

FAIR

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HERE'S A SPECIAL PREVIEW OF AN ARTICLE SCHEDULED FOR THE UPCOMING NOVEMBER/DECEMBER ISSUE OF EXTRA! OF SPECIAL INTEREST TO OUR PHILADELPHIA-AREA READERS.

The Philadelphia Inquirer's New Spectrum:
From Centrism to Anti-Semitism
By Jim Naureckas

The **Philadelphia Inquirer** recently announced a shake-up in its editorial pages (9/10/95), dumping long-time syndicated contributors Jeff Greenfield, Richard Reeves and George Will in favor of E.J. Dionne, David Shribman and Joseph Sobran.

Greenfield is a Beltway centrist, while Reeves is a moderate liberal, so their replacement by two other Beltway centrists marks a shift to the right. There's now no syndicated columnist appearing on the **Inquirer's** editorial page who can fairly be described as on the left. (Centrists like David Broder, William Raspberry and Richard Cohen don't count.)

What is surprising is the replacement of Will with Sobran--and the **Inquirer's** rationale for doing so. Will is a partisan, conservative Republican--though not completely partisan, since he often criticized George Bush for being insufficiently right-wing. The **Inquirer** also features--and will continue to feature--the writings of Charles Krauthammer, another pundit from the right wing of the Republican party. None of the other columnists are anywhere near as far left as these two are right.

But in the new ideological climate, being to the right of George Bush is no longer right enough. The **Inquirer** quotes Sobran as saying, "I used to think I was a conservative, but I may as well admit I don't measure up. I'm just not liberal enough to be a conservative." The paper then comments: "Over the years, we've heard often from readers who complain that this kind of unvarnished conservatism is not represented on our pages. Sobran's work should fill that gap."

Which kind of conservatism is that, exactly? Sobran, a former senior editor at **The National Review**, has praised an openly racist, Holocaust-denying newsletter: "I know of only one magazine in America that faces the harder facts about race: a little magazine called **Instauration**," Sobran wrote in the **New York City Tribune** (5/13/86; quoted in **The Nation**, 6/7/86). "It is openly and almost unremittingly hostile to blacks, Jews, and Mexicans and Oriental immigrants," he acknowledged, but called **Instauration** "an often brilliant magazine covering a beat nobody else will touch, and doing so with intelligence, wide-ranging observation and bitter wit."

Instauration, for its part, praised "The Brave Pen of Joseph Sobran" with this endorsement (9/85): "The man has repeatedly defended white racial pride and solidarity, despite the mounting campaign to get him."

In a column on Schindler's List, Sobran decries "all this Holocaust-harping," explaining that the Nazi genocide was merely an overreaction to the terror spread by "Jewish-led communist movements." (**Arizona Republic**, 3/24/94) The **New York Times**, he has written (cited in **New Republic**, 8/11/86), "really ought to change its name to **Holocaust Update**."

He argues that the U.S. should have stayed out of World War II, which it entered only because of President Franklin Roosevelt's "obsession with destroying Germany." (**Arizona Republic**, 5/26/94) And he's tired of hearing about the Inquisition, as well: "If Christians were sometimes hostile to Jews, that worked two ways." (cited in **New Republic**, 8/11/86)

"Anti-Semitism" is the obvious term for this sort of nonsense, a term that Sobran rejects--sort of. He has described his philosophy (which he says he shares with Patrick Buchanan) as "counter-Semitism": a reaction against "the excessive moral prestige Jews have in the media and the public square...Jews deciding the standards, setting the criteria of humanity. Since they set themselves up as the arbiter, there is, if you'll pardon the expression, a certain kill-the-umpire impulse." (quoted in **New Republic**, 10/22/90)

Inquirer editorial page editor Jane Eisner has asked for comments on its new line-up. You might let her know what you think of a spectrum that excludes any "unvarnished progressive"--or any varnished ones, for that matter--while going out of its way to make sure that anti-Semites have someone to represent them. She can be reached at the **Philadelphia Inquirer**, 400 N. Broad St., P.O. Box 8263, Philadelphia, PA 19101, or at 215-854-4530 (fax: 215-854-4483; e-mail: editpage@AOL.com).



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Dear George:

Did you see this latest development at the Inky? I am trying to get people to raise a protest--this is the only language these creeps understand. Please write and pass along the message.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ed/9'.

Edward S. Herman

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FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL

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TO: ~~NAZIS~~ ~~NOTED~~ George Cockburn

FAX NO.: _____

MESSAGE:

Friends:

The Inquirer has just displaced George Will with one Joseph Sobran, a National Review columnist of the hardline right, who made a name for himself in 1986 by a friendly affiliation with the racist and pro-Na_zi publication Instauration. Details are included in the two Cockburn columns enclosed.

The Inquirer has its stacked deck, with no hard-hitting liberals, let alone leftists, because it only feels pressure from the right.

Let the Inky know how you feel about its horrible bias--the important thing is to speak up, with anger!

Sincerely,

Edward S. Herman

INKY, 9/10/95 ES

We're changing the lineup of our syndicated columnists

By Jane R. Eisner
Editor of the Editorial Page

About seven years ago, the Editorial Board modestly changed its look — not on the order of plastic surgery, more like getting a new hairstyle. One element of this makeover was a declination to focus the Commentary Page on homegrown, original work, and to commit a different space in our part of The Inquirer to nationally syndicated columnists.

There, along the bottom of the Editorial Page, on Mondays, Saturdays and the or two other days a week, are published the words and thoughts of those with their fingers on the national political pulse. The names are familiar, mainstays of the Washington think-establishment: David Broder, George Will, Charles Krauthammer, William Raspberry, Richard Cohen, Jeff Greenfield, Richard Reeves.

It's an inside-the-beltway crowd, and in these days of heady change in

Washington, we hope these voices have helped inform readers on the sometimes profound, always confusing developments in and around our nation's capital.

But as politics is changing, so should the way we think about it. It may not be time to throw all the bums out, but it is time to refresh the lineup.

*Now
batting:
Sobran,
Dionne,
Shribman.*

All this is to explain why instead of Will, Greenfield and Reeves, the names Joseph Sobran, E.J. Dionne and David Shribman will soon grace our pages.

This is nothing personal against Will, whose column has run for a dozen years, or Greenfield and Reeves, whom we have published even longer, but it is a considered response to a body of work that many of us on the board have found predictable and repetitive.

Read through some of Joe Sobran's work, and you'll understand the comparison. Sobran's a William Buckley, *National Review* conservative, Michigan born and educated, blunt, unshakably bound to a philosophy that espouses minimalist government, ex-

coriates liberalism and eschews political compromise.

"I used to think I was a conservative," he wrote this summer, "but I may as well admit I don't measure up. I'm just not liberal enough to be a conservative." The subject was the Senate's welfare plan, about which Sobran wrote: "If this is conservatism, I feel homeless... today's conservatives all too often support for expedience what they once opposed in principle."

Over the years, we've heard often from readers who complain that this kind of unvarnished conservatism is not represented on our pages. Sobran's work should fill that gap.

Though he's coming from a different place politically, E.J. Dionne's work also radiates a kind of common sense, unpretentious approach to American political thought. Alert readers will recognize his name, for his column has run occasionally on the Commentary Page. Author of *Why Americans Hate Politics*, he's now a member of the Washington Post's editorial board.

There's nothing knee-jerk about his opinions.

In a column we ran last month, Dionne praised Bob Dole's critique of Hollywood's obsession with vio-

lence and sex, but then rightly held the senator to a higher standard: "The moral issues Dole raised in his speech are genuinely serious and worth talking about. But politicians who want to get into the moral argument had better be in it for more than quick hits."

"[They] have to be consistent about the broader issues involved in criticizing someone else's use of free speech. Can someone please explain to me if there is any objective difference between Gordon Liddy talking about how to shoot an agent of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and a gangsta rapper who talks about shooting a cop? If you speak out against one, should you not speak out against the other?"

When acknowledging his own qualms about discussing gay and lesbian rights, Dionne wrote: "Turning politics into something more satisfying than it is now requires that Americans find the gift for discussing matters of 'culture' and 'morality' in tones other than the accusatory or the condescending."

What's refreshing about Shribman's columns is that they reflect the sensibility of a keen mind not afraid to hit the road. It seems there are more common folk quoted in his

work than official pundits.

As Washington bureau chief of the Boston Globe and a long time political correspondent, Shribman — who won a Pulitzer Prize earlier this year — naturally knows all the key Washington players. He also knows when not to pay attention to them.

"If you want to understand the main currents of American politics keep your eye on Bill Clinton, Bob Dole and Marlene Elwell."

So began a recent column from the Elwell living room in Boone, Iowa, in which Shribman allowed the 57-year-old religious conservative to explain her Middle American, deeply committed brand of organizational politics.

We hope this kind of analysis and insight will be useful in the coming year, especially as the nation girds itself for another presidential campaign. But there's only one way to know if the new writers are better than the old: You, the reader, must tell us.

Give yourself some time to get accustomed to the revised lineup, and then write, call, fax or e-mail your reactions.

Does this latest makeover work? Or is plastic surgery the only solution?

ALEXANDER COCKBURN

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The Likes of Sobran

William Buckley, editor of *National Review* and no slouch at imputing racism to others, such as myself, may wish to have a serious word with his columnist Joseph Sobran. On May 13 *The New York City Tribune*, a Moonie newspaper, carried an article by Sobran in which he observed:

Our ethnic etiquette makes our ethnic problems pretty nearly insoluble. . . . I know of only one magazine in America that faces the harder facts about race: a little magazine called *Instauration*. . . . [It is] an often brilliant magazine covering a beat nobody else will touch, and doing so with intelligence, wide-ranging observation and bitter wit. It is openly and almost unremittingly hostile to blacks, Jews, and Mexican and Oriental immigrants.

Quite a testimonial. *Instauration* (the word means "renewal") is a monthly looking somewhat like *The New Leader*, published by "Howard Allen Enterprises" out of a box number in Cape Canaveral, edited pseudonymously, according to Sobran, and carrying unsigned articles. Its sense of humor recalls *The American Spectator* and *The Dartmouth Review*. The January 1982 issue had a story titled "Rev: Jerry Falwell—Majority Renegade of the Year." The word "renegade" is explained by Falwell's companion in the accompanying photograph, Menachem Begin. As Sobran said, the magazine doesn't like Jews. An article in the same issue announced: "We are pro-abortion, despite the aesthetic horror of it, because it is the only effective way to cut down on nonwhite proliferation, both here and abroad. Unfortunately, a greater proportion of whites in this country practice abortion than blacks."

Instauration for February 1984 carried a reproduction of Sully's painting of a blond boy with a hat, with the line, "In Praise of Fair Children." The June issue of that year hailed the war criminal Archbishop Valerian Trifa. The following year, in June, an article denounced the Heritage Foundation and *Policy Review* for being run by Jews ("most of them without any conservative identity or credentials. The table of contents exudes such names as Robert W. Kagan, Midge Decter, Oscar Handlin . . ."). Burton Pines, Heritage vice president, is singled out as a Jew, and the foundation's director, Ed Feulner, is identified as being the husband of "the former Miss Linda Leventhal."

Sobran's modesty in failing to disclose the fact is understandable, but the September 1985 issue of *Instauration* carried a three-page article on him, titled "The Brave Pen of Joseph Sobran," in which he was praised for his support of Reagan's visit to Bitburg: "The man has repeatedly defended white racial pride and solidarity, despite the mounting campaign to get him." In the same issue of *Instauration* we find racist cartoons of "Marv," a Jew, and "Willie," a black. Marv is saying: "Not everyone at the Last Supper was Jewish. I am working on a book that will prove Judas was a goy." This is the brilliance, intelligence and bitter wit Sobran recommends to his readers.

ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Adler never called my brother to compare his memory with hers. (And she has preached in the past against the use of blind quotes, writing—correctly—in *The New York Review of Books* back in 1977, "The use of the blind quote and the unnamed source has become an unprofessional cover for various journalistic cut corners and evasions.") But that was a matter of a paragraph. She never called George Crile or Sam Adams, even though her articles savage both men at great length and brood harshly on journalistic arrogance. (*The New Yorker*, incidentally, does not print letters from readers.) Adler's presentation of courtroom exhibits and testimony is misleading and cannot be relied upon. But how does she get around the central difficulty of Westmoreland's withdrawal from the suit? Easy. He didn't have the right lawyer. The right lawyer was not Dan Burt of the Capital Legal Foundation but David Dorsen, who was brought in to assist Burt. This is not the first time that we've seen the "if only Westy had Dorsen" line. For obvious reasons Dorsen had suggested as much in an interview with *The American Lawyer*. He was once on the staff of the Watergate special prosecutor, which is presumably where Adler met him, while doing her own Watergate research.

The sad thing is that Adler seems to think that "the left" took the CBS-Westmoreland trial seriously and endorsed the original broadcast. The left—so far as I've talked to it—didn't like the Crile broadcast and felt no particular sympathy for CBS. The Westmoreland case was always a right-wing crusade, still being fought by Adler with such errant passion.

Buckley, Decter and Sobran

I've been waiting to see what William Buckley would do about Joseph Sobran. The former's acrobatics in seeking to salvage both Sobran and himself have surpassed all expectations. You'll recall from my column here of June 7 that Sobran, one of the columnists for Buckley's *National Review*, had spoken in the highest terms of *Instauration*, a racist publication which had spoken warmly of Sobran. *Instauration* is anti-Semitic, calling the "Holohoax" a "gigantic hebe soap opera," and has said there will be no black progress "until someone tells us how you can get inside genes and do a little redesigning." Sobran wrote that *Instauration* is "an often brilliant magazine, covering a beat nobody else will touch, and doing so with intelligence, wide-ranging observation and bitter wit."

Sobran has been bothering other people, including Midge Decter. In mid-May she wrote to Sobran, spelling out her "shock and disgust—and contempt—at the discovery that you are little more than a crude and naked anti-Semite." She cited some columns by Sobran, at least one of which, on Jews and the Pope, seems on her account of it to have been quite clearly anti-Semitic. Decter sent copies of this letter to, among others, William Buckley, Arnaud de Borchgrave, R. Emmett Tyrrell, and Michael Novak, whose own kindly treatment of members of the wartime anti-Semitic Slovakian government has been discussed here in the past.

Sobran never responded to Decter, but Buckley wrote back, defending Sobran and denying that he was a "crypto or even a latent anti-Semite," stating, "If I thought him an anti-Semite, I would ask for his resignation from *National Review*." He added that if Decter had addressed her letter to someone who truly was a "crude anti-Semite, then you cast doubt over the judgment of a large company of sensitive men and women who collaborate joyfully and appreciatively with Joe [Sobran] in the anti-communist enterprise in which you play so vital a role." Decter wrote back in mollified terms and, ever gentle to fellow conservatives, admitted the error of having addressed Sobran's person rather than his words (an odd distinction). She received a final letter from Buckley on June 2 which said, "Please don't ventilate this, but I think we can be assured that he will let the topic of Israel go, and that there will be a creeping perspective in the next period." Buckley added that he was convinced that Sobran now "understood the social point," that is, in attacking Israel.

You'll note that what started as a discussion of Sobran's anti-Semitism modulated into a discussion of how to treat Israel, as a matter of etiquette. The fact that there is sound evidence—*Instauration*—that Sobran is anti-Semitic to the extent that he's a keen admirer of an anti-Semitic magazine is ignored. Thus, Buckley can position himself as a friend of Israel anxious to restrain a man who has been committing errors of taste, rather than as the forgiving sponsor of an anti-Semite, sufficiently hypocritical to attack *The Nation*, even as he was taking a modified hangout position on Sobran in the *National Review*. So far as the right is concerned, anti-Semitism is forgiven just as long as criticism of any Israeli government or of Zionist policies is regarded as off-limits.

Footnote: On the identification of anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism, a favored technique with which to harass critics of Israeli policies, a sentence in an editorial in *The Nation* for June 21, apropos the Waldheim affair, may have confused readers: "Some Europeans and many in the Middle East have used it to get more mileage out of their own anti-Semitism or anti-Zionism, whichever is more useful at the moment." This struck me as taking *The New Republic's* line that anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism are interchangeable, depending on the exigencies of the moment. Big Vic tells me that the purport of the lines was not a general judgment but merely a reflection on unspecified persons in the areas mentioned. On the topic of *The Nation*, I had considerable problems with Richard Falk's article in last week's issue, which—aiming to present a left position on terrorism—ended up entirely submissive to the prevailing discourse on "terrorism." Once you choose to fight on the enemy's terms, you end up accepting them. Anyone who can write, "At this stage, it would not be helpful for progressives to reject the moderating effects of the Atlantic alliance," or "We are all terrorists to the extent that we receive pleasure from witnessing the pain and suffering of others" is in line for the Anthony Lewis Award, namely a woolly mitten fitting tightly over the brain, to be worn at all times.

Ms. Jane Eisner, Editor
Philadelphia Inquirer
400 North Broad Street
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Sept. 12, 1995
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Narberth, Pa. 19072

Dear Ms. Eisner:

I am afraid that you didn't do your homework in selecting Joseph Sobran as your new regular columnist. His outbursts and warm affiliation with the pro-Nazi, antisemitic and racist Instauration in the mid 1980s caused Chicago Tribune columnist Stephen Chapman to say "It is impossible to escape the conclusion that Sobran is an anti-Semite and a racist," and forced even William Buckley briefly to distance himself from him. The hypocrisy of today's editorial on antisemitism is remarkable--maybe you ought to get Farrakan on board to balance off Sobran.

Your accommodation to the rightwing and know-nothings has gone beyond the pale and is going to hurt you and damage the Inquirer. In Krauthammer you already have a hardline rightist, and a thoroughly ideological, dishonest and mindlessly predictable one to boot; and you also have David Boldt, Mark Randall, and Cathy Young as well. And the Op Ed columns are wonderfully receptive to every new rightwing outburst and trend of thought--Robert Rector, Charles Lichenstein, Rob Nelson, Michael Silverstein, Gregg Easterbrook, Rush Limbaugh, the peddler of each new antifeminist line.

You are getting rid of the mildly liberal Richard Reeves, while keeping David Broder, who specializes in "horse race" commentary and evades (or takes conservative positions on) all important issues. As I pointed out in an article on Broder in EXTRA!, after analysing his positions on numerous issues, "David Broder is an ideal 'Leftist' for a media and political establishment that can't abide a serious liberal challenge."

It was illustrative of the profound bias of the editorial page that while Limbaugh was given Op Ed column space, Jeff Cohen, the head of Fairness and Accuracy in Media, and co-author of a highly factual book on Limbaugh, The Way Things Aren't: Rush Limbaugh's Reign of Error, was recently denied space to address Limbaugh's errors. This rejection occurred at the same time as the Inquirer ombudsman, John Bull, wrote an editorial column to apologize to Limbaugh supporters for a front page picture of Limbaugh that showed him grimacing. The picture had accompanied an article by Joe Logan that was pure boiler plate and de facto apologetics--deep in the article Logan had mentioned that Limbaugh had been accused of making errors, but Logan failed to cite any sources or specify any errors (which run into the hundreds). This catering to Limbaugh and his supporters--and protection of his errors and demagoguery--was cowardly news and editorial policy.

The absence of even a challenging liberal--let alone a radical--among the regular columnists explains why the editorial page has had no sustained analysis of the fall in real wages (from 1973, but

continuing in the recent prosperity), the growth in temporary work and widespread economic insecurity, the failure of the political parties to respond to this crisis, the controlling influence of money in politics, the dubiousness of the claim that the Republicans have a "mandate" to eviscerate environmental law and welfare state, and the issues involved in preservation of the Cold War military budget while gutting outlays for poor people.

During the 1980s, Will and Krauthammer maintained a steady stream of articles supporting the wars in Nicaragua and El Salvador, and no syndicated columnist provided an opposing view--which served the war party well. Your conservatives today can maintain sustained attention to Whitewater, and the alleged need to cut welfare, social security, and dismantle affirmative action programs, but nobody is in place to steadily address the neglected issues I mention above or to contest the propaganda themes of your conservatives.

This regular accommodation to an aggressive right, and refusal to allow a sustained critical analysis of the central issues facing our society, constitutes an editorial page moral and political failure of the first order.

Sincerely,

Edward S. Herman

cc: King, Hall, Jim Naureckas, Jeff Cohen, George Gerbner