

Thornburgh campaign previews Bush strategy

by Leo F. Scanlon

George Bush took the 1992 Republican campaign strategy for a test drive in Pennsylvania in the middle of August, and previewed a demagogic campaign which seeks to submerge debate over his failed economic policies in a sea of rhetoric about "crime." Standing by the side of the President was Attorney General Richard Thornburgh, who resigned his position one week earlier, in order to run for the Senate seat vacated by the death of John Heinz III last spring. Pennsylvania was the testing ground for the themes expected to be used by Republicans nationally. A recent court ruling has cleared the way for the Thornburgh campaign to begin, and that election is set for Nov. 5, 1991—one year before the presidential contest.

The President made his emotional pitch to a flag-waving crowd from the Fraternal Order of Police, telling them, "The time has come to show less compassion for the architects of crime and more compassion for its victims. . . . We must remember that the first obligation of a penal system is to punish those who break the laws. . . . You can't turn bad people into saints." Bush went on to emphasize his support for eliminating constitutional protections against illegal searches, sharply reducing appeals based on *habeas corpus*, and allowing inflammatory "victim impact" testimony to be introduced at sentencing hearings—all measures which are designed to accelerate the flood of executions which is soon to be unleashed by the criminal justice system.

Vice President Dan Quayle took a similar approach to the realm of civil law, speaking to the American Bar Association (ABA) convention in Georgia. Playing to the popular hatred of lawyers, Quayle floated a series of "reforms" which would reduce the rapidly expanding amount of litigation by restricting access to the courts, especially to certain categories of the disadvantaged.

Like Bush, he is carefully diverting popular rage away

from the fact that his administration has championed draconian environmental laws and regulatory prosecutions which are crushing entrepreneurs. Environmental litigation has turned into the fastest growing area of civil law in the United States.

The appeal to such emotion-laden issues has a calculated purpose. Insiders at the Republican National Committee (RNC) have summed up their campaign plans with the slogan "Kuwait, Crime, and Quotas," which is supposed to capitalize on the popular perception that the Democratic opponents of the Bush administration record—jingoism and genocide in the Gulf and police-state justice at home—are unfit to lead the nation. The leading contenders for the Democratic party are rushing to prove the RNC right, as each week brings more announcements of non-candidacy. Richard Gephardt, Jay Rockefeller, and most recently, Albert Gore.

The lack of an opponent only underscores the venality of the Republican campaign. The *Washington Post* reports that the Bush strategists told a reporter, "A punitive approach to violent street crime will be as well received by voters next fall as it was by the audience" of policemen in Pennsylvania. Bush's use of the racially divisive "Willie Horton" issue in 1988 campaign ads earned him widespread condemnation, and Lee Atwater issued a death-bed apology to those who were stigmatized by them. Bush has repeatedly justified the tactic, and indications are that there are even more divisive techniques in his campaign bag of tricks.

Crime facts and campaign rhetoric

A glance at the patterns of crime in the United States highlights the demagogic nature of the appeal to "fear of crime" among middle-class constituents. According to the National Crime Survey published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the percentage of U.S. households victimized by rape, robbery, or violent crime has been dropping steadily

from 1975 through 1990, and dropped a full 1% from 1989 to 90. (Absolute numbers of crimes, of course, are up.) The BJS also shows that black and Hispanic households are victimized at much higher rates than white households—nearly double the incidence of burglary and robbery. And such figures do not begin to capture the horrifying savagery which is visited on ghetto residents by the drug traffickers—who have expanded their reign of terror during the Reagan-Bush administrations.

Uniformed police officers, understaffed and underpaid, who have been left to confront this violence, are also victims of the Bush administration drug policy, which has provided “national security” protection to drug bankers and smugglers, thereby guaranteeing that the bloody conflict with street-level distributors embroils the cops and civilians in a no-win war. This explains some of the cheers Bush gets from such an audience, but there are more ominous trends as well.

Respect for justice among law enforcement officials who ape the Bushmen is at a dangerously low point. For example, in July, Chicago police chief LeRoy Martin returned from a tour of China singing the praises of the communist prison system, and shocked a radio audience by stating that Hitler owed his popularity to the “efficient” manner in which he dealt with crime. Martin stated that he is convinced that “there are some things they [Chinese communists] just do better than we do.”

Another case is that of the Attorney General of Pennsylvania, Ernest Preate, who has been widely quoted in support of the Bush administration plan to cut funding for legal aid to death-row inmates who appeal their sentences in federal court. The funding is provided by resource centers, established by Congress in 1988, after a task force discovered that hundreds of inmates on death row lacked competent lawyers to appeal their cases. The ABA is vigorously protesting the cuts. Preate and his colleagues demand the cuts in order to expedite pending executions. It is no coincidence that Preate is an intimate of the ring of cocaine users and dealers which surrounds Richard Thornburgh, two of whom have been exposed and convicted.

The reaction from the Republican middle-class constituency is even uglier. BJS figures clearly indicate that crime in general, and violent crime in particular, is concentrated among the poor. Middle-class Americans are terrified that they are soon going to join that category, and Bush is hoping to fixate their fear of “crime,” in order to prevent them from contesting the political and economic policies which threaten their ruin.

Nonetheless, these parents are being devastated by drug use among their children as well—recent survey results show a higher rate of drug use among white high school students than among blacks of the same age—but the drug culture is cultivating a “silent” epidemic of satanism, suicide, and other existential crimes. For this audience, Bush offers satisfaction through vengeance, provided by a kangaroo court system,

which will soon be televising trials nationwide, and, if several TV stations prevail in court, will televise executions as well. These ritual murders will be largely of black and Hispanic criminals, whose common denominator is the grinding poverty now staring at increasing numbers of Americans.

A Group Areas Act for America

But divisiveness is more than rhetoric in certain RNC circles. The Justice Department (DoJ) has promulgated guidelines for the implementation of the Supreme Court’s rulings which mandate that electoral districts should be drawn to guarantee equal representation according to race—a principle expressly forbidden by the original Voting Rights Act. RNC calculations show that integrated electoral districts frequently support liberal Democratic candidates, and if the black vote is segregated out, the white vote will migrate to Republicans. Hispanic and black Republicans have protested that the policy is racist, and gives the message that electoral success for minorities depends on segregation. Nonetheless, RNC chief Clayton Yeutter and the GOP legal counsel Benjamin Ginsberg are aggressively marketing the approach to local civil rights organizations, and local Republicans. The DoJ is shepherding the operation, by pressing legal sanctions against recalcitrant electoral boards, while they simultaneously target minority politicians in FBI stings.

Even the *Wall Street Journal* accurately described the strategy as a “Group Areas Act,” in no way different from the apartheid laws of South Africa. Similarly, the Bushmen have championed the “Hate Crimes Statistics Act” written by the Anti-Defamation League, which mandates the DoJ to keep crime statistics—for the first time in American history—according to the race of the perpetrator and the victim. Race-based justice is not only a fact, but is also the law, in the United States.

Bush brands protesters ‘criminals’

To the Bush administration, the most dangerous “criminal” is a political opponent. Lyndon LaRouche has been most seriously victimized by this lawless attitude of the Bush administration; his case is but an extreme example of the normal practice. A protest action by the Operation Rescue group in Wichita, Kansas brought out Bush’s contempt for free political speech. The President sided with a local federal judge who branded the protesters “criminals” and had invoked an 1871 anti-Ku Klux Klan statute to justify an extraordinary federal intervention against the anti-abortion protesters.

Despite the fact that the DoJ opposed the use of the 1871 statute to suppress the demonstrations, Bush attacked the protest as “excessive,” told the group to not “violate the law” and went on to compare them to violent homosexual activists, terrorists, and assassins. When the leader of the organization went to Kennebunkport to plead his case to the President, he got the answer every citizen who opposes tyranny should expect from Bush: “I’m trying to get a vacation here.”