August 9, 1984, A3; Jo Thomas, “Actor’s Case Reflects British Drug Crackdown,” *New York Times*, January 20, 1985, A8; Julia Chaplin, “A New Eurofestation,” *New York Times*, December 8, 2002, 9.1; Joseph Sobran, “Rave Review!,” *NR* (May 18, 1984): 48-49; For his first column for *NR*, see Taki Theodoracopulos, “King Hussein’s Ten-Day War,” *NR* (October 20, 1970): 1109.



Reagan “revolution” did not bring greater financial security. Instead, liberal magazines such as *The New Republic*, *The Nation*, and especially *Mother Jones* enjoyed substantial growth during the 1980s by attacking Reagan, conservatives, and Republicans.<sup>114</sup>

Despite having a conservative in the White House, *TAS* editors had to find ways to compensate for an annual deficit of \$250,000.<sup>115</sup> Absent sustained circulation growth, it was forced to continue relying on donations from wealthy benefactors. Tyrrell frequently called these ideological philanthropists “the Medicis of the Age.”<sup>116</sup> Foremost among them was Richard Scaife, the eccentric, Pittsburgh-based heir to the Mellon banking fortune, whose generosity had funded the magazine’s rapid rise in the 1970s.<sup>117</sup> Other major donations came from the John Olin Foundation, the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation in Milwaukee and the Adolph Coors Family in Colorado.<sup>118</sup> “*The American Spectator* is the avant garde journal of the right where many of the ideas that propel the conservative movement originate,” enthused Robert Walker, Vice President of National Affairs for the beer maker.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Louis Hatchett, ed., *The Best of The American Spectator’s The Continuing Crisis: As Chronicles for 40 Years by R. Emmett Tyrrell* (New York: Beaufort Books, 2009), 2; James Roberts, *The Conservative Decade: Emerging Leaders of the 1980s* (Westport, CT: Arlington House Publishers, 1980), 100; Burr, interview by Rutan, C-SPAN, May 23, 1986; and Jim Spencer, “Tempo: Liberal Doses of the Right Stuff,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 10, 1984, E1. For a comparative framework, *TV Guide* was the largest with 18,870,730 in 1980, *Newsweek* had 2,952,515 in 1981, and *The New Yorker* had 501, 629 in 1980, see “Circulation of Leading U.S. Magazines,” *The World Almanac & Book of Facts, 1981* (New York: Newspaper Enterprise Association, 1981), 412. For 1983, the largest circulation was *Reader’s Digest* at 17,900,290, *Newsweek* had 3,024,503, and *The New Yorker* had 507,861, see *The World Almanac And Book of Facts, 1984*, 427.

<sup>115</sup> Jim Spencer, “Tempo: Liberal Doses of the Right Stuff,” E2.

<sup>116</sup> Tyrrell, “Introduction,” in *Orthodoxy*, xi.

<sup>117</sup> Karen Rothmyer, “Citizen Scaife,” in *Speak Out Against the New Right*, ed. Herbert Vetter (Boston: Beacon Press, 1982), 22-35.

<sup>118</sup> Jay Nordlinger, “Tailgunner Torricelli,” *The Weekly Standard* (March 2, 1998): 14; and Russ Bellant, *The Coors Connection: How Coors Family Philanthropy Undermines Democratic Pluralism* (Boston: South End Press, 1988, 1991), 93, 125.

<sup>119</sup> Robert Walker, quoted in *TAS*, “*The American Spectator* is Read by the Best,” (November 1985): 4

With the help of these donors, *TAS* entrenched itself as one of the leading conservative magazines in the 1980s. But in contrast to the New York-based *NR*, *TAS* was still published in Bloomington, Indiana.<sup>120</sup> After Reagan's election to a second term, the editors decided it was time to move the magazine to Washington D.C. The physical move represented the editors' final break with their collegiate past and a symbolic end to their long adolescence and acceptance of their roles as adult conservative leaders in the 1980s.<sup>121</sup>

The decision was also a practical one. Bloomington as a publishing center befitted a campus magazine, not a national one. "Most of our writers are in Washington and most of our readers are here, and we thought we could do a better job making an impact on public policy if we're located in a town where most of the policy is made," explained Ronald Burr in early 1986. Moreover, he explained, "*The American Spectator* is now the second largest opinion magazine in the country and a lot of our subscribers and donors wanted us to move to Washington." Senator Jack Kemp, for example, a *TAS* Board member, had pressed the issue, and when European writers visited the U.S., it was a continual source of frustration and confusion to discover that the magazine was based not along the East Coast in Washington or New York, but amidst the rural farmland in the Midwest.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Rounding out the main conservative magazines were: the enormously influential neoconservative *Commentary*, religious journals such as *First Things*, the paleoconservative *Rothbard-Rockwell Report*, and the specifically political *Human Events*.

<sup>121</sup> Richard Brookhiser, *Right Time, Right Place: Coming of Age with William F. Buckley, Jr. and the Conservative Movement* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 179-180.

<sup>122</sup> Burr, interview by Rutan, C-SPAN, May 23, 1986.

The magazine officially moved in 1985. Even before 1985, the responsibilities of the magazine had necessitated opening an ancillary office in New York City.<sup>123</sup> “Judy and I have agreed to build a home 400 yards on the American side of the Beltway in McLean, Virginia. Moreover, I intend to keep my apartment in New York. Thus, another Midwestern enclave is being set up in enemy territory.”<sup>124</sup> In October, 1985, the magazine moved to offices in Arlington, Virginia, a Washington suburb on the metro line. The move gave *TAS*’s writers better access to sources, improved the editors’ ability to recruit writers, and made it easier for the media to cover the magazine itself.<sup>125</sup> The following May, for example, C-SPAN devoted an entire week of coverage to the magazine, bringing its film crews to Arlington and conducting extensive interviews with the staff and key writers. The move appeared to be paying off.

But there were also significant downsides to the move. Most importantly, it undermined one of the strengths of the magazine—its intellectual, emotional, and cultural distance from the East Coast power centers. Editors, contributors, and readers had often bragged that the distance allowed the magazine to keep a fresh, unique perspective on events, at least compared to other opinion magazines. Also, the editors had long boasted of the Midwestern qualities of the magazine, by which they meant a resistance to extremes and an appreciation of centrism over ideological excessiveness. “Being in Bloomington—a place as far away spiritually as it was physically from the source of leftist thinking,” wrote former managing editor Steven Munson, “made it possible for the

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<sup>123</sup> Dinesh D’Souza, “OP Artistis: The Right Stuff, From Will, Tyrrell, Safire, Sobran, and Raspberry,” *Policy Review* (Winter 1985): 52.

<sup>124</sup> Tyrrell to Robert Bartley, April 23, 1985, Box 57, Correspondence, Bartley Papers, Hoover Institution Archive, Palo Alto, CA.

<sup>125</sup> John Von Kannon made this point, see Von Kannon, “American Spectator 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner,” C-SPAN Forum, November 12, 1997.

*Spectator* to emerge with a fresh, energetic, and independent voice.”<sup>126</sup> This very quality had informed the magazine’s founding in 1967 as an anti-radical magazine and helped position it as a journal willing to welcome diverse writers, specifically the neoconservatives, onto its pages in the early 1970s, before *NR*. “They moved from Bloomington, Indiana, where they were founded, to D.C. in 1985,” recalled *NR*’s Richard Brookhiser, “my opinion of Washington having been set by then, I thought this was a mistake.”<sup>127</sup> The events of the 1990s would prove Brookhiser correct.

### **TAS and The Return of the 1960s**

*TAS* fought secular culture wars in the 1980s and their prime targets were former 1960s student radicals, not abortion, drugs, or pornography. In the 1970s, after the magazine went national, there were fewer of these targets to hit, as most baby boomers were still in graduate school and working their way up the professional ranks. But by the 1980s, *TAS* detected former student radicals emerging in positions in academia, the media, government, and other positions. The magazine wasted little time identifying and attacking anyone they could connect with their archrivals, former 1960s student radicals.

When *The Washington Post*’s editor Meg Greenfield refused to publish some of Tyrrell’s weekly columns, he blamed it on former 1960s radicals. In a letter to one of his mentors, Sidney Hook, Tyrrell explained that:

The column, after frequent disputes over its language, almost always appeared until the political campaign of 1984 began. Then I began drawing attention to Jesse Jackson’s anti-Semitism and racism. Every such column was deleted from their page... Then they began cutting all columns critical of liberals... In the next week or so I am going to bring this matter to her attention, for I feel that I am being censored and for no very good reason other than the fact that as with the young professors at the universities, *the youth of the sixties* are now in powerful

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<sup>126</sup> Steven Munson, “I Remember Bloomington,” *TAS* (December 1987): 96.

<sup>127</sup> Brookhiser, *Right Time, Right Place*, 179.

positions in the media. They have only grown more hostile to our way of thinking and they want to suppress our views.<sup>128</sup>

In fact other issues were affecting the editing process. Tyrrell's columns did not play as well with the general Washington audience in the 1980s. His style of humor and writing, which blended Mencken and Buckley, often came across as shrill and lacking in substance in its frequent attacks on liberals. One theory bandied about the capital was that "*The Washington Post* prints Tyrrell because he is the liberal caricature of a conservative, a token who never draws blood."<sup>129</sup>

Whatever the case with his *Post* column, there was no doubt that when it came to attacking 1960s radicals, Tyrrell and his magazine drew for combat. They deeply resented the popular perceptions of the 1960s in the media, which overemphasized the 1960s hippies and radical student activists. The 1970 Kent State shootings had become, complained Tyrrell, "to a highly ideological elite in the television industry...the Pearl Harbor of their youth."<sup>130</sup>

TAS's version of the 1960s was the minority report, though he was invited on occasion to participate in 1960s commemorative forums. NBC invited him to participate in a fifteen-year anniversary show on the Woodstock Festival with the Black Panther leader Bobby Seale, and a few other guests from the era. "Those rosy-checked progressives whose adolescence began in the 1960s have sustained more epochal events than were chronicled by Gibbon," he later wrote, partly in ridicule, partly in envy. He also complained that popular representations of 1960s sanitized what he considered a

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<sup>128</sup> Italics added, Tyrrell to Sidney Hook, June 30, 1986, Box 5, Folder 50, Sidney Hook Papers, Hoover Institution Archive, Palo Alto, CA. On *The Washington Post*'s famed editor, see Meg Greenfield, *Washington* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001).

<sup>129</sup> Dinesh D'Souza, "OP Artistis: The Right Stuff, From Will, Tyrrell, Safire, Sobran, and Raspberry," 52.

<sup>130</sup> Tyrrell, "'The Pearl Harbor of Their Youth,'" *The Washington Post*, February 9, 1981, A13.

pernicious legacy. “Actually the consequences of 1960s radicalism have been squalid, albeit marginal,” he contended. “The gurus of personal liberation can take credit for some of the nation’s growing rate of illegitimacy along with a rise in petty lawlessness, drug addiction, welfare, venereal disease, and mental illness,” wrote Tyrrell. “Also education was impaired together with standards of intelligent thought.”<sup>131</sup>

These comments, printed in both his *Washington Post* and *TAS* columns, illustrated the type of hyperbolic right-wing rhetoric that general audiences found tedious and shallow. The improbable list of ills blamed on former student radicals looked comical, though he surely believed it, and certainly belied even a casual understanding of each problem’s multicausal complexities. Furthermore, he gave not even a nod of credit for this leftist cohort’s role in improving the rights of students, feminists, and other minority groups. Indeed, on many other issues Tyrrell and *TAS* could be sensible, if controversial. But when it came to 1960s student radicals, the magazine replaced analysis with invectives. If nothing else, such tactics appealed to an increasing number of conservative baby boomers, themselves now entering middle age. The guttural tone and sheer volume of these attacks spoke to a shared sense of resentment on the right and a belief that blame for the problems of late-twentieth century America rightly belonged on a minority of young people from the 1960s.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Tyrrell, “Among the Woodstock People,” *TAS* (October 1984): 8-9; Tyrrell, “Keepers of the Woodstock Myth,” *The Washington Post*, August 20, 1984, A17.

<sup>132</sup> Tom Wolfe, the bestselling writer and strong *TAS* supporter, shared the magazine’s disdain for the 1960s student radicals. In a *TAS* article later reprinted in the *Utne Reader*, Wolfe wrote that “the hippies sought nothing less than to sweep aside all codes and restraints of the past and start out from zero” who “had the amazing confidence, the Promethean hubris, to defy the gods and try to push man’s power and freedom to limitless, god-like extremes.” Wolfe’s rhetoric mirrored and reinforced Tyrrell. Throughout the 1980s, *TAS* continued to print similar stories, whenever possible, with excessive rhetoric designed to convey the excessiveness of 1960s student radicalism. Tom Wolfe, “The Great Relearning: The Twentieth Century is Over,” *TAS* (December 1987): 14-15; reprinted as “A Eulogy for the 20<sup>th</sup> Century,” *The Utne Reader* (March/April 1988): 32-35.

Some former 1960s student radicals also found *TAS*'s logic and rhetoric on this issue persuasive. The most important of these political converts were David Horowitz and Peter Collier, former editors of the premier New Left publication in the 1960s, *Ramparts* magazine. In the 1970s and 1980s, both drifted right for various reasons and by the mid-1980s were in the conservative camp.<sup>133</sup> In 1988, they held a Second Thoughts Conference for former New Leftists and other 1960s radicals who were moving right. *TAS* contributors P.J. O'Rourke and Joshua Muravchik, both of whom had already abandoned their 1960s radical pasts to join the right, were also participants. Just as *TAS* had led the calls in the early 1970s for the conservative movement to welcome the neoconservatives, so it now urged the same for the conference participants. It was in fighting the important cultural battles that this cadre of former 1960s radicals could best help, argued the magazine. "It is the post-Reagan conservative agenda, particularly its cultural aspects, where the second thinkers might aid conservatives by drawing in others of their generation," explained *TAS* contributor Micah Morrison. For these and other reasons, "they should be welcome" in the conservative movement.<sup>134</sup> Horowitz and Collier argued that their former comrades in the 1960s New Left had corrupted American liberalism, turning it and the Democratic Party steadily in more extreme directions in the 1970s and 1980s. Their popularity on the right, occurring just as the Reagan administration and the Cold War were concluding, pointed to the power of the 1960s to energize the right.

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<sup>133</sup> Horowitz and Collier, *Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts About the 60s* (New York: Free Press, 1989; 1996). See also Horowitz, *Radical Son: A Generational Odyssey* (New York: Touchstone, 1997).

<sup>134</sup> Micah Morrison, "Harnessing the Energy of the Former New Left," *TAS* (January 1988): 18-21; See George Szamuely, "Review of *Destructive Generation* by Collier and Horowitz," *TAS* (August 1989): 42-43.

### Secular Culture Wars in the 1980s

While the magazine's editors lashed out at cultural foes, particularly feminism and the gay rights movement, it also maintained an uneasy relationship with Catholic and protestant religious groups. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops released a controversial letter condemning American dependence on nuclear weapons in 1983 and then began working on a letter critical of American capitalism.<sup>135</sup> *TAS*'s editors, Catholics themselves in some cases, including the editor-in-chief, created a "Find the Fattest Bishop" contest. The editors thought it a funny and irreverent way of humiliating the bishops by contrasting some bishops' gluttony and views of capitalist greed. Contestants were asked to weigh their bishop "on a scale certified by the National Livestock Grower's Association."<sup>136</sup> Not surprisingly, the contest ruffled feathers in the Catholic Church. "Some Catholics were a bit unsure about Tyrrell's strategy of combating the Catholic bishops' pastoral letter on capitalism by announcing in *The American Spectator* a 'Find the Fattest Bishop' contest, prize \$100," noted one writer.<sup>137</sup> Buckley's *NR* had set the precedent for conservative journals' irreverence toward the Catholic Church, but Tyrrell's *TAS* took it much further.<sup>138</sup>

In other ways the magazine irritated religious and cultural conservatives. It published articles blatantly disrespectful of women by its playboy European correspondent, Taki, *TAS*'s "erudite student of the venerated arts." His articles, "Ugly

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<sup>135</sup> *Wall Street Journal*, "The Bishops' Agenda," November 18, 1983, 30; *Wall Street Journal*, "Capitalism and the Bishops," November 13, 1984, 32; the letter on capitalism was finally published as "Economic Justice for All" in 1986. On both Bishops' letters see Patrick Allitt, *Catholic Intellectuals and Conservative Politics in America, 1950-1985* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 289-297.

<sup>136</sup> Tyrrell, "The Continuing Crisis," *TAS* (April 1984): 7.

<sup>137</sup> Dinesh D'Souza, "OP Artists: The Right Stuff, From Will, Tyrrell, Safire, Sobran, and Raspberry," 52.

<sup>138</sup> On Buckley and *NR*'s irreverence toward the Church in the 1960s, see Allitt, *Catholic Intellectuals and Conservative Politics*, 93-95.



Women,” and “American Women Make Lousy Lovers,” were racy, tasteless discourses attacking liberal women. “American women are becoming lousier lovers with each passing discussion about pleasure, ecstasy, and their belief that sex remains the principal confrontation by which to work out new values,” opined Taki.<sup>139</sup> But such articles never generated substantial controversy with readers.

*TAS* editors were ambivalent about the religious right in the 1980s. Powered by groups such as the Southern Baptist pastor Jerry Falwell’s Moral Majority, politically active conservative Christians helped elect Reagan and other candidates to political office. They were a substantial voting bloc who shared *TAS*’s disdain for the cultural changes inaugurated by the 1960s student left. *TAS* nevertheless published thoughtful articles critical of Falwell and Christian conservatives.<sup>140</sup> Former editor Malcolm Gladwell’s 1986 piece, for example, analyzed the tensions between Chuck Colson, the former Nixon henchman turned prison minister, Falwell, “the international ambulance chas[er],” and fundamentalist leaders such as Bob Jones and Oral Roberts regarding their differing approaches to blending politics and religion.<sup>141</sup> The criticism of evangelical leaders provoked lively responses from major leaders such as Colson, Richard John Neuhaus, the nation’s most prominent Lutheran minister who later converted to Catholicism, and Thomas Fleming, the Christian paleoconservative leader and editor of

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<sup>139</sup> Taki, “American Women Make Lousy Lovers,” *TAS* (August 1982): 15-18; see Taki, “Ugly Women: A Treatise on Ugliness,” *TAS* (March 1981): 16-17.

<sup>140</sup> For a critical piece on the evangelist Billy Graham, see Tom Bethell, “Billy Bee,” *TAS* (August 1982): 4-5; On the religious-based conservative culture wars groups, see Chapter 7, “Evangelicals and Politics, 1976-1990,” in Patrick Allitt, *Religion in America Since 1945: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 148-169.

<sup>141</sup> Malcolm Gladwell, “Chuck Colson vs. The Fundamentalists,” *TAS* (February 1986): 21-23; Richard John Neuhaus, “What the Fundamentalists Want,” *TAS* (May 1985): 41-46. Gladwell had touched on some of these themes in *TAS* the previous year. See Gladwell, “Review of Falwell: *Before the Millennium*,” by Dinesh D’Souza, *TAS* (January 1985): 38-39.

*Chronicles of Culture*.” Such tensions highlighted TAS’s ambivalence toward Church issues and religious leaders.<sup>142</sup>

Nevertheless, the magazine occasionally took strong stands on issues important to Christian conservatives, defending cultural conservatism from secular positions. Despite publishing the unapologetic playboy, Taki, editors also defended the traditional nuclear family against what it considered multiple fronts of attack, in some cases originating in the 1960s. “In almost every culture, women withhold sex in order to obtain marriage. This pattern predominated in our own culture up until less than twenty-five years ago,” wrote TAS’s New York correspondent William Tucker. “When I was in college in the 1960s, I knew men who would sleep with every girl they met until they ran into one who refused them. Then they would marry that one.”<sup>143</sup> The contrast between this lament for the allegedly chaste halcyon days of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and Taki’s discourses on the best sexual partners did not appear to bother editors. Indeed, since its founding, the magazine and its readers had reconciled a utilitarian defense of traditional values, one that stressed the social benefits of social traditions, with articles extolling a fun-loving, beer-swelling bonhomie, particularly for conservative men.

Despite this, *TAS* also took strong prolife positions, though largely from a secular line of argument. For example, in an influential piece, Lewis Lehrman, a conservative philanthropist, argued that the natural rights in the Declaration of Independence implied a prolife position and called for the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*.<sup>144</sup> Again, it bears repeating

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<sup>142</sup> Chuck Colson, “Evangelical Examples,” *TAS* (April 1986): 9; Richard John Neuhaus, “Evangelical Examples,” *TAS* (April 1986): 9; Thomas Fleming, “Evangelical Examples,” *TAS* (April 1986): 9.

<sup>143</sup> William Tucker, “Why We Have Families,” *TAS* (December 1985): 14-18.

<sup>144</sup> Among other efforts, Lehrman co-founded the prestigious Lincoln Prize for historians of Abraham Lincoln; Lewis Lehrman, “The Declaration of Independence and the Right to Life,” *TAS* (April 1987): 21-23.

that *TAS* published these positions frequently without recourse to religious documents as primary rationales. They argued from reason and tradition far more than spiritual positions.<sup>145</sup>

*TAS* editors had different concerns than the Religious Right. While the prolife Christian right regretted Reagan's lack of progress on abortion, *TAS* regretted the lack of support for conservative institutions such as journalists and academics. Conservative Christian writer Dinesh D'Souza, while writing a profile of Tyrrell, noted the editor's complexity. As part of the interview, they joined one of Tyrrell's friends, who monopolized the conversation with graphic tales of his sexual exploits. "Tyrrell brushed his boyish curls with frustration," observed D'Souza, and complained, "My life is terribly boring' ...He suggested while everybody else was out quaffing, snorting, and wenching, he composed on his personal computer."<sup>146</sup>

### ***TAS* and the 1980s's AIDS Scare**

With the discovery of AIDS in the early 1980s, *TAS* found another way to continue its assault on the homosexuals. Although in the early 1990s editors would criticize the American media for overstating the danger of AIDS for ideological reason, in the 1980s the magazine itself participated in that very process.<sup>147</sup>

Two articles in particular ruthlessly attacked gays while simultaneously whipping up fears of a mass outbreak of AIDS. Pat Buchanan and a medical professional partnered in 1984 in *TAS* to warn that AIDS was only one of the "incubating pandemic, rare, and

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<sup>145</sup> For a sympathetic but critical examination of the prolife movement in light of the Robert Bork nomination, see Charolotte Low, "The Pro-Life Movement in Disarray," *TAS* (October 1987): 23-26.

<sup>146</sup> Dinesh D'Souza, "OP Artistis: The Right Stuff, From Will, Tyrrell, Safire, Sobran, and Raspberry," 52.

<sup>147</sup> On the connections between the religious right and the homosexual rights movement, see Didi Herman, *The Antigay Agenda: Orthodox Vision and the Christian Right* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

exotic diseases” produced by the “Sodomites” lifestyle.<sup>148</sup> Even more sensationalist was James Grutsch and A.D.J. Robertson’s “The Coming of AIDS,” descriptively subtitled, “It didn’t start with homosexuals, and it won’t end with them.” The authors, both medical professionals, made outrageous claims misrepresenting the available science and exaggerating the threat to the general population. They asserted, for example, that AIDS had been passed nonsexually within two different European households, neglecting to mention that such rare cases involved in-home medical care for sick family members, without the use of gloves. They also implied that AIDS might be spread via coughing.<sup>149</sup> It was “the most egregious AIDS scare article printed in the conservative press,” according to Michael Fumento.<sup>150</sup> On culture issues involving the 1960s student radicalism, feminism, and homosexuality, the magazine tended to indulge its worst instincts.

Another AIDS scare article in 1987 provoked an editorial controversy and proved to be the last scare piece run by the magazine. Christopher Monckton, a former Thatcher adviser, claimed that in order to prevent the spread of AIDS, governments ought “to screen the entire population regularly and to quarantine all carriers of the disease for life to halt the transmission of the disease to those who are uninfected.”<sup>151</sup> The assistant managing editor, Andrew Ferguson, argued with managing editor Pleszczynski about

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<sup>148</sup> Patrick Buchanan and J. Gordon Muir, “Gay Times and Diseases,” *TAS* (August 1984): 15-18; and James Grutsch, Jr., and A.D.J. Robertson, “The Coming of Aids,” *TAS* (March 1986): 12-15; For a useful recent biography of Pat Buchanan, see Timothy Stanley, *The Crusader: The Life and Tumultuous Times of Pat Buchanan* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2012).

<sup>149</sup> James Grutsch, Jr., and A.D.J. Robertson, “The Coming of Aids,” *TAS* (March 1986): 12-15; John Cunniff, “Aids Science,” *TAS* (July 1986): 9; Michael Fumento, *The Myth of Heterosexual AIDS* (Washington D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 1990, 1993), 185.

<sup>150</sup> Michael Fumento, *The Myth of Heterosexual AIDS*, 185; When another AIDS scare piece was published in 1986, Gene Antonio’s bestselling conservative book, *The AIDS Cover-Up?*, instilled fear in conservative readers; it frequently cited both *TAS* articles to support its argument. Gene Antonio, *The Aids Cover-Up?: The Real and Alarming Facts about Aids* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986; 1987).

<sup>151</sup> Christopher Monckton, “AIDS: A British View,” *TAS* (January 1987): 29-30; Also on the editorial dispute, see Fumento, *The Myth of Heterosexual Aids*, 185-186.

publishing the piece. Ferguson lost, but was permitted to present a dissenting opinion in the same issue, a first for the magazine. “Why the editors have seen fit to open their pages to it remains a deep mystery,” wrote Ferguson, “but they have done so, and therein lies an insult and an embarrassment to all associated with *The American Spectator*.”<sup>152</sup>

Tyrrell and Pleszczyński’s decision to run the piece emerged from their opinion in early 1987 that AIDS “continues to spread at a frightening rate” without a cure and their faith in the scientific explanations offered by Monckton and others.<sup>153</sup> “At the time information was still quite sketchy,” Pleszczyński later recalled, “and we thought it prudent to go ahead with a warning article.” They later reversed their editorial position, and five years later published pieces critical of Monckton’s “alarmism.”<sup>154</sup>

### **TAS and the Reagan Presidential Postmortem**

The frustration *TAS* felt with Reagan’s administration for not, in their view, doing more to advance the conservative movement, expressed itself in increasingly public criticism after 1986. Republican losses in the 1986 midterm elections, Reagan’s nuclear reduction concessions to the Soviet Union at the Reykjavik Summit conference in 1986, which conservatives took as a sign of weakness, and the Iran-Contra scandal, in which the Reagan administration was forced to admit violating Congressional restrictions on funding anticommunist forces in Central America, further demoralized *TAS* and many on the right. Talk of “gloom and doom” shifted to “fear [of] calamity” for the right.<sup>155</sup>

The shift in *TAS*’s discussion of Reagan illustrated the mood. The Iran-Contra scandal severely tested *TAS*’s already strained support. “What the hell is going on?”

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<sup>152</sup> Andrew Ferguson, “Count Me Out,” *TAS* (January 1987): 9.

<sup>153</sup> Wladyslaw Pleszczyński, “Reply to Ferguson,” *TAS* (January 1987): 9.

<sup>154</sup> Pleszczyński quoted in Fumento, *The Myth of Heterosexual Aids*, 185-186; on the different editorial position, see Michael Fumento, “Do You Believe in Magic?” *TAS* (February 1992): 16-21.

<sup>155</sup> Tim Ferguson, “What Next for the Conservative Movement?,” *TAS* (January 1987): 14-16.

asked the April 1987 cover story.<sup>156</sup> Tyrrell's disappointment was pronounced. "Blinded by a good impulse," he wrote of the Iran-Contra scandal and the Reykjavik summit, the president has "behaved arrogantly, deviously, and as the classic appeaser." Still, though more critical of Reagan, he continued to blame staffers, employing a Warren G. Harding-style defense. "I lay the present presidential ineptitude, disingenuousness, and appeasement to Reagan's artless trust in the goodness of a good impulse."<sup>157</sup>

Tyrell's assessment set the template for the presidential postmortem, which was well under way before Reagan left office. *TAS* coped with their disappointment by openly criticizing the president and simultaneously escalating their attacks on his advisors. How to explain "a movement conservative with a non-conservative circle of advisers?" asked *TAS*'s Fred Barnes. Reagan's delegation approach, which opened the door for reckless shuffling of staff, was one cause. "He simply doesn't care much who works for him," wrote Barnes. Another was the First Lady, who exerted strong influence over Reagan and his staffers; "serious conservatives give her the willies," complained Barnes. Pragmatic politicians were also responsible for besting conservative staffers for influence.<sup>158</sup> *TAS*'s Washington correspondent, Tom Bethell, assigned more responsibility to Reagan. "What a terrible disappointment President Reagan has turned out to be," he complained. The president's "craving for popularity" consistently triumphed his conservative principles. He also identified a more salient point for Reagan's limited progress on conservative goals—the president knew he controlled his right flank. "The conservatives were Reagan's fan club and he figured he had those birds in the hand," Bethell surmised,

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<sup>156</sup> Aaron Wildavsky, with a reply by James David Barber, "What the Hell is Going On? Reagan Iran and the Presidency," *TAS* (April 1987): 14-18.

<sup>157</sup> Tyrrell, "Reagan is Not Reagan," *TAS* (January 1987): 10.

<sup>158</sup> Fred Barnes, "Thou Shalt Not Commit Conservatism," *TAS* (February 1988): 14-15.

“Then he reached to the liberal bush.” In fact, *TAS* had contributed to the problem by its reluctance to criticize Reagan until late.<sup>159</sup>

In the fall of 1987 Tyrrell tried to buoy spirits, extolling *TAS* readers to “take heart [and] pay no heed to those popinjays among the intelligentsia who report with unseemly exuberance that the heyday of Reagan conservatism has passed.”<sup>160</sup> Nothing cleared away unhappy thoughts about Reagan’s presidency faster than criticism from the left. As he sorted through the disappointments he devised an interpretation that worked, at least provisionally, to explain the good and the bad about Reagan. He argued that Reagan had accomplished his primary goals by 1986, including tax cuts, deregulation of industries, and a restored military. “Then came failure, not the failure of his magic but the failure of Ronald Reagan’s conservatives,” went Tyrrell’s new interpretation. A conservative president had been insufficient incentive for conservatives “to coalesce into a political community.”<sup>161</sup>

Despite *TAS*’s escalated criticism of Reagan’s administration, its editors remained personally loyal to the president. They were deeply disappointed that more was not done to build a conservative counterculture of institutions, education, and particularly media. And despite the attacks on him, many in the magazine’s orbit still adored him. Like the various scandals during his presidency that never quite stuck to the president, conservative criticisms of him also slid off, for the most part, in time. *TAS* frequently blamed senior staffers, not Reagan, for what they considered the administration’s shortcomings. With time they let frustrations toward him go. The highlight of the editors’ relationship with Reagan came when the president dined at Tyrrell’s home. On July 26,

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<sup>159</sup> Bethell, “Conservative Bird, Liberal Bush,” *TAS* (April 1987): 11-13.

<sup>160</sup> Tyrrell, “Conservatives, Take Heart,” *TAS* (October 1987): 14.

<sup>161</sup> Tyrrell, “The Coming Conservative Crack-Up,” *TAS* (September 1987): 17-19.

1988, the president arrived at Tyrrell's home, flanked by a necessary entourage of secret service and staffers, and spent the night dining with a dozen conservative writers associated with *TAS*. Reagan had successfully avoided such proximity to the *TAS* editors during his presidency, but now, at the end of his White House tenure, he felt politically safe enough to thank the magazine with a dinner party. Tyrrell was elated.<sup>162</sup>

In early 1987, as the Reagan administration limped past the Iran-Contra scandal, *TAS* editors lamented that conservatives had not accomplished more during the previous six years. Garry Wills published an essay in *Time* magazine arguing that "there was no Reagan "revolution," just a Reagan bedazzlement."<sup>163</sup> In a response to Wills' piece, Tyrrell agreed that conservatives had not built a viable infrastructure during the Reagan years. Coining a phrase, he titled his article, "A Conservative Crack-Up?"<sup>164</sup>

In it Tyrrell argued that conservatives had wasted an opportunity under Reagan to build durable conservative cultural, educational, media, and political institutions to counter what he and other conservatives considered the left's dominance in these areas. The biggest problem, he explained, was that conservatives were too parochial and insufficiently interested in supporting one another. "I have been among them for years," he confided. "Each has one or two solutions to the republic's problems: Supply-side Economics! Traditional Family Values! The Eternal Verities! Economic Education! Beyond their one or two wonder cures they lose interest." Conservatives, then, argued

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<sup>162</sup> Tyrrell to Reagan, December 30, 1987, WHORM: Alpha File, Reagan Presidential Papers, Texas A&M, College Station, Texas; Tyrrell, "Reagan on the Rock," *TAS* (July/August 2004): 78-79; Tyrrell, "A Great Gentleman," *TAS* (July/August 2004): 77-78.

<sup>163</sup> Garry Wills, "What Happened?" *Time* (March 9, 1987): 40.

<sup>164</sup> R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., "The Coming Conservative Crack-Up" *TAS* (September 1987): 17-18; and Tyrrell, "A Conservative Crack-Up?" *Wall Street Journal*, May 27, 1987, 22.



Tyrrell, needed to be more cosmopolitan in their worldviews, accepting and actively supporting a big tent conservatism full of diversity. “The narrowness of America’s conservatives is a mystery. I have seen it retard fuddy-duddies like Russell Kirk and the libertarians, who can become violent at the first departure from orthodoxy.” And, he argued, while they griped about their lack of access to cultural institutions, they did not want to take the steps and spend the money to build a really effective set of alternative academic and media institutions.<sup>165</sup>

Politics in the Reagan era had proved a disappointment, but *TAS*’s work in cultural combat offered intriguing possibilities. In a signal piece in late 1986, *TAS*’s Chester Finn suggested that the future health of the conservative movement rested with the defense of a conservative interpretation of America’s western, Judeo-Christian culture. Finn, inspired by an essay by conservative organizer Paul Weyrich in the *Washington Post*, argued that the various factions of conservatism might rally around ten aspects of American culture. Even when defending religious traditions, he argued, “I have said nothing that would oblige a bona fide cultural conservative to believe in God, much less to participate in any particular branch of organized religion.” Thus, he suggested, a defense of conservative culture offered a bright future for conservatism.<sup>166</sup> Finn was correct in anticipating the power of cultural politics. And as the next chapter argues, *TAS* was the conservative journal best positioned to capitalize on conservative cultural topics. The contested Supreme Court nomination in 1991 and the emergence of Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill would provide the necessary spark to energize *TAS* and conservatism again.

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Chester Finn, Jr., “Giving Shape to Cultural Conservatism,” *TAS* (November 1986): 14-16.

**Chapter 4: Right Wing Muckraking and the Culture Wars:  
The American Spectator's Turn to Investigative Journalism, 1988-1992**

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, American conservatism appeared troubled. With their political leader, former president Ronald Reagan, battling Alzheimer's disease in California, and their intellectual hero, William F. Buckley, semi-retired from *National Review* and public life, conservatives had a frosty relationship at best with the sitting Republican president, George H.W. Bush. The end of the Cold War corroded the bond of anticommunism and conservatives seemed to bicker with one another with increasing hostility. Bob Tyrrell, editor of *The American Spectator*, anticipated the zeitgeist on the right with his 1987 article entitled "The Coming Conservative Crack-Up," in which he lamented the state of conservatism and fretted over its future prospects.<sup>1</sup>

Over the next five years Tyrrell expanded these ideas into book form. But when it was finally published in 1992, it was a much less accurate statement about conservatism or *TAS*. Although the book was excerpted in *TAS* and elsewhere and widely reviewed, its crackup argument applied more to the spirit of the late 1980s.<sup>2</sup> Far from cracking up, conservatism was resurgent in 1992, energized by *TAS*'s investigative reporting and by the emergence of a powerful new voice of conservatism, Rush Limbaugh, with whom the magazine partnered in various ways.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., "The Coming Conservative Crack-Up" *TAS* (September 1987): 17-18; and Tyrrell, "A Conservative Crack-Up?" *Wall Street Journal*, May 27, 1987, 22. Helpful histories of the magazine during this period include Byron York, "Life and Death of *The American Spectator*," *The Atlantic* (November 2001): 91-110; David Brock's *Blinded by the Right: The Conscience of an Ex-Conservative* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2002); David Hoeveler's "The American Spectator," in *The Conservative Press in Twentieth-Century America*, eds., Ronald Lora and William Longton (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1999) and "American Spectator," in *American Conservatism: An Encyclopedia*, eds., Bruce Frohnen, Jeremy Beer, and Jeffrey Nelson (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006), 33-35; and Alicia Shepard, "Spectator's Sport," *AJR* (May 1995): 32-39.

<sup>2</sup> Its greater long term value was as a memoir of Tyrrell's life and times as an intellectual in the conservative movement; Tyrrell, "The Conservative Crack-Up," *TAS* (April 1992): 22-27.

<sup>3</sup> This chapter's focus on the immediate period after Reagan and the Cold War builds on the work of a small but important aspect of the historiography, including the following, Patrick Allitt, "The Bitter

*TAS* transformed itself from a conservative opinion journal into the preeminent muckraking magazine on the right. Abandoning its traditional role as an ecumenical, bridge-builder on the right, it morphed into an increasingly partisan rag. It made headlines by publishing hard-hitting, occasionally scurrilous investigative journalism stories on Anita Hill, the homosexual rights movement, and a host of other topics related to its enemies on the left.<sup>4</sup>

During this period, baby boomers, including some former student radicals from the 1960s, increasingly assumed leadership positions in both major parties and in the nation's key cultural institutions. These developments energized *TAS*, whose editors had always defined their magazine principally in opposition to their co-generationalists from the 1960s, not anticommunism. By 1992, *TAS* enjoyed the fastest growing circulation of any opinion magazine in the nation by successfully recasting itself as the right's muckraker and by attacking what it considered the aftermath of 1960s radicalism.<sup>5</sup>

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Victory: Catholic Conservative Intellectuals in America, 1988-1993. *The South Atlantic Quarterly* (Summer 1994): 631-658; and other works which touch on the period, such as Donald Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy: How the GOP Right Made Political History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Allan J. Lichtman, *White Protestant Nation: The Rise of the American Conservative Movement* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2008); Gregory Schneider, *The Conservative Century: From Reaction to Revolution* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009); John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *The Right Nation: Conservative Power in America* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), 11; William Berman, *America's Right Turn: From Nixon to Bush* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> This chapter contributes to the historiography on the right's formation and articulation of its opposition to the feminists and gay rights movements, areas which historians such as Kim Phillips-Fein have recently highlighted as gaps in the literature. See Kim Phillips-Fein, "Conservatism: A State of the Field," *Journal of American History*, 98 (Dec. 2011), 723-743; and Jennifer Burns, "In Retrospect: George Nash's The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945," *Reviews in American History*, 32 (Sept. 2004), 447-62.

<sup>5</sup> As the 2011 *Journal of American History* roundtable on the field of conservatism argues, much work remains to be done on conservative thought after 1980. See Kim Phillips-Fein, "Conservatism," 723-743. Wilfred M. McClay, "Less Boilerplate, More Symmetry," *JAH* (December 2011): 744-747; Alan Brinkley, "Conservatism as a Growing Field of Scholarship," *JAH* (December 2011): 748-751; Donald T. Critchlow, "Rethinking American Conservatism: Toward a New Narrative," *JAH* (December 2011): 752-755; Martin Durham, "On American Conservatism and Kim Phillips-Fein's Survey of the Field," *JAH* (December 2011): 756-759; Matthew D. Lassiter, "Political History beyond the Red-Blue Divide," *JAH* (December 2011): 760-764; Lisa McGirr, "Now That Historians Know So Much about the Right, How Should We

### **TAS and Conservatism after Reagan**

Between 1989 and 1991, the Cold War came to a rapid end, surprising most observers and unsettling the American conservative intellectual movement. Unity among conservatives had been tenuous during the Cold War, maintained primarily by a shared vigorous anticommunism.<sup>6</sup> Almost immediately bickering on the right turned rancorous, as conservative icon Ronald Reagan was succeeded by moderate Republican George H.W. Bush, and conservatives disagreed over foreign and domestic policies. *TAS* suffered through this uncertain period with stagnant circulation numbers. Although fervent anticommunists, its editors were leaders of a generation of conservative intellectuals who came of age united in opposition to 1960s radicalism. But they, too, struggled initially to gain their bearings during this period.<sup>7</sup>

The magazine felt ambivalent toward Bush. On the one hand, it wanted to support him as Reagan's designated successor and because *TAS* valued supporting allies, however distant. On the other hand, though, Bush was not a movement conservative, and even as early as his nomination speech in 1988, he repudiated core conservative values. *TAS* maintained an uneasy relationship with the administration throughout its duration. For his part, Bush kept the magazine at arm's distance, though he courted the editors and attended occasional banquets when it was politically necessary. *TAS* supported him when

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Best Approach the Study of Conservatism?," *JAH* (December 2011): 765-770; and Phillips-Fein, "A Response," *JAH* (December 2011): 771-773.

<sup>6</sup> On postwar conservatism, see Allitt, *The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), especially 158-223; Godfrey Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996); and George Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Conservatives fiercely argued about America's proper response to Iraq's invasion of oil-rich Kuwait near the Persian Gulf. On the Cold War's conclusion, see John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), especially, 195-258; On conservatives' debates during this period see Allitt, *The Conservatives*, 252-276; Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 208-227; and Allitt, "The Bitter Victory," 631-658.

it could, more so than other conservative magazines such as *National Review*, but the relationship remained distant.<sup>8</sup>

The magazine's relationship with the new administration got off to a rocky start in 1989. During an interview for the *Wall Street Journal*, newly inaugurated vice president Dan Quayle disparaged *TAS* and sparked a public intra-conservative controversy.<sup>9</sup>

Widespread questions about his intellectual qualifications prompted an interviewer with the *Wall Street Journal* two months after the inauguration to ask which magazines Quayle read. He answered:

I used to, I've read, I read *National Review*—some. I used to read *Human Events*. Don't read it as much as I used to. *The American Spectator*—it's hard to get through *The American Spectator*. And *The New Republic* (his voice brightening). I enjoy reading *New Republic* articles (which have been very critical of Mr. Quayle, incidentally). And then I glance at lesser—try to get through *Time* and *Newsweek* and *U.S. News*, try to, but it's much more of a jumpy-type thing.<sup>10</sup>

When the *TAS* editors read the *WSJ* interview, they were incensed. Quayle was the frequently touted conservative front man in the new administration, and his comments appeared to undermine *TAS*'s repeated claims of White House readership. Also, he was an old acquaintance of the magazine and its editors, going back to their student days together in Indiana and his prominent staffers were longtime *TAS* contributors, including William Kristol, his chief of staff, a masthead staple since 1968. On a political, business, and personal level, then, the editors were offended, and they overreacted to the slight.<sup>11</sup>

The June 1989 *TAS* cover story, “Why Danny Can't Read,” pictured Quayle in short pants, wearing a propeller-topped beanie, and holding a copy of *TAS* upside down.

<sup>8</sup> See Robert Novak, “The Unfinished Reagan Agenda,” *TAS* (March 1989): 14-15.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Oreskes, “The Republicans in New Orleans: Convention Message is Garbled by Quayle,” *The New York Times*, August 19, 1988; Walter Shapiro, Robert Ajemian, et al., “The Republicans: The Quayle Quagmire,” *Time* (August 29, 1988): 16-23.

<sup>10</sup> Tom Bethell, “The Interview Ace,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 31, 1989, A14.

<sup>11</sup> Dan Quayle, *Standing Firm: A Vice-Presidential Memoir* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), 145-146.

Inside, the staff signed a mean-spirited letter—quoting the offending *WSJ* passage—which offered advice “for an old Indiana chum” on how to “‘get through’ our magazine.” It included, for example, the following explanation: “In our April issue we also ran a memoir (pronounced MEM-WHAR...that’s French, Danny, for recalling something).”<sup>12</sup>

However much the staff enjoyed writing up the insulting page, they soon discovered that it was a serious misstep. Quayle, naturally, was deeply offended, and his chief of staff, Kristol, promptly resigned from the masthead. “I was always fair game. Even my friends in the media would step up to the free lunch if they could get some entertaining copy from it,” recalled Quayle. “Come June I found myself cartooned on the *Spectator*’s cover, wearing a propeller beanie.”<sup>13</sup>

*TAS* readers sent angry letters and canceled subscriptions. “Who in the hell do you think you are to attack the Vice President of the United States in such a scurrilous manner,” asked one typical letter. “Never in the twenty-three years of this magazine has it received a larger or more inhospitable response to a piece,” wrote Tyrrell. Ron Burr, *TAS*’s longtime publisher, a position tasked with maintaining solvency, tried to explain that “It is exceedingly difficult to sell advertising to people when we tell them we are read by the administration and its number two says, No, he reads the *New Republic*.” Moreover, argued Tyrrell, Quayle had unfairly hurt the conservative movement. “Somehow I think the Vice President should have been able to avoid diminishing the

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<sup>12</sup> Editorial staff, “A Danny Quayle Reader,” *TAS* (June 1989): 1, 13.

<sup>13</sup> From Quayle’s perspective, *TAS*—recently moved from Bloomington, Indiana—was now just another Washington rag clawing for attention and survival. “That’s what can happen even to some Hoosiers when they move inside the Beltway,” he complained. Dan Quayle, *Standing Firm*, 145-146.

stature of the small number of conservative publications that regularly take on the vast majority of publications antithetical to him and his ideas.”<sup>14</sup>

But these explanations missed the point. The negative response—from Quayle to the subscribers—was in reaction to the *insensitive form* of the magazine’s response to the *WSJ* interview. *TAS* appeared simply to be piling on the conservative vice president’s already vulnerable public image. Prominent conservatives and Republicans came to Quayle’s defense.<sup>15</sup> “As we hear it, Mr. [Robert] Novak pulled no punches” in criticizing Tyrrell privately, confided *The Washington Times*, referring to the influential conservative columnist. At a *TAS*-sponsored dinner John Sununu, President Bush’s Chief of Staff, “also a blunt-spoken sort when he wants to be, weighed in on the side of those urging Mr. Tyrrell to seriously reevaluate his position on Mr. Quayle.”<sup>16</sup> Sununu would continue to pressure *TAS* to treat Quayle with kid gloves at the behest of President Bush himself, who suggested that his chief of staff ask Tyrrell “to be kind and gentle toward my able V.P.”<sup>17</sup>

The dustup generated tremendous mainstream press coverage, primarily because it featured such a publicly aired intra-conservative squabble involving the sitting vice president.<sup>18</sup> *The Washington Post* noted that *TAS*, “the barbed voice of conservatism,” had insulted Quayle, “the darling of the conservatives.”<sup>19</sup> Similarly, *The London Times* commented on the “slap” from “a bible of the very conservative right of the Republican

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<sup>14</sup> *TAS*, “Deconstructing the Danny Quayle Reader: Subscribers, Former Subscribers, and the Editor-in-Chief React to Our June Cover Story” (August 1989): 26-27.

<sup>15</sup> Diana West, “Yet Another Round of Quayle-bashing: Will He Ever Get Out From Under?” *Washington Times*, July 26, 1989, E1.

<sup>16</sup> *The Washington Times*, “Quayle Flap,” July 17, 1989.

<sup>17</sup> Memorandum, George Bush to John Sununu, October 5, 1989, ID#080467, TR001, WHORM: Subject File, General, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library, College Station, Texas.

<sup>18</sup> Diana West, “Quayle Slap Has *Spectator* Rumbling,” *Washington Times*, May 18, 1989, E1.

<sup>19</sup> Chuck Conconi, “Personalities,” *The Washington Post*, May 10, 1989, C3.

Party to which Mr. Quayle belongs.”<sup>20</sup> As a result, Tyrrell and the editors decided to backpedal. “As far as I am concerned our June issue of *The American Spectator* is vitriol under the bridge,” he wrote hopefully. “Before this, our August issue, arrives at your door my old friend Dan Quayle and I shall renew an old friendship.” (In fact, Tyrrell did not extend an olive branch to Quayle, aside from his published remarks.)<sup>21</sup> “Now we have all had a few laughs, and we can get back to our mutual goal of protecting American liberty and advancing a little Yank culture.” The episode marked an inauspicious beginning for the magazine and the new Republican administration.<sup>22</sup>

### **Circulation and Funding: A Constant Struggle**

In the late 1980s, particularly into the early years of the Bush administration, circulation lagged, dropping from 42,000 in May 1986 to 30,000 in 1990, where it hovered until the explosive growth period of 1992 to 1995.<sup>23</sup> By comparison, *NR*'s circulation ranged from approximately 130,000 in 1988 to 170,000 in 1991.<sup>24</sup> The leading liberal opinion magazines, *The New Republic* and *The Nation*, maintained relatively stable circulation numbers—roughly 100,000 each—during the same period. The exception was the far left magazine, *Mother Jones*, which enjoyed a circulation spike

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<sup>20</sup> Charles Bremner, “Quayle Finds His New Role as the ‘Nice’ American,” *The London Times*, May 26, 1989; *In These Times*, “The New Republican” (September 13-19, 1989): 5.

<sup>21</sup> *The Washington Times* reported “that Quayle staffers Bill Kristol and Joe Shattan have resigned from the *Spectator*'s editorial board [and that] Mr. Tyrrell packed up his olive branch earlier this month and set off on a trip around the world.” *The Washington Times*, “Quayle Flap,” July 17, 1989.

<sup>22</sup> *TAS*, “Deconstructing the Danny Quayle Reader,” 26-27; On Quayle's staffers with *TAS* connections, see Fred Barnes, “Danny Gets His Gun,” *The New Republic*, June 26, 1989, 10-11.

<sup>23</sup> Ronald Burr, “The American Spectator,” CSPAN, May 23, 1986; Alicia Shephard, “Spectator Sport,” *American Journalism Review* (May 1, 1995): 33.

<sup>24</sup> Norman Vanamee, “Trickling Down,” *New York* (April 1, 1996): 17; *The Economist*, “The Press: Healthy Opposition” (December 4, 1993): 32.



during the Reagan administration, peaking at nearly 200,000, before dropping in half during the Bush administration.<sup>25</sup>

Maintaining solvency, a constant struggle for most opinion magazines, proved especially challenging for *TAS* during this period prior to its shift toward investigative journalism. “Intellectual reviews have never made a profit in America,” observed the magazine, “and, in fact, are dependent on financial benefactors who understand the importance of such magazines in the battle of ideas.”<sup>26</sup> It continued its long-standing practice of frequent fundraising letters to subscribers, a practice for which it developed a reputation. Martin Walker, a British journalist with the leftist *The Guardian*, critically observed that among the “begging letters from the magazines...*The American Spectator* tends to be the most shameless.”<sup>27</sup>

Another strategy included annual fundraising dinners with wealthy benefactors. Repeated letters to the White House helped secure President Bush’s attendance for the 1990 dinner, a visit which helped fundraising and also allowed for *TAS* editors to talk in person with the president. “To celebrate the commitment of its financial backers, *The American Spectator* has annual dinners at which members of *The American Spectator* Advisory Group (donors of \$10,000 or more) and *The American Spectator* Washington Club (donors of \$1,000 or more) come together with *TAS* editors, writers, and related

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<sup>25</sup> Vanamee, “Trickling Down,” 17; Magazines on the left, it should be noted, enjoyed boom times during the 1980s as the opposition to the Reagan Administration, *The Economist*, “The Press: Healthy Opposition,” 32; by comparison, in the late 1980s, *TV Guide* had the large circulation at nearly seventeen million; *Newsweek*, 3,198,007; *The New Yorker*, 593,848; and *The Atlantic Monthly*, 473,916; see “Circulation of Leading U.S. Magazines,” *The World Almanac and Book of Facts* (New York: Newspaper Enterprise Association, 1989), 350.

<sup>26</sup> *TAS*, “President Bush Meets the Washington Club” (April 1990): 37-39.

<sup>27</sup> Martin Walker, “American Diary: Lifting the Lid on Junk Mail,” *The Guardian* (London), May 5, 1990.

notables to discuss the magazine's high ideals and to celebrate."<sup>28</sup> Guests included conservative billionaire Roger Milliken, the director of the conservative John M. Olin Foundation, and virtually every major conservative journalist and many top Republicans, such as strategist Lee Atwater, John Sununu, and Richard Cheney.<sup>29</sup>

Bush, meeting one of his many obligations in an effort to forestall dissent on his right, arrived for a brief chat with Tyrrell and key conservative opinion makers, and gave a brief speech. "I'm very pleased to be on Bob Tyrrell's kinder, gentler side," joked Bush, "the right side, if there's any question about that." He included the obligatory compliments—"Our nation's intellectual life would be more than a little poorer without *The American Spectator*."<sup>30</sup> Dan Quayle's chief of staff, Bill Kristol, also attended, demonstrating that the bridges were mended.<sup>31</sup>

Between 1990 and 1993, donations to the magazine's nonprofit controlling organization, *The American Spectator* Education Foundation came from several large foundations, including \$225,000 from the Carthage Foundation, \$120,000 from the Scaife Foundation, and \$105,000 from the Bradley Foundation.<sup>32</sup> Surveying the role of

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<sup>28</sup> Advisory Group donors in 1990 included the Bradley, the Coors, the Grover Hermann, the Samuel Nobel, the John Olin, and the Sarah Scaife Foundations. *TAS*, "President Bush Meets the Washington Club," 37-39.

<sup>29</sup> *TAS*, "President Bush Meets the Washington Club," 37-39.

<sup>30</sup> After Bush left, Tyrrell spoke about the magazine's recent past and immediate future. "Yes, the past 10 years have been *out* years for *The American Spectator*. They've been dry years. We've been the *out* magazine," he said, "So our pathetic remnant is gathered here." *TAS*, "President Bush Meets the Washington Club," 37-38.

<sup>31</sup> Martha Sherrill, "The Conservatives' Menu: For *The American Spectator*, a Dinner of Brains and Bush," *Washington Post*, January 23, 1990, C1, C4. Tobacco company Phillip Morris underwrote the event and its three open bars; the dinner tables held complimentary cigarettes. The president's attendance assured press coverage, and the *Washington Post* sent a reporter to cover it. "Since *The American Spectator* can be such an enthusiastically mean-spirited publication, it seems perfectly appropriate to report the following," wrote Martha Sherrill. "It was not as much fun as the *New Republic*'s annual party."

<sup>32</sup> Other sizable donations during this period included "\$31,263 from the Grover Hermann Foundation; \$25,000 from the John M. Olin Foundation; \$20,000 from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation; \$18,000 from the Starr Foundation; \$10,000 from the Adolph Coors Foundation," see Beth Schulman, "Foundations For a Movement: How the Right Wing Subsidizes Its Press," *FAIR*, March 1, 1995, available at <http://fair.org/extra-online-articles/foundations-for-a-movement/>

conservative foundations in the culture wars in 1991, the paleoconservative *Rothbard-Rockwell Report* wrote that “*American Spectator*, a monotonously faithful, neo-conservative magazine, is perhaps the one most often in straitened circumstances, after *The New Criterion*,” wrote the *Report*’s Paul Gottfried. “Bradley and J.M. Olin provide it jointly with about \$450,000 per annum...Without the administrative staffs of Bradley, Olin, Smith-Richarson, and Sarah Scaife, there would be no operative agenda of ‘cultural conservatism’ being implemented in New York and Washington.”<sup>33</sup>

The Scaife foundation, led by Richard Mellon Scaife, heir to the Mellon banking fortune, was the largest and most important *TAS* supporter. “One of the great men of the country [and a] man who has made it possible for many elements of the conservative movement to the tremendous things they’ve done,” said Tyrrell at a *TAS*’s annual dinner funded by the Scaife foundation. “The Florentines had their Medicis, but we conservatives have had our Dick Scaife...without you, we wouldn’t be here.”<sup>34</sup> Twenty-five years of running *TAS* with meager circulation numbers had taught Tyrrell the necessity of donors like Scaife to political magazines. The magazine would fold without such backers.

### ***TAS and the Buchanan Controversy***

The magazine’s modest circulation numbers seemed unlikely in the troubled conservative movement climate of the Bush years, especially with *TAS* editors fighting fellow conservatives. In 1991, former Nixon speechwriter Patrick Buchanan publicly criticized his conservative allies, including *TAS* specifically, and created a public intra-conservative feud. Although Buchanan’s own conservative positions fluctuated, in

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<sup>33</sup> Paul Gottfried, “Scrambling for Funds,” *The Rothbard-Rockwell Report* (March 1991): 9.

<sup>34</sup> Tyrrell, “Celebrate Building the Conservative Culture,” *C-SPAN*, December 2, 1992.

general he espoused a form of isolationism, trade protectionism, and a defiant support for white working-class Americans. His confrontational style and sharp tongue had irritated critics on the left in the 1970s and 1980s, and then during the Bush administration he became a wedge within the conservative movement. In 1990, Buchanan staunchly opposed American involvement in the first Gulf War on the grounds that it was not in America's interest; he also suggested that a Jewish lobby was pushing America into the war in order to serve Israel's interest. During a PBS television news show, for example, he said that "there are only two groups that are beating the drums for war in the Middle East—the Israeli Defense Ministry and its amen corner in the United States."<sup>35</sup> *TAS* had supported and published Buchanan in the 1980s, all as part of the magazine's efforts to promote a big tent conservatism. But, Buchanan's attempts in the early 1990s to collapse this big tent ran counter to the ethos of *TAS*. And, as the Dan Quayle flap had illustrated, *TAS*'s editors could be overly sensitive to criticism from fellow conservatives.<sup>36</sup>

*TAS* editors again overreacted by excoriating Buchanan and calling for his excommunication from the movement. David Frum (b. 1960), a Jewish Canadian-American conservative and editor at the *Wall Street Journal*, called Buchanan "the conservative bully boy" whose conservatism "rests on bitterness, inconsistency, and a

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<sup>35</sup> On this quote and controversy, see Allitt, *The Conservatives*, 260-262, 312; and Buckley, "In Search of Anti-Semitism," *NR* (December 30, 1991): 31-40, which was reprinted and expanded in Buckley, *In Search of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Continuum, 1992). For a useful biography of Pat Buchanan, see Timothy Stanley, *The Crusader: The Life and Tumultuous Times of Pat Buchanan* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2012).

<sup>36</sup> Buchanan's attacks on fellow conservatives signaled his alignment with the paleoconservatives, the marginalized, disgruntled wing of the conservative movement who resented the success and values of the neoconservatives. On the relevant Buchanan columns, see Buchanan, "Crackup of the Conservatives," *Washington Times*, May 1, 1991, G1; Buchanan, "Onslaught of the Reagan Wreckers," *Washington Times*, May 15, 1991, G1; and Buchanan, "Rights Front Reconnoitered: Terms Redefined," *Washington Times*, June 5, 1991, G1; On comparison to Quayle, see Robert Novak, "Robert Novak on Pat Buchanan," *TAS* (August 1991): 7.

kooky obsession with ethnicity and culture.”<sup>37</sup> He suggested that Buchanan’s views bordered on anti-Semitic, xenophobic, and perhaps even latent segregationist sympathies.<sup>38</sup> “His real message is inseparable from his sly Jew-baiting and his not-so-sly queer-bashing, from his old record as a segregationist and his current maunderings about immigrants and the Japanese,” Frum asserted, “And it’s not a message that can be accommodated in any conservatism.” Just as Buckley’s *NR* had read out the John Bircher’s in the early 1960s, so now *TAS* and responsible conservatives need to push out Buchanan, argued Frum. Aside from the remarkable irony that *TAS* would accuse another conservative of “queer-bashing,” given *TAS*’s own history of club-wielding against homosexuals, *TAS*’s message was unambiguous.<sup>40</sup>

In response, Robert Novak, a frequent advisor and ballast for *TAS*’s impulsive, overly sensitive editors, defended Buchanan. “Surely, not *The American Spectator*?” he asked in the next issue. “This lively and valued voice of the right” had printed a “wicked caricature that bears no resemblance to the Pat Buchanan I have known for over twenty years as a news source, a colleague, and a friend.” He was no kook, anti-Semite, or bigot, explained Novak, and he was well within the big tent of conservative positions on foreign and domestic policy questions. He chided gently out of affinity and respect for *TAS*

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<sup>37</sup> David Frum, “The Conservative Bully Boy,” *TAS* (July 1991): 12-14. On Frum’s biography, see “David Frum Interview,” *Conversations with History*, Institute of International Studies, UC Berkeley, 2004, available at <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people4/Frum/frum-con1.html>.

<sup>38</sup> “Open the latest tabloid and there is Buchanan defending a Nazi war criminal,” wrote Frum, “[t]urn on the TV and there he is again, sputtering and going red in the face about the threat of colored immigration...or bringing you the straight dope on how Communism inspired the civil rights movement.” Frum, “The Conservative Bully Boy,” 12-14.

<sup>39</sup> *TAS*’s intra-conservative attack followed an interesting line because it echoed the 1950s consensus school scholars’ arguments that psychological problems, including paranoia and status anxiety explained the presence of conservatives in 1950s America. See Daniel Bell, ed., *The New American Right* (New York: Criterion Books, 1955) and *The Radical Right* (New York: Doubleday, 1963); Schlesinger, “The Need for an Intelligent Opposition,” *The New York Times Magazine* (April 2, 1950): 13, 56–8; and Richard Hofstadter, “The Pseudo-Conservative Revolt,” *American Scholar* (Winter 1954–1955): 11–17.

<sup>40</sup> Frum, “The Conservative Bully Boy,” 12-14.

editors and a recognition of their thin skin. The attack “attest[ed] to the feistiness of this publication... whose refusal to suffer slurs silently is a quality I applaud.” But had not Tyrrell’s new book lamented conservatives’ tendency to infight and tear one another down, asked Novak, and was not one of *TAS*’s great contributions its history of stretching the boundaries of acceptable conservative thought? “It is especially painful to read this calumny in *TAS*,” he concluded, and “Frum’s character assassination... [was] a disservice not only to its target but to those who published it.”<sup>41</sup>

But the magazine backed off only slightly. Tyrrell offered a reluctant olive branch. “June passes and so has my displeasure with Pat Buchanan for trashing a third of the conservative movement and for giving encouragement to some rather unpleasant people,” he wrote, “Now, let us get on with maintaining a movement, right, Pat?”<sup>42</sup> Letters to the magazine from paleoconservatives such as Wesley McDonald, Paul Gottfried, and Claes Ryn, as well as movement conservatives such as The Conservative Caucus’s Howard Phillips indicted *TAS* for publishing “Frum’s unworthy little stinkbomb.”<sup>43</sup>

*TAS* and Frum were taking a leading position in criticizing a very popular conservative politician in the early 1990s. *Commentary* had published a critical piece earlier in the year, but Norman Podhoretz’s magazine was a neoconservative organ.<sup>44</sup> *TAS* had a long history of publishing neoconservatives and being sympathetic toward

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<sup>41</sup> Novak, “Robert Novak on Pat Buchanan,” 7.

<sup>42</sup> Tyrrell, “The Continuing Crisis,” *TAS* (August 1991): 6.

<sup>43</sup> The majority of letters from readers were more critical, particularly on the anti-Semitism issue, a charge on which they thought Buchanan innocent. Frum yielded nothing in his rebuttal. He pointed out to Novak that his attack was actually a counterattack to an intraconservative battle Buchanan himself started. “As one of the nation’s most prominent conservatives,” Frum insisted, Buchanan was “tainting all the rest of us with his reckless actions and accusations.” Frum, “David Frum replies,” *TAS* (August 1991): 7, 35; “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Responses to Frum’s Buchanan,” *TAS* (September 1991): 22-24; Frum renewed his attacks the next year, see Frum, “Spending Time with Pat,” *TAS* (April 1992): 65, 81.

<sup>44</sup> Joshua Muravchik, “Patrick J. Buchanan and the Jews,” *Commentary* (January 1991): 29-36.

their viewpoints, but it was clearly recognized as a centrist magazine along with the flagship movement journal, *NR*. In fact, so politically popular was Buchanan in the early 1990s—he challenged Bush for the GOP nomination in 1992—that “a lot of conservatives’ were afraid to ‘stand up and speak out against Pat,’” said David Keene with the American Conservative Union.<sup>45</sup> *TAS* had been cautious on the Buchanan issue prior to the Frum piece, and the decision to run it was clearly a chesty reaction to Buchanan’s slight. Norman Podhoretz praised *TAS* for its role, particularly in denouncing Buchanan’s anti-Semitic undertones.<sup>46</sup>

Others outside the conservative movement noticed the fight between conservatives and found it remarkable for its ferocity. “The fiercest squabbles are within families, so don’t be aghast to find a conservative monthly creaming one of its own,” commented the *Chicago Tribune*, “[s]till, its passion is notable.”<sup>47</sup> The intra-conservative tensions after the Cold War were such that even *TAS*, a magazine with a long history of ecumenical conservatism, found itself involved in public internecine arguments.

### ***TAS* and “The Real Anita Hill” Controversy**

The situation for *TAS* and the conservative movement began to improve with the Supreme Court confirmation of Clarence Thomas in late 1991. The failed Supreme Court nomination of Robert Bork in 1987 had embittered conservatives and alerted them to the

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<sup>45</sup> Buckley accused Buchanan of “anti-Semitic impulses” in 1991, but then *NR* editor John O’Sullivan persuaded him to support Buchanan during the New Hampshire primaries early the next year. See Buckley, “In Search of Anti-Semitism,” 31-40; and Norman Podhoretz, “Buchanan and the Conservative Crackup,” *Commentary* (May 1992): 30-34; for a paleoconservative’s perspective, see Paul Gottfried, *Conservatism in America: Making Sense of the American Right* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 176.

<sup>46</sup> For more on this conflict by a participant, see Podhoretz, “Buchanan and the Conservative Crackup,” 30-34.

<sup>47</sup> James Warren, “Family Feud: A Stunning Attack on Pat Buchanan Appears in *The American Spectator*,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 20, 1991, 2.

intense confirmation battle that future Supreme Court nominees would face.<sup>48</sup> An acrimonious process followed the Bush administration's nomination of Clarence Thomas to replace retiring justice Thurgood Marshall in the summer of 1991. *TAS* had only commented from the periphery during the Bork nomination process, but the magazine would play a central role in the Thomas confirmation and aftermath. Editors took the lead by ruthlessly attacking Thomas's opponents, lurching the magazine toward what it called its "investigative journalism" phase.<sup>49</sup>

The Thomas nomination was immediately controversial. Despite the president's claims, few thought Thomas the most qualified candidate. He lacked adequate experience on the appeals court and had served in various positions in the Reagan administration. Many liberals feared Thomas was simply the most qualified *black* conservative jurist, and

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<sup>48</sup> The signal battles of the late-twentieth century American culture wars were fought over two Supreme Court nominees Robert Bork in 1987 and Clarence Thomas in 1991. David Souter's successful nomination to the Supreme Court in 1990 was not as controversial for several reasons; conservatives, for one, incorrectly thought he would be closer to Bork than William Brennan, the moderate justice he replaced. See Terry Eastland, "An American Originalist," *TAS* (December 1990): 36-37; on the comparative lack of controversy over Souter's nomination, see Critchlow, *Conservative Ascendancy*, 233-234. Critchlow mistakenly dates Souter's nomination as 1991 instead of 1990.

<sup>49</sup> For the best recent account of the Thomas hearings, see Kevin Merida and Michael Fletcher's *Supreme Discomfort: The Divided Soul of Clarence Thomas* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), especially chapter eight, "Who Lied?," 171-209. Scores of books and articles have been written in the intervening twenty years, including one by Anita Hill. *Supreme Discomfort*, written by two *Washington Post* journalists as part of a biography of Thomas with the advantage of fifteen years distance, offers a careful assessment and reaches several sound conclusions. First, the core issue at stake—what was said between them in the early 1980s—is unknowable except to Hill and Thomas. Second, a compelling amount of circumstantial evidence, either known at the time or simply not presented at the hearings, suggests that Hill's case was much stronger than it initially appeared and that, by implication, Thomas lied under oath. In short, the key points of Hill's testimony now seem far more believable than Thomas's. Over time, conservatives, even Thomas supporters, seemed to accept this, as they shifted from denying Hill's accusations to conceding that even if true, Hill's allegations did not amount to illegal activity. For his part, Buckley raised this point immediately after the conclusion of the senate hearings in October 1991. See Buckley, *Happy Days Were Here Again: Reflections of a Libertarian Journalist* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 134. Merida and Fletcher also make the same point, see *Supreme Discomfort*, 208-209. The most intriguing explanation was one of the first offered. Harvard sociologist Orlando Patterson argued that African-American gender, class, and regional cultures helped explain Hill's and Thomas's relationship in the 1980s and Thomas's perjury in 1991. See Patterson, "Race, Gender and Liberal Fallacies," *New York Times*, October 20, 1991, A15. Most Hill-Thomas histories also reference the Patterson article for its subtle method of resolving the complexities of the case. On the persuasiveness of this piece, see Kathleen Sullivan, "The Hill-Thomas Mystery," *The New York Review of Books* (August 12, 1993): 12-17.



that Thomas's judicial opinions would not differ from Bork's or those of archconservative junior justice Anthony Scalia. Liberal groups, well organized after their successful defeat of Bork in 1987, prepared to challenge Thomas. Learning from Robert Bork's mistakes, Thomas avoided revealing his conservative judicial philosophy during his individual meetings with senators and before the Senate Judiciary Committee hearings. He claimed, for example, implausibly, never to have discussed the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, which had struck down many states' antiabortion laws. But on the intensely divisive topic of abortion, senators found evidence that belied Thomas's claims.<sup>50</sup>

Early in the process, Democratic senators discovered a speech Thomas had given at the conservative Heritage Foundation in 1987 in which he praised a *TAS* article on the prolife position.<sup>51</sup> "But Heritage Foundation Trustee Lewis Lehrman's recent essay in *The American Spectator* on the Declaration of Independence and the meaning of the right to life," said Thomas in his 1987 speech, "is a splendid example of applying natural law."<sup>52</sup> The Lehrman essay had defended the prolife position from a natural law perspective and attacked *Roe v. Wade*. But Thomas and his supporters argued that his speech about the essay merely endorsed the application of natural law to civil rights, not to abortion, and that he praised the article because its author was in the audience that

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<sup>50</sup> Patrick Allitt, *The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 235-235; Buckley, *Happy Days*, 134.

<sup>51</sup> Ruth Marcus, "Thomas's Conservatism Displayed in Speeches, Writings," *The Washington Post*, July 3, 1991, A15. Thomas's speech at the Heritage Foundation was titled "Why Black Americans Should Look to Conservative Policies."

<sup>52</sup> For the full text of the 1987 Thomas speech, "Why Black Americans Should Look to Conservative Policies," see Danforth, "Clarence Thomas and Natural Law," *Congressional Record*, Senate, July 18, 1991. For the essay Thomas spoke of, see Lewis Lehrman, "The Declaration of Independence and the Right to Life," *TAS* (April 1987): 21-23.

night at the Heritage function.<sup>53</sup> Democrats “made much of a 1987 speech in which he praised an antiabortion article in *The American Spectator*,” recalled Vice President Dan Quayle, “but [a] single sentence in Thomas’s speech could easily have been meant to praise the writer’s skill in debate and logic, not endorse every piece of his argument. Certainly it gave no firm indication of whether the judge would actually vote to overturn Roe if it came before the Supreme Court.”<sup>54</sup> When pressured by the Senate committee, Thomas went so far as to claim that he may not have even read the full article before or after his 1987 speech.<sup>55</sup>

Democrats and prochoice advocates were incredulous. “The [TAS] article that Thomas had praised in a speech raised a red flag for us on the matter of credibility,” explained judicial committee member Senator Paul Simon. “On the first point, we asked ourselves: If he was shaping what he had to say to please his immediate audience, was he also shaping what he had to say now to please fourteen Senators? Second...we found it difficult to believe that he had not read it, unless his White House handlers had told him not to read it as a way of avoiding specific answers to questions. The Lehrman matter deepened Committee skepticism.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Some conservatives went further. Buckley argued in his nationally syndicated column that even if Thomas agreed with the Lehrman article in *TAS*, it ought not to disqualify him. See Buckley, “How to Reason on Clarence Thomas,” *Kerrville Daily Times*, July 8, 1991.

<sup>54</sup> Dan Quayle, *Standing Firm: A Vice-Presidential Memoir* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), 296-297.

<sup>55</sup> For example, see Senator Jack Danforth, Danforth, “Clarence Thomas and Natural Law,” Congressional Record, Senate, July 18, 1991. On the hearings, see “Nomination of Judge Clarence Thomas to be Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States,” Hearings Before the Committee on the Judiciary United States Senate, One Hundred Second Congress, First Session, September 10-13, 16, 1991, J-102-40, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993), S. HRG. 102-1084, Pt. 1.

<sup>56</sup> Paul Simon, *Advice and Consent: Clarence Thomas, Robert Bork and the Intriguing History of the Supreme Court’s Nomination Battles* (Washington DC: National Press Books, 1992), 86-87. Even conservative patriarch Bill Buckley found some of Thomas’s claims ridiculous; he thought the nominee sounded like a “trained fool,” see Buckley, *Happy Days*, 134.

Despite this, Thomas's confirmation looked all but assured until news broke in early October, just before the full senate vote, that one of Thomas's former assistants, Anita Hill (b. 1956), was now accusing the nominee of sexually harassing her in the early 1980s. The Judiciary Committee quickly reopened hearings. Hill, a law professor in Oklahoma in 1991, testified that while working for Thomas in Reagan's Department of Education and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission between 1981 and 1983, he regularly discussed pornography in graphic terms, Hill's appearance, and his own anatomy. She was composed, thoughtful and articulate, and offered specific details about Thomas's alleged comments. She also contradicted herself on several occasions and appeared to mislead the committee on her motivations and memories of the events. Though a Yale law school graduate when she worked for Thomas, she took no notes or evidence to support her claims of harassment, and she even followed Thomas from one job to another. None of this made her allegations false, but it persuaded Thomas's supporters of his innocence. Thomas later, under oath, categorically denied all of Hill's claims and accused the Democrats of racism, calling the process a "high tech lynching."<sup>57</sup>

The nation was riveted to CSPAN watching the Thomas-Hill hearings in October 1991, as senators discussed lurid topics such as sex with animals, pubic hairs on coke cans, and a pornographic actor, "Long Dong Silver."<sup>58</sup> Liberals believed Hill and thought

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<sup>57</sup> For example, the FBI issued a statement to the committee pointing out inconsistencies between her testimony to field agents in July and her testimony before the committee in October. See "Nomination of Judge Clarence Thomas to be Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States," Hearings Before the Committee on the Judiciary United States Senate, One Hundred Second Congress, First Session, September 10-13, 16, 1991, J-102-40, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993), S. HRG. 102-1084, Pt. 1; and Suzanne Garment, *Scandal: The Culture of Mistrust in American Politics* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992), especially the afterward, pages 305-344.

<sup>58</sup> Conservative columnist Bill Buckley thought all parties involved in the hearings "were all humiliated and humiliating." Buckley, *Happy Days*, 135. Despite a long line of witnesses, no strong corroborating evidence surfaced during the televised hearings, and it appeared an unknowable case of "he said-she said." For a contemporary example of the evidence for both sides, see Michael Winess,

Thomas unfit for the high court because of the sexual harassment charges and the nominee's perjury about it. By contrast, conservatives believed Thomas and thought that Hill was lying at the behest of powerful liberal interest groups for the sake of sinking another conservative nominee (ie., "Borking" Thomas). The polls taken immediately after the hearings revealed that the public found Thomas the more convincing witness and the senate narrowly confirmed him.<sup>59</sup>

Conservatives were nevertheless angry at what they considered Hill's lies and the left's attempts to "Bork" Thomas. *TAS* had long argued that the major news outlets were sympathetic to liberal interests and, like many conservatives, nursed a grievance because of it. Late in 1991, *TAS* editors were presented with what they considered an opportunity to balance the Thomas-Hill coverage. Elizabeth Brady Lurie, the elderly daughter of a wealthy Milwaukee entrepreneur and conservative philanthropist, contacted *TAS*'s editors with an offer to fund a "special investigation" into Anita Hill and the story behind her allegations, the story that the mainstream media was unwilling to pursue for ideological reasons, according to conservatives. Lurie's money went to *TAS*, because unlike *NR*, the

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"Compelling Evidence on Both Sides, But Only One Can Be Telling Truth," *New York Times*, October 15, 1991, A20; On the significant corroborating evidence that was excluded or unknown at the time, see Merida and Fletcher, *Supreme Discomfort*, 193-199; Two key bits of excluded evidence include Angela Wright, another Thomas subordinate who alleged that Thomas used similarly sexual language with her. Democrats on the Judiciary Committee opted not to call her to testify because, among other liabilities, she had been fired by Thomas in the 1980s.

<sup>59</sup> A year later, though, polls showed the public now believed Hill over Thomas. Merida and Fletcher describe a "nagging sense [in both the Hill and Thomas campus] that there was a side to the Hill-Thomas relationship that neither of them wished to divulge," see *Supreme Discomfort*, 194-196. For an analysis of the Brock controversy over Anita Hill from an explicitly feminist perspective see Mary Coombs, "The Real *Real Anita Hill*, or the Making of a Backlash Best-Seller," in *Feminism, Media, and the Law*, eds., Martha Fineman and Martha McCluskey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 41-56.

*TAS* editors had a well-deserved reputation for aggressively attacking women. Managing editor Wlady Pleszczynski called David Brock about the assignment.<sup>60</sup>

Brock (b. 1962) was an ambitious, talented writer who began contributing to *TAS* in the 1980s. A history major at UC Berkeley in the early 1980s, his conservative journalism took shape in reaction to what he considered a repressive politically correct intellectual culture on campus, “where many of the sandal-clad 1960s campus activists had settled and were now running fiefdoms like the Rent Control Board.”<sup>61</sup> He was shocked to witness mobs of protesters in black and white skeletal sheets shouting down a visiting conservative speaker, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Jeane Kirkpatrick, and throwing fake blood on the stage. Kirkpatrick was forced to stop her speech, and a young Brock walked away astonished that leftist students at Berkeley were now suppressing free speech with such tactics.<sup>62</sup>

Influenced by historian Walter McDougall and a handful of other professors, conservative magazines, and his work with the campus paper, he continued moving to the right at Berkeley. He identified with *The Dartmouth Review* conservatives then raising havoc in New Hampshire, also in angry reaction to political correctness. At Berkeley between 1984 and 1986, he edited the *Berkeley Review*, a conservative paper similar to *TDR*, and he also started a neoconservative campus paper, the *Berkeley Journal*, both of which were funded in part by the IEA. After graduation in 1986, Brock moved to Washington and established a reputation for clear, forceful journalism targeting the left.

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<sup>60</sup> David Brock, *Blinded by the Right: The Conscience of an Ex-Conservative* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2002), 96. On Lurie, see obituary in *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, “Elizabeth Brady Lurie,” December 2, 2007, B99.

<sup>61</sup> Brock, *Blinded by the Right*, 2-3, 17-22. His first few articles were investigative stories on the Democratic Party and radical groups, see David Brock, “Democrat Foreign Policy Scandals,” *TAS* (August 1987): 18-20, and Brock, “Christic Mystics and Their Drug-Running Theories,” *TAS* (May 1988): 22-26.

<sup>62</sup> For his biographical details, see Brock’s autobiography, *Blinded by the Right*, especially 1-51, and his interview with Brian Lamb on CSPAN, June 13, 1993.

He wrote for the *Wall Street Journal*, *Policy Review*, *Insight* magazine, *Commentary*, *Washington Times*, and beginning in 1987, some freelance pieces for *TAS*. Although he had lived as an openly gay man at Berkeley, he kept his homosexuality closeted as he worked his way up the ladder of conservative journalism in Washington in the 1980s and early 1990s.<sup>63</sup>

Pleszczynski's call in late 1991 about an expose on Anita Hill piqued his interest. Publicly, Brock claimed that he initially agreed to investigate how Hill's story was leaked to the press, but the article evolved into something different. "I came upon enough information that I thought questioned seriously the corroboration for Professor Hill's testimony and questioned particularly the image of Anita Hill as a Bork-supporting, Reagan conservative once I started doing the reporting on Capitol Hill [and] so the piece shifted," he explained. "I never did really address the leak very much in that piece, but it became somewhat a speculative piece about some of the problems with Anita Hill's story."<sup>64</sup> Other factors, such as money and ideology, shaped the piece from the outset, too. A decade later Brock admitted that "I saw the offer, my introduction to right-wing checkbook journalism, as a big break. I wasn't one of the magazine's marquee names [and] after several years on the conservative sidelines, I now had a chance to prove myself as a combatant in the culture wars."<sup>65</sup>

The story Brock wrote made the March 1992 issue of *TAS* the most popular in its history, by far. It proved exceptionally popular among conservatives and controversial with everyone else. Billed as "investigative journalism," Brock's "The Real Anita Hill" was an extensive article that sought to discredit Hill's testimony, to highlight what

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Brock, interview by Brian Lamb, CSPAN, June 13, 1993.

<sup>65</sup> Brock, *Blinded by the Right*, 96.

conservatives considered the left's control and manipulation of congress and the media, and to explain Hill's motivations for accusing Thomas.<sup>66</sup> Brock combed through the senate transcripts, acquired confidential documents via Republican leaks, and interviewed mostly pro-Thomas sources. He correctly undermined the then prevailing view that Hill was a Reagan conservative who agreed with Thomas's conservatism. He also highlighted the discrepancies in Hill's testimony before the FBI in the summer of 1991 and the senate in October and a potentially significant admission about the date of a phone call about the harassment between Hill and a friend in 1981. Another noteworthy contribution was his detailing of the pressure applied on Hill by Democratic staffers and liberal groups and Hill's misleading statements before the senate about her desire to remain anonymous and then come forward.<sup>67</sup> He speculated that Senator Paul Simon leaked the Hill deposition in September 1991, a charge that Simon refuted and which Brock later abandoned.<sup>68</sup> Had the article stopped there it would have been vulnerable to criticism on some factual errors and details, but it would have been a tame attack on Hill's credibility, backed by extensive quotations from actual senate documents, public and sealed.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Brock, "The Real Anita Hill," *TAS* (March 1992): 18-30. The issue's cover included a drawing of Hill that many considered racist. See Brock, *Blinded by the Right*, 106.

<sup>67</sup> The Senate appointed an investigator, Peter Fleming, to identify how Hill's testimony was leaked to the press in late September, but Fleming was unable to get answers. *TAS* supported a vigorous investigation of the journalists involved—NPR's Nina Totenberg and *Newsday*'s Timothy Phelps. See Terry Eastland, "Hill's Rats," *TAS* (July 1992): 48-51. The magazine's opinions of government investigations of the third estate would change drastically over the course of 1990s as the Clinton administration pursued *TAS*. See chapter five.

<sup>68</sup> "Only one reporter have I refused to grant interviews to after he distorted in a wholesale way an interview for the far-right publication, *The American Spectator*. Not only did David Brock massively and intentionally misquote me, he said I had leaked the information on Anita Hill in the encounter with Clarence Thomas, then later said Jeanne did, before he moved on to other suspects. Neither of us had done it, though my belief is that people should be more concerned with who told the truth between Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas, than with who leaked the information." See Paul Simon, *P.S.: The Autobiography of Paul Simon* (Chicago: Bonus Books, Inc.), 285.

<sup>69</sup> Publications such as the *Wall Street Journal*, *New Republic*, and *Commentary* also explored the problematic aspects of Hill's testimony. On Hill's misleading testimony see Suzanne Garment, "Why Anita Hill Lost," *Commentary* (January 1992): 26-35, which was revised and reprinted in Garment, *Scandal: The*

The substantive parts of Brock's article resembled a *Commentary* article published in January 1992. Suzanne Garment's "Why Anita Hill Lost" was a measured, carefully reasoned analysis of Hill's and Thomas's testimonies and a critique of the effect of the Bork nomination on the confirmation process.<sup>70</sup> Garment argued that while Hill's testimony contained misleading and dubious elements, many of these answers could be explained, if not justified. In other words, it was possible to assert that Hill gave false testimony on several points without taking the next step, as Brock did in *TAS*, that a grand, liberal plot was afoot to sink Thomas's nomination or that Hill was somehow unstable. Garment's insightful and measured article, made no significant impact on the debate or *Commentary's* circulation. Not so with Brock's combative piece in *TAS*; it reshaped the national debate and multiplied *TAS's* circulation numbers.<sup>71</sup>

In an ideologically motivated effort to explain Hill's testimony, Brock included a sensational series of attacks on Hill's character, based mostly on rumors circulating in conservative circles and outlandish conspiracy theories. Brock argued that a monolithic, surprisingly well-coordinated alliance of liberal interest groups and Democrats worked to bring down Thomas. He included salacious and false gossip suggesting the Hill herself was preoccupied with sex and spoke about it inappropriately to coworkers. He also included a ridiculous yarn about Hill returning law school students' papers with her public

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*Culture of Mistrust in American Politics* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992), especially the afterward, pages 305-344.

<sup>70</sup> According to Garment, the mean-spiritedness of the Hill-Thomas hearings was partly the result of structural problems, specifically "the public quasi-criminal trail into which the Senate had allowed the proceedings to be cast. Anita Hill had charged Clarence Thomas with crimes to which she said there had been no witnesses. The normal courtroom defense to such charges is to try to even the score by eliciting details that damage the accuser's credibility and by testing various theories of her motivation." Garment, "Why Anita Hill Lost," 34.

<sup>71</sup> Merida and Fletcher's *Supreme Discomfort* argues that Thomas lied during the hearings and that Hill's testimony was also misleading. "Even some of her immediate family question whether she was completely candid during the hearings," Merida and Fletcher wrote, and that a "nagging sense that there was a side to the Hill-Thomas relationship that neither of them wished to divulge." See Merida and Fletcher, *Supreme Discomfort*, 195.



hairs. Brock passed on anonymous criticisms from her former students describing her as “kooky” and irrational. Another anonymous student, reported Brock, alleged that Hill made a pass at him in the hallway by saying, “I know your favorite flavor is chocolate.” Brock concluded, infamously, that Hill had an “obsessive, even perverse, desire for male attention” and was “a bit nutty and a bit slutty.”<sup>72</sup> By the end of the long article, Brock had moved beyond mudslinging to character assassination.<sup>73</sup>

In some ways, Brock’s *TAS* piece on Hill mirrored the magazine’s long history of publishing mean-spirited and personal attacks on opponents. Its issues in the late 1960s, for example, had denigrated SDS leaders at IU with gleeful personal invective, including accusing the SDS leader, Guy Loftman, of poor personal hygiene and suggesting he commit suicide. But in other ways, it marked a departure for the publication into a take-no-prisoners style of investigative reporting. With it, the editors abandoned the historic strength of the magazine as an intellectual review that stretched the boundaries of the conservative movement and instead indulged their worst tendencies, allowing the heated partisanship of the early 1990s and the public’s growing interest in the culture wars to consume the magazine, as well. Brock failed to appreciate the magazine’s long history of ruthless attacks on leftist opponents, especially those connected in any possible way with 1960s student radicals, but he accurately captured the significance of his piece to the magazine’s new investigative journalism phase:

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<sup>72</sup> The infamous phrase that became associated with Brock’s mudslinging, in which he described Hill as “a bit nutty, and a bit slutty,” appeared *only* in the *TAS* article in March 1992, not in the follow-up book. The article and book shared the same title, which has contributed to the confusion. The phrase was also misquoted in various ways. For example, even Brock’s autobiography misquoted the line as a “little bit nutty and a little bit slutty.” For an example of this frequent misattribution, see *Supreme Discomfort*: Molly Irvin misquoted it as well, see “Untold Story of Hill Detractor: He’s Not An Objective Journalist,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, May 23, 1993: A19; on Brock misquoting himself, see Brock, *Blinded by the Right*, 109.

<sup>73</sup> Brock apologized for this line the next year. “Frankly, I regret the word choice there” and “apologize[d] for that use of language.” Quoted in Sullivan, “The Hill-Thomas Mystery,” 12-17.

For what was then a lighthearted magazine, the full-throated tenor of the attack, and especially its tabloid bent, was a major departure. Surely, this was an impossible story to tell without explicit references to sex; but no respectable publication, not even the *Spectator*, had ever seen the likes of the sexist imagery and sexual innuendo I concocted to discredit Anita Hill. These were but two ingredients in a witches' brew of fact, allegation, hearsay, speculation, opinion, and invective labeled by my editors as 'investigative journalism.' And well, it did *look* like journalism. By taking portions of the record and quoting previously unreleased Senate material, I was able to create the illusion that the article was based on established fact, solid evidence, and extensive documentation. The editors weren't careful with the magazine's reputation, much less mine. Wlady, the managing editor, hardly questioned a word I filed. All women were 'emotional' and thus prone to fabrication, Wlady said.<sup>74</sup>

The article was an immediate hit for *TAS*. For the first time in the magazine's history, the March issue sold out in two days, prompting further press runs. It "immediately turned out to be the most popular piece we've ever published," noted Pleszczynski. "Countless press columns, talk shows and radio interviews have seized on it, and we've gone back to press twice with the story that sells out the moment it hits the newsstands."<sup>75</sup>

The nationally syndicated radio host Rush Limbaugh enthusiastically endorsed and promoted the *TAS* article, including reading entire passages from it live on the air. The article appeared to give Limbaugh hard investigative journalism to support the conservative line. "Anita Hill did not go to work for Clarence Thomas, did not even meet him, until September 1981!," bellowed Limbaugh, "This timely bit of information, and a lot more, can be found in the yeoman research effort by Washington investigation reporter David Brock in a cover story in the March 1992 issue of *The American Spectator*."<sup>76</sup> Limbaugh's support amplified the reach of *TAS*, and as a result, new readers

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<sup>74</sup> Brock, *Blinded by the Right*, 107-108.

<sup>75</sup> Ronald Burr, "Celebrate Building the Conservative Culture," CSPAN, December 2, 1992; Wladyslaw Pleszczynski, "About This Month," *TAS* (April 1992): 5.

<sup>76</sup> Rush Limbaugh, *The Way Things Ought To Be* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 120.

subscribed by the thousands. Paid advertisements on the Limbaugh Show and elsewhere by *TAS* helped, too, with promises that new subscribers would be sent a free copy of the Brock article.<sup>77</sup>

Thanks in large part to Limbaugh's powerful microphone, the *TAS* article influenced the public debate. Editorial pages buzzed with Brock-inspired theories, even in some small town newspapers. One contributor to the *Iowa Gazette* noted "much has come out about Hill since the Senate hearing. But the most factual revelation as to her real character was made by David Brock and published in *The American Spectator*."<sup>78</sup> Limbaugh's direct access to the public embodied the type of alternative media venue that Tyrrell had long sought for the conservative movement.

Respected conservatives agreed with Limbaugh and promoted the *TAS* article as a vindication of Thomas and a revealing investigative study of the depravity of the liberal left establishment, feminism, the media, and Hill. They were untroubled by the tasteless attacks on Hill, in part because they viewed such personal attacks as fair game since similar tactics had been used by some liberals to discredit Robert Bork a few years previously.<sup>79</sup> *NR* called it a "damaging expose" and noted that it "raised deep questions about her veracity and even her grip on reality."<sup>80</sup> Conservatives with syndicated columns

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<sup>77</sup> See *TAS* full page advertisement in *Reason* magazine (November 1992): 13.

<sup>78</sup> Gordon Gillette, "Dump Grassley? What Nonsense!," *The Cedar Rapids Gazette*, March 23, 1992, 4A.

<sup>79</sup> Conservatives viewed Ted Kennedy's comments about Bork in the Senate as gross character assassination. See George Szamuely, "Review of *The Tempting of America*, by Robert Bork and *Battle for Justice*, by Ethan Bronner," *TAS* (February 1990): 43-44.

<sup>80</sup> *NR*, "For the Record" (April 27, 1992): 6; *NR*, "What a Difference a Year Makes" (November 2, 1992). *National Review* echoed *TAS*'s complaints that the mainstream press was ignoring points raised by Brock's article. Conservative writer Thomas Sowell heralded it as a "devastating article." Thomas Sowell, "Anita Hill, Part II," *Omaha World-Herald* (NE), October 9, 1992, 27; Neoconservative Ben Wattenberg's syndicated column called attention to the new evidence in Brock's piece, including the allegation that Hill returned papers to students with pubic hairs attached. Ben Wattenberg, "Picking Your Way Through the Firestorm," *Galveston Daily News*, February 11, 1992; Columnist Walter Williams praised Brock's sleuthing on the discrepancies in Anita Hill's testimony and complained that the mainstream press seemed

especially trumpeted the *TAS* article. “Investigative reporter David Brock turned up amazing things” but the media continued to “cover Anita Hill as if *The American Spectator* article were not in general circulation,” complained Jeffrey Hart, “it is astounding that the major media have not picked up Mr. Brock’s article.”<sup>81</sup> In fact, the media and press were paying attention, as Pleszczynski noted in the next *TAS* issue, but the demeaning attacks on Hill’s character lacked sufficient evidence to be persuasive for readers outside the conservative movement.

The tabloid-style attacks on Hill’s character and the sensational language understandably dominated critical press coverage of the article.<sup>82</sup> The *Chicago Tribune* noted that “the trashing of Anita Hill is complete with David Brock’s ‘The Real Anita Hill’ in March’s *American Spectator*. It portrays her as a dissembling, feminist wacko and subpar attorney with a history of making allegedly frivolous sex-discriminating allegations.”<sup>83</sup> Critics also argued that Brock’s article rested on a weak and dubious evidentiary base. “We found...that most of the information in that article—we were just unable to verify,” explained journalist Timothy Phelps, whose own lengthy book on the whole affair was published shortly after Brock’s article appeared.<sup>84</sup> Hill’s friend and

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to be ignoring these new facts. Walter Williams, “Continuing Hill Saga is Ignored,” *The Lima News*, March 26, 1992, B2.

<sup>81</sup> Jeffrey Hart, “The Great Anita Hill Scam,” *Gadsden Times*, May 21, 1992, A4. For a different perspective from a sympathetic Midwestern columnist, see Iowa’s Mike Deupree, “Put Hill-Thomas Mess to Rest,” *The Cedar Rapids-Gazette*, February 25, 1992, 2A.

<sup>82</sup> On more reaction to the Brock article, see also Charles Trueheart, “Adoption Across the Color Line,” *The Washington Post*, February 25, 1992, E07.

<sup>83</sup> James Warren, “‘Un-uh! Ray Charles Ads Haven’t Helped Diet Pepsi Close Gap with Diet Coke,’” *Chicago Tribune*, February 20, 1992, 2; The *Tribune*’s comments were reprinted in the *Orange County Register*, “Accent on Magazines,” February 23, 1992, H7; Anita Hill described it as a “virulent ‘hit piece’” that “supply[ed] Thomas’ supporters with new perversions for their attack on me.” She claimed to have heard rumors prior to the article’s publication “that there was a reward being offered by a ‘conservative women’s organization’ to anyone who could find ‘dirt on Anita Hill.’” Anita Hill, *Speaking Truth to Power* (New York: First Anchor Books, 1998), 270.

<sup>84</sup> Tim Phelps, *Larry King Live*, CNN, May 8, 1992; Timothy Phelps and Helen Winternitz, *Capital Games: Clarence Thomas, Anita Hill, and the Story of a Supreme Court Nomination* (New York: Hyperion,

conservative Yale law professor Stephen Carter echoed Phelps's criticism of *TAS*. "In a peculiar article in *The American Spectator* [Brock] offers a chain of mostly unsupported and often contradictory assertions, many of which play perfectly into popular stereotypes of black people as sensually obsessed, of women as vindictive and of black women as both."<sup>85</sup> Jane Mayer, a reporter with the *Wall Street Journal*, then at work on her own book about the episode, recalled the tremendous impact the *TAS* article had in 1992:

In March of 1992, a sensational investigative report by an unknown journalist was published in a little-read magazine. Though it wasn't clear at the time, David Brock's article, "The Real Anita Hill," which appeared in *The American Spectator*, marked the beginning of one of the nastiest decades in American political history. In this piece Brock revived the dirty tricks of Watergate days and adapted them to the popular press. Using catchy phrases, like "a little bit nutty and a little bit slutty," and buttressing them with a tone of conviction and seemingly authoritative facts, Brock alleged that Hill had concealed parts of her past and that her testimony about Clarence Thomas was false. Brock used the language of investigative journalism to demolish Hill's credibility and character. After its charges were broadcast repeatedly on the growing right-wing talk-radio circuit, and then picked up by the mainstream press and television, Brock's long article convinced many open-minded Americans to reassess their thinking about the vexing *Rashomon* episode that had transfixed the country the autumn before, when Hill had accused her former boss, the nominee to the Supreme Court Clarence Thomas, of lewd behavior and harassment while she worked for him in the 1980s, and of then lying about it under oath during his confirmation hearings.<sup>86</sup>

Contrary to what some zealous critics charged, *TAS* and its editors were not part of the "lunatic right," and yet the Brock article clearly crossed journalistic and ethical

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1992). For a critical review of it in *TAS*, see Tod Lindberg, "Review of *Capital Games*," in *The American Spectator* (October 1992): 65-67.

<sup>85</sup> Stephen L. Carter, "The Candidate," *The New Republic* (February 22, 1993): 32.

<sup>86</sup> Jane Mayer, "True Confessions," Review of Brock's *Blinded by the Right*, *The New York Review of Books* (June 27, 2002), available at <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2002/jun/27/true-confessions/>; Several facts, including the fallout from the Hill-Thomas case, particularly the way Hill was treated by Republican senators, and the Brock smearing of Hill in his *TAS* article, resulted in the 1992 congressional election being referred to as the "Year of the Woman." An unprecedented four women were elected to the senate that year, including Carol Moseley-Braun and Barbara Boxes. See Jackie Calmes, "Senators Elected in 'Year of the Woman,' Will Be Tested Early by Packwood Case," *The Wall Street Journal*, November 24, 1992, B3; and Abramson, "Reversal of Fortune: Image of Anita Hill, Brighter in Hindsight, Galvanizes Campaigns," *Wall Street Journal*, October 5, 1992, A1.

lines.<sup>87</sup> When considering the editors' decision to publish it, and the ensuing enthusiastic reaction to its character assassination passages, it is imperative to place it in the context of the Bork hearings in 1987. Conservatives had been genuinely shocked by what they viewed as a vile character assassination of Bork, typified by Senator Ted Kennedy's "Robert Bork's America" speech. This speech, particularly the lines, "Robert Bork's America is a land in which women would be forced into back-alley abortions, blacks would sit at segregated lunch counters, rogue police could break down citizens' doors in midnight raids," became a rallying point for conservatives of all stripes.<sup>88</sup> *TAS* and its readers viewed Hill's testimony as a continuation of the Bork strategy, and thus reflexively defended Brock. The grossly offensive attacks on Hill in Brock's *TAS* article, masked by a thin investigative journalism veneer, seemed justifiable to conservatives as turnabout—from their perspective they were simply turning the left's tactics on itself. This also helps account for why so many intelligent, otherwise sensible conservatives backed the *TAS* report without voicing concerns over the mudslinging and cruel lines about Hill's character. The Bork case had helped to desensitize partisan camps to the ruthless tactics increasingly involved in Supreme Court confirmation battles.<sup>89</sup>

The stunning success of the *TAS* article led to a book deal and further controversy for the magazine. Brock and his agents "decided on the basis of the *Spectator* piece and some of the response that [it] got that [they] ought to float it as a book proposal." Erwin Glikes with The Free Press, a division of Macmillan publishers, had found the article

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<sup>87</sup> "The lunatic right," observed the *New York Times*, "is spreading the tale that there was a conspiracy among Professor Hill and other individuals and interest groups to sabotage the Thomas nomination." Anthony Lewis, "The Hunt For Red October," *New York Times*, February 27, 1992.

<sup>88</sup> Kennedy's speech was delivered on the floor of the Senate July 1, 1987, and it played a recurring role in the hearings. See US Congressional Record, Volume 133, Part 20, October 13, 1987 to October 21, 1987, page 28847.

<sup>89</sup> See Garment, *Scandal*, 305-344.

intriguing and been carrying a copy in his briefcase. A neoconservative, Glikes thrived in the niche of publishing commercially successful books by conservative writers, and he quickly agreed to terms on a book length version of the *TAS* article, including a sizeable advance of \$120,000. He assigned Adam Bellow, Saul Bellow's son and a committed movement conservative, to work as Brock's editor, and Brock's article was transformed into a book. Bellow stripped the sensationalistic language from the *TAS* piece, and challenged Brock to "think of the reader as you would a juror...the tone should be more in sorrow than in anger."<sup>90</sup>

Brock obliged, and the book he wrote was extremely persuasive. "In this sanitized retelling, Hill was no longer a nut or a slut," he later explained. "The book was framed more as a defense of Thomas than an attack on Hill, who was portrayed more as a victim than a victimizer, a confused pawn pressured to turn an old white lie into false Senate testimony by ruthless liberal Senate staffers and feminist supporters."<sup>91</sup> He even criticized Thomas for being "evasive and calculating" and used "artful dodging" when fielding questions about the Lehrman abortion article.<sup>92</sup> Not surprisingly, few on the left responded to his interview requests, which he sent by certified letter, "in which I also enclosed copies of my *Spectator* piece so that they clearly knew where I was coming from." The completion of the Senate's special investigator Peter Fleming's report, however, gave Brock access to depositions by many key witnesses.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> For the above quotes and details on the book deal and Glikes, see Brock, interview by Brian Lamb, CSPAN, June 13, 1993; and Brock, *Blinded by the Right*, 114-117. The tentative title, *The Borking of Clarence Thomas*, was later changed to *The Real Anita Hill*, the title of the original *TAS* article. See Sullivan, "The Hill-Thomas Mystery," 12-17.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Brock, *Real Anita Hill*, 87.

<sup>93</sup> Brock, interview by Brian Lamb, CSPAN, June 13, 1993. Brock would later incorrectly claim that "all of my sources were pro-Thomas partisans." See Brock, *Blinded by the Right*, 118; According to Jane Mayer, one of Brock's harshest critics, Brock's "dispassionate tone made the argument seem carefully

The sordid denigration of Hill's character attracted press attention, but it also helped lionize Hill and brought many stout defenders to her side. Additionally, it overshadowed Brock's and others' substantive critiques of Hill's testimony. She had misled the committee under oath and there remained problematic aspects to her account. Brock's book zeroed in on these discrepancies and buttressed by copious footnotes, his book appeared at the time to be more substantive than his *TAS* article. The careful reader noticed problems, though, such as Brock's insistence that a "Shadow Senate" of liberal groups and Senate Democrats conspired to sink Thomas's nomination. Such conspiracy talk mirrored what some liberal groups suggested was a monolithic conservative movement funded by a small cadre of immensely wealthy business leaders. Conservatives found such conspiracy talk ridiculous when it came from the left, but worthy of consideration when it came from their own ranks.<sup>94</sup>

The conservative press promoted the book. *The Wall Street Journal* and *NR* published long excerpts.<sup>95</sup> Brock's team gave the Pulitzer Prize-winning conservative columnist George Will an advanced copy with the hopes of securing a preemptory positive review in his *Newsweek* column.<sup>96</sup> To their pleasant surprise, Will offered effusive praise. Brock's book "dismantles the myth that Hill is a conservative Republican who was driven from Washington by sexual harassment," gushed Will, and "Brock assembles an avalanche of evidence that Hill lied—about her career and relations with

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reasoned." But she, and later, Brock, too, credited the book's success to clever and disingenuous marketing strategies by The Free Press. See Jane Mayer, "True Confessions."

<sup>94</sup> Brock, *The Real Anita Hill: The Untold Story* (New York: Free Press, 1993, 1994). On the "Shadow Senate," see pages 25-60. The 1994 revised edition included a new afterward essay detailing the book's response, see pages 389-402.

<sup>95</sup> Brock, Excerpt from *The Real Anita Hill*, *The Wall Street Journal*, April 9, 1993, A10; Brock, "Her Word Against His," *NR* (May 10, 1993): 23-26.

<sup>96</sup> On the arrangement for Will to receive an early copy, see Brock, *Blinded by the Right*, 124-125.



Thomas.” After summarizing Brock’s main points, Will concluded that “Brock’s book will be persuasive to minds not sealed by the caulking of ideology.”<sup>97</sup>

Brock’s book eventually drew *TAS* into a public conflict with *The New Yorker* magazine.<sup>98</sup> Positive reviews by the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, including one by the Pulitzer Prize-winning historian of the civil rights movement, David Garrow, eventually prompted the *New Yorker* to review the book.<sup>99</sup> Writing in the *New Yorker*, Jane Mayer and Jill Abramson, two *Wall Street Journal* reporters then writing their own book on the Thomas-Hill controversy, dismantled Brock’s book.<sup>100</sup> They exposed its serious factual errors and distortions of the evidence and challenged Brock’s pretensions to objectivity. “His first ‘investigative’ work on Professor Hill, a long article describing

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<sup>97</sup> George Will, “Anita Hill’s Tangled Web,” *Newsweek* (April 19, 1993): 74. NPR’s Nina Tottenberg was one of the first to incorrectly describe Hill as a Reaganite. See also *Time* magazine and *New York Times*; See also Tyrrell, review of *The Real Anita Hill*, by David Brock, *TAS* (July 1993): 58-59; Not all conservative reviews were positive. *NR*’s formal review was mixed, at best, distinguishing between the book’s strengths (that Hill was no Reagan conservative and that her testimony was problematic) and weaknesses (Brock’s too frequent reliance on anonymous sources and gossip). It found troubling the later chapters in which Brock attempted to explain Hill’s motivations. “In his final chapter, and citing a wide range of unattributed gossip, Brock more than suggests that the ‘real’ Anita Hill has had a not-so-secret life as a foul-minded, foul-mouthed, porn-loving, sex-obsessed hag.” *NR* found “this psychoanalytic rampage... disgusting.” Jacob Cohen, “Truth and Consequences,” *NR* (July 5, 1993): 47-50; *Commentary*, the flagship neoconservative magazine, ran a favorable review of the book. Terry Eastland, “The Case Against Anita Hill,” *Commentary* (August 1993): 39-44.

<sup>98</sup> For a history of *The New Yorker*, see Ben Yagoda, *About Town: The New Yorker and the World It Made* (New York: Scribner, 2000).

<sup>99</sup> “Despite Brock’s conservative political leanings, this book is not, as some may have anticipated, a rabid right-wing smear,” wrote *the Washington Post*, “[i]t is rather an effort at a revisionist history of the Thomas-Hill affair, a serious work of investigative journalism that builds a case quietly and incrementally.” Jonathan Groner, “The Thomas-Hill Debate: A Revisionist’s View,” *The Washington Post*, May 3, 1993, C1, C9; *The New York Times* described it as “well written, carefully reasoned and powerful in its logic.” Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, “Peering Behind the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas Matter,” *New York Times*, April 26, 1993, C18; Garrow called it a “highly valuable but seriously flawed piece of work,” and praised Brock’s “superb and extremely persuasive job” of tracing the leak of Hill’s testimony to Phelps and Tottenberg and in probing the discrepancies in Hill’s testimony. David J. Garrow, “How Anita Hill’s Charges Became Political Grist,” *Newsday*, May 4, 1993, 58.

<sup>100</sup> Jane Mayer and Jill Abramson, “Books: The Surreal Anita Hill,” *The New Yorker* (May 24, 1993): 91 and Mayer, “Abramson and Anita Hill,” June 3, 2011, on the *New Yorker*’s blog, <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/newsdesk/2011/06/abramson-and-anita-hill.html>. Anita Hill found Brock’s book a “fraudulent portrayal of me” that “hinged on sexual mythology about black women and society’s willingness to believe it.” She was at a loss to explain its commercial success and positive reviews. “Because Brock supported his case with fabricated and misquoted sources,” she complained, “I was at first amazed that the press gave him such broad license to define me.” Anita Hill, *Speaking Truth to Power*, 281.

her as ‘a bit nutty, and a bit slutty’ (the mudslinging language has been cleaned up for this more high-toned effort),” they noted, “appeared in March of 1992 in the lively and tendentiously conservative journal of opinion *The American Spectator*—a publication funded by several conservative foundations.”<sup>101</sup> Other critics followed their lead.<sup>102</sup> In an insightful survey of the Brock/*TAS* and *New Yorker* controversy, Kathleen Sullivan of *The New York Review of Books* wrote that Brock’s work in *TAS* and the book “often reads less like a work of investigative journalism than a tract in a cultural war.” Sullivan noted the “real target of the book is not so much Anita Hill as the ‘left-liberal’ establishment.”<sup>103</sup>

Brock had become a full time investigative journalist on *TAS*’s payroll in January 1993, and the magazine fully supported him as he exchanged increasingly heated letters with the *New Yorker*, extracts of which were printed verbatim in *TAS*.<sup>104</sup> *TAS* editors placed deep trust in Brock’s investigative reporter skills, in part because they liked his

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<sup>101</sup> Mayer and Abramson, “Books: The Surreal Anita Hill,” 91. On the financial details, Brock told Brian Lamb: “I sold this book in March 1992 after having published *The American Spectator* article. I sold it for an advance that was quite enough to keep the book financed for more than a year, for the entire time I worked on it. Several months into the book I was approached by the Olin Foundation -- I did not approach them -- and I was asked if there was anything they could do financially to help them. At that point I felt I could use a research assistant. I first said no, but then did take a \$5,000 Olin Foundation grant which went to pay Hilary Adams, who is mentioned in the author's note. Olin then contacted Bradley and asked them to make a matching grant, and so there was money from these foundations involved here, but the idea that they financed the project is wrong. The project was going forward, and it would have come to fruition without that money. It just made it easier for me to hire a research assistant, and that's not so unusual, I don't think, anyway.” See Brock, interview by Brian Lamb, CSPAN, June 13, 1993.

<sup>102</sup> Molly Irvins, “Untold Story of Hill Detractor: He’s Not An Objective Journalist,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, May 23, 1993: A19; Anthony Lewis, “Sleaze With Footnotes,” *New York Times*, May 21, 1993. The *New Yorker* review also sparked debate in Congress, for two examples see the floor debate between Patricia Schroeder and Philip Crane, House of Representatives, May 25, 1993, Congressional Record, 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress.

<sup>103</sup> Sullivan, “The Hill-Thomas Mystery,” 12-17.

<sup>104</sup> Tina Brown to Brock, quoted in Brock, “Jane and Jill and Anita Hill: At *The New Yorker*, They Don’t Know Jack,” *TAS* (August 1993): 24-30.

hard hitting reporting, and in part because they lacked the journalistic background to oversee the type of investigative reporting they now embraced.<sup>105</sup>

When Mayer and Abramson's book was published, *TAS* printed a detailed review by Brock, which itself made headlines, undermining *TAS*'s and conservatives' claims of neglect by the mainstream media. The television journalism program "60 Minutes" read the review in *TAS* and considered doing a segment critical of Mayer and Abramson's book, based on Brock's review. "We assumed that the show wanted to present the allegations in our book. But we learned that instead they wanted to run an exposé—on us," recalled Mayer. "By showing them a trail of documents, we managed to dissuade them from doing the story. But we realized how readily reputations could be ruined, and responsible professionals damaged, not to mention the expensive legal entanglements that can result when political smears are repeated in the media."<sup>106</sup>

For *TAS* and its fellow conservatives, the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas controversy resembled an inversion of the Alger Hiss-Whitaker Chambers controversy of the late 1940s. In that famous case before Congress, Chambers, a recent conservative convert and *Time* magazine editor, claimed that both he and Hiss, a distinguished American statesman, had worked together as communist spies in the 1930s. Hiss completely denied the charges under oath and was vigorously defended by Democrats and liberal supporters. Republicans and conservatives strongly backed Chambers, who ultimately produced damning evidence of Hiss's guilt. Nevertheless, some ardent supporters and liberals continued to insist on Hiss's innocence, despite growing evidence

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<sup>105</sup> The managing editor at *TAS* was the primary person obliged to give a critical eye to Brock's writing, see Brock, *Blinded by the Right*, 106-113.

<sup>106</sup> Mayer, "True Confessions." Thomas allies told Brock that the *TAS* review persuaded Supreme Court justice Stephen Breyer that Thomas was innocent. See Brock, *Blinded by the Right*, 268.

to the contrary in the decades that followed. Initially, in the period between 1991 and 1994, conservatives repeatedly compared Thomas to Chambers, in essence playing unjustly maligned truthful witnesses. The publication of Brock's 1992 essay in *TAS* and the follow-up book seemed to confirm that Hill's defenders were like Hiss's defenders—unwilling to accept the facts. But increasingly after the Mayer and Abramson book was published in late 1994, the references to Hill-Chambers took on new meaning and the Hill-Thomas case reversed the comparisons. Some conservatives, led by *TAS*'s investigative journalism and attack pieces, clung tenaciously to a belief in Thomas's innocence, despite a growing body of circumstantial evidence that belied it. Increasingly, to outside observers it appeared clear that Thomas's categorical denials were perjurious; still, stalwarts clung to the belief that a liberal cabal framed the conservative justice.<sup>107</sup>

The conflict, then, between *TAS*, *The New Yorker*'s Mayer and Abramson, and others over Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas remained heated between 1992 and 1995, with additional skirmishes into the 2000s. But its duration and intensity reflected more than a search for the truth about the Thomas confirmation hearings. By the mid-1990s, it had become a proxy war over *TAS*'s journalistic credibility, the increasing partisanship of the media, the Clinton presidency, and the culture wars.<sup>108</sup> The magazine's opponents, led by Mayer and Abramson, felt obliged to demonstrate that *TAS* acted in bad faith, publishing ideologically-driven gossip as hard news, undermining objective journalism,

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<sup>107</sup> See Brock, *Blinded by the Right*, 95-96; *TAS* continued to publish stories questioning Hill and ignoring the evidence against Thomas, see Jeremy Lott, "Thomas-Hill Revisited," October 3, 2007, available at *TAS*'s blog, <http://Spectator.org/archives/2007/10/03/thomas-hill-revisited>. For a thoughtful essay on the Hiss case, see Susan Jacoby, *Alger Hiss and the Battle for History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009). The definitive case for Hiss's guilt remains Allen Weinstein's *Perjury: The Hiss-Chambers Case* (New York: Knopf, 1978; Random House, 1997).

<sup>108</sup> "The Thomas-Hill hearing was more than a shocking media spectacle," wrote Brock, "it was part of a broader struggle for political power between conservatism and liberalism that split our world in two." See Brock, *Blinded By the Right*, 95.

and fueling conservatives' support for bad policies. *TAS*, by contrast, fought to maintain the legitimacy of its lucrative investigative journalism, which by early 1994's Troopergate story was stalking the president, and to support its larger belief that an alternative right wing media was viable. It had long argued that the media suffered from a liberal bias that hurt conservatism's chance at a fair hearing and distorted the public's view of political choices. Along with Rush Limbaugh's radio and TV show, which also had much invested in the *TAS* controversy, *TAS*'s claim to providing sound alternative media structures was at stake.

### **The Limbaugh Connection**

As noted, during the Hill-Thomas controversy, *TAS* benefitted immensely from its relationship with Rush Limbaugh, who enthusiastically promoted *TAS* in his nationally syndicated radio talk show. Limbaugh (b. 1951), a baby boomer from Missouri, was a radio phenomenon with an audience of millions in the 1990s. The conservative's talk show began in the small regional markets of Kansas City, Missouri, and Sacramento, California, and proved a success thanks to Limbaugh's charismatic, blunt right wing talk. Not unlike *TAS* in the 1970s and 1980s, Limbaugh ruthlessly denigrated gays and lesbians, feminists, the environmental movement, Democrats, and liberals. He creatively used different voices, popular music, and listener call-ins to insult feminists and gays, in particular. In 1988, he moved his show to the east coast, went national, and continued to thrive. Like the *TAS* editors, he had a theatrical flair.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> No full length academic biography has yet been written on Limbaugh. On his early years and rise to fame, see Paul Colford, *The Rush Limbaugh Story: The Unauthorized Biography* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993, 1994); and Zev Chafets, *Rush Limbaugh: An Army of One* (New York: Penguin, 2010). For an early study of Limbaugh's rise and role in early 1990s politics and the 1992 election, see Philip Seib, *Rush Hour: Talk Radio, Politics, and the Rise of Rush Limbaugh* (Fort Worth, TX: The Summit Group, 1993); for a more recent study, see John Wilson, *The Most Dangerous Man in America: Rush Limbaugh's Assault on Reason* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011),

He read and supported *TAS* in the 1980s, but it was the Anita Hill story in the March 1992 edition that created a symbiotic relationship between the two. Limbaugh literally read long excerpts from the Brock article on the air, using different voices to mock the Democrats and liberals. The result was dramatic. *TAS* subscriptions immediately spiked, and with each day that Limbaugh read from or talked about the magazine, subscriptions continued to climb. It was unlike anything the editors had experienced, and it made *TAS* a phenomenon in the magazine industry. “In Limbaugh’s view, [*TAS*’s] searing report illustrated that the major media had been blind to Hill’s credibility problem when her charges held the nation rapt,” wrote Paul Colford, one of Limbaugh’s early biographers, in 1993, “the piece neatly supported his recurring us-against-them theme, which held that most journalists were liberals pursuing their own agenda. His heralding of the story...prompted a blitz of listener calls to the magazine.”<sup>110</sup> Limbaugh had no compunction about the tasteless character assassinations in the latter parts of Brock’s article. Beyond just reading the article, he added his own demeaning attacks. “My guess is she’s had plenty of spankings, if you catch my meaning,” he said of Hill.”<sup>111</sup> His strident attacks on Hill and defense of Thomas, fueled by the *TAS* stories he read on air, helped gain the attention of Clarence Thomas.<sup>112</sup>

Limbaugh also benefitted from his relationship with *TAS*, though. *TAS* was an established conservative opinion journal, and when it printed investigative stories that included demeaning and tasteless personal attacks, like the second half of its piece on

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<sup>110</sup> Colford, *The Rush Limbaugh Story*, 157.

<sup>111</sup> Limbaugh quoted in Wilson, *The Most Dangerous Man in America*, 50.

<sup>112</sup> Thomas reportedly loved Limbaugh’s show and was a devoted listener. The two eventually met at a private dinner party in 1994, and only a few weeks later Thomas agreed to officiate Limbaugh’s third wedding at Thomas’s home in Virginia. The reception included the odd scene of Thomas and James Carville sitting on a back deck together amiably, in Carville’s words, “bullshittin’ about cooking.” See Merida and Fletcher, *Supreme Discomfort*, 222-224.

Anita Hill, it gave the veneer of journalistic credibility to gossip and mean-spirited attacks. Limbaugh was then able to read the stories on the air to millions of listeners, not as gossip and hearsay, but as a legitimate investigative news story by a respected journal. *TAS* provided the material for Limbaugh's show, then, and the magazine also paid for promotional advertisements, so that listeners would know exactly how to subscribe during the commercial segments. "I was listening to Rush and I heard the *Spectator* ads," commented William McGurn, editor of the *Far Eastern Economic Review* and member of *TAS*'s editorial board, "[I]t works together well, the *Spectator* prints this stuff, Rush disseminates it."<sup>113</sup>

It proved a compelling synergy, and both enjoyed meteoric growth in 1992. From Limbaugh and *TAS*'s perspective, they were providing the news and information the conservative population wanted and was ignored by the mainstream press. From the viewpoint of skeptics and liberals in the media, though, the Limbaugh-*TAS* synergism created a distorted "echo chamber" in which *TAS* printed false, salacious and/or slanderous articles based on questionable sources, which Limbaugh amplified to a much larger audience, simply citing an ostensibly respectable national conservative opinion journal.<sup>114</sup>

*TAS*'s investigative stories, which differed markedly from the highbrow material the magazine continued to print on literature, art, and ideas, proved perfect for Limbaugh's talents. One *TAS* advertisement on Limbaugh's short lived television show—

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<sup>113</sup> William McGurn, *TAS* Editorial Board Meeting, CSPAN, July 30, 1993. Limbaugh's radio audience was an estimated 17,947,700 on 622 radio stations by 1993; also, by October 1993, a reported 353,452 subscribed to his newsletter. See Rush Limbaugh, "The EIB Explosion 1993," *The Limbaugh Letter*, October 1993, 8.

<sup>114</sup> For example, see Kathleen Jamieson and Joseph Cappella, *Echo Chamber: Rush Limbaugh and the Conservative Media Establishment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

an experiment begun in 1992 that confirmed radio was his best medium—promised new subscribers a copy of *TAS*'s profile of Limbaugh and featured a nervous Tyrrell extolling the virtues of his magazine's investigative journalism:

Suddenly this year our readership has tripled. Why? Because *American Spectator* reveals never before published information about AIDS and Magic Johnson. Plus the truth about Anita Hill... At *American Spectator* we tell our writers to dig deeper, get the inside facts, write the truth, and let the chips fall where they may. And here's the result. The hardest hitting, wittiest magazine around.<sup>115</sup>

Several themes intersected *TAS* and the Limbaugh show. Few were more important than opposition to what both considered the excesses of post-sixties liberalism, particularly the areas of feminism and political correctness. "I didn't want to be identified with my generation," explained Limbaugh to ABC's Barbara Walters, echoing nearly the exact language of *TAS* regarding the 1960s, "I didn't wear tie-dies, I didn't protest America, never did, and so I wasn't part of the consensus."<sup>116</sup> *National Journal*, in a 1993 story on *TAS*'s rapid expansion since its turn to investigative reporting, wrote that:

Wladyslaw Pleszczynski, the *Spectator's* managing editor, says that the magazine has tapped into 'the phenomenon that created Rush Limbaugh'—which the editor views as a long-overdue cultural response to liberal political correctness. This is the main theme of a *Spectator* TV ad that has run on Limbaugh's television show; a young, well-dressed, professional-looking woman declares of the magazine: 'It's so incorrect. I like that.'<sup>117</sup>

In 1992, then, both Limbaugh and *TAS* enjoyed meteoric growth. Terry Eastland, a regular *TAS* columnist, lauded the talk show host as "conservatism's media

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<sup>115</sup> The advertisement also included Republican Senator John McCain, trying to capitalize on the popularity of *TAS* and Limbaugh, saying, "I've subscribed to it. I read it. And I think it's one of the best magazines around." *TAS* Advertisement, The Rush Limbaugh Show, 1993, available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=WnSJFfpJ9m8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=WnSJFfpJ9m8).

<sup>116</sup> Rush Limbaugh, Interview with Barbara Walters, 20/20, ABC, November 5, 1993. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6DTWN9qOw-A>

<sup>117</sup> *National Journal*, "Washington Update—They're Bashing Libs for Fun and Profit" (September 18, 1993).



superweapon.”<sup>118</sup> His feature piece on Limbaugh in the late summer of 1992 in *TAS* anticipated dozens of similar stories on television news shows and in newspapers, and the press in 1992 and 1993.<sup>119</sup>

Although *NR* also compared him to Reagan, its feature on Limbaugh identified tensions within conservatism over his aggressive style of radio. Some conservative intellectuals worried that Limbaugh was more comedian than serious political force, and that his “people don’t take him seriously.” By contrast, noted *NR*, *TAS* and its editor-in-chief, Bob Tyrrell, were thrilled with Limbaugh’s emergence, and viewed him as a bonding agent for the conservative movement’s perpetual resistance to its own centrifugal forces. “We need to have people who can dramatize ideas,” *NR* quoted Tyrrell on Limbaugh. “You need that literary spark... Buckley has it. And, though he’s a great talker rather than a great writer, Rush has it, too.”<sup>120</sup>

Limbaugh also adopted a style very similar to Tyrrell’s long running “Continuing Crisis” column, which had begun in 1970 and became famous among conservative readers for its outlandish and often rude critiques of liberals, Limbaugh also used over-the-top rhetoric describing the left because, as Eastland explained, “Limbaugh battles the absurd by *being* absurd.” This bore a striking similarity to the self-conscious mimicking

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<sup>118</sup> Terry Eastland, “Rush Limbaugh: Conservatism’s Media Superweapon,” *TAS* (September 1992): 22-27; for an example of an early article from a major newspaper on Limbaugh, see Lewis Grossberger, “The Rush Hours,” *New York Times*, December 16, 1990, A58. Eastland’s Limbaugh profile in *TAS* was reprinted as an example of conservative heroes in *The Presence of Others: Readings for Critical Thinking and Writing*, eds., Andrea Lunsford and John Ruszkiewicz (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 492-499.

<sup>119</sup> Limbaugh was an iconoclastic conservative, explained Eastland, using language that resembled other’s descriptions of *TAS*, and his appeal had much to do with the way he injected humor, catchphrases, and charisma into his attacks on the left. Eastland observed that Limbaugh’s personal life did not always match his defense of conservative values, but otherwise expressed few concerns. “Limbaugh has filled a political-cultural void created by the departure of Ronald Reagan, the last figure to speak unapologetically for American conservatism,” cheered Eastland. Terry Eastland, “Rush Limbaugh,” 26; John Von Kannon, *TAS* publisher in the 1970s, praised Burr’s role, in particular, in the Limbaugh synergy, see Von Kannon, “American Spectator 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner,” C-SPAN Forum, November 12, 1997.

<sup>120</sup> James Bowman, “The Leader of the Opposition,” *TAS* (September 6, 1993): 44-52.

of H.L. Mencken at *TAS* since its founding. His show, wrote Eastland, included “‘Feminist Updates,’ ‘Sexual Harassment Updates,’ and ‘Anita Hill Updates,’ which are variations on the same theme. (The Hill updates are introduced by the Guess Who’s ‘She’s Come Undone.’)”<sup>121</sup>

Limbaugh’s direct access to the public appealed to another theme of *TAS* writing—Tyrrell’s complaint about the lack of alternative media institutions on the right. Tyrrell had complained about this in the 1970s in the pages of *TAS* and then directly to Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. Limbaugh provided a way around what *TAS* conservatives perceived to be the liberal gatekeepers of the major news outlets, Eastland argued. “For years conservatives ruminated about how they might challenge what Tyrrell calls the one-party media. Buy a newspaper, a network.” Limbaugh’s radio show seemed to offer a solution.<sup>122</sup>

Also like *TAS*, and especially Tyrrell, Limbaugh was a conservative culture warrior, but not from a specifically religious position. A recent divorcé in 1992, like Tyrrell, Limbaugh assailed liberalism from secular positions, and like *TAS*, when he spoke of religion, it was often from either an abstract or utilitarian perspective. “Limbaugh may seem like an unlikely conservative warrior. Twice divorced with no children, he is now single, and though he believes in God, he does not go to church,” wrote Eastland. “He disdains the ‘lifestyle liberalism’ of many in the media (and

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<sup>121</sup> Terry Eastland, “Rush Limbaugh,” 22-27. Like *TAS*, Limbaugh loved to single out Ted Kennedy for insults. *TAS* had long ridiculed Kennedy as “the hero of Chappaquiddick” for his suspicious behavior in the drowning death of a young female companion in 1969. Tyrrell, “Political Leadership: A Question Flummoxed,” *TAS* (October 1974): 4-5; for another example of *TAS*’s anti-Kennedy language, see Tyrrell, “Teddy and the Camelot Buncombe,” *TAS* (December 1978): 4, 37-40; Philip Terzian, “Chappaquiddick *Spectator*,” *TAS* (July 1989): 49-51.

<sup>122</sup> Terry Eastland, “Rush Limbaugh,” 22-27. The lack of conservative media outlets was one of Tyrrell’s primary complaints, see Tyrrell, “The Coming Conservative Crack-Up” 17-18; and Tyrrell, “The Conservative Crack-Up,” 22-27.

Hollywood and politics), who live on the basis of the proposition that there is no higher authority than the individual, no higher end for man than his constant self-creation.”<sup>123</sup>

Antifeminism animated both *TAS* and Limbaugh’s show, and this helps explain why Limbaugh concentrated so intently on *TAS*’s articles about Anita Hill and female supporters in 1992. An internal survey found that a higher percentage of readers were male at *TAS* (91%) compared to *NR* (83%) and *The New Republic* (77%).<sup>124</sup> “Is it a coincidence that the *Spectator* rocketed in popularity by targeting first a woman who accused a man of sexual harassment and secondly a woman who has made the First Lady post an unprecedented seat of policy-making power?” asked *National Journal*. Liberal opinion journals such as *Mother Jones* and the *Nation* thought *TAS* was clearly pandering to male resentment in the adult population, increasingly led by baby boomers. “*Mother Jones*’ editor Jeffrey Klein said conservative publications were feeding off of ‘real male resentment’ at ‘a perceived slippage of authority, a slippage of power, in an uncertain world with uncertain enemies,” wrote *National Journal*. Neil Black, president of *The Nation*, told *National Journal* of his concern that “conservative journals were playing on ‘complex emotional and psychological fears . . . dangerous buttons to be pushing—mean-spirited buttons to be pushing.’”<sup>125</sup>

### **Magic Johnson, *TAS*, and the Culture Wars**

The magazine also used its popular new investigative journalism on the homosexual rights movement, one of its favorite targets. It published tasteless articles

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<sup>123</sup> Charlotte Allen, “What They Preach . . . and What They Practice: Lifestyles of the Right and Famous,” *Washington Post*, October 17, 1993, C1, C5; Terry Eastland, “Rush Limbaugh,” 27.

<sup>124</sup> *National Journal*, “Washington Update—They’re Bashing Libs for Fun and Profit,” September 18, 1993.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*; See also Bruce Bawer, *A Place at the Table: The Gay Individual in American Society* (New York: Touchstone, 1993), 71-81.

that both ridiculed gays and portrayed them as a significant threat to American society and Western civilization. An example of this approach was Sandy Hume's "Bum Steer," an article on a gay rodeo in Washington, DC. Hume (1969-1998), son of then-ABC News correspondent, Brit Hume, was a recent Middlebury College graduate and participant in *TAS*'s internship program for young conservative writers. He reported on the event's unique features, including the presence of protesters from the "Gay and Lesbian Animal Rights Caucus." Popularly selling T-shirts "invariably featured some sort of sexual reference," wrote Hume, included "'Stop That Man...I Want to Get Off' or 'If You Rope Me You Can Ride Me.'" By highlighting the unusual aspects of the night, as opposed to more serious gay and lesbian events, the piece contributed to *TAS*'s mean-spirited narrative that gays were somehow akin to a Victorian freak show.<sup>126</sup>

In the 1980s, *TAS* editors had published controversial and tasteless AIDS-related articles that overstated the threat of AIDS as part of its anti-gay culture wars campaign. In the early 1990s, editors reversed course. They now began printing muckraking articles purporting to show that the national media was complicit in a scheme, orchestrated by the gay community, both to *overestimate* the AIDS threat to heterosexuals and to *underestimate* the responsibility of the gay community. Basketball great Magic Johnson's announcement that he was HIV positive in November 1991 prompted increased awareness of the disease's threat to heterosexuals and led to calls for more research funding into a cure. But for *TAS* contributor Michael Fumento, author of a controversial book on the AIDS crisis in 1990, Johnson's announcement gave "new impetus to the AIDS establishment's relentless campaign of distortion." Diseases that killed a far larger

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<sup>126</sup> Sandy Hume, "The Rodeo *Spectator*: Bum Steer," *TAS* (December 1992): 47; Christopher Caldwell, "Sandy Hume, 1969-1998," *Weekly Standard* (March 9, 1998): 8.

percentage of the population, such as cancer and heart disease, continued to struggle with insufficient funding, Fumento argued, while they “sell us on the idea that AIDS is a democratic disease that doesn’t single out homosexuals and needs an even greater infusion of federal research funds.”<sup>127</sup> The tone of Fumento’s writing on AIDS and the gay rights movement suggested the he was uncovering a vast conspiracy with investigative reporting; his report on Magic Johnson became one of *TAS* bestselling pieces.<sup>128</sup>

The Magic Johnson article and other investigative stories concentrated exclusively on *TAS*’s longtime opponents on the left, almost invariably connected in some way with *TAS*’s cultural and political war with former 1960s student radicals or what the magazine considered the legacy of the 1960s. The magazine’s editors remained convinced that liberals dominated the key cultural institutions, particularly the media, print and television, universities, and the premier philanthropic organizations. By contrast, liberals and the general media increasingly pointed to conservatism’s dominance of talk radio and the presence of donors like Richard Scaife and the Coors family as evidence that conservatives were not as marginalized as they claimed. *TAS*, however,

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<sup>127</sup> Michael Fumento, “Do You Believe in Magic?” *TAS* (February 1992): 16-21. For more on Fumento and the AIDS issue in the late-1980s and early-1990s, see Allitt, “The Bitter Victory,” 651-654. While much of his work was based on empirical studies, Fumento also resorted to gossip to undermine the notion that there was an impending heterosexual AIDS epidemic, an idea frequently repeated in the late 1980s and early 1990s in the national media. He floated rumors, for example, in this *TAS* article that Johnson might actually have contracted HIV from gay assignations. “The prevalence of the rum is such that residents of Florida’s homosexual enclave on Key West have been spotted wearing T-shirts saying, ‘I love basketball; I had a Magic Johnson,’” wrote Fumento. “Will Johnson be ‘outed’? Eventually, probably yes, but quite possibly...only posthumously.” Johnson later blamed his basketball rival, Isiah Thomas, for spreading the rumor that he was gay. See Mark Heisler, “Magic Johnson’s Kiss-and-Tell Hurts Isiah Thomas,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 24, 2009.

<sup>128</sup> Charles Bremner, “Cast Out for an AIDS Heresy,” *The London Times*, May 11, 1992; Tom Bethell, “Heretic,” *TAS* (May 1992): 18-19; During the 2012 presidential campaign, Fumento announced his break with the “extreme right,” including climate change denier, Rush Limbaugh, and other conservatives who, in his opinion, were no longer interested in rational debate and empirical studies. See Fumento, “My Break With the Extreme Right,” *Salon.com*, May 24, 2012.

viewed these factors, particularly the Limbaugh show, as only a fraction of the resources controlled by the left. A popular article in early 1992 investigated one of these elite cultural institutions, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.<sup>129</sup>

Joshua Muravchik, a neoconservative baby boomer who grew up a socialist in New York City and a resident scholar with the American Enterprise Institute, wrote a lengthy expose in the muckraking style on the MacArthur family and its foundations. He argued that John D. MacArthur, the patriarch who created the family's fortunes in the insurance industry, was parsimonious with his own family and set up his foundations as a tax relief scheme to become active posthumously. MacArthur appointed to his foundation board, upon his death, Midwestern businessmen and "conservative radio commentator Paul Harvey, whose broadcasts MacArthur has sponsored for decades." But after his death, his children and grandchildren gradually pushed conservatives off the board and turned his foundations into a bankroll for liberal and socialist causes. "A foundation created by a strange right-winger has become a treasure trove for a variety of leftist 'geniuses' and other lost causes," wrote Muravchik, as he chronicled in his article the machinations of the board takeover and the subsequent drift of the foundation's grants.<sup>130</sup>

His investigative piece was ammunition for conservatism's culture warriors. His primary argument was that, contrary to the general public's perception, the various MacArthur foundations were largely liberal, not nonideological. The article primarily examined the family's main foundation, which granted the prestigious MacArthur Fellowship "genius" awards to distinguished individuals in the arts and sciences.

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<sup>129</sup> Joshua Muravchik, "MacArthur's Millions," *TAS* (January 1992): 34-41. See also James Piereson, "Investing in Conservative Ideas," *Commentary* (May 2005): 46-53.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.* The article also noted that the MacArthur foundations gave to some laudable nonpartisan and nonideological scientific pursuits.

Muravchik complained that while four editors of the socialist journal *Dissent* had won MacArthur genius awards, “the number of editors of *TAS*, *National Review*, and *Foreign Affairs* who are MacArthur fellows is zero.”<sup>131</sup> Given that *TAS* and *NR* were lauding Rush Limbaugh, hardly an equal of *Dissent*’s Irving Howe, whatever their ideological differences, as the new face of conservatism, this should not have come as a surprise to conservative readers.

But to *TAS* readers and cultural warriors such as the energetic Lynne Cheney, wife of then Defense Secretary, Dick Cheney, *TAS*’s article exposed the MacArthur foundation’s lavish funding of leftist causes and eroded the patina of unbiased philanthropy. She later praised Muravchik for writing in *TAS* “about the distinct bias in MacArthur’s grant-giving” before similar studies were published elsewhere in the early 1990s.<sup>132</sup> The *TAS* article, for example, explained that the MacArthur Foundation in the 1980s heavily subsidized *Harper*’s magazine with more than \$19 million in the 1980s, elevating Rick MacArthur, a grandson of the deceased patriarch, to publisher, and to shifting the editorial attention to the left, according to Muravchik. Other MacArthur foundations supported former sixties radicals, he argued, such as “former SDS leader Todd Gitlin” and the former leader of the Weather Underground and fixture on the FBI’s Ten Most Wanted List, Bernadine Dohrn.<sup>133</sup>

The magazine’s attacks on liberal foundations, feminists, former 1960s student radicals, homosexuals, and other leftist cultural causes continued to come from largely

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<sup>131</sup> Muravchik, “MacArthur’s Millions,” 34-41.

<sup>132</sup> Lynne Cheney, *Telling the Truth*, 108; Muravchik, “MacArthur’s Millions,” 34.

<sup>133</sup> Muravchik, “MacArthur’s Millions,” 34-41.

secular positions.<sup>134</sup> While it did publish some overtly religious pieces by religious activists—a result of the editors’ openness to publishing a wide range of conservative thought—the bulk of its articles on traditionally religious cultural topics argued from a traditionalist or utilitarian position. The magazine continued to celebrate a collegiate ethos that celebrated alcohol and fun, occasionally ribald language, and saw religion as less than an all-consuming preoccupation shaping its every position. This stood in contrast to the more overtly religious elements of conservatism at the time, whether *NR*’s conservative Catholicism or inter-denominational *First Things*.<sup>135</sup>

*TAS* editors and Rush Limbaugh, all right wing baby boomers, shared this secular cultural conservatism in common. Tyrrell and Limbaugh, both divorcés and cigar loving drinkers, were among the fiercest defenders of the positions the religious right cherished. Amy Lumet, daughter of director Sidney Lumet and then wife of conservative humorist, PJ O’Rourke, even joked about the procession of Tyrrell’s young girlfriends at the magazine’s dinner celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary. Newt Gingrich (b. 1943), another prominent baby boomer conservative on the make in the early 1990s and strongly supported by *TAS*, shared these traits. “Call it the Tyrrell Paradox: commending traditional family values for the masses while reserving an explicit exemption for one’s bon vivant self,” observed the *Washington Post*. “[For] while much of the conservative rank-and-file may believe in God and go to church on Sunday, much of its ruling class—

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<sup>134</sup> On the religious right and conservatism, see Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011); Susan Friend Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Michelle Nickerson, “Women, Domesticity, and Postwar Conservatism,” *OAH Magazine of History* (January 2003): 17–21; Leo P. Ribuffo, “God and Contemporary Politics,” *JAH* (March 1993): 1515–33.

<sup>135</sup> For an interesting essay on the history of conservatives and utilitarian religion, see Jerry Z. Muller, *Conservatism: An Anthology of Social and Political Thought From David Hume to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 1-31. Donald Critchlow also finds evidence of secular cultural conservatism during this period. See Donald Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 228.



the magazine editors, politicians and policy-retailers—is as agnostic as its counterpart on the left.”<sup>136</sup> But this “paradox” and *TAS*’s secular conservatism—its utilitarian approach to religion—nevertheless pointed to the wide base of support for conservative cultural positions.

### **Investigative Journalism and 1960s Student Radicals...in the 1990s**

*TAS* had emerged as a reaction to student radicals in 1967, and a generational tension between *TAS*’s editors, all baby boomer conservatives, and former 1960s student radicals, baby boomers on the left, remained the defining feature of the magazine. As the generation left college and began building careers in the 1970s and 1980s, *TAS* maintained a heightened sense of awareness for former 1960s student radicals and carefully constructed the argument that these former radicals were pulling liberalism and the Democratic Party further and further to the left. *TAS*’s constant interest in combating their generational cohort began to take on new urgency in the late 1980s and 1990s as former sixties radicals increasingly assumed leadership positions. *TAS* editors beat the drum hardest and alerted conservative readers to what they feared was an enshrinement of 1960s cultural radicalism in government, media, educational institutions, and even the White House. “We got those coat-and-tie radicals back in time,” announced Tyrrell after the 1992 election, “If I had to go four more years of that miasmic confusion in ideology [of the Bush administration], I think I’d have gone bonkers. We’re now into, not a defeat, but an opportunity for a conservative renaissance.”<sup>137</sup>

*TAS* saw threats from the 1960s extending everywhere. Conservatives born at the end of the baby boomer generation in the late 1950s and early 1960s—the “post-Vietnam

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<sup>136</sup> Allen, “What They Preach,” C1, C5.

<sup>137</sup> Tyrrell, *TAS* 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner, CSPAN, January 1993.

baby boomers”—although too young to have experienced the campus tumult of the 1960s first hand, nevertheless identified with the aftershocks of it.<sup>138</sup> Boomers such as Wattenberg, Ebertstadt, O’Rourke, and Brock reacted to what they considered the Political Correctness (P.C) movement, which they clearly connected with 1960s student radicals, particularly because in some cases their college professors came from that background. “Rather than a liberal bastion of intellectual tolerance and academic freedom, the campus was...politically correct, sometimes stifling so,” wrote Brock about his alma mater, Berkeley. “Many on the faculty, having come of age in the 1960s, adhered to a doctrinaire leftism to which I had never been exposed.”<sup>139</sup>

And if they did not make the connection, *TAS* constantly worked to make any links clear. Tyrrell’s and the magazine’s friendship with the writer Tom Wolfe synched together well on this point in particular. Wolfe’s “Late Boomers,” published in the magazine in November 1990, disparaged the popular perception of the generation and then linked it to the 1980s yuppies. “At bottom,” he wrote, “the yuppie is not terribly different from the hippie or the New Lifter.” Tyrrell shared Wolfe’s disdain for the cohort. “Will anyone be able to rescue the universities from PC’s anti-intellectual radicals of the 1960s?” asked Tyrrell in 1991. He added, “Incidentally, this is a generation of radicals who, despite two decades of braggadocio have made no greater contribution to Western intellect than have the intellectual elites of Bulgaria (and I mean no disrespect to Bulgaria’s eggheads; they did labor under certain impediments). The American radicals were oppressed only by their megalomania and

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<sup>138</sup> Terry Teachout, ed., *Beyond the Boom: New Voices on American Life, Culture, and Politics* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1990).

<sup>139</sup> Brock, *Blinded by the Right*, 2. See also Teachout, ed., *Beyond the Boom: New Voices on American Life, Culture, and Politics* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1990).

swinishness. Their illuminati have created not one book admired anywhere by anyone but them. Aside from a little rock music and a few treatises on the public benefits of dope and zoo sex, the 1960s radicals have created nothing of lasting intellectual interest. They have given us no generation of writers, no Angry Young Men, no Bloomsbury, not even a Beat Generation.”<sup>140</sup>

In nearly all of *TAS*'s writings, baby boomers on the left were characterized as a monolithic group of dangerous, morally bankrupt, and irresponsible radicals that menaced American civilization. Creating this image was facilitated by spotlighting the most extreme elements of the generation ( i.e., the Black Panthers, the Weatherman). Despite complaints that the media and leftists cast the right as a monolith of its worst features, *TAS* continued to do the same to the left. The former 1960s student radicals remained a diverse group of Americans who viewed themselves as trying to save American society, not destroy it. Just as *TAS* editors wrestled with maintaining their ideals as they became professionals in influential positions, so too did baby boomers on the left. When Tyrrell wrote in 1993 that “in the last two decades, as the [1960s] university left has taken power throughout Academe, it has replaced intellectual freedom and intellectual rigor with blah,” he demonstrated a lack of intellectual rigor himself. Ideologically it was grist for the mill of his conservative audiences, but it did little to confront his generational cohort's politics or to equip young conservatives for the college experiences.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Tyrrell, “PC People,” *TAS* (May 1991): 8-9.

<sup>141</sup> See Tyrrell, “The University Left,” *TAS* (February 1993): 14, 16; and for an example of conservative baby boomers insisting on their diversity, see Teachout, ed., *Beyond the Boom: New Voices on American Life, Culture, and Politics* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1990).

Several factors influenced the turn toward investigative journalism. First, it was lucrative, drawing unprecedented levels of publicity. Subscription numbers rose rapidly. It astonished editors, particularly those who had been with the magazine long, such as Tyrrell, Pleszczynski and Burr to see such success. They realized that they had found a niche in the marketplace, particularly among the rank and file conservatives, for tasteless attacks on political opponents. A second factor has deeper roots. Editors were willing to embrace these ruthless and questionable articles in part because of their deep-seated bias against the nation's leading publications. It was a long held view at *TAS*—which they shared with *NR* and other right wing journals—that the respectable mainstream media treated conservatives unfairly and presented the news with a liberal bent, despite claiming neutrality. The Bork hearings also played a role. *TAS* shared a deep, widespread sense of anger at what they perceived was the character assassination of Robert Bork by Ted Kennedy and the press during the 1987 confirmation hearings.

Finally, it was able to enjoy temporary success because it was trading on its reputation as a respectable conservative journal. It was widely viewed as one of the legitimate voices of conservative thought and intellectual culture—a legitimate intellectual review. Switching to character assassinations and hit pieces under the name of “investigative journalism” worked because of its established capital. Editors received support from elder members of the conservative movement such as former Nixon Treasury Secretary Bill Simon. “Bill was a vital presence on the Board of Directors of *The American Spectator* Educational Foundation and an occasional writer in our pages. During his tenure he was steadfast in urging us to maintain our investigative journalism

and the highest literary standards. If we did not, I could be sure I would have him on the telephone roaring in that fortissimo baritone that always steeled me to duty.”<sup>142</sup>

The strategy proved enormously successful. The exposes on the MacArthur Foundations, Magic Johnson and AIDS, and the Anita Hill stories, trumpeted on Limbaugh’s show, led to explosive growth *before* the magazine ran its first major anti-Clinton piece in the summer of 1992. The British magazine *The Economist* profiled *TAS* because of its rapid success. “When a magazine’s circulation rises from 30,000 to 200,000 within 18 months, eyebrows are raised. Is the success a mirage (higher circulation can be bought, at a price), or does it reflect real changes in content or the political climate?” asked the *Economist*. “Two years ago *The American Spectator* was redesigned. It started to advertise on radio talk-shows, notably Rush Limbaugh’s. It also added a new element, investigative journalism, including controversial stories on Anita Hill, AIDS and the Waco disaster.”<sup>143</sup>

Magazines on the left enjoyed similar success in the 1980s in opposition to the Reagan administration. They saw subscriptions increase in direct relationship to their attacks on Reagan and the Republicans. “The liberal/left publications, of course, shamelessly milked the devilish specter of Ronald Reagan,” noted *National Journal*.

Back then, *Mother Jones* offered the subscription inducement of a free cotton doormat stamped with a portrait of the President. A direct-mail letter sent by *The Nation* said that Reagan was fulfilling his promises to an evil crew whose ‘bombs and pesticides and nuclear poisons rain down on the people of this planet.’ The best-selling issue in *Mother Jones*’ history was its September/October 1980 cover piece titled ‘How President Reagan Will Change Your Life.’ (Not, the article concluded, for the better.) Circulation at *The Nation* steadily grew over the dark

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<sup>142</sup> Tyrrell, “In Memoriam: William E. Simon,” *TAS* (July/August 2000): 18.

<sup>143</sup> *The Economist*, “The Press: Healthy Opposition” (December 4, 1993): 32. Similar journals noted *TAS*’s astonishing growth; see Eric Bryant, “*The American Spectator*,” *Library Journal* (September 1, 1993): 230.

years of Republican rule -- from the low 30,000s in the early 1980s to a peak of 97,000 last summer.<sup>144</sup>

The shift to an investigative journalism, then, proved successful from a financial standpoint. Circulation increased nearly fourfold, from a modest 30,000 in January 1992 to 114,000 in December 1992. As a result, it surpassed *The New Republic* (circulation 107,000 in 1992) as the largest opinion journal.<sup>145</sup> The magazine also enjoyed extended press coverage, the support of Limbaugh, and an increased profile and influence in national debates, particularly in Washington. *The Economist* noted that Tyrrell and his magazine sounded bullish about the future. “Clearly, he believes that he and his magazine have entered the serious league.”<sup>146</sup>

*TAS*'s transition to investigative reporting, especially targeting women, gays, and baby boomers with any connections to the 1960s student radicals, positioned it as the vanguard magazine of the right's culture wars. Its synergistic relationship with Rush Limbaugh raised the magazine's profile and provided Limbaugh with ostensibly credible journalism to cite on his powerful radio program.

As successful as 1992 had been for the magazine, though, the following years would be even better, at least in some respects. *TAS*'s newfound reputation for

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<sup>144</sup> *National Journal*, “Washington Update—They're Bashing Libs for Fun and Profit,” September 18, 1993.

<sup>145</sup> Ron Burr, *TAS* Editorial Board Meeting, CSPAN, July 30, 1993. Despite a circulation of 114,000 in December 1993, *TAS* was still not in the black and had to rely on donations from readers and conservative benefactors. According to publisher Ron Burr, the conventional wisdom held that a magazine needed a circulation of 250,000 just to break even each year. Thanks to the Troopergate stories, discussed in chapter five, the circulation would peak at 309,000 in February 1995; Louis Hatchett, ed., *The Best of The American Spectator's The Continuing Crisis: As Chronicled for 40 Years by R. Emmett Tyrrell* (New York: Beaufort Books, 2009), 2.

<sup>146</sup> *The Economist* also noted that “*National Review's* circulation has risen from 170,000 to more than 240,000 over the past 18 months.” see *The Economist*, “The Press: Healthy Opposition,” 32. By comparison, for 1992, the largest circulation was *Modern Maturity*, 22,879,886; other notables were *TV Guide*, 14,498,341; and *Newsweek*, 3,240,131; see “100 Bestselling U.S. Magazines,” *The World Almanac and Book of Facts* (New York: Newspaper Enterprise Association, 1992), 292.

muckraking attracted the attention of some men in Arkansas with stories to tell about Bill and Hillary Clinton. In late December, 1993, fresh off his Anita Hill bestseller, David Brock and *TAS* prepared to publish an explosive, controversial story. And with it, as the next chapter argues, *TAS* played a critical role in humiliating and nearly unseating the first president from the 1960s student generation.

**Chapter 5: “The Bible of the Clinton-Haters”:  
Troopergate, the “Arkansas Project” and *The American Spectator*’s Crackup, 1993-  
2001**

At the Capital Hilton in Washington, DC on December 2, 1992, *The American Spectator* celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. Conservative humorist P.J. O’Rourke, serving as Master of Ceremonies, delighted the crowd when he issued a warning to president-elect Bill Clinton. “Ladies and gentlemen, we have game in our sights. Clinton may be a disaster for the rest of the nation, but he is meat on our table,” he said. “What a joy to be able to turn to the helmsman of our good ship *Spectator* and say, “Captain Bob, bring the guns down to deck level and load with grapeshot. So stand warned, Boy Clinton... We’re going to laugh you out of office.”<sup>1</sup>

Editor-in-chief R. Emmett Tyrrell Jr., and his magazine did indeed wage war on Clinton during the 1990s. The success of its Anita Hill stories had convinced *TAS* editors that there was an audience eager for more right-wing investigative reporting. Beginning with the 1992 presidential campaign, *TAS* editors published scores of muckraking pieces on the Clintons, none more popular and controversial than its Troopergate article. Written by star reporter David Brock, it rocked Washington with allegations, salaciously described, that Clinton had abused his powers as governor of Arkansas, and it set in

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<sup>1</sup> P.J. O’Rourke, “Brickbats and Broomsticks,” *The American Spectator* (February 1993): 20; R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., “Celebrate Building the Conservative Culture,” *C-SPAN*, December 2, 1992. Helpful histories of the magazine during this period include Byron York, “Life and Death of *The American Spectator*,” *The Atlantic* (November 2001): 91-110; David Brock’s *Blinded by the Right: The Conscience of an Ex-Conservative* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2002); David Hoever’s “*The American Spectator*,” in *The Conservative Press in Twentieth-Century America*, eds., Ronald Lora and William Longton (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1999) and “*American Spectator*,” in *American Conservatism: An Encyclopedia*, eds., Bruce Frohnen, Jeremy Beer, and Jeffrey Nelson (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006), 33-35; and Alicia Shepard, “*Spectator*’s Sport,” *AJR* (May 1995): 32-39.



motion events which would lead to the second presidential impeachment in American history.<sup>2</sup>

*TAS*'s circulation numbers surged, and its articles contributed to dramatic conservative Republicans' midterm electoral victories. "To celebrate the magazine that was at the forefront of the 1994 revolution," wrote the *Washington Post* in 1996, "more than 400 leading conservative writers, columnists and policy types gathered at the Four Seasons Hotel."<sup>3</sup> Encouraged by its success, the magazine pushed for Clinton's impeachment. "I submit that *The American Spectator* did a more thorough job with Bill Clinton than Woodward and Bernstein did with Nixon," explained *TAS* supporter and bestselling writer, Tom Wolfe. "[The Troopergate article] led straight to the impeachment of President Clinton."<sup>4</sup>

*TAS*, then, played a central role on the right during the Clinton administration. More than partisan political considerations, though, a longstanding intragenerational battle against 1960s radicalism fueled the magazine's investigative pieces. Clinton was "what we founded [*TAS*] to oppose," explained Tyrrell, "the left wing element of the 1960s generation."<sup>5</sup> *TAS*'s stories repeatedly connected the alleged Clinton scandals with the 1960s student left, a process that capitalized widespread resentment on the right

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<sup>2</sup> Dinitia Smith, "Spectator Sport: R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.," *New York Times*, July 3, 1994, SM14; Alicia Shepard, "Spectator's Sport," *American Journalism Review* (May 1995): 32-39.

<sup>3</sup> Roxanne Roberts, "The Right Crowd: *The American Spectator*, Celebrating Conservatism," *Washington Post*, May 17, 1996, B1.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Stacy McCain, "Wolfe praises Spectator Reporting," *Washington Times*, November 7, 2007, A4.

<sup>5</sup> Tyrrell, interview by Brian Lamb, "Q&A," C-SPAN, May 6, 2007. See also Tyrrell, "Thirty—and Still Counting," *TAS* (December 1997): 16. As this dissertation argues, *TAS* often blurred the distinctions within liberalism, relying instead on a caricatured version of the left as an extension of student radicals from the 1960s.

against what it considered the aftermath of 1960s radicalism.<sup>6</sup> This provided conservatism with a much needed source of cohesion after the Cold War.<sup>7</sup>

However, for all its success, the magazine overreached in the late 1990s. Lavish support from conservative benefactors funded the magazine's "Arkansas Project," the name given to its Clinton investigative efforts. But alleged financial and journalistic improprieties at the magazine led to a fallout with donors, harsh editorial disputes and firings, and a federal grand jury investigation into potential fraud. As a conservative Republican president from the 1960s student generation took office in 2001, *TAS* faced financial ruin and closure.

### **"Rapidly becoming a flagship of anti-Clintonism"<sup>8</sup>**

The magazine began targeting Bill and Hillary Clinton in the summer of 1992 with investigative articles that ranged from sound reporting to ideological attacks.<sup>9</sup> Danny

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<sup>6</sup> Although not from the 1960s student generation, *TAS* reporters such as Brock and Daniel Wattenberg shared the editors' deep antipathy for 1960s radicalism. For more on the opposition to 1960s radicalism among right-wing college students during the 1970s and 1980s, see chapter 3 of this dissertation, which examines the anti-sixties attitudes at *The Dartmouth Review* and other conservative campus magazines in the 1980s, and chapter 4, which addresses David Brock's anti-1960s formative experiences in college. For more on conservatives' opposition to the legacies of the 1960s, see George G. Rising, "Stuck in the Sixties: Conservatives and the Legacies of the 1960s," (PhD Dissertation, University of Arizona, 2003); and Bernard von Bothmer, "Blaming 'The Sixties': The Political Use of an Era, 1980-2004," (PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> This chapter's concentration on conservative thought in the 1990s seeks to contribute to a historiographic lacuna identified in a *Journal of American History* symposium, see especially Kim Phillips-Fein, "Conservatism: A State of the Field," *JAH* (December 2011): 723-743; and Lisa McGirr, "Now That Historians Know So Much about the Right, How Should We Best Approach the Study of Conservatism?," *JAH* (December 2011): 765-770. See also Jennifer Burns, "In Retrospect: George Nash's The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945," *Reviews in American History* (September 2004): 447-462. For important works with address the period in a broader context, see Patrick Allitt, "The Bitter Victory: Catholic Conservative Intellectuals in America, 1988-1993," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* (Summer 1994): 631-658; Patrick Allitt, *The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Donald Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy: How the GOP Right Made Political History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Allan J. Lichtman, *White Protestant Nation: The Rise of the American Conservative Movement* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2008); and Gregory Schneider, *The Conservative Century: From Reaction to Revolution* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> *The Economist*, "The Press: Healthy Opposition" (December 4, 1993): 32.

<sup>9</sup> For an example of a sound, if critical, investigative piece, see Robert Novak, "The Trouble with Clinton," *TAS* (June 1992): 18-22.

Wattenberg's "The Lady Macbeth of Little Rock" was a muckraking expose into what conservatives considered her past as a 1960s student radical, her aversion to traditional female roles, and her enormous political influence over her husband. It marked the first extensive attack specifically on her published by a reputable magazine or newspaper during the campaign, and it made its author into another rising star investigative reporter at the magazine.<sup>10</sup>

Wattenberg (b. 1959), son of the neoconservative writer Ben Wattenberg, traveled an unusual route to *TAS*. His opposition to the legacy of the 1960s radicalism developed in the New York City punk music scene of the late 1970s. "New York punk represented a first skirmish [with] the reverse pieties then associated with the Left," he later explained, adding that it was an "assault on the stale residue of the sixties counterculture [that] worked its way through suburban basements and college dorm rooms in the seventies."<sup>11</sup> Between 1978 and 1982 he was a moderately successful lead singer in the New York City punk-rock bands the Mystery Dates and the Casuals. After graduating from Columbia University in 1983, he gave up the band and followed his father's footsteps into writing.<sup>12</sup> In the mid-1980s he took writing positions in the Reagan administration,

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<sup>10</sup> The article was titled "The Lady Macbeth of Little Rock," but because the issue's cover said "Boy Clinton's Big Mama," the article was often incorrectly cited. Daniel Wattenberg, "The Lady Macbeth of Little Rock," *TAS* (August 1992): 25-32; Mike Capuzzo, "The Brash Conservatives: Investigative Reporters David Brock and Daniel Wattenberg Are Hot. So Are the Subjects They Cover," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 26, 1994, G1.

<sup>11</sup> Daniel Wattenberg, "Was Punk Rock Right-Wing?" *The Weekly Standard* (August 26, 1996): 32; and Rising, "Stuck in the Sixties," 887; and Capuzzo, "The Brash Conservatives," G1.

<sup>12</sup> Betsy Rothstein, "TWT's Daniel Wattenberg: Then and Now," *FishbowlDC: Where Politics and DC Media Mesh*, March 19, 2011, at [http://www.mediabistro.com/fishbowlDC/twts-daniel-wattenberg-then-and-now\\_b34022](http://www.mediabistro.com/fishbowlDC/twts-daniel-wattenberg-then-and-now_b34022); and *Washington Times*, "Wattenberg Joins *Times* as Arts Editor," January 6, 2003, A3.

and, like Brock, the conservative *Washington Times* and *Insight* magazine. His Hillary-as-Lady-Macbeth column was his first major article for *TAS*.<sup>13</sup>

In it, Wattenberg argued that Hillary was a student radical in the 1960s who remained committed to radical causes and would be a politically influential first lady. He detailed her history as a student radical in the 1960s, including an analysis of her 1969 senior Valedictory speech at Wellesley, and her continued support for radical causes in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly as the director of New World Foundation, an organization which supported left wing causes such as the El Salvadorian communists, and the Christic Institute, a public interest law firm that veered into leftwing conspiracy theories in the 1980s.<sup>14</sup> “We don’t know Hillary at all,” he reported one Clinton advisor as saying. Wattenberg’s article, following on the heels of Brock’s Anita Hill articles, gave support to critics’ charges of an anti-women bias, bordering on misogyny, at *TAS*.<sup>15</sup>

It also had an immediate effect on the 1992 presidential campaign. Other publications began to look into Hillary’s background in the 1960s and her current political beliefs and sympathetic media outlets to present a counter image. The *TAS* article “triggered a wave of stories about a more feminine Hillary Clinton who had shed her trademark headbands, zipped her lip and perfected an adoring gaze toward her husband,” reported the front page of the *Washington Post*, adding that “*W* magazine

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<sup>13</sup> Capuzzo, “The Brash Conservatives,” G1. Hillary was like Lady Macbeth, he concluded, because of her “consuming ambition, inflexibility of purpose, domination of a pliable husband, and an unsettling lack of tender human feeling, along with the affluent feminist’s contempt for traditional female roles.” Daniel Wattenberg, “The Lady Macbeth of Little Rock,” *TAS* (August 1992): 25-32. See also Wattenberg, “Gunning for Koresh,” *TAS* (August 1993): 31-34.

<sup>14</sup> Wattenberg, “The Lady Macbeth of Little Rock,” 25-32; on the Christic Institute, see Chip Berlet, “Big Stories, Spooky Stories,” *Columbia Journalism Review* (May/June 1993): 67-71; See also David Brock’s early investigative story, “Christic Mystics and Their Drug-Running Theories,” *TAS* (May 1988): 22-26.

<sup>15</sup> Wattenberg, “The Lady Macbeth of Little Rock,” 25-32. Other sections irresponsibly suggested that Hillary agreed with radical statements published by others while she edited the *Yale Review of Law*. Also, Wattenberg unfairly glossed over her commendable work trying to help impoverished, neglected, and abused children gain independence and security.

detailed how television producer Linda Bloodworth-Thomason provided three stylists (hair, makeup, wardrobe) to give her friend ‘a softer, natural, honey-blonde look.’<sup>16</sup> As a result of the *TAS* article and similar stories, *Newsweek* wrote, “[w]ith Hillary’s negative ratings slowly rising, both Clintons have stated unequivocally that Hillary would not serve in a Clinton cabinet. But Mrs. Clinton’s recent attempts to soften her image, to present herself as mother and homemaker as well as career woman, have only invited Republican mockery.”<sup>17</sup>

Wattenberg’s piece proved a tremendous hit with conservative audiences.<sup>18</sup> Other journals echoed *TAS*’s anti-1960s theme. “Bill Clinton has ceased promising that the missus will play a key role in his White House [and] the reason is clear from Daniel Wattenberg’s profile of Hillary in the August [*TAS*],” noted *National Review*, “Since her Yale days, Hillary has been enthusiastically engaged with the radical Left.”<sup>19</sup> Other conservatives pointed to Garry Wills’ praise of Hillary Clinton’s radical theories on children’s rights as corroboration of the *TAS* article. “Wattenberg, writing in the conservative [*TAS*], criticizes her for the same reason” that Wills praises her, wrote conservative Joseph Sobran in his nationally syndicated column. “When two intelligent writers on opposite sides agree as to which side she’s on, it’s disingenuous for her to

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<sup>16</sup> Howard Kurtz, “Portraits of a First Lady: Media Strive to Define Hillary Clinton,” *Washington Post*, November 21, 1992, A1, A12.

<sup>17</sup> Eleanor Clift, “Hillary Then and Now,” *Newsweek* (July 20, 1992): 38. For an example of the *TAS* story’s reach into small market papers through syndicated journalists, see Joe Spear, “Hillary Clinton Suffers Attack From All Sides of the Spectrum,” *The Orange Leader* (TX), August 13, 1992, 4A; and Clarence Page, “Ten Commandments for Political Wives, Political Lives,” *Chronicle-Telegram* (OH), July 31, 1992, A6.

<sup>18</sup> Capuzzo, “The Brash Conservatives,” G1.

<sup>19</sup> *NR*, “This Week” (August 3, 1992): 8; *NR*, “Hillary: A Life” (September 14, 1992): 17; and John O’Sullivan, “A Moral for George Bush,” *NR* (October 5, 1992): 6.

pretend her views are unclassifiable,” concluded Sobran regarding the Clinton campaign’s efforts to blunt Wattenberg’s and other’s criticisms.<sup>20</sup>

The *TAS* attacks on Hillary were fueled more by the magazine’s opposition to 1960s student radicals than by antifeminism. In myriad ways the magazine linked Hillary and her husband to the 1960s protest generation. The numbers of new subscribers indicated that a sizable portion of the public, now compromised of adult baby boomers, shared *TAS*’s intense dislike for all politics associated with the 1960s student radicals. “Ellen Goodman, a *Boston Globe* columnist, said the [anti-Hillary articles are] actually ‘a conversation about social and generational issue. It fits into the ‘Year of the Woman’ and the year of the baby boom generation taking power,’” observed the *Washington Post* in 1992.<sup>21</sup>

*TAS*’s circulation grew with each new muckraking investigation of the Clintons. Lisa Schiffren (b. 1960), a former speechwriter for Vice President Dan Quayle, meticulously combed through the Clintons’ tax returns and detailed several irregularities. She learned, for example, contrary to Clinton’s claims to have had the lowest annual salary of any governor at \$35,000, he had actually enjoyed—and abused—gubernatorial subsidies and benefits that elevated his real earnings in excess of six figures. She also alleged that the Clintons broke state and IRS laws and engaged in illegal investment schemes.<sup>22</sup> Conservative readers found the article persuasive, and circulation grew.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Joseph Sobran, “Hillary’s Record is Clear Enough,” *Daily Herald* (Chicago), August 10, 1992, 8.

<sup>21</sup> Kurtz, “Portraits of a First Lady,” A1, A12; Donald Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 240; and Anne Gowen, “Hillary’s Evolution: What Now?” *Washington Post*, November 23, 1992, D1.

<sup>22</sup> Lisa Schiffren, “Bill and Hillary at the Trough,” *TAS* (August 1993): 20-23. Schiffren now serves as a Senior Fellow for the conservative women’s organization, Independent Women’s Forum. Her brief biography is available at <http://www.iwf.org/about/lisa-schiffren>.

<sup>23</sup> At an editorial meeting in July 1993, publisher Ron Burr singled it out for praise, noting that it was generating a large volume of calls. “We anticipate another increase [in subscriptions],” he explained,

By the end of 1993, then, *TAS* had established itself as the leading anti-Clinton publication. “More people subscribe to *The American Spectator* than *The New Republic*,” complained *The New Republic*, “[a]nti-Clintonism, writes [Fred] Barnes, has ‘revived the conservative movement beyond its wildest dreams.’”<sup>24</sup> With circulation thriving, *TAS* editors hired more staff and further increased advertising. Brock and Wattenberg accepted offers to join the magazine as full time investigative reporters, according to Pleszczynski, to “[cover] Washington and America’s politicized institutions in a way they don’t like to be covered...providing [readers] with fresh reporting and provocative writing.”<sup>25</sup> “Provocative” would accurately described Brock’s first investigative article on the president.

### **Troopergate**

The cover story of the January 1994 edition of *TAS*, which reached newsstands on December 20, 1993, set in motion a series of events that would lead to the impeachment of President Bill Clinton almost exactly five years later on December 19, 1998. The article, “Living with the Clintons,” reported sensational allegations by former Arkansas state troopers about the personal and professional lives of Bill and Hillary Clinton between 1979 and 1993. Most sensationallly, it detailed the prodigious sexual practices and peccadilloes of Bill Clinton and the state troopers’ complicity in arranging sexual partners for the former Arkansas governor.<sup>26</sup>

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“especially with this piece by Lisa Schiffren on Clinton’s tax return.” Ronald Burr, *TAS* Editorial Board Meeting, C-SPAN, July 30, 1993.

<sup>24</sup> Mickey Kaus, “TRB From Washington: Room to Move,” *The New Republic* (July 19, 1993): 3-4.

<sup>25</sup> Pleszczynski, “About this Month,” *TAS* (January 1993): 5.

<sup>26</sup> David Brock, “Living With the Clintons,” *TAS* (January 1994): 18-30; The story’s title has been frequently mistaken as “His Cheatin’ Heart,” a phrase on the magazine’s 1994 cover.

The story raised many controversies, principally centered on *TAS*'s editorial process and ethics. The magazine began investigating in the fall of 1993 allegations by Arkansas state police assigned to protect Governor Clinton. An Arkansas lawyer and Clinton opponent, Cliff Jackson, contacted the magazine in August and began working with *TAS*'s David Brock. His investigations of Anita Hill, successful from conservatives' perspectives at the time, made him a rising star of investigative journalism at *TAS*. He spent much of the fall in Arkansas recording more than thirty hours of interviews with four state troopers, researching, and writing the story.<sup>27</sup>

A particular sticking point—and source of future conflict—was the issue of money. Jackson, the troopers' representative, insisted on a whistleblowers' fund for the troopers in the event of retaliation. There are conflicting accounts of the magazine's initial response. In Tyrrell's 1996 account, the magazine refused on ethical grounds. By contrast Brock, in 2002 after he left the conservative movement, wrote that Tyrrell was willing to pay off the troopers. Whatever the initial reactions, the magazine paid no money prior to the story's publication, and even secured a written statement from Jackson affirming as much.<sup>28</sup>

The article's sexual content about the president's personal life gave the magazine pause. The national press had long withheld from the public details about the sexual habits of presidents while in office, most famously in the case of the prolific philanderer John Kennedy. But the Watergate crisis had created a more adversarial relationship between presidents and the press. Still, Brock's article was graphic. It included, for

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<sup>27</sup> Tyrrell, *Boy Clinton: The Political Biography* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 1996), 268-269; Brock, "Living With the Clintons," 18-30.

<sup>28</sup> Brock, *Blinded by the Right: The Conscience of an Ex-Conservative* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2002), 167; Tyrrell, *Boy Clinton*, 270-71; The troopers later received payments from Peter Smith, a wealthy Chicago conservative businessman but with no direct connections to *TAS*.



example, troopers' claims of standing guard while women performed oral sex on Clinton— "I could see Clinton get into the front seat and then the lady's head go into his lap." In another passage a trooper recalled Hillary responding to Clinton's flirtations with an attractive woman by saying, "Come on Bill, put your dick up. You can't f-- her here."<sup>29</sup>

*TAS* editors were aware of precedents to support publication. *The Washington Monthly*, a respected, non-partisan journal in the capital, had published a controversial piece in 1979 on Democratic presidential candidate Ted Kennedy's sex life. It argued that a long pattern of unusual sexual activity in a presidential candidate, specifically serial philandering, "should be publicly discussed as a legitimate issue in the campaign."<sup>30</sup>

Five years later, *Mother Jones*, a respected liberal monthly journal, published graphic sexual details about a rising conservative politician from Georgia named Newt Gingrich. Within the context of reporting on the alleged hypocrisy of an outspoken social conservative, the journal reported that Gingrich had developed "a reputation as a ladies' man" in Georgia for his serial philandering. Subsequent sex-related stories, such as those related to Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill, had further blurred the lines between public and private behavior as valid news stories.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Brock, "Living With the Clintons," 27-28.

<sup>30</sup> Suzannah Lessard, "Kennedy's Woman Problem, Women's Kennedy Problem," *The Washington Monthly*, (December 1979): 10-14. *TNR* originally commissioned the Lessard article, but found it too objectionable; it then agreed to let *The Washington Monthly* publish it. Lessard, a writer for *TNR* and a former editor at *The Washington Monthly*, argued from a feminist perspective that Kennedy's philandering "suggests a severe case of arrested development, a kind of narcissistic intemperance, a huge, babyish ego that must constantly be fed," such that it made her worry that "if he is immature in this area, mightn't he be in others?" She also explored the ethical dimensions of reporting on politicians' private lives; On *TAS* editors' considerations, see Tyrrell, "Thirty—and Still Counting," 17.

<sup>31</sup> David Osborne, "Newt Gingrich: Shining Knight of the Post-Reagan Right," *Mother Jones* (November 1984): 14-20, 53; See also Joe Klein, "The Citizens of Bimboland," *Newsweek* (January 3, 1994): 59.

Eight years later, in late 1993, as *TAS* considered the effects of publishing its incendiary story, it had four sources, but they were questionable. The troopers were pursuing a tell-all book deal and had fallen out with the Clintons after not receiving job promotions. Still, they offered four specific, first person accounts from Clinton's tenure as governor. Their stories were convincing to *TAS*, which for partisan reasons, was inclined to believe them. Reporters at *The Los Angeles Times* were also convinced by the troopers, and the newspaper had been researching and preparing its own story on the troopers' tales. Their story argued that "the breadth and detail of the troopers' statements—including charges that Clinton misled voters in 1992 about these matters—[gave] their allegations impact."<sup>32</sup>

The staff at *TAS* enthusiastically agreed. The allegations in the article, which quickly became known as Troopergate, included abuse of power, a cover-up, suppression of evidence, and a disturbing pattern of using government resources in inappropriate ways. The article also accused the mainstream press of ignoring the story for ideological and generational reasons. "It was clear that many reporters viewed Clinton as 'one of us,' a product of the 1960s not only politically, but on sexual matters as well."<sup>33</sup>

*TAS* published its story on December 20, 1993, a day before the *Los Angeles Times* published its report, and it created a firestorm of controversy. Both Brock's *TAS* article and the *LA Times* story included allegations that Clinton had abused his power as governor, misled the public during the 1992 presidential campaign about his

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<sup>32</sup> Tyrrell, *Boy Clinton*, 268-271; Brock, "Living With the Clintons," 18-30; Brock, *Blinded by the Right*, 166-170; the *LA Times* story stressed the witness tampering allegations, see William Rempel and Douglas Frantz, "Troopers Say Clinton Sought Silence on Personal Affairs," *LA Times*, December 21, 1993, A1.

<sup>33</sup> Tyrrell, *Boy Clinton*, 268-271; Brock, *Blinded by the Right*, 166-170; David Brock, "Living With the Clintons," 19.

philandering, and recently called the troopers to discourage them from talking to the press. But unlike the *LA Times*, the *TAS* piece reported the Troopers' stories in salacious detail, including specific sex acts and the comments allegedly made by the president regarding the bible and fellatio. The *TAS* story received far more press attention because it was published first, was longer, and included more sensational details than the *LA Times*' story.<sup>34</sup>

The major press outlets covered *TAS*'s Troopergate piece extensively. "Had it not been for the *Spectator*, the Arkansas troopers' allegations might never have exploded across the media landscape," observed the *Washington Post*'s media critic, Howard Kurtz, "The [*LA Times*] had been investigating the same allegations for four months, but published its piece only after the 11,000-word Brock article was released. Brock's account also prompted CNN, ABC, NBC, *The Washington Post* and other news organizations to jump on the story."<sup>35</sup> But many news organizations took a censorious view of the conservative magazine's decision to publish it. The White House immediately cast doubts on the credibility of the troopers, pointing out that two of them had been involved in a drunk-driving insurance scam in recent years. Reporters in Arkansas discovered other problems with specific allegations, and one trooper denied an earlier accusation about Clinton job offers. Tyrrell, Brock, and the magazine conceded the possibility of some minor errors, but maintained the core allegations were correct—Clinton lied during the 1992 campaign about his ongoing philandering, misused

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<sup>34</sup> Both articles included lengthy discussions about the troopers' mixed motives, financial motivations, conflicts of interest, etc. *TAS* even included a statement about the unsuccessful attempts by the troopers to get a whistleblower's fund from the magazine.

<sup>35</sup> Howard Kurtz, "The *Spectator*'s Hard Right Jab," *Washington Post*, December 24, 1993, C2.

government resources to support his habits, and used his position as governor (and even as president) to bribe or threaten witnesses to be silent.<sup>36</sup>

The magazine had many trenchant critics. *Newsweek*'s Joe Klein, calling the story "trash" and "salivatory journalism," argued that it was symptomatic of the ease with which journalists could "destroy a public figure with unsubstantiated charges." If the story was correct, he asked, where were all the Clinton women? *TAS* was leading a "witch hunt," he thought, to drive out of politics not only the Clintons but also many other talented politicians with "a vaguely interesting life away from the public arena."<sup>37</sup> The *New York Times*' Frank Rich directed his attacks on Brock the reporter, accusing him of misogyny, which many politicos, right and left, interpreted as a veiled attempt to out Brock, a semi-closeted homosexual.<sup>38</sup> In response to the Rich piece, the *Washington Post* called and directly asked Brock about his sexuality; only then did the *TAS* writer decide, after consulting with his conservative advisors, including, via an intermediary, Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, to formally come out of the closet.<sup>39</sup>

The Troopergate story had inadvertently made homosexuality a major issue within conservative and liberal intellectual journals. *TNR* questioned whether Brock's newly public homosexuality would be acceptable to *TAS* readers. "It's now true that the bastion of aggressive conservatism has an openly gay man as its star reporter," *TNR*

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<sup>36</sup> *New York Times*, "Splashes and Growth at *The American Spectator*," December 27, 1993: D6.

<sup>37</sup> Joe Klein, "The Citizens of Bimboland," *Newsweek* (January 3, 1994): 59; *TNR*'s Michael Kinsley excoriated Brock's reporting for inaccuracies and tabloid sleaziness. See Michael Kinsley, "TNR From Washington," *TNR* (January 10, 1994): 4; and *TNR*, "News From the Gutter," *TNR* (January 31, 1994): 8. Reporter Gene Lyons also highlighted inaccuracies, see Gene Lyons, "The Great Whitewater Snipe Hunt," *The Washington Monthly* (April 1994): 30-33.

<sup>38</sup> The "out-of-control *American Spectator* piece," with its sexual sensationalism, Rich wrote, had distracted from legitimate concerns raised by the *LA Times* "to investigate the troopers' graver allegations of jobs-for-silence." See Frank Rich, "David Brock's Women," *NYT*, January 6, 1994, A21; Rich later denied knowledge of Brock's sexuality at the time of writing, see Brock, *Blinded by the Right*, 178-187.

<sup>39</sup> See Howard Kurtz, "Journalist in the Crossfire: David Brock Decries Personal Attacks by Columnists," *Washington Post*, C1, C6; Brock, *Blinded by the Right*, 178-187; and John O'Sullivan, "Sexual Exceptionalism," *NR* (February 7, 1994): 10.

wrote in a column mocking *TAS*'s claims of indifference about its staff's sexual practices.<sup>40</sup> By contrast, *NR* editor-in-chief John O'Sullivan accused Rich of creating "a new category—the politically incorrect homosexual," and argued that the episode illustrated that the press applied different rules about sexuality on a partisan basis.<sup>41</sup> Going further, the *NR* editors decided to explore the relationship of conservatism and homosexuality by inviting Richard Neuhaus and the gay conservative-libertarian Bruce Bawer to discuss the subject.<sup>42</sup> The response to the *TAS* story, then, seemed to confirm for conservatives their view that the mainstream press were ideological liberals willfully giving conservatives the unfair short shrift.

The magazine thrived amidst the controversy.<sup>43</sup> Its circulation quickly reached 200,000 and would soon top 300,000 subscribers, thanks in part to free endorsements by popular conservative radio host Rush Limbaugh.<sup>44</sup> "When he mentions one of our articles, that's like gold," explained *TAS* publisher Ronald Burr, "we would certainly be growing without him, but he is like kerosene on the fire."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *TNR*, "Notebook: The Gay Right," (February 28, 1994): 10; On the subject of *TAS*'s tolerance of Brock's homosexuality, Tyrrell told a *New York Times* reporter in 1994 that Brock "hasn't made a goddamned issue" of it or "bored me to death with discussions of his sex life." In the same article, Brock said he found the conservative magazine a tolerant place to work, though he expressed concerns in his 2002 memoir about the anti-gay atmosphere. See Dinitia Smith, "R. Emmett Tyrrell: *Spectator* Sport," *New York Times*, July 3, 1994, SM14.

<sup>41</sup> O'Sullivan, "Sexual Exceptionalism," 10.

<sup>42</sup> Bruce Bawer and Richard John Neuhaus, "Back to the Table," *NR* (February 7, 1994): 9.

<sup>43</sup> *TAS*'s success brought increased attention for its editor-in-chief, Tyrrell. See Thomas Grant, "The American Spectator's R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.: Chicken McMencken," *Journal of American Culture* (Summer 1996): 103-110; For an earlier essay with a similar interpretation, see J. David Hoeveler, "R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.: H. L. Mencken a la Mode," from *Watch on the Right*, (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 217-232.

<sup>44</sup> "Rush Limbaugh's always been interested in [*TAS*]," explained Tyrrell, "We're kind of like-minded figures. We both find the same things interesting and the same things funny." See Tyrrell, interview by Brian Lamb, "Q&A," C-SPAN, May 6, 2007.

<sup>45</sup> *NYT*, "Splashes and Growth," D6; Tyrrell, "Thirty—and Still Counting," 17; Tyrrell, *Boy Clinton*, 275; Jennet Conant, "The Hazing of the President," *Esquire* (June 1994): 91. The history of conservative broadcast media is a burgeoning field of study. See Heather Hendershot, *What's Fair on the Air? Cold War Right-Wing Broadcasting and the Public Interest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011) and especially Nicole Hemmer, "Messengers of the Right: Media and the Modern Conservative Movement"

Following a precedent set with *TAS*'s Anita Hill articles, Limbaugh gave extensive air time to *TAS*'s Troopergate and subsequent stories, including reading passages live on air, and in his monthly newsletter to more than 350,000 paid subscribers. "Then, of course, there is Troopergate, which I've fittingly renamed Fornigate," explained the *Limbaugh Letter*, "Gary Hart and other public figures who were castigated for monkey business must be shaking their heads in disbelief. The mainstream press has turned up its nose at the story, despite the abuse-of-power allegations."<sup>46</sup>

Its editors and writers gave scores of radio and television interviews. At one point Mike Wallace of "60 Minutes" even asked Tyrrell for early tips on new pieces, with the promise to give credit to *TAS*. *Esquire* and the *New York Times Magazine* published feature pieces on Tyrrell, Brock and *TAS*. Both articles captured the magazine's long standing iconoclasm and newfound swagger. "I can't be fired," Tyrrell told *Esquire*, "I can say whatever I want. It's a hell of a great life."<sup>47</sup>

How did other conservatives react? The *New York Times* reported that some conservatives were also critical of *TAS*'s article, quoting Patrick Buchanan's dislike for the publication of graphic sexual details. Joe Sobran, a paleoconservative and strong critic of Tyrrell's, defended the piece, as did other conservative journals. *NR*, which

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(Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2010). On the intersection of conservative media and intellectuals, see James McPherson, *The Conservative Resurgence and the Press: The Media's Role in the Rise of the Right* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2008).

<sup>46</sup> Limbaugh, "Artful Dodger," *The Limbaugh Letter* (March 1994): 11; see also Limbaugh, "Governor Harassment?" *The Limbaugh Letter* (May 1994): 10. Limbaugh's radio audience was an estimated 17,947,700 on 622 radio stations by 1993, and by October 1993, a reported 353,452 subscribed to his newsletter. See Rush Limbaugh, "The EIB Explosion 1993," *The Limbaugh Letter* (October 1993): 8. For more on Limbaugh and *TAS*, see Limbaugh, "Me and Mrs. Jones," *The Limbaugh Letter* (July 1994): 10-11; Limbaugh thought that the Troopergate articles raised serious questions. "Did Clinton attempt to pressure Arkansas State Troopers into not talking to the media about allegations of marital infidelity?," he asked. See Limbaugh, "Congress News: Reaching Their Hands Into Your Back Pockets," *The Limbaugh Letter* (August 1994): 9.

<sup>47</sup> Tyrrell, "Thirty—and Still Counting," 17; Tyrrell, *Boy Clinton*, 275; Conant, "The Hazing of the President," 91; and *NYT*, "Splashes and Growth," D6; "His Cheatin' Heart: David Brock in Little Rock," Cover of *TAS*, January, 1994;

refused to publish gratuitous stories itself, nevertheless promoted the piece by concentrating on what it considered the national press's extreme attacks on Brock and the article. Although it was the policy of Buckley's magazine not to "break sexual scandals about partisan opponents," the *TAS* article appeared to be well corroborated by the four troopers and the president's own admissions regarding past marital indiscretions. The *TAS* piece raised legitimate questions about the president's honesty, *NR* editors wrote, and about larger issues regarding the connections between public and private behavior.<sup>48</sup>

Like other conservative journals, *NR* spent far more time attacking the article's critics in the national press than defending the particulars of the piece. "No one said outright that Mr. Brock's story was false," observed *NR*, "instead that it was sleazy, uncorroborated, irrelevant to government." It noted that even one of Brock's strongest critics, Kinsley at *The New Republic*, had conceded the allegations would be serious if true, particularly if Clinton's philandering had continued through the 1992 campaign and involved providing jobs for silence. It pointed to inconsistencies in the press's standards, noting the recent treatments of Kitty Kelley's gossipy biography of Nancy Reagan. At the time of its publication in 1991, the *New York Times* had repeated Kelley's lightly sourced allegations about Reagan, and after recognizing numerous errors and sensationalization, *Newsweek*'s Jonathan Alter and Andrew Murr wrote that "despite her wretched excesses, Kelley has the core of the story right." The stories by *TAS* about Clinton were being treated differently, *NR* argued, because many mainstream reporters shared with Clinton

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<sup>48</sup> Joseph Sobran, "Courtiers All," *Rothbard and Rockwell Report* (February 1994): 13-15; *NR*, "Of Banking and Bimbos," (January 24, 1994): 14-16.

similar 1960s cultural values. “When the victim is the New Age good ol’ boy they know from Renaissance Weekends” the press displayed an inconsistency.<sup>49</sup>

Some press reports entertained *TAS* editors and other conservatives, such as when the respected journalist Richard Reeves reported on intense marital spats in the White House. Clinton “would come downstairs yelling and sulking, obviously distracted by the reaction upstairs to a nasty article in *The American Spectator*,” recorded Reeves, and “at the White House Christmas party (in 1993), the Clintons left after only five minutes. They were barely looking at each other.”<sup>50</sup> Clinton aides would later describe disconcerting responses inside the White House. David Gergen, a trusted aid to the president, noticed a similar effect of the story on the first family. *TAS*’s “stories were so salacious that I could not believe them, and I joined in the effort to knock them down.” But the president’s behavior raised Gergen’s concerns, particularly in the light of the upcoming fight over health care reform in 1994.

In the next few days, it became obvious that the stories had privately humiliated Mrs. Clinton and her husband was deep in her doghouse. Like a bouncy golden retriever who has pooped on the living room rug, he curled up and looked baleful for days. Perhaps I am wrong, but over the next several weeks, I sensed that he was in no mood—and no position—to challenge her on anything. As the New Year opened, we were heading into the most important months of the health care fight with a president who was tiptoeing around the person in charge. I cannot recall him publicly confronting her on any health care issue after that.<sup>51</sup>

George Stephanopoulos, White House Communication Director, grew concerned about the story after speaking with the president. “When I asked Clinton about [it] a few

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<sup>49</sup> *NYT*, “Splashes and Growth,” D6. In various ways Klein, Rich, and Kinsley had made this point, see Kinsely, “*TNR* From Washington,” 4; Jonathan Alter and Andrew Murr, “Wretched Excess,” *Newsweek* (April 22, 1991): 52-28; and *NR*, “Of Banking and Bimbos,” 14-16. Jeffrey Taylor, writing elsewhere in *NR*, thought there were other reasons for the press’s reluctance to probe the sexual allegations in *TAS* and *LA Times* articles. The Clintons had energetically worked to cast doubt on the troopers’ veracity and the press retained a “general squeamishness about the topic.” Jeffrey Taylor, “The Bimbo Eruption, Etc.” *NR* (January 24, 1994): 21-22.

<sup>50</sup> Richard Reeves, “Alone at the Top: The Clinton Presidency,” *Baltimore Sun*, March 29, 1995, 19A.

<sup>51</sup> David Gergen, *Eyewitness to Power* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 308-309.



days before the stories broke,” he wrote in his 1999 memoir, “his abrupt shift to fast-talking, lawyerly, hyperexplanation mode convinced me something was up.”

Stephanopoulos was particularly concerned when Clinton admitted to discussing a potential job with one of the troopers, though Clinton denied offering a job as part of a quid pro quo. Despite his qualms, Stephanopoulos arranged meetings with *Washington Post* editors with the goal of suppressing the story on the grounds that it was largely a sex story.<sup>52</sup>

The brouhaha over *TAS*'s Troopergate story calmed by mid-January, until a little noticed name mentioned in the story sparked the biggest threat to Clinton's presidency. The magazine's editors had removed the names of Clinton's alleged paramours from the early drafts of Brock's story, with one exception. Tyrrell and Brock, in separate and otherwise often conflicting accounts, later attributed the inclusion of a “Paula” to an editorial oversight; they had fully intended to remove the name, but it accidentally made it to the published draft. According to one paragraph in the lengthy article, a state trooper had approached a woman named “Paula” in a Little Rock Hotel at the behest of the governor to arrange a meeting in a room upstairs. The trooper waited outside the room until the woman reemerged, expressing her willingness to be the governor's girlfriend.<sup>53</sup>

The “Paula” in question was in fact Paula Jones, a twenty-seven year old former state employee of Arkansas, who lived in California in 1993. While visiting family back in Arkansas in January 1994, a local friend showed Jones the *TAS* article. She immediately recognized that she was the subject of the trooper's story, but knew the

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<sup>52</sup> George Stephanopoulos, *All Too Human: A Political Education* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 1999), 228-229, 266-272.

<sup>53</sup> Tyrrell, “From Troopergate to Monicagate,” *TAS* (November 1998): 18-20, 22; Brock, “Living with the Clintons,” 26; Brock, *Blinded by the Right*, 166.

story's account to be incorrect—she had rebuffed the governor's advances and had left the room without talking to the trooper. Reading the story in early 1994, she worried that others in her community—including her new husband—might make the connection and mistakenly believe the *TAS* account.<sup>54</sup>

Ostensibly in a desire to clear her name, Jones initiated a lengthy legal process that culminated in a sexual harassment and a defamation lawsuit against Clinton. She and her lawyers considered filing a defamation suit against *TAS*, as well, but ultimately did not because the article had not included her surname. According to Jones, Clinton had aggressively harassed her in the hotel room, including exposing himself, requesting oral sex, and then made a thinly veiled threat about her job if she talked. She had fled the room and over the next few days told several friends and family members what had happened. Because a state police officer had participated in the episode, she was reluctant to contact the police. And so she decided not to take any action, until she read the *TAS* story nearly three years later.<sup>55</sup>

The Troopergate article, therefore, unintentionally spurred a sexual harassment lawsuit against the president. Clinton's attorney skillfully employed a delaying strategy in the hopes of pushing back discoveries, testimonies, and a trial until after the 1996 election, including challenging the constitutionality of a private citizen suing a sitting

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<sup>54</sup> The best journalistic account of the detailed legal wrangling over the early phases of the Jones's lawsuit is Stuart Taylor, "Her Case Against Clinton," *The American Lawyer* (November 1, 1996): 56-69; see also Paula Corbin Jones v. William Jefferson Clinton and Danny Ferguson, LR-C-94-290C, United States District Court, Eastern District of Arkansas, Western Division, May 6, 1994, 9-14, in Paula Jones Pleadings File, NLWJC-Kagan, Counsel, Box 15, Folder 5, William Clinton Presidential Library, Little Rock, Arkansas.

<sup>55</sup> A lawsuit was nearly averted by negotiations over a public statement to be read by the president, but a statement agreeable to both parties was not found before the three-year sexual harassment filing deadline. To the surprise of Jones' lawyers, Clinton himself participated in the telephone negotiations. See Taylor, "Her Case Against Clinton," 56-69. Also helpful is James Stewart, *Blood Sport: The President and His Adversaries* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 347-376.

president. In early 1997 the Supreme Court ruled that Clinton could be sued while in office for legitimate cases such as Jones's sexual harassment lawsuit. Jones's lawyers sought to establish a pattern of Clinton's sexual involvement with government employees, and questioned Clinton under oath about other women with whom he had worked. When asked about a White House intern named Monica Lewinsky, Clinton perjured himself by denying any sexual involvement, thus creating the primary legal basis for his impeachment in 1998.<sup>56</sup>

### **Investigating a "1960s First Family"**

After its controversial Troopergate story, *TAS* intensified its investigations of the Clinton family and continued to connect alleged scandals with what it called the "1960s First Family."<sup>57</sup> The magazine often broke new scandal-related stories before the national press, but occasionally their stories took on the semblance of a rabid, slightly conspiratorial, partisan snipe hunt.<sup>58</sup> It worked hard to situate its Clinton stories within a specific anti-1960s context, and other conservative journals followed its lead. Spearheaded by *TAS*, the conservative intellectual movement increasingly blamed the Clintons and American culture and politics on the influence of former 1960s student leftists. This line of logic proved expansive and useful, allowing conservative writers to

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<sup>56</sup> Taylor, "Her Case Against Clinton," 56-69. See also Charles Peters, "Tilting at Windmills," *The Washington Monthly* (July/August 1997): 6.

<sup>57</sup> Daniel Wattenberg's follow-up to Brock's sensational story further detailed Clinton's alleged use of state troopers to procure women and abuse of power in silencing witnesses. The long story was based on a former state trooper and Clinton confidant, L.D. Brown, who agreed to speak after reading Brock's first Troopergate story. Wattenberg's article is often referred to as "Troopergate II," see Daniel Wattenberg, "Love and Hate in Arkansas," *TAS* (April/May 1994): 32-42. For press reaction to the story, see Elizabeth Pochoda, "Spectator Sport," *The Nation* (June 6, 1994): 775; for typical criticisms, see Joel Bleifuss, "Much Ado," *In These Times* (April 4, 1994): 13.

<sup>58</sup> *Human Events*' Deroy Murdock reported that *TAS*'s offices had been burglarized four times after the Troopergate story. Murdock quoted Wladly Pleszczynski, managing editor at *TAS*, speculating on the burglars' motives: "We didn't necessarily connect it with [Brock's] research, but it did make you wonder." Murdock argued the incidents were sufficiently suspicious to warrant federal investigation into possible connections with the White House. Deroy Murdock, "Has Whitewater Led to Violence?" *Human Events* (April 8, 1994): 6-7.

blame almost any perceived problem on a generic rhetorical enemy—seemingly embodied by the Clintons—and thus find tentative common ground among disparate conservative intellectuals.<sup>59</sup>

Among conservative journals, *TAS* took the clear lead in pursuing Whitewater, a failed real estate investment scheme that critics alleged implicated the Clintons in various illegalities, and other possible scandal stories, sensing a possible Watergate-like scandal that might lead to an impeachment.<sup>60</sup> James Ring Adams (b. 1944) became *TAS*'s financial specialist in investigative stories involving financial scandals. Adams received his BA from Yale in 1966 and PhD from Cornell in 1973, before beginning a long journalistic career with stops as an editorial page writer for *Wall Street Journal* and as a senior editor at *Forbes*.<sup>61</sup> He meticulously investigated the Clintons' finances, first with a lengthy analysis of the McDougals' Madison Guaranty, arguing that a thorough investigation would establish ties between the bank and the Clintons' campaign funds. Adams' investigative stories were long, in-depth exposes, which the magazine viewed as conservative muckrakers, a comparison the novelist Tom Wolfe first suggested of the magazine. This in-depth investigative reporting differentiated *TAS* from what newspapers such as *The Wall Street Journal* and *Washington Times* could provide.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> For a perspective of Arkansas journalists on *TAS*'s investigative pieces, see Lyons, "The Great Whitewater Snipe Hunt," 30-33; see also Tyrrell, *Boy Clinton*, 276.

<sup>60</sup> Thanks in part to *TAS*'s reporting, political pressure grew between 1992 and 1994 for the Clintons to appoint an independent federal investigation of the Whitewater financial arrangements. In January 1994, at the political nadir of his administration, Clinton agreed to create an independent counsel. For a thorough history of the Whitewater financial dealings and the Starr investigation, see Ken Gormley, *The Death of American Virtue* (New York: Broadway Paperbacks, 2010); Peters, "Tilting at Windmills," 6; and Jeff Gerth, "Clintons Joined S. & L. Operator in an Ozark Real-Estate Venture," *NYT*, March 8, 1992, 1, 24.

<sup>61</sup> James Ring Adams, interview by Lew Ketcham, "Savings & Loan Scandal," C-SPAN, November 13, 1989; James Ring Adams, "Losing the Drug War: Drugs, Banks, and Florida Politics," *TAS* (September 1988): 20.

<sup>62</sup> James Ring Adams, "Beyond Whitewater," *TAS* (February 1994): 46-57, 103; Adams, "The Obstructionists," *TAS* (April/May 1994): 22-31; and Capuzzo, "The Brash Conservatives," G1. Other major conservative journals followed *TAS*'s leadership, but did so without the personal edge. Writing for *NR*,

A recurring critique at *TAS* and other conservative journals was of what they perceived to be the mainstream press's reluctance to cover the Clinton scandals, whether Paula Jones or any of the dozens of Whitewater threads. In fact, from the perspective of the Clintons, the press, from the *New York Times* to the *Atlantic*, seemed only too happy to investigate Whitewater and other possible scandals. Conservatives' suspicions of a liberal bias protecting the president, though habitually overblown, occasionally found support from unexpected sources, as *TNR*'s Mickey Kaus' reaction to the Paula Jones story illustrated. "Clinton is...the best president we've had in a long time...[and that] is the unspoken reason the sex charges haven't received as much play as you might expect," explained Kaus, "few journalists want to see the president crippled now that he is making some progress cracking large intractable domestic problems." However much Kaus's confession might have represented a minority report, it contributed to conservatives' distrust of the mainstream media.<sup>63</sup>

The growing attention garnered by *TAS* prompted journalists to explore the funding and background of the magazine and other anti-Clinton campaigns. Grassroots organizations such as Clinton Watch and Citizens United worked actively to attack the president, but these were grassroots' groups, not intellectual journals. By 1995, journalists increasingly wondered who was funding the anti-Clinton movement. David

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Richard Brookhiser, a senior editor at Buckley's magazine but a former contributor to *TAS*, attempted to interpret the Whitewater complexities for his readers. *Commentary* magazine ran similar pieces, in essence trying to summarize and sort out for readers recent developments in the unfolding scandal. While *TAS* pushed to break new investigative stories, these journals opted to take a back seat, reporting on *TAS*'s work and the developing investigations. They agreed with *TAS* thoroughly, though, in questioning the reluctance of the mainstream press to cover the story more skeptically. See Richard Brookhiser, "Whitewater Runs Deep," *NR* (March 21, 1994): 42-49; Lynn Chu, "What Did the Clintons Know & When Did They Know It?" *Commentary* (March 1994): 21-24.

<sup>63</sup> Kaus argued that Clinton's sexual history prior to 1992 was no longer relevant as a legitimate news story, see Mickey Kaus, "Old News," *TNR* (February 10, 1994): 46; for more on the role of bias, see Taylor, "Her Case Against Clinton," 56-69.

Callahan, writing for the liberal journal, *The Nation*, identified a series of wealthy conservative philanthropic organizations such as the Bradley Foundation, the John M. Olin Foundation, and the Sarah Scaife Foundation that were giving money to *TAS* and other right-wing groups. Callahan explained that these foundations were significantly smaller in wealth than their liberal counterparts, but that “by strategically leveraging their resources, conservative foundations have engineered the rise of a right-wing intelligentsia that has come to wield enormous influence in national policy debates.”<sup>64</sup>

By this point, in mid-1994, *TAS* had firmly established itself as the primary anti-Clinton conservative journal. “The bible of the Clinton-haters, of course, is *The American Spectator*,” wrote Jeffrey Rosen with *TNR*, “Once a clever and appealingly subversive journal, it has become unhinged in the Clinton era by dark populist resentments.” Rosen found the magazine’s intense Clinton opposition hard to comprehend. Indeed it was more than partisanship and scandals or even solely ideological conflict. In a real sense, of course, *TAS* had been fighting the Clintons since its founding. Its battles against the SDS student left at IU between 1967 and 1969 prefigured its Clinton-battles of the 1990s.<sup>65</sup>

All the while, the magazine continued to pursue Whitewater and other potential scandals, elaborating on the conviction that the Clintons systematically abused their government positions and actively worked to cover-up crimes.<sup>66</sup> Occasionally the anti-Clinton stories veered into a conspiracy theory territory. For example, a story by Tyrrell

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<sup>64</sup> See Trudy Lieberman, “Churning Whitewater,” *Columbia Journalism Review* (June 1994): 26-30; Pochoda, “*Spectator* Sport,” 775; and David Callahan, “Liberal Policy’s Weak Foundation,” *The Nation* (November 13, 1995): 568-572.

<sup>65</sup> Jeffrey Rosen, “Chilliest Testosterone,” *TNR* (August 8, 1994): 42; see also Francis X. Bacon, “The Tragedy of Macbeth,” *TAS* (August 1994): 18-25. For another influential expose, see Brock, “The Travelgate Cover-Up,” *TAS* (June 1994): 30-37, 71, 78-81, 94.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*; On Clinton’s Travel Office missteps, see James Patterson, *Restless Giant* (New York: Oxford, 2005), 328. Brock, “The Travelgate Cover-Up,” 30-37, 71, 78-81, 94. Gormley suggests Foster’s suicide may have been linked to increased stress over the Travelgate scandal, see Gormley, *Death of Virtue*, 70-75.

about Arkansas's Mena Airport (based on accounts by L.D. Brown, a disgruntled former Arkansas state trooper) suggested that Clinton was involved in transferring weapons to the Contras of Nicaragua in the mid-1980s, in conjunction with the CIA, and in passively permitting an international drug trade. "The Mena operation," concluded Tyrrell, "reveals the essential recklessness of our present president."<sup>67</sup>

The Mena story proved a disaster and turning point for the magazine. Tyrrell befriended Brown during the former troopers' *TAS* funded interview trips to Washington. Brown stayed as an overnight guest at Tyrrell's and recounted anecdotes while the two drank, including an implausible tale about Clinton's complicity in drug running operations out of the western Arkansas airstrip. When Tyrrell wrote up the stories as an investigative article, the *TAS* staff balked at publishing it. Eventually a modified version found its way into print, and even helped spur a two-year, fruitless investigation by the House Banking Committee, but it tarnished the magazine's respectability in some conservatives' eyes. One editor, speaking anonymously a few years later, said "it was immensely frustrating to many of us who had toiled so long and hard to build up the *Spectator*, but Bob [Tyrrell] and L.D. Brown, and Boynton and Henderson...thought that they were going to bring down the president. But the only thing they might have accomplished in the end is their own undoing." The Mena story symbolized the worst instincts and failings of *TAS*, and it tarnished by association far more substantial stories at the magazine.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> For example, see James Ring Adams, "April and Webb and Jean and Jack," *TAS* (October 1994): 41-46; and Tyrrell, "The Arkansas Drug Shuttle," *TAS* (August 1995): 16-18.

<sup>68</sup> Murray Waas, "Tainted Witness," *Salon.com*, January 12, 1999, available at [http://www.salon.com/1999/01/12/news\\_168/](http://www.salon.com/1999/01/12/news_168/); and Byron York, "The Life and Death of The American Spectator," *Atlantic Magazine* (November 2001): 91-110. After the Mena story's publication, Tyrrell and his teenage daughter met Clinton by chance at a Washington-area restaurant. He sent the president's table two bottles of champagne, and was invited over to meet Clinton. With his daughter in tow, Tyrrell asked

Nevertheless, in article after article, particularly between 1994 and 1997, the magazine assailed the Clintons for alleged wrongdoings.<sup>69</sup> For example, *TAS*'s investigative reporting broke a story that dealt with the Clinton's connections to wealthy Indonesian campaign contributors. James Ring Adams investigated the complex financial interactions between the Clintons, the Chinese government, and Indonesian businessmen James Riady and John Huang. The magazine continued to pursue the story and after the 1996 elections, other press outlets joined them. *Mother Jones*, the liberal opinion journal, wrote "forget Whitewater, Clinton's Indonesian money scandal may be the real thing."<sup>70</sup>

Writing in the *New York Times* in 2001, after both Riady and Huang had been convicted of violating campaign finance laws, William Safire praised *TAS*'s role in the process. "[*TAS*] is a feisty little right-wing magazine that drove the Clinton White House crazy," wrote Safire. "In exposing the curious fund-raising of John Huang, Riady's man with the run of the White House," he added, "I found the early *Spectator* material useful in writing columns that helped trigger a reluctant investigation and ultimate conviction of both felons."<sup>71</sup>

### ***TAS* and the Impeachment**

Indeed, the cumulative effect of *TAS*'s attacks against the first "1960s First Family" contributed to Clinton's impeachment in December 1998. Behind the

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for Clinton's reaction to the Mena story, at which point Clinton realized Tyrrell's connection with *TAS*, and an argument ensued. The encounter made the DC gossip columns, see Al Kamen, "Biting the Hand You Feed," *Washington Post*, July 19, 1995, A19.

<sup>69</sup> Adams and Tyrrell, "The Case Against Hillary," *TAS* (February 1996): 22-27; For a *TAS* background story on the Whitewater investigation between 1992 and 1994, see Rebecca Borders and Adams, "Filling In The Blanks," *TAS* (March 1996): 28-33; Borders, "Hell To Pay," *TAS* (January 1997): 31-41.

<sup>70</sup> Adams, "What's Up in Jakarta?" *TAS* (September 1995): 28-35; Kenneth Timmerman, "All Roads Lead to China," *TAS* (March 1997): 30-40; and L.J. Davis, "Riady or Not?" *Mother Jones* (January/February 1997), available at <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/1997/01/riady-or-not>.

<sup>71</sup> William Safire, "The Senate Plumbers," *NYT*, May 17, 2001: A25; See also Theodore Olson, "The Most Political Justice Department Ever: A Survey," *TAS* (September 2000): 22-26; and Adams, "What's Up in Jakarta?" 28-35.



impeachment was Paula Jones, the Arkansas woman who had accused Clinton of sexual harassment after her first name appeared in *TAS*'s Troopergate story in December 1993. Tyrrell frequently noted that multiple newspapers and journals ran similar investigative stories between 1994 and 1998, corroborating many of the basic allegations by the magazine. But this was only partially accurate. No other journals had been willing to publish specific, lurid, sordid details about the president's sex life. *TAS*'s decision to do so was a grave mistake. Journalists from the *LA Times* complained that the sensational details in the Troopergate story inadvertently helped the Clinton administration by diverting attention away from the graver allegations about misuse of state power.<sup>72</sup>

Nevertheless, as journalists investigated the Paula Jones case, Clinton's governorship in Arkansas, and his White House administration, the attitude toward the president shifted. A critical turning point in the Paula Jones case was the publication in late 1996 of Stuart Taylor's Paula Jones article. Taylor was a former lawyer turned journalist with a sterling non-partisan reputation for reporting. He wrote an exhaustive article for *The American Lawyer*, concluding that, while Jones's story and legal case had flaws, the preponderance of evidence supported her contention of sexual harassment and the illegal use by Clinton of State Troopers. "I'm all but convinced," concluded Taylor, "that whatever Clinton did was worse than anything [Clarence] Thomas was even accused of doing." Taylor's respected reputation and thoroughness of reporting had the effect of changing many mainstream journalists' minds about Jones and Clinton.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Wolfe quoted in Tyrrell, "Thirty—and Still Counting," 17.

<sup>73</sup> Taylor's piece remains a critical starting point for any study of the Jones-Clinton lawsuit and impeachment. He notes, for example, the class bias displayed by the Washington press toward Jones, and he offers a careful comparison of the media bias, right and left, in its coverage of the Paula Jones and Anita Hill sexual harassment allegations. His analysis of Clinton's legal strategy is insightful. See Taylor, "Her Case Against Clinton," *The American Lawyer* (November 1, 1996): 56-69; See William Buckley's

Joe Conason covered the impeachment process for *The Nation*, and he stressed *TAS*'s role. "The most industrious promoter of impeachment these days is Tyrrell, a controversial personage on the right because of his magazine's single-minded pursuit of supposed conspiracies connected to the Clintons." *TAS*'s monthly dinner for conservatives, The Saturday Evening Club, met in October 1997 to outline plans for impeaching Clinton.<sup>74</sup> Along with Tyrrell and others from the magazine, the guests included the editors from the *Washington Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, conservative activist Grover Norquist, and a special guest, Bob Barr, a conservative congressman from Georgia. Barr was a specialist in impeachment procedures, and had become the leading conservative advocate for impeachment, even writing the foreword to Tyrrell's recent impeachment book.<sup>75</sup>

The magazine clearly and repeatedly explained that its anti-Clinton articles and drive for impeachment were an extension of its thirty years' war on 1960s student radicals. "For a magazine founded by conservative students of the 1960's generation,"

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assessment of the Taylor article, Buckley, "Clinton Goes a-Courting," *NR* (February 10, 1997): 15-16; Charles Peters, "Tilting at Windmills," *The Washington Monthly* (July/August 1997): 6.

<sup>74</sup> In the fall of 1997, before the press knew about Monica Lewinsky, Tyrrell co-authored (with "Anonymous") an odd book called *The Impeachment of William Jefferson Clinton*, a "political docu-drama" of "future history" which offered a fictionalized account of a presidential impeachment trial in 1998 for abuse of power. It included a fictionalized conversation in which George Stephanopoulos, White House Director of Communication, advised Clinton that "a revolution (though he called it a counter-revolution) was brewing; a cultural backlash against the new morality of Bill Clinton's Baby Boomer generation [and] Clinton might be its first causality." Tyrrell and "Anonymous," *The Impeachment of William Jefferson Clinton: A Political Docu-Drama* (Washington DC: Regnery, 1997), 258; Speculation on the identity of Tyrrell's co-author centered on Theodore Olson, a *TAS* board member and powerful Washington attorney, and Terry Eastland, the future *TAS* publisher. For more on the possible identity of "anonymous," see Joe Conason, "The Impeachment Craze," *The Nation* (December 8, 1997): 18-22. *Human Events* named it one of 1997's best conservative books. Reflecting on the timing of the book's publication, *Human Events* commented, "the notion of impeachment would have been dismissed as total fantasy a few months ago, but now Tyrrell looks like a prophet." Mona Charen, "Books in Brief," *NR* (May 4, 1998): 60; James Roberts, "Last Year's Best Conservative Books," *Human Events* (May 15, 1998): 18; Robert Bork praised the book's detailed explanation of how the impeachment process might work, from rules and regulations to congressional vote counting. See Robert Bork, "Should He Be Impeached?" *TAS* (December 1997): 74-78.

<sup>75</sup> See Conason, "The Impeachment Craze," 18-22; *The Washington Post* made similar observations, see Thomas Edsall, "From the Fringe to the Center of the Debate," *Washington Post*, December 15, 1998, A18.

wrote Tyrrell in 1997, “the 1990’s presidency of this student government whiz kid has proved to be one of history’s ironies.” *TAS* had a unique insight into what it considered the president’s hypocrisy and malfeasance because it represented the opposition element within the president’s generational cohort. “It was apparent to us, their amused peers, that [the Clintons] were what was called, in the decade of student protest, Coat and Tie Radicals....Back then my conservative friends had guffawed at the [their] moralistic cant.”<sup>76</sup>

The Monica Lewinsky scandal, which broke in 1998, appeared initially to vindicate *TAS*’s reporting. When Hillary Clinton defended her husband’s probity on national television, she blamed a “vast right-wing conspiracy” for generating false accusations and suggested the government should investigate such groups. *TAS* struck back, ridiculing the idea of a conservative conspiracy. “Conspiracy theories as expounded by Hillary Clinton are the last refuge of the intellectually lazy and the morally desperate,” explained Tyrrell.<sup>77</sup>

The magazine reminded readers of the crucial role its investigative reporting had played, but it was largely defensive, anxious to have the press reassess the magazine’s editorial decisions in running the more salacious of its anti-Clinton pieces. Reminding readers of the criticism *TAS* had received in 1994 for including discussion of Clinton’s alleged proclivities for oral sex, it pointed to *Newsweek* stories in early 1998 that contained graphic language about oral sex. “Four years before, *The American Spectator* and the *Los Angeles Times* had published stories that showed...Clinton suffered not merely from reckless, but clearly compulsive, sexual behavior.” Even the *New York*

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<sup>76</sup> Tyrrell, “Thirty—and Still Counting,” 16.

<sup>77</sup> Tyrrell, “A Menace to Society,” *TAS* (March 1998): 16-17.

*Times* in 1998 began to comment on potentially serious implications of Clinton's sexual habits, and *TAS* expressed satisfaction that "four years it took to confirm what we already knew." When the *Washington Post* and others reprinted large, unedited sections of Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr's sexually explicit report, Tyrrell wrote, more defensively than boastfully, that "other editors are finding out how the editors of *The American Spectator* felt when we laid eyes on the salacious text of our first Troopergate piece."<sup>78</sup>

As the impeachment hearings approached in late 1998, the magazine pressed its anti-Sixties interpretation of the Clinton presidency. Robert Bork, who, ironically had been a stalwart of Richard Nixon's during the infamous Saturday Night Massacre of 1973, wrote a scathing analysis. Bork argued that "the debacle of this president's administration is both a cause and a symptom of the decline of American values." Clinton had damaged the nation's legal, political, cultural, and moral standards, he explained, and the president was a symptom of the devastating effects of the "spirit of 1968"—the 1960s student generation. "The '68 generation believed that its moral superiority and purity of motive absolved it of any need for truth and decent behavior," wrote Bork. Impeachment, though an unpleasant option, he argued, was needed as a national referendum on the Sixties generation.<sup>79</sup>

### **The Arkansas Project and *TAS*'s Crack-Up**

The history of the magazine's Clinton obsession in the 1990s highlights the role of philanthropy to the conservative intellectual movement in the late-20<sup>th</sup> century. Like most intellectual journals, *TAS* had enjoyed support from wealthy benefactors for much

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<sup>78</sup> "John Corry, "Dropping the Big One," *TAS* (March 1998): 56-58; Tyrrell, "From Troopergate to Monicagate," 18-20, 22.

<sup>79</sup> Robert Bork, "Counting the Costs of Clintonism," *TAS* (November 1998): 54-57.

of its history. Beginning with donations from the Eli Lilly family in 1970, the magazine attracted support from other conservative philanthropists. In 1993, Richard Mellon Scaife, heir to the Mellon banking fortune, began donating millions of additional dollars to *TAS* specifically for the purpose of investigating possible crimes and misconduct during Clinton's tenure as governor of Arkansas.<sup>80</sup>

Wanting to break legitimate investigative stories, but tempted to indulge in conspiracy theories, *TAS* danced along a precipice of respectability for much of the 1990s. While it flirted with potential conspiracies regarding the Clintons' role in the Foster suicide, campaign money from China, Travelgate, and Whitewater, the Clinton White House itself became infected with similar fears. The White House Counsel's office produced a three hundred plus-page report in 1995 which they titled, "The Communication Stream of Conspiracy Commerce." It attempted to trace the links between Scaife and conservative outlets such as *TAS*, Rush Limbaugh's radio show, and British paper, *The Daily Telegraph*. The White House distributed copies to the press in July 1995, just at the peak of the *TAS* investigative articles about Whitewater and Paula Jones.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> The most important conservative donors included the John Olin Foundation, the Smith Richardson Foundation, the Bradley Foundation, the Coors Family, and the Scaife Trusts. For a detailed look at the major conservative foundations in the mid-1990s, who all contributed to *TAS*, see Leon Howell, "Funding the War of Ideas," *Christian Century* (July 19, 1995): 701-703. The history of conservative philanthropy is a burgeoning area of historical study, see James Piereson, "Investing in Conservative Ideas," *Commentary* (May 2005): 46-53; Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2009); and Nicole Hoplin and Ron Robinson, *Funding Fathers: The Unsung Heroes of the Conservative Movement* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2008).

<sup>81</sup> Eric Alterman, "A Stupidity Conspiracy," *The Nation* (February 10, 1997): 5-6; John Harris and Peter Baker, "White House Memo Asserts a Scandal Theory," *Washington Post*, January 10, 1997, A1; The memo was released to the press in 1995 but became a national story only in early 1997 after coverage by *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post*; see also Joseph Shattan, "Conspiratorial Comforts," *TAS* (November 1997): 74-77; For the field of journalism studies, see James McPherson, *The Conservative Resurgence and the Press* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2008).

By the mid-1990s, then, *TAS* stood astride a revitalized conservative movement. At its peak, its monthly circulation numbers reached 309,000, roughly three times the circulation of the *Nation* and *TNR*, opinion magazines on the left.<sup>82</sup> Thanks to its investigative pieces, the Clinton administration found itself constantly addressing alleged scandals. Rifts and tensions over a fragile conservative sense of unity remained—indeed, such dynamics were endemic to the movement—and occasionally manifested themselves in intra-conservative debates, over issues such as immigration and foreign policy concerns, for example.<sup>83</sup> But *TAS*'s attacks on the Clintons continued to provide a temporary corrective to centrifugal pressures on the right.<sup>84</sup>

Meanwhile, it continued to investigate the president and spawned a whole new cadre of conservative outlets. Its push for impeachment finally gained serious momentum when, in January 1998, an online political gossip blog, *The Drudge Report*, introduced the nation to a former White House intern named Monica Lewinsky. According to the blog, *Newsweek*'s Michael Isikoff had written an explosive story detailing a sexual affair between Lewinsky and the president, but the magazine was unwilling to run it. Lewinsky's name and the president's later denial under oath about their relationship emerged directly from the Paula Jones lawsuit against the president—*TAS*'s Troopergate

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<sup>82</sup> *NR*'s circulation grew, but at a slower rate than *TAS*'s, reaching its peak in 1994 above 200,000, see Norman Vanamee, "Media: Trickle Down," *New York* (April 1, 1996): 17; For further comparison, the circulations of *Reader's Digest* (16,258,476) and *TV Guide* (14,498,341) were among the largest nationally. *Newsweek*'s 3,240,131 put it well ahead of opinion journals such as *TAS*, *NR*, and *TNR*. See *The World Almanac and Book of Facts, 1994* (New York: Newspaper Enterprise Association, 1994): 292.

<sup>83</sup> On intra-conservative arguments in the 1990s, see Allitt, *The Conservatives*, 255-276. See also *Commentary*, "On the Future of Conservatism: A Symposium" (February 1, 1997): 14-43.

<sup>84</sup> Roxanne Roberts, "The Right Crowd: *The American Spectator*, Celebrating Conservatism," *Washington Post*, May 17, 1996, B1.

stories, it seemed, continued to wreak havoc on the administration.<sup>85</sup> But any sense of triumphalism was tempered by several factors.

After David Brock's enormously successful Anita Hill and Troopergate stories, he was the undisputed star writer at *TAS* and among conservative magazines generally. Even the outing of his homosexuality did not diminish his status at the magazine and on the right, if only because his anti-Clinton reporting continued to stir controversy. In 1995, he received a one million dollar advance to write a partisan, hard hitting biography of Hillary Clinton, presumably one to mimic the style and success of his Anita Hill book.<sup>86</sup>

Instead, for a variety of reasons, he began to rethink his political affiliations and wrote a tepid critical biography on the first lady that angered conservatives. "Hillary has gotten a bad rap from all sides," wrote Brock, and "her remarkable life...has been more important to America than her husband."<sup>87</sup> The book flopped commercially, in part because it was so poorly reviewed by conservatives. The "long-expected attack-book becomes instead an apologia," complained *NR*'s Rich Lowry, and "the scrubbing Mr. Brock gives Mrs. Clinton's motives approaches the laughable." The problem, according to Lowry, was that Brock wanted to shed his image of writing attack pieces—of being "a partisan conservative journalist—and this book is his misbegotten attempt at escape."

*TAS* continued to support Brock, however, publishing his articles and supporting him in

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<sup>85</sup> Matthew Drudge, "Newsweek Kills Story On White House Intern," *The Drudge Report*, January 17, 1998, [http://www.drudgereportarchives.com/data/2002/01/17/20020117\\_175502\\_ml.htm](http://www.drudgereportarchives.com/data/2002/01/17/20020117_175502_ml.htm); R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., interview by Brian Lamb, "Q&A," C-SPAN, May 6, 2007.

<sup>86</sup> Brock, *The Seduction of Hillary Rodham Clinton* (New York: Free Press, 1996); Brock, "Confessions of a Right-Wing Hitman," *Esquire* (July 1997): 52.

<sup>87</sup> Still, the book was far from hagiography. Brock suggested communist sympathies in her background, and accused her of complicity in various administration scandals and cover-ups. But she was less to blame than her husband, argued Brock, who had seduced Hillary for years into compromising political and ethical positions. Brock, *The Seduction of Hillary Rodham Clinton*, xi, 418; Several reviewers, right and left, noted Brock's dubious attempts at even-handedness, see Christopher Hitchens, "The Real David Brock," *TNR* (October 28, 1996): 8, and see especially Jacob Weisberg, "Hillary Clinton, Commie Martyr," *Time* (October 21, 1996): 42, originally published on *Slate.com* Magazine, October 5, 1996, [http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/strange\\_bedfellow/1996/10/hillary\\_commie\\_martyr.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/strange_bedfellow/1996/10/hillary_commie_martyr.html).

editorials. Tyrrell, though privately disappointed with Brock, attempted to put a positive spin on the book, arguing that it was a “clever attempt” to “destroy the Clintons’ marriage.”<sup>88</sup>

Even so, and despite *TAS* support, Brock penned a shocking confessional announcing his break with the conservative movement in *Esquire* magazine in July 1997. “Confessions of a Right-Wing Hit Man” turned his attacks from the Clintons to his conservative friends, who he alleged had begun to shun him after the publication of his Hillary Clinton book. He blamed his defection on anti-homosexuality on the right, a “kind of neo-Stalinist thought police,” and “the conservative movement’s obsession with the supposed hidden agendas and dark motives of anyone who dissents.”<sup>89</sup> He initially spared *TAS*, still his employer, from criticism, insisting that his “conservative views have not changed” and he was “still at home at *The American Spectator*,” where he knew that Tyrrell was warding off conservatives’ calls for his dismissal. The magazine was “one bright spot in an otherwise bleak conservative landscape.”<sup>90</sup>

Brock’s view of the magazine changed in late 1997, when Tyrrell finally decided to fire him—technically not to renew his contract.<sup>91</sup> Brock’s next *Esquire* confessional piece turned the attack toward his now former employer. He denounced his Troopergate piece, not for specific inaccuracy but for its sordid look at the president’s private life. He

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<sup>88</sup> Rich Lowry, “It Takes a Whitewash,” *NR* (December 31, 1996): 48-49; Tyrrell, “Seduced by Bill,” *TAS* (December 1996): 17; Brock, “Confessions of a Right-Wing Hitman,” 52.

<sup>89</sup> Brock, “Confessions of a Right-Wing Hitman,” 52; York, “Life and Death,” 91-110; Brock, *Blinded by the Right*, 316-321; and Conason and Lyons, *The Hunting of the President*, 160-182.

<sup>90</sup> Brock, “Confessions of a Right-Wing Hitman,” 52.

<sup>91</sup> Brock, *Blinded by the Right*, 316-321; York, “Life and Death,” 91-110; and Conason and Lyons, *The Hunting of the President*, 160-182.



criticized Tyrrell and the magazine for its role in the story and compared the magazine's investigations into Clinton to a witch hunt.<sup>92</sup>

Conservatives countered with frank assessments of their former star ally. *NR*'s Ramesh Ponnuru wrote a scathing open letter to Brock accusing him of numerous contradictions in his *Esquire* pieces. "Over the last year, whatever your motives, your public pronouncements have offered us a politics of narcissism and attitudinizing, constant revisionism, and false pieties masking low cunning," chastised Ponnuru, "You're not just apologizing to Bill Clinton, you're becoming him." Similar rebukes by Hilton Kramer in *Human Events* and *The Weekly Standard*'s Eric Felton challenged Brock on a point-by-point basis. By contrast, Tyrrell's comments on Brock's defection were surprisingly tame, especially in light of Tyrrell's often acid attacks on political opponents.<sup>93</sup>

The Brock-*TAS* breakup delighted liberals and troubled conservatives; it also stood in sharp contrast to a historical pattern. The conservative intellectual movement had long benefitted from apostates from liberalism and communism in the twentieth century. Whittaker Chambers, Frank Meyer, and James Burnham, to name just a few, had made dramatic ideological swings from left to the right in the 1940s, just as Irving Kristol and Norman Podhoretz had done in the late-1960s. When David Horowitz and Peter Collier rejected the New Left for conservatism in the 1980s, they complained about an inflexible

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*; see also Brock, "The Fire This Time," *Esquire* (April 1998): 60-65.

<sup>93</sup> Ramesh Ponnuru, "The Real David Brock," *NR* (April 6, 1998): 23-25. Brock's shift to the left was mocked by many in the press, for example, see Charles Lane, "Brock Crock," *TNR* (March 30, 1998): 8; William F. Buckley, Jr., "The Repentance of David Brock," *NR* (April 6, 1998): 62; Hilton was responding to a strong letter in *Human Events* in which Brock repeated the key points of his *Esquire* pieces, see Hilton Kramer, "The Seduction of David Brock," *Human Events* (August 1, 1997): 17; and Eric Felton "Clinton's Apologist: The Bonfire of David Brock's Vanity," *The Weekly Standard* (March 23, 1998): 16-20; Felton's article offers rich detail on the background of Brock's financial relationship with *TAS* in the mid-1990s and his economic problems in 1996; and Tyrrell, "Brock Groped," *TAS* (May 1998): 18.

orthodoxy on the left that was hostile to dissenting opinions, and they praised a welcoming heterodoxy of opinions on the right. Brock's experience stood in sharp contrast to this historical experience on the right. It may be possible to dismiss his case as *sui generis*, indeed, many commentators, left and right, noted Brock's troubled confessions about struggling to find his own self-identity. And yet in the heavily partisan atmosphere of the conservative intellectual movement in the late-1990s, the defection of a star, young, gay conservative writer seemed to confirm liberals' criticisms of conservatism's repressive biases.<sup>94</sup>

Growing financial problems also augured trouble for the magazine. Circulation peaked in 1995 at 309,000 but declined steadily thereafter. "We were spending too much to keep circulation above what I believed was a more natural level, in the neighborhood of 130,000," recalled Tyrrell. "We had too many reporters doing too little."<sup>95</sup> Revenues from such inflated circulation numbers and from the magazine's decades-long patron, Scaife, had not been managed well. An expensive redesign of the format and paper quality failed to lure lucrative advertising dollars, further worsening the situation. Staff conflicts within the magazine festered over how the Scaife money was being used. The

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<sup>94</sup> See Brock, *Blinded by the Right*, especially xvii-xxi, 188-189; For conservative conversion memoirs, see Whittaker Chambers, *Witness* (New York: Random House, 1952), Norman Podhoretz, *Breaking Ranks* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), and David Horowitz, *Radical Son* (New York: Touchstone, 1998); For right to left conversions, see Michael Lind, *Up From Conservatism* (New York: Free Press, 1997).

<sup>95</sup> Tyrrell, "The Government is Going to Get You," *TAS* (November/December 2002): 5-6, 78-80; York, "The Life and Death of *The American Spectator*," 91-110; and see Chapter 10, "Inside the Arkansas Project," in Conason and Lyons, *The Hunting of the President* (New York: Thomas Dunne, 2000), 160-182; Conason and Lyon acquired private records from *TAS* offices through "confidential sources," including detailed financial statements, but their extensive reliance on Cayln Mann, an Arkansas astrologist, left questionable gaps in their account.

magazine was legally owned by a non-profit organization, *TAS* Foundation, and thus had both tax exemption status and financial management and reporting responsibilities.<sup>96</sup>

Conflict related to the management of the Scaife-financed investigations into the Clintons eventually resulted in Tyrrell's firing of publisher Ronald Burr, his friend and longtime colleague. Jokingly referred to as the Arkansas Project around the office, the money was unwisely being managed largely outside *TAS*'s offices by a magazine board member, David Henderson, and a Washington-area attorney and conservative, David Boynton. Between 1993 and 1997 Scaife gave almost two million dollars through his charities to *TAS*'s education foundation for the purpose of investigating the corruption charges stemming from the Clintons' time in Arkansas politics. But by 1997, Burr was diverting some of these funds to *TAS*'s general operating budget to stabilize the magazine. (Despite the spike in subscriptions since 1992, the magazine still needed outside grants to function.) Scaife deputy, Richard Larry, accused Burr of misallocation of the Arkansas Project funds, and Burr, in turn, demanded an immediate internal audit of all funds. Tyrrell, torn between the two, backed the Scaife view, but refused Burr's audit request. Tyrrell's editorial strengths were never in overseeing the magazine's financial or logistical details; it seems likely he did not know what an audit would uncover in late 1997. He eventually reached a legally-binding settlement in October 1997, which prohibited Burr from ever discussing the situation with outside parties.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, see also Howard Kurtz, "At *American Spectator*, A Firing Offense," *Washington Post*, October 20, 1997, C1.

<sup>97</sup> Kurtz, "At *American Spectator*, A Firing Offense," C1; York, "Life and Death," 91-110; John Corry, "Salon's Spectator Project," *TAS* (June 1998): 44-45; In Tyrrell, "The Government is Going to Get You," 5-6, 78-80, Tyrrell noted Burr became the "publisher to Pat Buchanan's magazine, the *American Conservative*"; Richard Lacayo, "Hale Storm Rising," *Time* (April 13, 1998): 54; and Conason and Lyons, *The Hunting of the President*, 160-182; On Burr's relationship with *TAS*, see Ronald Burr, interview by Carl Rutan, "The *American Spectator*," C-SPAN, May 23, 1986.

As subsequent investigations would confirm, the money in fact was mismanaged but not illegally. Burr, who had been with the magazine since 1970, was used as a scapegoat, and Tyrrell's decision to fire him was a mistake. The scheduled emcee for the magazine's upcoming annual banquet, P.J. O'Rourke, refused to attend. "Ron has given his whole life to this thing," he told the *Washington Post*, "There's no way I can support Ron being fired."<sup>98</sup> The Heritage Foundation's John Von Kannon, a Burr friend and former *TAS* publisher, decided to still attend the dinner honoring *TAS*'s 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. But he spoke at length, with a visibly uncomfortable Tyrrell sitting nearby, about Burr's key role in the magazine's success since 1969.<sup>99</sup>

Later that year, the December 1997 edition included a critical review of a new book by Christopher Ruddy, a Pittsburgh-based, favorite reporter of Scaife, entitled *The Strange Death of Vincent Foster*. As a high ranking White House official and former law partner of Hillary Clinton in Little Rock, Foster's suicide on July 20, 1993 ignited speculation about a possible political murder; initially, at least, there were just enough peculiar elements to Foster's death to raise questions on the right. For example, the White House had quickly removed documents from Foster's office before law enforcement authorities could conduct an investigation. Conservatives, including *TAS*, cried foul and demanded an independent investigation into what they now suspected was something other than suicide. They eventually got an independent inquiry, and when Ken Starr

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<sup>98</sup> Kurtz, "At *American Spectator*, A Firing Offense," C1. "The tendency of the magazine to do this Clinton-obsessive stuff, I don't get," P.J. O'Rourke told media journalist Howard Kurtz in 1997, "it seems strange and somewhat embarrassing. Some of these articles over the last few years seem to undercut the credibility of the *American Spectator*." Howard Kurtz, "At *American Spectator*, A Firing Offense," *Washington Post*, October 20, 1997, C1.

<sup>99</sup> John Von Kannon, "*American Spectator* 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner," C-SPAN Forum, November 12, 1997.

issued a definitive report in September 1997 confirming Foster's suicide, it settled the issue for most conservatives.<sup>100</sup>

Not all on the right agreed. Various fringe elements of the anti-Clinton right continued to insist—despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary—that Foster had been murdered and that even the conservative Starr was complicit in a conspiracy to cover it up. John Corry, a senior journalist at *TAS*, reviewed Ruddy's book in light of Starr's findings. He had contributed a piece on Foster's death in December 1993 that accused the media of insufficient skepticism and rigor in investigating the White House's account of events that summer. But four years later, he agreed that Starr had settled the matter conclusively, and his review excoriated Ruddy's conspiracy theories, reporting, and gullibility. "Ruddy, in fact, is a very heavy breather," wrote Corry, questioning Ruddy's anonymous sources and noting, "this is a book with very few direct quotes, but a great many insinuations." Inconsistencies frequently occur in such investigations, noted Corry, but for Ruddy "everything seems to him, and to many of his sources, too, to be suspicious."<sup>101</sup>

Scaife was incensed at the critical review of Ruddy's book. He remained convinced there was more to the Foster case—he had called the death the "Rosetta Stone to the whole Clinton administration"—and unhappy that a magazine to which he had contributed lavishly would publish such a scathing review. In response, "Scaife phoned *Spectator* editor R. Emmett Tyrrell," reported the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, "and told him he

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<sup>100</sup> James Stewart, *Blood Sport: The President and His Adversaries* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 312-346, 377-397.

<sup>101</sup> To illustrate this point, contrast John Corry's opinion change between Corry, "Killing the Foster Story," *TAS* (October 1993): 54-56; and Corry, "Vince Foster Redux," *TAS* (December 1997): 56-57.

would get no more Scaife money.”<sup>102</sup> This was a crucial turning point for the magazine, severing relations with one of the few large conservative benefactors, particularly the one behind the Arkansas Project. “I stood by John Corry’s critical review of a book by one of Scaife’s writers on one of Scaife’s pet projects, the death of Vince Foster,” wrote Tyrrell, “causing Scaife to end annual grants to us that had gone back thirty years.”<sup>103</sup>

More than that, Scaife’s money had been crucial to the magazine’s longevity. Other conservative philanthropists such as the Eli Lilly family and the Adolph Coors and Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundations also helped the magazine with contributions. But *TAS* almost certainly would not have survived into the 1980s and 1990s without the Pittsburgh-based billionaire’s largesse. Scaife grants had allowed the magazine to become a national publication in 1970 and then to balance the books after each subsequent year’s losses. He was a key funder of *TAS* annual dinners, and even helped finance the magazine’s move to Washington in 1985. Then, he bankrolled the Arkansas Project, giving the magazine approximately \$1.8 million between 1993 and 1997. Despite the spike in circulation numbers since *TAS*’s first Anita Hill piece in 1992, publishing the Foster review was, indeed, a critical editorial decision.<sup>104</sup>

Losing Scaife’s financial support at this point proved especially costly. In January 1998, as the Lewinsky story was breaking, Terry Eastwood joined the magazine as publisher. Long affiliated with the magazine, he had worked in the Reagan administration and for other publications. He spent the first part of the year auditing the Arkansas

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<sup>102</sup> Frank Greve, “A Benefactor to Many, But Not to Clinton: Richard M. Scaife Supports Groups That are No Friends of Bill,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 8, 1998, A21;

<sup>103</sup> Neil Lewis, “Almost \$2 Million Spent in Magazine’s Anti-Clinton Project, But On What?” *NYT*, April 15, 1998, A20; Greve, “A Benefactor to Many,” A21; York, “Life and Death,” 91-110; and Conason and Lyons, *The Hunting of the President*, 160-182.

<sup>104</sup> John Kennedy, Jr., “Who’s Afraid of Richard Mellon Scaife?” *George* (January 1999): 54; York, “Life and Death,” 94; and Greve, “A Benefactor to Many,” A21; Howell, “Funding the War of Ideas,” 701-703; and Piereson, “Investing in Conservative Ideas,” 46-53.

Project and made two important reports to the *TAS* board of directors. First, he found no illegal misuse of funds. Henderson and Boynton “could account for the money they spent. There were no serious discrepancies—maybe a few hundred dollars here and there out of nearly two million.” Second, he concluded that the Arkansas Project had been ill-managed and was dangerous for the magazine itself.<sup>105</sup>

However clumsy and ineffective the Scaife-funded project had been, its existence was not widely known. Journalists in the late-1990s paid increasing attention to the handful of wealthy conservative donors, including Scaife, and all the tax-deductible donations to *TAS* and other conservative groups were fully disclosed on annual public statements. The Arkansas Project, such as it was, then, was far from secret, and yet it kept a low profile. “As a fresh-from-college research assistant at *TAS* in the mid-1990s,” explained Matt Labash, “I never heard the term ‘Arkansas Project’ until years after I left.”<sup>106</sup>

That all changed with articles published by the *New York Observer* and *Salon* online magazine in February and March 1998. The existence of the Scaife-backed Arkansas Project, reported first in the *Observer* and then more extensively in *Salon*, seemed to confirm Hillary Clinton’s “vast right-wing conspiracy” theory. Here was what seemed to be a conspiracy involving a conservative billionaire and a magazine in a coordinated effort to “get-the-president.” Best of all, the name Arkansas Project, which had been an informal joke around the magazine’s offices, now played great in the media

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<sup>105</sup> Quoted in York, “Life and Death,” 108; Lewis, “Almost \$2 Million Spent,” A20; Lacayo, “Hale Storm Rising,” 54.

<sup>106</sup> Matt Labash, “Clintonmania: It Never Ends in Arkansas,” *The Weekly Standard* (December 6, 2004): 18.

and with public supporters of the president. It also seemed to validate the first lady's fears.<sup>107</sup>

The next month, March 1998, *Salon.com* accused *TAS* of illegally paying a key Whitewater witness, David Hale, in Arkansas. The story's lead was powerful, alleging that Hale "received numerous cash payments from a clandestine anti-Clinton campaign funded by conservative billionaire Richard Mellon Scaife, two eyewitnesses told *Salon*." The Scaife-funded project was far from "clandestine," and the two eyewitnesses quickly dwindled to one unreliable teenager who was thirteen years old at the time of the alleged payoffs. Nevertheless, *Salon* continued aggressively to pursue the story.<sup>108</sup>

*Salon*, then, was *TAS*'s most dogged critic. Founded by left-wing journalist David Talbot in 1995, *Salon* was one of the first exclusively online magazines to print serious political articles alongside lighter cultural pieces, primarily from liberal perspectives. "Think the *Village Voice* without the classifieds," wrote the *New York Times*.<sup>109</sup> It overcame annual budget deficits only with the help of wealthy liberal donors such as investment banker William Hambrecht and John Warnock, a co-founder of the software

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<sup>107</sup> A spate of articles published in the late 1990s explored Scaife and other conservative benefactors. For representative examples, see Murray Waas, "Richard Scaife Paid for Dirt on Clinton in 'Arkansas Project,'" *New York Observer*, February 9, 1998, 1; Nurith Aizenman, "The Man Behind the Curtain: Richard Mellon Scaife—and \$200 Million of His Money—is the Man Behind the Conservative Revolution," *The Washington Monthly* (July/August 1997): 28-34; and Greve, "A Benefactor to Many," A21.

<sup>108</sup> Jonathan Boder and Murray Waas, "The Road to Hale," *Salon.com*, March 17, 1998; Broder and Conason, "The American Spectator's Funny Money," *Salon.com*, June 6, 1998, [http://www.salon.com/1998/06/08/cov\\_08news/](http://www.salon.com/1998/06/08/cov_08news/); Broder, "American Spectator Audit: Is the Fox Guarding the Henhouse?" *Salon.com*, April 27, 1998, [http://www.salon.com/1998/04/27/news\\_27/](http://www.salon.com/1998/04/27/news_27/); See also Stewart, *Blood Sport*, 312-346.

<sup>109</sup> Sana Siwolop, "Before *Salon*'s Offering, Some Negative Reviews," *NYT*, May 9, 1999, 7; and David Carr, "The Founder of *Salon* is Passing the Mouse," *NYT*, February 10, 2005, E1. Talbot was a radical student in the late 1960s and early 1970s, who later worked as an editor of *Mother Jones*. See Warren St. John, "The *Salon* Makeover" *Wired* (July 2001), available at [http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/7.01/talbot\\_pr.html](http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/7.01/talbot_pr.html); and Talbot, interview with Terry Gross, "Fresh Air," National Public Radio, June 14, 2000, transcript available at <http://www.ibiblio.org/slanews/conferences/sla2000/fresh.htm>.



company Adobe.<sup>110</sup> Along with its *TAS* exposes, *Salon*'s most successful scope was its September 1998 disclosure that Representative Henry Hyde, a chief Clinton impeachment proponent, had himself had an affair in the 1960s.<sup>111</sup>

Defending itself, *TAS* raised questions about the upstart *Salon* magazine's fast rise to prominence. After reading the first *Salon* article, Tyrrell visited the site and was surprised at the number of sex-related articles and cultural gossip. "To my amazement *Salon* is a lurid compendium of political hallucinations, sour gossip, New Age quackery, and smutty cybersex," he complained.<sup>112</sup> *TAS* managing editor, Pleszczynski, questioned the funding of *Salon*. "Midst all the attacks on Richard Scaife," he asked, "did anyone notice that one of *Salon*'s chief financial backers, William Hambrecht, recently hosted a major Clinton-led fundraiser?"<sup>113</sup> Tyrrell frequently pointed out that all opinion magazines, right and left, relied on benefactors—*TAS* was not alone.<sup>114</sup>

*TAS*, after a decade of investigative journalism, now found *itself* the subject of journalists' investigations. The bulk of the stories began shortly after the Lewinsky affair surfaced, in January 1998, and ran through the impeachment proceedings, ending in January 1999. Hale was a crucial witness for the Whitewater Investigation of Independent Counsel Ken Starr, and if his testimony had been purchased, it would be a critical turning point. The *Observer* and *Salon* articles followed the blueprint laid out in

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<sup>110</sup> Dan Frost, "Salon.com beats the odds: S.F. Online Magazine Courses Into Its Second Decade," *San Francisco Chronicle*, Thursday, December 1, 2005, C1; *NYT*, "Salon Media Group Raises \$800,000 to Stay Afloat," March 29, 2003; and Lisa Bransten, "Salon Internet Files for an IPO; Hambrecht is Named Underwriter," *Wall Street Journal*, April 20, 1999, B6.

<sup>111</sup> Frost, "Salon.com beats the odds," C1; David Talbot, "This Hypocrite Broke Up My Family," *Salon.com*, September 17, 1998, available at [http://www.salon.com/1998/09/17/cov\\_16newsb/](http://www.salon.com/1998/09/17/cov_16newsb/).

<sup>112</sup> Tyrrell, "Cybersexy *Salon*," *TAS* (June 1998): 18; Tyrrell, "Continuing Crisis," *TAS* (June 1998): 8.

<sup>113</sup> Wladyslaw Pleszczynski, "About This Month," *TAS* (June 1998): 4. On conservative investigations into left-wing philanthropists, see Susan Hirschmann, "Emily's List: Chicks With Checks," *TAS* (April 1993): 20-23; For conservatives' favorable response to Hirschmann's article, see Limbaugh, "Emily's List," *The Limbaugh Letter* (December 1994): 5.

<sup>114</sup> Tyrrell, "Cybersexy *Salon*," 18; Tyrrell, "Continuing Crisis," *TAS* (June 1998): 8; Frost, "Salon.com beats the odds," C1.

the White House's "Communication Stream of Conspiracy Commerce," originally written in 1995 but released to great coverage in March of 1997. Not unlike the sensational aspects of the Troopergate story, *Salon's* allegations of illegality at *TAS* were immediately repeated by print and media news. For example, *Time* magazine covered the allegations, asking "Did the king of the Clinton haters funnel cash to Kenneth Starr's chief Whitewater witness?" Mark Geragos, the attorney for Susan McDougal, a Clinton supporter facing charges related to Whitewater, asserted on CNN's "Crossfire" that "*The American Spectator* took that \$2.4 million, they funneled it to David Hale, who's [Starr's] chief witness."<sup>115</sup>

It is easy to understand skepticism on the part of the Clinton White House and journalists and their desire to investigate further. The connections between *TAS* and David Hale were extensive, including *TAS* board members Theodore Olson and David Henderson. *TAS* contributor James Ring Adams admitted to the *Times* that "the only financial assistance the magazine gave to Mr. Hale was \$200 to subsidize his telephone calls to the magazine while he was in prison" and "that Mr. Hale occasionally used a 'safe house' in Little Rock rented by *The American Spectator*." Moreover, by the spring of 1998, accounts were widespread through Washington of the internal shakeup and audit controversy at the magazine the previous fall. Clearly, it seemed to many, something controversial and possibly even illegal regarding the magazine's tax exempt status and/or the Whitewater witnesses had developed. This much seemed clear: Scaife had funded a

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<sup>115</sup> Richard Lacayo, "Hale Storm Rising," *Time* (April 13, 1998): 54; Lewis, "Almost \$2 Million Spent," A20; Quoted in Corry, "*Salon's* Spectator Project," 44.

project through a nonprofit opinion journal specifically for the purpose of bringing down a president, and now, in 1998, an impeachment seemed plausible.<sup>116</sup>

Initially, the White House refused to comment publicly on the *Salon* allegations, but privately administration officials expressed glee to reporters. *Salon* was a new magazine, one of the first attempts at an internet only news and opinion journal; its story on *TAS*'s Arkansas Project put the fledgling digital magazine on the map. At the White House Correspondents' Dinner in late April, President Clinton, at the time wrestling with the Paula Jones lawsuit and a Lewinsky-related Grand Jury hearing, humorously offered some valuable publicity. "I just want to know one thing: how come there's no table for *Salon Magazine*?" he asked. The audience laughed in response, but conservatives began to question the connections between Clinton and *Salon*.<sup>117</sup>

Significantly, the Clinton administration and Democrats took the *Salon* allegations seriously. Tyrrell learned this first hand when he agreed to appear on C-SPAN's *Washington Journal* on April 2. While waiting in the Green Room he heard something that shocked him. On the set with host Brian Lamb was Michigan Democratic Representative John Conyers, who, as a member of the House Judicial Committee, was discussing impeachment scenarios. Lamb casually mentioned that *TAS*'s Tyrrell was his next guest, and Conyers replied, "I am sorry to hear that... We're investigating the

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<sup>116</sup> Lewis, "Justice Dept. Wants Inquiry Into Anti-Clinton Witness," *New York Times*, April 10, 1998, A16; the final audit raised the total to \$400 for Hale's long distance phone calls, see Lewis, "Almost \$2 Million Spent", A20; See also Broder, "American Spectator Audit," *Salon.com*, April 27, 1998; and Tyrrell, "The Government is Going to Get You," *TAS* (November/December 2002): 5-6, 78-80.

<sup>117</sup> William Clinton, "Remarks at the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner," *Administration of William J. Clinton, 1998*, Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, No. 34 WCPD, 713-715; See also Tyrrell, "Cybersexy *Salon*," 18; *PR Newswire*, "Landmark Uncovers Journalists' Ties to White House Money Trail," April 30, 1998, 1; Lewis, "Justice Dept. Wants Inquiry Into Anti-Clinton Witness," *NYT*, April 10, 1998, A16; Conyers read a *Washington Post* article on the House floor, see *House Congressional Record*, 105<sup>th</sup> Congress, June 10, 1998, E1096. At a White House social in the spring of 1998, the Clintons briefly talked with *Salon.com* editors and Broder, expressing their approval of the Scaife story, see Kurtz, "Whitewater Mud Hits the Messengers: Online Magazine's Staff Caught in the Swirl of Conspiracy Theorists," *Washington Post*, April 24, 1998, B1.

magazine. They've been the beneficiary of funding that raises interesting points. Much of the legal fees, the political propaganda, and the investigation has been funded by right-wing, conservative, wealthy organizations, and nonprofit charitables and foundations."<sup>118</sup>

The following week the Clinton Justice Department demanded a formal investigation of the magazine for "alleged witness tampering and threatened murder." Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder wrote Ken Starr's Office of the Independent Counsel requesting a formal inquiry into the *Salon* magazine allegations. Starr ultimately appointed a former Justice Department investigator, Michael Shaheen to conduct the inquiry. Between June 1998 and July 1999, Tyrrell and the magazine were forced to hire attorneys to defend their interests in separate investigations conducted in Washington and in US District Court in Fort Smith, Arkansas. The press followed the investigation, especially when Scaife appeared in Fort Smith to testify.<sup>119</sup>

Initially, Tyrrell threatened to resist cooperation on all fronts with the investigations. But in the end, he and the magazine cooperated. He announced the probe with characteristic humor. "Hey! Guess who the Special Prosecutor in Whitewater is about to investigate?" he joked, "Why, it's the little old *American Spectator*, our very own selves...I love it. No matter that the whole issue could not possibly be more farfetched. No matter that the guy Holder who referred it is a bigtime Clinton/Ron Brown hatchet lawyer." He categorically denied any wrongdoing and challenged the basis of the investigation:

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<sup>118</sup> Broder and Conason, "The *American Spectator*'s Funny Money," *Salon.com*, June 8, 1998; Tyrrell, "The Government is Going to Get You," *TAS* (November/December 2002): 5-6, 78-80; see also Pat Griffith, "Scaife Interest-Conflict Probe Sought," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, February 12, 1998, A17.

<sup>119</sup> Senator Robert Torricelli read the Holder letter on the Senate floor, see *Senate Congressional Record*, 105<sup>th</sup> Congress, February 11, 1998, S625; Tyrrell, "The Government is Going to Get You," 5-6, 78-80; Tyrrell, "We Have Returned," *TAS* (July/August 2002): 6; John Mintz, "Anti-Clinton Billionaire Goes Before Grand Jury," *Washington Post*, September 29, 1998, A8.

There is no ‘vast right-wing conspiracy’... The witness in question, David Hale, gave his story to Jeff Gerth of the *New York Times* among other reporters weeks before he encountered anyone from *The American Spectator*, which, according to the Clintonites, paid Hale for his testimony, a charge that we deny. Hale too denies receiving money.<sup>120</sup>

Tyrrell viewed the investigation as part of Clinton’s counterattack strategy aimed at Starr’s office. No editor or journalist at the magazine was called before the Shaheen grand jury in Fort Smith, but Tyrrell felt harassed. The investigation consumed his and the magazine’s time, attention, and operating budget, effectively neutering its ability to attack further the Clintons. “A dozen of us were either called in with our lawyers before a Fort Smith, Arkansas, grand jury or before a government inquiry here in Washington,” he later explained. “My experience with the Washington inquiry was expensive in legal fees, though civic pride impels me to admit that the team of prosecutors and agents from the FBI and IRS was polite and respectful of my First Amendment Rights.”<sup>121</sup>

Conservative publications came to *TAS*’s defense. The *Observer* and *Salon* stories were problematic, wrote editors at *The Weekly Standard*, observing that almost immediately after publication the only witnesses and sources for the stories backpedaled. One was a teenage boy at the time, and the other, the boy’s mother, Caryn Mann, turned out to be an astrologer with connections to the Clintons. “What *Salon* dramatically calls ‘headquarters for a sophisticated, well-financed operation aimed at discrediting the president of the United States’—is actually Dozhier’s Bait Shop and Rainbow Landing,” mocked the *TAS* journalistic ally. “And Caryn Mann is his disgruntled ex-girlfriend, an astrologist who has elsewhere claimed to have telepathically directed U.S. troop

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<sup>120</sup> Tyrrell, “Cybersexy *Salon*,” 18.

<sup>121</sup> Tyrrell, “The Government is Going to Get You,” 5-6, 78-80; Tyrrell, “We Have Returned,” *TAS* (July/August 2002): 5-7; and R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., interview with Brian Lamb, “Q&A,” C-SPAN, May 6, 2007.

movements during the Persian Gulf War,” wrote David Tell, “And she has since acknowledged that she did not [sic] see Dozhier give Hale any money; only her son did.” Her son’s story later changed, as well. Nationally syndicated conservative columnist Robert Novak questioned the independence of Janet Reno’s Justice Department.<sup>122</sup>

Apart from the serious charges and their tenuous financial situation, Tyrrell and his colleagues at the magazine found the *Observer* and *Salon* articles amusing. They found it funny that their opponents had fixated on Dozhier’s store in Hot Springs. Tyrrell mocked it as “Bait Shop Junta” and derided the idea that this was the base for Hillary Clinton’s “vast right-wing conspiracy.” Matt Labash, a former *TAS* staffer writing for *The Weekly Standard*, agreed. “My colleagues and I were amused that so many thought [the Arkansas Project] responsible for so much,” remembered Labash, “the heavy breathers and conspiracy theorists in Arkansas and elsewhere that we typically peppered for ‘hot leads’ were unlikely to find their car keys, let alone information to bring down the president.”<sup>123</sup>

Defending *TAS*, *The Wall Street Journal* warned that the First Amendment was under assault and criticized the press for not challenging the administration. “So we have the U.S. government marshaling its powers to investigate how a magazine spent its money reporting stories highly critical of the incumbent Administration.” Yet the press was largely mute to *TAS*’s plight. By contrast, noted the editorial, when Starr’s office

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<sup>122</sup> David Tell, “Wake Up,” *The Weekly Standard* (April 20, 1998): 9-10; and Robert Novak, “Is Justice in Clinton’s Pocket?” *The New York Post*, April 13, 1998, 27.

<sup>123</sup> Matt Labash, “Clintonmania: It Never Ends in Arkansas,” *The Weekly Standard* (December 6, 2004): 18. On the “Bait Shop Junta,” see Tyrrell, “The Clinton Legacy: A Scherzo,” *TAS* (September 2000): 14, 16, 18-19; see also Murray Waas, “Tainted Witness,” *Salon.com*, January 12, 1999. York, a *TAS* investigative reporter in the 1990s, was blunt in his assessment. “Portrayed by the left as a highly effective political dirty-tricks machine, the [Arkansas] project in fact bore more resemblance to a Keystone Kops operation, as Henderson and Boynton crisscrossed Arkansas to no discernible effect.” See York, “Life and Death,” 91-110. On the “Bait Shop Junta,” see Tyrrell, “The Clinton Legacy: A Scherzo,” *TAS* (September 2000): 14, 16, 18-19; see also Murray Waas, “Tainted Witness,” *Salon.com*, January 12, 1999.

“subpoenaed White House hatchetman Sidney Blumenthal, the *Times* saw it as ‘an attack on press freedom and the unrestricted flow of information.’”<sup>124</sup>

Tyrrell also accused the mainstream press of bias in its silence. “A small magazine was being investigated by the federal government over how it spent its money investigating the president of the United States,” he stressed, “But none of the usual First Amendment watchdogs rose to bray, ‘Chilling effect!’ or even note the free speech implications of the attack.”<sup>125</sup>

But some journalists in the mainstream press noted some concerns. Writing in the *New York Times*, for example, Neil Lewis remarked on the Justice Department’s departure from its standard practice with Holder’s letters to Starr. “The letter publicizing the accusations against Mr. Hale and Mr. Starr’s possible conflicts was unusual for a Justice Department where Attorney General Janet Reno has been reticent about discussing details of any pending investigations.”<sup>126</sup>

*The Weekly Standard* also went on the attack. Philip Terzian pointed out that Jonathan Broder, one of the two key writers of the *Salon* articles, had been fired in 1988 from the *Chicago Tribune* for committing plagiarism, a fact Terzian criticized other media figures for not addressing. “For the one feature of Broder’s career that neither Howard Kurtz nor Tim Russert saw fit to mention—and the singular detail that tells us all we need to know about Jonathan Broder—is his experience as a plagiarist.”<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Editorial, “Hale Storm,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 17, 1998, A14.

<sup>125</sup> Tyrrell, “The Government is Going to Get You,” 5-6, 78-80.

<sup>126</sup> Lewis, “Justice Dept. Wants Inquiry Into Anti-Clinton Witness,” *New York Times*, April 10, 1998, A16.

<sup>127</sup> Philip Terzian, “The Plagiarist’s Salon,” *The Weekly Standard* (May 11, 1998): 16. *The Weekly Standard* was founded in 1995 by former young writers at *TAS*, Fred Barnes and William Kristol. It frequently defended *TAS*, but it never published similar investigative articles, preferring instead, like *NR*, to concentrate on ideological and policy disputes. *The Weekly Standard*, “The Reading List,” (November 13, 1995): 2-3.

Conservatives tried to fight back as the *Observer* and *Salon* allegations spread throughout the media. When Democratic Senator Robert Torricelli repeated the *Salon* allegations as facts on ABC's weekly Washington news show, *The Week*, Jay Nordlinger at *The Weekly Standard* pushed back. "Torricelli offered not a wisp of evidence for his allegations," wrote Nordlinger, who also speculated on the Senator's motivations. "When someone crosses him, the senator retaliates. Two months ago, *TAS* criticized Torricelli for his ties to the People's Mujahedin Organization of Iran, which the State Department has labeled a terrorist group...his foray into the Lewinsky scandal gives him an opportunity to war against a magazine that has embarrassed him."<sup>128</sup>

The Clinton White House was thrilled with these developments. From its perspective, the magazine was a sleazy right wing tabloid, using money from rabid anti-Clinton billionaires to publish essentially politically motivated, unfounded, salacious, and dishonest stories. The *Observer* and *Salon* stories seemed to confirm, from the administration's perspective, its earlier conspiracy commerce theory and the first lady's explanation on the Today Show on January 28, 1998 that the allegations about a sexual affair between her husband and Lewinsky were just another example of a "vast right-wing conspiracy" to bring down the president. Clinton would later describe this view in his autobiography:

The [McDougal] jury didn't know about the money and support Hale had been receiving from a clandestine effort known as the Arkansas project. The Arkansas project was funded by the ultra-conservative billionaire Richard Mellon Scaife from Pittsburgh, who has also pumped money into *The American Spectator* to fund its negative stories on Hillary and me. For example, the project has paid one former state trooper \$10,000 for the ridiculous yarn accusing me of drug smuggling...Most of the Arkansas project's efforts centered on David Hale. Working through Parker Dozhier, a former aide to Justice Jim Johnson, the

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<sup>128</sup> Jay Nordlinger, "Tailgunner Torricelli," *The Weekly Standard* (March 2, 1998): 13-15; Torricelli's senate career ended in a scandal in 2002 related to allegedly illegal campaign contributions.



project set up a haven for Hale at Dozhier's bait shop outside Hot Springs, where Dozhier gave Hale cash and the use of his car and fishing cabin while Hale was cooperating with Starr. During this time Hale also received free legal advice from Ted Olson, a friend of Starr's and a lawyer for the Arkansas Project and *The American Spectator*. Olson later became the solicitor general in President George W. Bush's justice department after a Senate hearing in which he was less than candid about his work for the Arkansas project.<sup>129</sup>

Clinton was not alone in misrepresenting the strange history of *TAS*'s Arkansas Project. It became common after 1998 for some journalists and figures on the left to believe and repeat what proved eventually to be the unfounded reports from the *Salon* articles. Democratic politico Terry McAuliffe, for example, in his 2007 memoir, claimed that *TAS* "took under-the-table money from an ultraconservative named Richard Mellon Scaife and used it to send reporters out to do just enough digging to give the veneer of truth to wild, unfounded charges." These charges, like the ones that appeared in Clinton's memoir, were factually incorrect, and yet were repeated frequently.<sup>130</sup>

After an extensive investigation, Shaheen exonerated the magazine completely. The charges published in the *Observer* and *Salon* were baseless, he and two retired federal judges, Arlin Adams and Charles Renfrew, who partnered in the investigation, found. The 168-page official report submitted to Starr's Office of the Independent Counsel was sealed, but a press report explained:

[After] conducting an independent investigation into allegations that David Hale may have received payments to influence his testimony in matters within the jurisdiction of the Office of Special Review has concluded that 'many of the allegations, suggestions and insinuations regarding the tendering and receipt of things of value were shown to be unsubstantiated or, in some cases, untrue...in

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<sup>129</sup> Bill Clinton, *My Life* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2004), 711-712. On the idea of a well-funded, right-wing conspiracy, see Clinton quoted in John Brummett, *Highwire: The Education of Bill Clinton* (New York: Hyperion, 1994), 282.

<sup>130</sup> Terry McAuliffe, *What a Party: My Life with Democrats* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2007), 58; Tyrrell, *The Clinton Crack-Up* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 233-234; Hillary Clinton's autobiography also includes inaccuracies on this point, see Hillary Clinton, *Living History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 208-209, 350.

some instances, there is little if any credible evidence establishing that a particular thing of value was demanded, offered, or received.’<sup>131</sup>

A relieved Tyrrell wrote “we have been exonerated to the utmost,” and indignantly complained, “Yet the scoundrels made life complicated for us, and is it not interesting that all the great First Amendment watchdogs of journalism slept through this police state assault?”<sup>132</sup>

Meanwhile, to restore stability and credibility to *TAS*—important for the sake of recruiting new donors—the magazine invited respected right wing columnist Robert Novak to join the board as an unpaid member. “They wanted a journalist on the board,” he explained, “I think the magazine has made mistakes and is in trouble, and I think it’s a valuable magazine and I wanted to save it.” Unsure of what he would learn about the internal management of the Scaife money, Novak emphasized that “my going on the board in no way condones everything they’ve done or defends it.” He brought conservative respectability, and he was not shy of criticizing his allies at the magazine. “It’s made some terrible mistakes,” he admitted, “I don’t believe taking that kind of money from a foundation for a specific purpose is proper journalism. I don’t think it’s ethical [and] it was a mistake to hire investigators.”<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> The Shaheen Report remains sealed on the grounds that it contains sensitive grand jury testimony; the July 27, 1999 press release was reprinted frequently in *TAS*, see Tyrrell, “Lying with Impunity,” *TAS* (September 2004): 67; and Conason, “Shaheen Draws a Blank,” *Salon.com*, July 28, 1999, <http://www.salon.com/1999/07/28/shaheen/>; Conason, “Why Won’t the Government Release the Shaheen Report,” *Salon.com*, Thursday, May 17, 2001, [http://www.salon.com/2001/05/17/shaheen\\_report/](http://www.salon.com/2001/05/17/shaheen_report/); and Robert Kaiser, “Clinton Critics Cleared in Special Investigation,” *Washington Post*, July 29, 1999, A2.

<sup>132</sup> Tyrrell, “The Clinton Legacy,” 14, 16, 18-19; Tyrrell, “We Have Returned,” 5-7; see also Benjamin Wittes *Starr: A Reassessment* (New Haven: Yale Press, 2002), 225; and *NYT*, “Whitewater Report Finds No Proof of Tampering,” July 29, 1999, A14.

<sup>133</sup> Joe Conason, “The Novak Project: Clean Up *Spectator*,” *New York Observer*, June 1, 1998, available at <http://observer.com/1998/06/the-novak-project-clean-up-spectator/>; Kurtz, “60 Minutes’ A Day? It’s the Question of the Hour,” *Washington Post*, June 1, 1998, C1.

Novak resolutely opposed the practice of hiring private investigators for any purpose, and the magazine's board agreed. It unanimously voted to prohibit such practices in the future. "Resolved, that as a matter of policy, *TAS* will not engage non-journalists for investigative projects and will not engage private investigators in connection with its journalistic mission." Novak took this statement and unanimous vote to be binding in perpetuity. Tyrrell, by contrast, who also affirmed the motion, interpreted the statement differently. Hiring outside non-journalists to investigate stories was commonplace, he argued, and "the majority of the board, including me, passed the resolution fully aware that it would not run unto eternity but only until we brought to the board further investigative plans. The board wanted to be informed when next we undertook similar investigations."<sup>134</sup>

The Shaheen exoneration did not remove the threat of government investigation from the magazine. In early 2001, a row ensued in the Senate over the confirmation of *TAS* board member Theodore Olson as President George W. Bush's Solicitor General. Again, the *Observer* and *Salon* were at the center of controversy, accusing Olson of complicity in the Arkansas Project. Unwilling to accept the Shaheen report and relying on the veracity of David Brock, *Salon* prompted Democrats to challenge the nomination. Senator Patrick Leahy, ranking member of the Judicial Committee, threatened to hold up the nomination until the magazine produced all of its board records and internal audits. Fellow board member Robert Novak protested that "the main issue is ideological warfare," not the Arkansas Project. "I can personally attest to how thin the case is against

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<sup>134</sup> Robert Novak, "Resolved," Letter to the Editor, *TAS* (January/February 2003): 10; Tyrrell, "Response to Novak," *TAS* (January/February 2003): 10.

Olson,” he wrote, “The Arkansas Project was being wrapped up, and board members—Olson included—were isolated from its management, just as he informed the senators.”<sup>135</sup>

*NYT*'s columnist William Safire defended both Olson and *TAS* and attacked Leahy for trampling on the First Amendment. “In confirmation hearings, Olson testified that he was the magazine’s lawyer, not its editor, and made no editorial decisions;” affirmed Safire, “moreover, the magazine was engaged in journalism protected by the First Amendment.” He agreed with Novak that the real issue was partisan, rooted in Olson’s successful defense of George Bush’s interests in the previous year’s *Bush v. Gore* case. Safire considered Leahy a friend, but said that on this issue the senator was in the wrong. “Come back to the Constitution Pat,” he wrote, “never permit the investigative power of government to chill the expression of any opinion or report of what the writer has reason to believe to be the truth.” Leahy eventually decided not to follow through on his threats to the magazine and Olson was confirmed.<sup>136</sup>

*TAS* struggled to meet payroll after the government investigations of 1998-1999. Facing imminent bankruptcy in 2000, the magazine received two bailout offers. Canadian and British media tycoon Conrad Black offered to provide substantial funding indefinitely in exchange for magazine control. He intended to replace Tyrrell as editor with David Frum, a moderate conservative from Canada.<sup>137</sup>

As both founder and sole editor-in-chief for the magazine, Tyrrell was unwilling to accept the Black offer and lose control of his creation. The Clinton battles also affected

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<sup>135</sup> Conason, “Arkansas Project Should Haunt Olson,” *New York Observer*, May 21, 2001, 5; Novak, “Leahy Employs ‘Red Herring’ To Block Nominee,” *Augusta Chronicle*, May 23, 2001, A4; Prior to his nomination, Olson wrote a harsh assessment of the Reno Justice Department, see Theodore Olson, “The Most Political Justice Department Ever: A Survey,” *TAS* (September 2000): 22-26.

<sup>136</sup> Safire, “The Senate Plumbers,” A25.

<sup>137</sup> As part of his *TAS* defection, York contributed these insider details, see York, “Life and Death,” 91-110.

his position. “He said he had a bond with all of those who had taken on Clinton and fought for his impeachment, and that he was seen as a leader of the opposition, and that if he were demoted or marginalized, he would be letting down those who had followed him,” said Eastwood. “He also said Clinton and those around him would notice what a terrible fate had befallen him and take great pleasure from it. In his view, they would be vindicated if that happened.”<sup>138</sup>

At the eleventh hour George Gilder, a conservative writer who had made a fortune in the technology sector during the 1980s and 1990s, offered to buy the magazine and keep Tyrrell on as editor. But he, too, had conditions—he wanted a new emphasis on the burgeoning technology economy. In 2000, at the height of the internet bubble, this seemed to Gilder a plausible way to make the magazine profitable. “I have been a longtime friend and admirer of R. Emmett Tyrrell and *The American Spectator* magazine,” he wrote. “I am looking forward to helping Bob and the *Spectator* grapple with a new set of fascinating issues arising from the new economy and the technology that drives it, while they continue to wittily dissect the continuing crisis of American politics and culture.”<sup>139</sup>

Gilder’s approach suggested blending conservative political and economic ideas with cutting edge technology business sectors reporting. “We bought the *Spectator* to have a vessel for the views of the investor class, which spearheads the economy,” explained Gilder.<sup>140</sup> The effort failed miserably, but not before Gilder closed the

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<sup>138</sup> Quoted in York, “Life and Death,” 110; see also Tyrrell, “Welcome the Gilder Effect,” *TAS* (November 2000): 12, 14.

<sup>139</sup> See Tyrrell, “Welcome the Gilder Effect,” 12, 14; Joseph D’Agostino, “Conservative Spotlight,” *Human Events* (December 29, 2000): 17; and York, “Life and Death,” 91-110.

<sup>140</sup> Pleszczynski, “About This Month,” *TAS* (November 2000): 4; Editors, “The Interview: George Gilder,” *TAS* (June 2001): 36-44.

magazine's offices in Washington, laid off nearly all but Tyrrell, and moved the remaining operation to Massachusetts.<sup>141</sup>

Journalist Byron York thought *TAS* was finished. He was one of many young writers who had got their start at *TAS* since the magazine's founding in 1967. But after the Arkansas Project debacle, the Burr firing, and the Gilder buyout, he soured on the magazine, particularly its editor, Tyrrell. Then, the *Atlantic Monthly* hired him to pen a critical, insider's obituary. York wrote, "The conservative magazine survived and prospered for twenty-five years before Bill Clinton came into its sights. Now the former President is rich and smiling, and the *Spectator* is dead."<sup>142</sup>

York's main point was that the magazine had sacrificed its respectable history of providing intellectual substance for Clinton scandal mongering. *NR* and *The Weekly Standard*, by contrast, never engaged in *TAS*'s anti-Clinton obsession, eschewing personal attacks for substantive discussions of policy and ideological disagreements.<sup>143</sup> York correctly assessed the cause and seriousness of the magazine's troubles—its obsession with bringing down the Clintons. This was the original sin that led to the Arkansas Project's irregularities, the fractured staff relationships, and the grand jury

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<sup>141</sup> Tyrrell, "We Have Returned," 5-7; Kurtz, "Media Notes," *Washington Post*, Monday, June 10, 2002, C1; and York, "Life and Death," 91-110.

<sup>142</sup> York, "Life and Death," 91. York (b. 1958) studied at the University of Alabama and the University of Chicago, and was working as a television producer at the Washington, DC, NBC affiliate when he began contributing to *TAS*. He quickly established himself as a conservative writer with investigative pieces for *TAS* in the 1990s. But his stories often lacked the conspiratorial undertones, lurid details, and speculative allegations in other stories, certainly when compared with Brock's. Byron York, "Taxing the Air," *TAS* (October 1993): 58-59; Byron York, interview with Brian Lamb, *News Review*, C-SPAN, January 17, 2000; and *The Washington Examiner*, "Byron York Joins Examiner as Chief Political Correspondent" (February 3, 2009): 7.

<sup>143</sup> See York, "Life and Death," 91-110; William Kristol, who began publishing with *TAS* while a teenager in high school in 1968, also chose substance over scandals. Throughout the 1990s he repeatedly stressed the importance of conservative ideas, see Adam Meyerson, "Kristol Ball: William Kristol Looks at the Future of the GOP: An Interview," *Policy Review* (Winter 1994): 14-18.

inquiries. Singling out Tyrrell for pointed criticism, he charged the magazine's editors with allowing their opposition to former 1960s student radicals to overwhelm and harm conservative ideology. "The wonderful little magazine that gave me my start as a young writer, *The American Spectator*," lamented John Podhoretz elsewhere, "was ruined and finally shattered by its psychotic obsession with Clinton's evil ways."<sup>144</sup>

Still, York's obituary was premature. The magazine survived, entering a magazine purgatory of sorts, waiting for wealthy donors to save it. "Reports of the *Spectator*'s death turned out to be exaggerated," wrote James Taranto, from the *Wall Street Journal*'s editorial board, "but it is fair to say that in 2001 the magazine had fallen on hard times, in part as a result of a fruitless Clinton administration grand jury probe."<sup>145</sup>

By the summer of 2002, recognizing it was time to cut his losses, Gilder sold the magazine back to *TAS*'s nonprofit organization. Tyrrell rehired his old staff and restored the familiar format and political concentration. "George has returned the magazine to the foundation," he announced, "telling me that apparently there really are some institutions that cannot make money, as the symphony cannot make money or the local library."<sup>146</sup>

In 2003, it slowly regained its financial footing and resumed its position as a combative conservative magazine opposed to the aftermath of 1960s radicalism. "*The American Spectator* is now being refitted after enduring Hurricane Clinton, the big blow," trumpeted Tyrrell, "Loyal readers can hear the carpenters hammering boards into place as we prepare the relaunch...[at] the only intellectual review ever to provoke a

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<sup>144</sup> John Podhoretz, quoted in "Current Wisdom," *TAS* (March/April 2003): 81.

<sup>145</sup> James Taranto, "Presswatch," *TAS* (June 2008): 52.

<sup>146</sup> Tyrrell, "We Have Returned," 5-7; Kurtz, "Media Notes," *Washington Post*, Monday, June 10, 2002, C1.

president's impeachment and acquire its own special counsel.”<sup>147</sup> Whether a rebooted conservative magazine forged in the 1960s could survive in the twenty-first century remained to be seen.

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<sup>147</sup> Tyrrell, “The Government is Going to Get You,” 5-6, 78-80; and James Taranto, “Presswatch,” *TAS* (June 2008): 52.



### **Epilogue: The Regnery Revival: *The American Spectator* Since 2001**

George Gilder's experiment running *TAS* as a magazine of the technology economy, peppered with conservative opinion pieces, failed miserably.<sup>1</sup> Gilder was a longtime friend of the magazine, though, and in the summer of 2002, at a dinner hosted by the *Wall Street Journal*'s Robert Bartley, he returned *TAS* to Tyrrell and its nonprofit foundation.<sup>2</sup> During the next year, Tyrrell reassembled the magazine's staff, returning staples such as managing editor Wladyslaw Pleszczynski and former columnist Ben Stein, and moving offices from Great Barrington, Massachusetts to New York, and then eventually back to Washington, DC. Peter Hannaford, a former advisor to Ronald Reagan, served as interim publisher, offering valuable financial advice.<sup>3</sup>

The most important change was the addition of Alfred Regnery as publisher in 2003.<sup>4</sup> The son of Henry Regnery, founder in 1947 of what became the most successful conservative publishing press in the postwar period, Alfred Regnery had worked in the family business for decades. He brought with him extensive experience in the business side of publishing, then, as well as extensive contacts. *TAS* had "taken its lumps over the

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<sup>1</sup> For a representative example of this format, see *TAS*'s November/December 2001 issue. See also Byron York, "The Life and Death of The American Spectator," *Atlantic Magazine* (November 2001): 91-110. On his decision to purchase *TAS*, Gilder explained: "I woke up from 15 years of studying semiconductors and optics to discover that a whole generation of polled politicians had entirely forgotten the lessons of the Reagan era, and that science policy had been incredibly debauched by special government interests and, most critically, by the perverted illusions of the environmental movement." Pleszczynski, "About This Month," *TAS* (November 2000): 4; Editors, "The Interview: George Gilder," *TAS* (June 2001): 36-44.

<sup>2</sup> Seth Lipsky, "Memories and Tributes," *TAS* (December 2007/January 2008): 28.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Hannaford, interview with Stephen Knott and Russell Riley, January 10, 2003, Ronald Reagan Oral History Project, Miller Center of Public Affairs, Charlottesville, Virginia, available at [http://web1.millercenter.org/poh/transcripts/ohp\\_2003\\_0110\\_hannaford.pdf](http://web1.millercenter.org/poh/transcripts/ohp_2003_0110_hannaford.pdf); Peter Hannaford to Tyrrell, November 18, 2001, Box 62, *American Spectator* Correspondence, Robert L. Bartley Papers, Hoover Institution Archive, Stanford, CA; Tyrrell to Bob Bartley, October 28, 2001, Box 62, *American Spectator* Correspondence, Robert L. Bartley Papers, Hoover Institution Archive, Stanford, CA; *The Weekly Standard*, "Kathleen, We Hardly Knew Ye" (August 12/August 19, 2002): 2; and especially the *TAS* editorial statement in *TAS* (November/December 2002): 5.

<sup>4</sup> Tyrrell, "Another Ruffian Arrives!" *TAS* (March/April 2003): 9.

last few years,” he told *Publisher’s Weekly* upon taking over as publisher, and he wanted to “revitalize it and put it back on the map as an influential right of center magazine.”<sup>5</sup>

TAS’s longtime supporter Robert Bartley, recently retired from the *Wall Street Journal*, offered part-time editorial assistance, as well. “I am digging through the considerable stack of issues confronting the *Spectator*,” Regnery wrote to Bartley, “but am making good headway.”<sup>6</sup> The renovated magazine announced its formal return in October 2003.<sup>7</sup>

It remained committed to fighting 1960s radicalism during the 2000s. “*The American Spectator* began 40 years ago as the anti-student radical intellectual review that laughs,” Tyrrell explained in 2007. “Today it is still laughing and at the same personages, though now they are heading toward the far side of middleage, and perhaps deserving polite condescension.”<sup>8</sup> Editors, especially Tyrrell, also remained fixated on the magazine’s battles against the Clintons in the 1990s.<sup>9</sup>

One major front of its continued war with the Clintons was the publication in 2002 of David Brock’s confessional memoir, *Blinded By the Right*. Ironically, despite TAS’s well-earned reputation for often mean-spirited attacks on gays, Brock, a gay man, had written the two most successful articles in the magazine’s history.<sup>10</sup> His memoir,

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Jim Milliot, “Al Regnery Moving to ‘*American Spectator*,’” *Publisher’s Weekly* (March 31, 2003): 12; Robert Thomas, “Henry Regnery, 84, Ground-Breaking Conservative Publisher, Obituary,” *New York Times*, June 23, 1996, 33; Philip Shenon, “Projects of a Provoking Sort,” *New York Times*, May 23, 1985, B12.

<sup>6</sup> Alfred Regnery to Robert Bartley, May 7, 2003, Box 62, *American Spectator* Correspondence, Robert L. Bartley Papers, Hoover Institution Archive, Stanford, CA. The magazine continued to publish, though irregularly, between 2000 and 2003. Bartley explained that he was “lending an editorial hand...because I didn’t want to see a Clinton political assault kill a journalist enterprise. *The Spectator* was endangered by an investigation by the U.S. government, a chilling free speech ignored by usually hypersensitive journalism ethicists.” See Robert Bartley, “Our New Old Look,” *TAS* (October 2003): 5.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Bartley, “Our New Old Look,” 5; and Alfred Regnery, “Back With a Vengeance,” *TAS* (October 2003): 7.

<sup>8</sup> Tyrrell, “Happy 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary,” *TAS* (December 2007/January 2008): 7.

<sup>9</sup> Tyrrell, “The Government is Going to Get You,” *TAS* (November/December 2002): 5-6, 78-80;

<sup>10</sup> Brock, “The Real Anita Hill,” *TAS* (March 1992): 18-30; and Brock, “Living With the Clintons,” *TAS* (January 1994): 18-30.

published after his break with conservatism, insulted and attacked *TAS* editors (personally and professionally), contributors, and supporters with the same tone and clear writing that had made his *TAS* stories so persuasive in the 1990s. He also confessed to intentionally violating journalistic ethics on at least one occasion while at *TAS* when he bullied a source and then printed what he knew to be false information.<sup>11</sup>

*TAS* and other conservative journals counterattacked, pointing to inaccuracies in Brock's account. Pleszczynski went further, saying Brock "could be one sick puppy...[who] had checked [himself] into a psychiatric ward last summer."<sup>12</sup> *TAS* ally Bartley called Brock "the John Walker Lindh of contemporary conservatism," a reference to an American who fought alongside the Al Qaeda terrorist organization in 2001.<sup>13</sup> Tyrrell defensively pointed to other, far more serious recent violations of journalistic ethics at the *New York Times* and *The New Republic*.<sup>14</sup>

The second member of the 1960s student generation to become president was George W. Bush; unlike Clinton, he was a self-identified conservative. Bush's administration softened *TAS*'s critical edge in the 2000s and repeated a pattern set during the Reagan presidency. *TAS* initially supported Bush Administration policies, particularly

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<sup>11</sup> Brock, *Blinded by the Right: The Conscience of an Ex-Conservative* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2002).

<sup>12</sup> Wladyslaw Pleszczynski, "You've Got a Friend," *TAS* (July/August 2002): 82. For *TAS*'s formal review of the books, see John Corry, "Blinded by the Bias: Why Bother Being Serious," *TAS* (July/August 2002): 22.

<sup>13</sup> Bartley quoted in Jane Mayer, "True Confessions," Review of Brock's *Blinded by the Right*, *The New York Review of Books* (June 27, 2002), available at <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2002/jun/27/true-confessions/>. *New York Times*, "Captive Fighter in Taliban Says He is American," December 3, 2001, B2.

<sup>14</sup> See Tyrrell, "The Liars' Club," *TAS* (June/July 2003): 5, 7. Other high profile journalism scandals in the 1990s and early 2000s included *The New Republic*'s Stephen Glass and the *New York Times*'s Jayson Blair, both of whom were fired for fabricating sources. See Lori Robertson, "Shattered Glass at *The New Republic*," *American Journalism Review* (June 1998): 9; and Jayson Blair, *Burning Down My Masters' House: My Life at The New York Times* (Beverly Hills, CA: New Millennium Press, 2004); Seth Mnookin, *Hard News: The Scandals at The New York Times and Their Meaning for American Media* (New York: Random House, 2004). John Corry, "Blinded by the Bias: Why Bother Being Serious," *TAS* (July/August 2002): 22.

its tax cuts, the nominations of John Roberts and Samuel Alito to the Supreme Court, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as part of an anti-terrorism campaign. Also, *TAS* alums worked throughout the administration in various positions, including former editor William McGurn as chief speechwriter. By the mid-2000s, though, the magazine's editors were complaining about limited direct access and influence over White House policies.<sup>15</sup>

But even as editors began to sour on Bush's reluctance to veto spending bills and the costs of international wars, they were hesitant to criticize sharply the president.<sup>16</sup> "We applaud the President for his tax cuts, for his efforts to reform Social Security," wrote Regnery, for example, "but we do not like his fondness for big government, his spending record, or his neglect of his conservative base."<sup>17</sup> For Tyrrell, conservatives' response to Bush echoed their response to Reagan. "I heard it also during the administration of the conservative president whom we now revere, Ronald Reagan. The song was pretty much the same as the complaints we hear today, even on the question of government growth."<sup>18</sup> A conservative ally of sorts in the White House blunted the magazine's critical edge, just as it had in the 1980s.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Tyrrell, "This President & Us," *TAS* (November 2005): 14-17.

<sup>16</sup> For an example of one of the strongest criticisms of Bush in *TAS*, see Angelo Codevilla, "He Put Us In a Hole: The Making of a Foreign Policy Disaster," *TAS* (April 2006): 24-28; Like *National Review*, *TAS* soured on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq in the mid-2000s.

<sup>17</sup> Alfred Regnery, "Underwhelmed," *TAS* (April 2006): 4.

<sup>18</sup> Tyrrell, "A Bush Crack-Up?: We've Been Here Before," *TAS* (April 2006): 12-13. "That said, it remains the duty of conservatives to sound the alarm when a Reagan or a George W. Bush wanders. And as is clear," he continued, "from the critical pieces published in this issue about the Bush administration, conservatives are certainly doing their duty." See also Stephen Moore, "We are All Post-Reaganites Now," *TAS* (April 2006): 30-33.

<sup>19</sup> Introducing a critical symposium on Bush's presidency, Tyrrell concluded "that though this conservative President has wandered from his base occasionally, it would be very foolish for his base to fail to turn out in this next election. It has as much at stake as the President. And when its members begin to grumble about how dreadful this Bush is, let them reflect on that other Clinton, waiting in the wings." Tyrrell, "A Bush Crack-Up?: We've Been Here Before," *TAS* (April 2006): 15.

The major difference between the two eras was attitude. *TAS* conservatives were glum during the 1980s but bullish during the 2000s, at least prior to the economic recession of 2008. “Conservatives are now the dominant force in all three branches of the government,” boasted Tyrrell in 2006. “As Peter Wallison made clear in our October issue, America has become a conservative country.”<sup>20</sup> Indeed, the magazine continued to support Bush politically, showing the same editorial reluctance to break with him that they had shown to Reagan. For example, the magazine attacked Bush’s 2004 opponent, Democratic John Kerry, for “displaying all the excesses of his 1960s left-wing contemporaries.”<sup>21</sup>

The Clintons, though, continued to attract the magazine’s attention. Editors tried to counter what they perceived as deliberate attempts by Clinton supporters to malign the magazine’s work in the 1990s.<sup>22</sup> When the Clinton Presidential Library and Museum opened in Little Rock in 2004, Tyrrell visited and was angry to discover a museum placard that described the “Arkansas Project” as a “secret slush fund.”<sup>23</sup> Tyrrell and other *TAS* editors pushed back against these claims frequently in print and during interviews.

Occasionally the magazine’s Clinton obsession expressed itself mischievously. In 2006, while writing a book on Clinton’s post-presidential activities, Tyrrell managed to obtain an invitation to Clinton’s 60<sup>th</sup> birthday party in Toronto and get a picture with the former president, who did not recognize Tyrrell. (The two had met only once before, in

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<sup>20</sup> Tyrrell, “A Bush Crack-Up?: We’ve Been Here Before,” *TAS* (April 2006): 12-13.

<sup>21</sup> Tyrrell, “When They’re 64,” *TAS* (October 2004): 62.

<sup>22</sup> For a representative example of this, see *TAS*, “The Tyrrell/McAuliffe Letters” (December 2007/January 2008): 96-97.

<sup>23</sup> See Tyrrell, interview by Brian Lamb, “Q&A,” C-SPAN, May 6, 2007; and Tyrrell, *The Clinton Crack-Up* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 233-234; Terry McAuliffe, *What a Party: My Life with Democrats* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2007), 58; Hillary Clinton’s autobiography also includes inaccuracies on this point, see Hillary Clinton, *Living History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 208-209, 350.

the mid-1990s, at a restaurant in Washington, DC, resulting in a heated exchange.) When Clinton's staffers discovered Tyrrell's connection to *TAS*, he was forbidden from using his picture with Clinton in print.<sup>24</sup>

The magazine increasingly worried about the political fortunes of Hillary Clinton during the early 2000s. Writers warned that Hillary was still a radical and that she was "positioning herself as the once and future president" for the 2008 campaign.<sup>25</sup> Tyrrell captured the right's fear of a Hillary Clinton presidency with his 2004 book, *Madame Hillary: The Dark Road to the White House*. The book argued that Hillary continued to be deeply influenced by the ideas of the radical 1960s organizer, Saul Alinsky, and that her political "agenda comes from the fevered 1960s left."<sup>26</sup> *TAS* editors echoed this fear of another Clinton in the White House, and as it became clear that Hillary was an early frontrunner for the Democratic nomination, they fought hard to oppose her. They believed that the 2008 election represented the "last great battle between the left wing and the right wing of the 1960s generation."<sup>27</sup>

While the magazine fretted about the Clintons and the influence of 1960s radical guru Alinsky, it continued to rely on donations to stay financially solvent. Subscriptions levels dropped from more than 300,000 in the mid-1990s to fewer than 50,000 by the

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<sup>24</sup> Tyrrell, *The Clinton Crack-Up: The Boy President's Life After the White House* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007), xv-xxvi.

<sup>25</sup> Mark Davis, "The Once and Future President," *TAS* (August/September 2001): 36-40; and Terence Jeffery, "Virtually Hillary," *TAS* (April 2007): 20-24.

<sup>26</sup> Tyrrell and Mark Davis, *Madame Hillary: The Dark Road to the White House* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2004), 2, 99-132; and Taki Theodoracopulos, "Gang of One," *TAS* (March 2004): 56-57.

<sup>27</sup> Tyrrell, interview by Brian Lamb, "Q&A," C-SPAN, May 6, 2007. Elsewhere, Tyrrell wrote that "It is surprising to me that so little today is made of the fact that the dominant figures in the Democratic party are members of the 1960s generation." See Tyrrell, "The Hippies' Last Hurrah," *TAS* (June 2007): 74-75; and Tyrrell, "2008: The Battle for a Generation," *TAS* (March 2007): 14-19.

mid-2000s.<sup>28</sup> Just as the magazine had learned during the Reagan administration, it was more difficult to sell subscriptions with an ally in the White House. Circulation levels improved after the election of Barack Obama, a Democrat, rising to 81,320 in 2012.<sup>29</sup> With such low subscription levels—magazines generally need in excess of 250,000 subscribers to break even—donations were crucial. Richard Mellon Scaife had stopped contributing money to the magazine in 1997, but other donors—most significantly conservative billionaire T. Boone Pickens—stepped forward to support *TAS*.<sup>30</sup>

Pickens sponsored *TAS*'s internship program for young journalists.<sup>31</sup> This allowed the magazine to continue its long tradition of developing young conservative writers, a tradition which had included *Commentary* editor John Podhoretz, the *New Yorker*'s Malcolm Gladwell, and *The Weekly Standard*'s William Kristol and Fred Barnes. In the 2000s, a new generation of young writers gained valuable experience at *TAS*, including Joseph Lawler, who later became an editor for the political website, *RealClearPolitics*, and Philip Klein, who worked for *TAS* before joining the *Washington Examiner* as a senior writer.<sup>32</sup>

While talented new writers continue to fill *TAS*'s offices and masthead, Tyrrell, Regnery, and Pleszczynski, all members of the 1960s student generation, still run the

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<sup>28</sup> Sara Ivry, "Bush's Re-election Lifts Circulation at Liberal Magazines," *New York Times*, March 21, 2005, C7. For comparison, *National Review*'s circulation in 2004 was 173,815 and the liberal journal, *The Nation*, had a circulation of 184,000.

<sup>29</sup> *Standard Periodical Directory* (New York: Oxbridge Publishing Company, 2013), 1733.

<sup>30</sup> Wladyslaw Pleszczynski, "Shall We Dance?" *TAS* (December 2007/January 2008): 6; Robert McCain, "Wolfe Praises *Spectator* Reporting," *Washington Times*, November 7, 2007, A4; and Ron Burr, *TAS* Editorial Board Meeting, CSPAN, July 30, 1993.

<sup>31</sup> Philip Klein, "Energy's Prevailing Winds: *The American Spectator* Interviews Legendary Oilman T. Boone Pickens," *TAS* (May 2008): 16-18, 20; Wladyslaw Pleszczynski, "Shall We Dance?" *TAS* (December 2007/January 2008): 6; and Robert McCain, "Wolfe Praises *Spectator* Reporting," *Washington Times*, November 7, 2007, A4.

<sup>32</sup> "The American Spectator Foundation's 2011 Report," January 30, 2012, 7, available at <http://news.spectator.org/2012%20Annual%20Report.pdf>; and Tyrrell to Bob Bartley, October 28, 2001, Box 62, *American Spectator* Correspondence, Robert L. Bartley Papers, Hoover Institution Archive, Stanford, CA.

magazine. Despite this aging leadership, the magazine has demonstrated an ability to adapt to the digital age. It maintains a robust, daily-updated website, first started in the mid-1990s, as well as an active Twitter account, YouTube channel, and Facebook page.<sup>33</sup> But as the editorial leadership—and the larger 1960s student generation—moves closer to retirement age, it remains to be seen how the magazine, and the conservative movement it supports, will evolve.

As this dissertation has argued, *TAS* waged the cultural battles of the 1960s student generation throughout the late twentieth century, and it did so from largely secular, not religious, grounds. Significantly, *TAS* was the only student magazine from the 1960s to survive the decade and then grow into a national publication, and it did so because its editors were open to allying with others outside conservative circles who shared an opposition to 1960s radicalism. Money from wealthy benefactors also proved crucial to long term viability, and the editors found that attacking opponents, particularly anyone they connected to the 1960s left-wing generation, in occasionally vicious ways attracted additional supporters and attention. The magazine's use of satire and irreverent humor also made it distinctive on the right. Between 1967 and 2001, then, *TAS* filled a unique niche as the conservative intellectual movement's secular culture wars magazine.

*TAS*'s history highlights the importance of conservative members of the 1960s student generation, for whom 1960s radicalism has had a long half-life, and the value of

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<sup>33</sup> “The American Spectator Foundation’s 2011 Report,” January 30, 2012, 7, available at <http://news.spectator.org/2012%20Annual%20Report.pdf>; For the *TAS* website, see <http://spectator.org/>; for the Twitter account, see <https://twitter.com/AmSpec>; for the YouTube channel, see <http://www.youtube.com/user/AmerSpectator>; and for the Facebook page, see <https://www.facebook.com/amspec>. See also James Taranto, “The Journal Interview with R. Emmett Tyrrell: The Right’s Happy Warrior,” *Wall Street Journal (Online)*, April 30, 2010, available at <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704627704575204951159245166.html>.



generational studies in recent American history. To borrow and adapt a phrase from ecologists, the 1960s student cohort has functioned as a “keystone generation” in late twentieth century America—it has exercised disproportionate intellectual and cultural influence since its members came of age in the 1960s. As they move toward retirement from public life, it seems reasonable to expect potentially significant changes in the political culture in various ways.<sup>34</sup>

More broadly, though, this study demonstrates that conservatism is particularly well suited to generational analysis. As works by Patrick Allitt, George Nash, and Greg Schneider have noted, conservative thought has evolved over time. Conservative intellectuals have been reactive and adaptive in the application of conservatives’ values and traditions.<sup>35</sup> Situating conservative thinkers in their generational context, as this study has attempted to do, can help identify and explain important variations in conservative ideas.<sup>36</sup>

This proves particularly useful when examining the post-World War II conservative intellectual movement. As I have tried to show, especially in chapter one, the 1960s student generation differed in important ways from the World War II generation, men like William Buckley, Russell Kirk, and Milton Friedman. The *TAS* editors admired these men, but they were far less focused on fighting international communism than combating domestic student radicalism. And, their variation of

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<sup>34</sup> On the term, “keystone species,” which ecologists define as a species with disproportionate influence on an ecosystem, see the biologist Edward Wilson’s comments in Charles Mann, “1491,” *The Atlantic Monthly* (March 2002): 53.

<sup>35</sup> Patrick Allitt, *The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 1-5; George Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1996); and Gregory Schneider, ed., *Conservatism In America Since 1930* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 2.

<sup>36</sup> For an extended analysis of generational theory, see William Strauss and Neil Howe’s *Generations: The History of America’s Future, 1584-2069* (New York: William and Morrow, 1991), especially 7-68.

conservatism allowed *TAS* editors to be the first to see potential allies in the rightward drifting neoconservatives of the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, as chapter two shows, the integration of neoconservatives into the mainstream conservative movement was no quick and easy process, but *TAS* editors were integral to it precisely because of their generational disposition.

On a related point, this generational history points to the salience of 1960s radicalism and its long afterlife to the right. In some important ways, *TAS* editors never left the 1960s. Their opposition to the leftist members of their generational cohort slowly supplanted anticommunism as a unifying glue to the always fragile shards of the conservative movement. As chapters four and five noted, conservative talk radio host Rush Limbaugh's rise to dominance followed his symbiotic relationship with *TAS*'s anti-1960s investigative articles in the early 1990s.

Further, unlike the Catholic conservatives running *National Review* and *Triumph*, or the conservative evangelical Christians at *World Magazine* and the myriad small publications associated with the Christian right, *TAS* articulated a largely secular conservatism. The magazine often took delight in its version of right-wing hedonism, boasting of its intense interest in alcohol consumption, reveling in the playboy adventures of its contributors, and using intentionally shockingly sexual language whenever possible, usually in reference to gays.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> On the Catholic features in conservatism, see Patrick Allitt, *Catholic Intellectuals and Conservative Politics in America: 1950–1985* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); Mark Popowski, “Roman Catholic Crusading in Ten Years of Triumph, 1966-1976: A History of a Lay-Directed, Radical Catholic Journal,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 2008); and Popowski, *The Rise and Fall of Triumph* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012). On an influential religious right magazine, see *World*, “World Tries To Be Salt, Not Sugar,” available at <http://www.worldmag.com/about.php>.

Indeed, *TAS*'s secular conservatism, particularly as expressed in its opposition to feminism and the gay rights movement, challenges the historiography's recent emphasis on the religious wellsprings of conservatism. While the right—like the left—drew on Protestant and Catholic thought and traditions, its base of support was much broader. *TAS*'s secular conservatism suggests that the right was composed less of mutually exclusive segments of support than a series of overlapping groups, such as on a Venn diagram.

*TAS*'s history also supports Lisa McGirr's recent observation that the post-1980 period was not a triumphal one on the right. Despite Reagan's electoral wins in the 1980s, *TAS* conservatives experienced frustration and disappointment during the period, as described in chapters three and four. The magazine's staff discovered that it was financially and editorially easier with their enemies in office, as the celebratory mood over the election of Bill Clinton at *TAS*'s annual dinner in late 1992 illustrated. Although the failed nomination of Robert Bork was an important event, my study of *TAS* suggests that the Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill controversy in late 1991 had a far more galvanizing effect on the right.<sup>38</sup>

After *TAS*'s move from Indiana to Washington, DC, the editors began extolling the virtues of the Midwest as a rhetorical issue. But as historians of the Midwest have noted, there were, in fact, distinctive qualities to the region.<sup>39</sup> Conservative historiography has tended to concentrate on two regions—first, the northeast corridor, symbolized by

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<sup>38</sup> Lisa McGirr, "Now That Historians Know So Much about the Right, How Should We Best Approach the Study of Conservatism?" *JAH* (December 2011): 765-770; P.J. O'Rourke, "Brickbats and Broomsticks," *The American Spectator* (February 1993): 20; and R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., "Celebrate Building the Conservative Culture," *C-SPAN*, December 2, 1992.

<sup>39</sup> For a particularly helpful collection of essays about Midwestern history, see Andrew Cayton and Susan Gray, eds., *The American Midwest: Essays on Regional History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001).

William Buckley's hometown in Sharon, Connecticut, and the Sunbelt region, represented by southern suburbs and Orange County, California.<sup>40</sup> But as *TAS*'s history shows, the Midwest was a vibrant center of conservative thought and activity, particularly in the 1960s. Historians of the interwar period have examined the conservative nature of Indiana, and similar studies would be helpful for later periods in understanding the right.

*TAS*'s history also points to the importance of right-wing philanthropy and institutions and especially the impact of federal tax policy in contributions. Without the support and funds of Ruth Lilly and especially Richard Mellon Scaife, the magazine almost certainly would not have survived the 1960s. Conservative institutions and sympathetic businesses also played crucial roles. And, as *TAS* editors' constant complaints in the 1990s pointed out, philanthropists and institutions also gave substantial support to left-wing magazines in the late twentieth century. More work is needed to understand the role of federal tax policy, specifically the 501(c)(3) tax deductible designation, in the editorial policies and financial stability of political magazines, right and left. Lilly's advice that *TAS* obtain this status, which allowed contributions to be tax deductible, made an enormous difference in securing financing.<sup>41</sup>

IRS rules helped virtually all political magazines, including *National Review*, the flagship journal of the right. Because it was (and remains) the most important conservative journal, the history of *National Review* has been explored in significant

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<sup>40</sup> For example, see Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2011); Kurt Schuparra, *Triumph of the Right: The Rise of the California Conservative Movement, 1945–1966* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1998); and Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

<sup>41</sup> Historians such as Kim Phillips-Fein have begun to trace these links between business leaders and the right, Kim Phillips-Fein, "Conservatism: A State of the Field," *Journal of American History* (December 2011): 723-743; Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2009); and Nicole Hoplin and Ron Robinson, *Funding Fathers: The Unsung Heroes of the Conservative Movement* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2008).

detail, including short, often admiring, biographies of many of its editors.<sup>42</sup> Mark Popowski's recent history of *Triumph* magazine and Benjamin Balint's history of *Commentary* have pointed to the value of exploring beyond *National Review* to understand the complexities of right-wing thought. Following their examples, my study of *TAS* stresses the generational dynamics on the right and the secular dimensions of the right's culture wars. As Jennifer Burns has pointed out, conservative thought was more complex than the literature has perhaps thus far recognized; indeed, much work remains in writing the histories of conservative intellectuals in the twentieth century.<sup>43</sup>

Additional extended studies of magazines such as *Modern Age*, *World*, and *Human Events*, to name just a few, would be helpful toward developing a fully intellectual history of the right. This is particularly true for the lesser known editors and writers at these magazines.<sup>44</sup> Likewise, although scattered studies exist for liberal publications such as *The New Republic* and the *New Yorker*, more work is needed in understanding the histories of journals on the left.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> For examples, Daniel Kelly, *James Burnham and the Struggle for the World* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2002); and Kevin Smant, *Principles and Heresies: Frank S. Meyer and the Shaping of the American Conservative Movement* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2002).

<sup>43</sup> "Although studies of the American right have become almost fashionable as of late," notes Burns, "most of these remain explicitly political or social examinations, with little concern paid to the intellectuals who articulated the formal strategy and concerns of the movement and laid the groundwork for electoral success." See Jennifer Burns, "In Retrospect: George Nash's *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945*," *Reviews in American History* (September 2004): 447–62.

<sup>44</sup> See Mark Popowski, "Roman Catholic Crusading in Ten Years of *Triumph*, 1966-1976: A History of a Lay-Directed, Radical Catholic Journal," (Ph.D. dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 2008); Popowski, *The Rise and Fall of Triumph* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012); Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine that Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010); Damon Linker, "Turning Right," *New York Times Book Review*, August 1, 2010, 20; and Patricia Cohen, "Commentary is All About Commentary These Days," *New York Times*, June 12, 2010, C1.

<sup>45</sup> See David Seideman's *The New Republic: A Voice of Modern Liberalism* (New York: Praeger, 1986); Ben Yagoda, *About Town: The New Yorker and the World It Made* (New York: Scribner, 2000); and Peter Richardson, *A Bomb in Every Issue: How the Short, Unruly Life of Ramparts Magazine Changed America* (New York: The New Press, 2009).

Additionally, my study points to the vibrancy of student campus conservative papers and magazines. *TAS* began as one, and it remains the most successful of scores of similar efforts since the 1960s. Its editors' advisory relationships with *The Dartmouth Review* and the *Vassar Spectator*, for example, helped translate and extend the anti-1960s radicalism rhetoric to new generations of college students in the 1980s and provided practical advice on running a campus publication. Although most campus conservative publications failed, their editors and writers—influenced by *TAS*—went on to work in myriad professional positions, as lawyers, politicians, journalists, bureaucrats, and academics. Charting the histories of these magazines and editors might also explain the continued salience of 1960s generational themes, as well as identify factors specific to Generation X conservative intellectuals.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> For memoirs of *The Dartmouth Review* by former contributors, see James Panero and Stefan Beck, eds., *The Dartmouth Review Pleads Innocent: Twenty-Five Years of Being Threatened, Impugned, Vandalized, Sued, Suspended, and Bitten at the Ivy League's Most Controversial Newspaper*, (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006).

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Christianity Today  
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Chronicles  
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Newsday  
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