

Heritage Foundation: Court Philosophers

Conservative think tank feeds new Administration with continuous menu of ideologically palatable reports

This may be a time of fiscal stringency for most nonprofit groups, but the conservative Heritage Foundation, established in 1974 by two Capitol Hill staffers, is fat and happy and growing almost daily. Over the past 4 years it has taken a position on almost every conceivable aspect of public policy. Its reports have been regularly cited as bases for pronouncements during the Reagan presidential campaign. And Heritage president Edwin J. Fuenler, Jr., says that two detailed documents produced shortly after the election—"Agenda for progress" and "Mandate for leadership"—are generally acknowledged to have made crucial contributions to the new Administration's ability to "hit the ground running."

The foundation did not really take off until April 1977, when Fuenler came in as president. At that time it had an annual budget of \$800,000, which has since grown to over \$5 million. Heritage's "godfather," says public relations director Herb Berkowitz, is beer magnate Joseph Coors, who contributed \$250,000 in seed money and has since been donating \$300,000 a year. Other major contributors are the Scaife family charitable trust of Pittsburgh (the largest donor), the John M. Olin Fund, and the Noble Foundation, established with income from an Oklahoma oil and gas fortune. Included on the board, in addition to Coors, are former Treasury Secretary William Simon (author of the best-selling conservative treatise *A Time for Truth*), J. Robert Fluor of the Fluor Corporation, former ambassador to Switzerland Shelby Cullom Davis, and RKO General president Frank Shakespeare, former head of the U.S. Information Agency.

The foundation, housed in three adjacent row houses on Capitol Hill, now employs a staff of 70, supplemented by resident scholars and a vast network of academics, businessmen, and government officials. The roots of the foundation are embedded in the intellectual matrix that spawned George Gilder, author of *Wealth and Poverty*, the book often referred to as the "bible" of supply-side economics; and indeed Fuenler

serves on the board of Gilder's International Center for Economic Policy Studies. Other leading intellectual lights in the conservative constellation are Ernest van den Haag, a criminologist at the New School for Social Research; Thomas Sowell of the Hudson Institute (the black economist who was said to be a candidate for head of the Department of Housing and Urban Development); Herman Kahn of the Hudson Institute; Ben Wattenberg, editor of *Public Opinion*, published by the American Enterprise Institute (AEI); *Harper's* editor Lewis Lapham; and conservative historian Russell Kirk. The foundation's current visibility is a result of "all the conservative networking going on that has been quietly happening for the past 4 years," says Berkowitz.

Fuenler himself would appear to be as close as anyone to an archetypal conservative, both personally and intellectually. Interviewed in his tasteful American heritage-style office, the American flag snapping smartly in the azure sky outside his window, he seemed good-natured and comfortably paunchy at 39. He is a gourmet, an oenophile, a numismatist, and a member of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London. Born in Chicago, his formative years were nourished by the writings of Russell Kirk, William F. Buckley, and Barry Goldwater. He studied at the London School of Economics and received a master's degree in business administration from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. A Ph.D. candidate in political science at the University of Edinburgh, he is working on a dissertation on the evolution of the House Republican Policy Committee, where he served as executive director. His specialty now is foreign policy, and he was chairman of Reagan's foreign aid transition team. (Fuenler doesn't think much of foreign aid on the grounds that it strengthens governmental institutions and distorts the market in receiving countries.)

Fuenler approves of the description of the foundation as "unabashedly conservative." He says it is clearly distinguishable from its nearest competitor, the American Enterprise Institute, be-

cause the latter is basically Republican: it looks to big business to resolve society's problems, whereas Heritage looks to the free market—"Adam Smith versus Lee Iacocca," as he puts it. Also, he says, the AEI "has the big names—the Herb Steins, the Arthur Burnses. We have young Ph.D.'s just out of graduate school, on their first or second job." (Almost all Heritage staffers are under 40.)

Despite their relative youth, Heritage people have had a good deal of direct input into policy formation in the new Administration. Fourteen served on transition task forces and one, the foundation's tireless and prolific energy expert Milton Copulos, continued on from the synfuels transition team to serve as adviser on several Department of Energy task forces. One Heritage official, former vice-president Willa Johnson, is now in the White House personnel office, assigned to find people for the foreign policy and defense establishments. Edward E. Noble, a trustee of the Noble Foundation, was recently named head of the Synthetic Fuels Corporation.

Fuenler was asked why he had such optimistic faith in the free market when the reason the government crept into everything in the first place was that the free market wasn't working for everyone. "We never really did have free market capitalism," he says. "It was obfuscated by special interest pressures." Although he agrees that that will always be the case, he feels that "we need a model to which to aspire," and Heritage is here to supply it.

So far, the foundation is pleased with what the Reagan people have been doing. The cuts proposed by Office of Management and Budget director David Stockman are very much in line with curbs on government programs recommended by the Heritage "blueprint." And, says Fuenler, Heritage reports have also been timely. "We hit the bull's-eye with our first three reports this year." The first, on the Jamaican economy, came out just before a visit by the Jamaican prime minister; a report on the grain embargo (recommending that it be strengthened) coincided with delibera-

tions on that topic; and a study on "The Soviet strategy of terror" was issued the day after Secretary of State Alexander Haig announced that international terrorism would be a top priority of the State Department.

The Heritage people never send out a press release that is not accompanied by



Constance Holden

Edwin J. Faelner, Jr.

the publication to which it refers; every new report is delivered by hand to every member of Congress as well as key aides and government officials. Money is no problem: in addition to corporate and foundation support, Heritage has received 120,000 individual contributions over the past 18 months.

Science policy is one of the few areas to which the foundation has not accorded much attention. It is not particularly interested in the nature of the President's science advisory apparatus. Recommendations so far are in accord with the conservative line: most applied research should be left to the private sector; regulatory and fiscal roadblocks to research investments should be lifted; and government should reduce participation in areas that promise no immediate benefits, such as space, astronomy, and high energy physics. In line with faith in the power of economic incentives, the foundation recommends establishment of a new federal prize for private innovators. Says Faelner, "we would defend scientists making decisions instead of them being made by bureaucrats or the courts." Any more specific than that he is not prepared to get. He says, "broadly speaking, as believers in the growing economic pie, we are supportive of advances in science and technology. . . the best way government can serve science is by restoring a healthy economy."

—CONSTANCE HOLDEN

"Flash" Near South Africa, Again

The press has recently given attention to a report of a second mysterious "flash" over the ocean near South Africa, detected 15 December by a U.S. surveillance satellite. The sighting has been described as a sequel to the flash spotted near South Africa on 22 September 1979.

Many intelligence analysts thought the 1979 event might have been produced by a small, surreptitious atom bomb test. After a year-long review of the physical data collected that night, an independent panel of scientists brought together by the Carter White House concluded that there was no evidence that a blast had occurred. However, the scientists never came up with a persuasive explanation of what had happened (*Science*, 1 August 1980). They guessed that a meteoroid might have reflected sunlight into the satellite's "eye."

Some of those who were skeptical of this theory thought the Carter Administration was trying to paper over an unpleasant fact: that a nuclear test could be concealed and that a test ban treaty would be unenforceable. The skeptics appear ready to cite the second event as conclusive evidence that someone is testing nuclear weapons in secret and getting away with it. As one agitated Washington newspaper columnist put it, "President Reagan is confronted with one of the gravest, most perplexing mysteries of the nuclear age. . . Is the nuclear club expanding another notch, or has a card carrying member taken advantage of the remote waters where the South Atlantic joins the Indian Ocean to test weapons without the risk that the world will ever discover who he is?"

Although the report from 15 December remains somewhat puzzling, government officials and scientists who have studied it say that in one respect it is not mysterious at all. The intelligence agencies agreed this time that it was not an atomic blast. In the earlier case, the federal technicians were divided because the satellite's record looked like the unique signal given off by an atom bomb explosion. In this case there is no difference of opinion in the technical community.

The 15 December event was in fact a heat signal picked up by an infrared monitor designed to spot missile launches. Because nuclear blasts do not give off a unique infrared signal, there is no way for the people who interpret the satellite's messages to judge whether the machine spotted a natural or man-made event. However, nuclear blasts do produce a unique visible light signal, not thought to have any counterpart in nature (except for meteoroids reflecting sunlight). The technicians are confident that the 15 December event could not have been caused by a bomb because an optical sensor—just like the one that picked up the earlier South African flash, and much more sensitive than the infrared sensor—was watching the same area of the globe that night. It saw no flash. According to one highly placed government official, the most likely explanation is that the satellite picked up solar infrared radiation being reflected off the condensation trail of a meteor. The intelligence agencies have combed through the geophysical and other information collected last December and found nothing to suggest that a blast occurred.

One intriguing aspect of this and the previous sighting is that they have given rise to the expression of diverse varieties of international paranoia. Although there is insufficient evidence to prove that any bomb actually went off, authoritative articles have already named villains. The candidates include South Africa, Israel, the Soviet Union, Pakistan, and France.

—ELIOT MARSHALL

Texas Court Rules That Hughes Left No Will

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute has lost an attempt in Texas to take control of the estate of the late Howard R. Hughes, Jr., an empire valued at more than \$2 billion. A victory for the Institute would have immediately made it one of the world's largest private organizations devoted to the support of biomedical research (*Science*, 20 February). On 27 February, a judge in Houston ruled that the Institute could not attempt to probate a so-called lost will. Last year, similar rulings were handed down in Nevada