



The Wallace Phenomenon

By David W. Levy

Thoughts on a frightening alliance of those who hate and those who are bewildered

Many writers have pointed out that, when he was operating safely within the confines of Alabama state politics, George Wallace always used the word "nigger." The niceties of national campaigning, however, seemed to have made that term inappropriate and Wallace discretely began talking about "Negroes."

Unfortunately, no similar precaution was required in dealing with university professors. We were called pseudo-liberal anarchists, wild-eyed humanitarians, bearded ivory-tower boys, intellectual morons, and half a dozen other terms of playful endearment. And we were called these things so consistently that it has become apparent that, in the Wallace campaign, professors became the new "niggers." It is no exaggeration to assert that George Corley Wallace launched the most violently anti-intellectual campaign—on a national level—of any we have seen in this century.

One can make several observations about this anti-intellectualism. In the first place, it has been a sobering experience for professors and one which, I hope, has widened our sympathy for all men who are irresponsibly and collectively condemned. We have not been, as a group, as angry about these kinds of attack as we should have been, and we must be indebted to Governor Wallace for enlarging our sensibilities. In addition, the frank anti-intellectualism of the Wallace campaign allows us a certain freedom to criticize it. As Spiro Agnew has so eloquently put it, nobody enjoys getting kicked in the groin. If professors have some harsh things to say about Governor Wallace and those who follow his leadership, at least

it will not be alleged, I trust, that we cast the first stone.

Finally, and most seriously, there is in this suspicion of the mind a very real phenomenon which needs to be examined in some depth and explained if possible. It is this task which I want to attempt here. And I wish to begin by suggesting that the vast majority of George Wallace's support came from two camps. One may sometimes find a Wallace supporter who does not properly belong in either group, but I think that such a follower would be extremely rare.

II

First, and of most importance, both in the strength of their tie to Mr. Wallace and in the evangelical quality of their support, are those Americans who hate and fear Negroes. Wallace quite appropriately became their champion, for, with the possible exception of Lester Maddox, one would be hard-pressed to name a single national figure who has come to symbolize so dramatically the attempt to keep Negroes "in their places."

Wallace, of course, denies that he is a racist, and his running mate, the perceptive Curtis LeMay (who says that *he* favors integration because, hell, it works in the Air Force, doesn't it?), has even gone so far as to say that Wallace favors integration, too. Wallace's obvious discomfort at having that remark of General LeMay reported

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to him was monumental. And properly so: George Wallace is a racist and he is no integrationist.

From the time he announced himself "unalterably opposed" to the Democratic Party's 1948 civil rights plank, Wallace has been in the forefront of the anti-integration movement. He broke with his governor, Big Jim Folsom, the day Folsom announced that the then uncontroversial Adam Clayton Powell would be coming over to the executive mansion for a scotch. His record of testimony against congressional civil rights bills is clear. In 1953 he was the first judge in the South to issue an injunction against removal of segregation signs in railroad terminals. It was surely no accident that Wallace defiantly closed his inaugural address as governor with a ringing challenge to those who would see the Negro become a part of American society:

Today I have stood where Jefferson Davis stood, and took an oath to my people. It is very appropriate then, that from this Cradle of the Confederacy, this very heart of the great Anglo-Saxon Southland, that today we sound the drum for freedom. . . . Let us rise to the call of the freedom-loving blood that is in us. . . . In the name of the greatest people that have ever trod this earth, I draw the line in the dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny. And I say, segregation now! Segregation tomorrow! Segregation forever!

The speech apparently escaped the attention of General LeMay.

Wallace's distinction between "segregation" and "racism" (segregation is "social" while racism is "biological") simply does not stand the test of scrutiny. Segregation is nothing if it is not a program based firmly and at all points upon a belief that the races should have as little contact as possible. The answer to the question "Why should the races have as little contact as possible?" is an answer which must inevitably be made in racist terms.

This is not to say that Wallace hates all Negroes. His view was best described, I think, in a remark attributed to him by Marshall Frady (not a friendly observer, by any means, but one who did spend eight months in close contact with Wallace). According to Frady, the Governor got to talking about old Carlton McKinnis, a handyman on the Wallace place, who hung around, dozing in the backyard, waiting outside the kitchen door for a handout:

Yeah, ole Carlton—we loved him. When he got too old to get around, we built him a little house down toward Blue Springs, not too far from the Methodist Church, and on Thanksgiving and Christmas we'd take stuff down to him. I can see ole Carlton now, smilin' and tremblin' and laughin' when we toted in those hams to him. All his sisters and chillun down there been told I'm anti-niggah now. Yeah. But I can still see ole Carlton when we'd bring him stuff to eat. We gave him money and looked after him until he died. It made us all mighty sad when he was gone.

The first, and I think the largest group of Wallace's supporters are those who can't understand why Negroes can't be like ole Carlton McKinnis anymore, who can't understand why they need to go around looting and burning and throwing bricks through shoe store windows. But it is more than puzzlement. One feels that it is hate, too,

and the disposition, on their parts, first, to see the Negro as the beast who needs to be caged, and, second, to see George Wallace as just the man who can do it.

These people are essentially uninteresting, probably because there is nothing that can really be said about them after one has pointed out that they are motivated principally by hatred and fear. One can charge, I guess, that they have chosen the narrowest definition of democracy instead of the broadest, that they would, if they could, propel our society into a program which is the least generous, the least promising, the least hopeful as well as the least likely to be workable. But all the time that one is shouting this at them, one has the discouraging feeling that they cannot hear, that fixed, dead-center in their minds, is the hatred of Negroes. One ends by quietly hoping that the passage of time and the fresh experiences of a new generation may help some. (I do not say, of course, that the rest of us need to wait for them. I just say that the rest of us can harbor no very real hope for their "conversion" in large numbers.)

It is the second group of George Wallace's followers who are fascinating, for there were some who voted for Wallace without hating Negroes.

III

The clue to these people, it seems to me, lies in some important recent studies of "human behavior" under conditions of extreme stress. Bruno Bettelheim's study of the German concentration camps, for example, reveals some interesting things about personality. Bettelheim, himself an inmate of the camps, has shown that if you take men and women and rather suddenly and decisively thrust them into a new environment, their behavior will change radically. The camps did this by the intentional removal of all certainties: middle-class burghers were suddenly stripped naked and tortured. No one was called by his given name. Fantastic rules were mercilessly enforced and then suddenly left unenforced. Most powerfully of all, the use of the principle of random terror—executions carried out without expectation or explanation, unpredictable and unaccountable—caused some startling changes in human personality to take place in the inmates.

One of the results of this extreme environment, says Bettelheim, was a kind of reversion to childishness. There was something terribly frightening, something overwhelming, in being thrust into a world where nothing fit, where nothing was certain, where men were at the mercy of the unpredictable. One frequent reaction was a kind of psychological retreat into a less sophisticated and more simple personality—to the memory of a time when things *were* simple and certain.

I want to make it crystal clear that I am not suggesting that America is a concentration camp. I am not charging that George Wallace is a Nazi. The point I wish to make is simply this: in far less extreme ways and in conditions of far less dramatic stress and far less sudden transformation, America finds herself in something roughly

analogous to this situation. We have rapidly been forced into a world where the old certainties have vanished. Negroes do not behave as they should anymore. College students are no longer the nice, clean young men and women that they have traditionally been. College professors are acting in ways which represent a distinct break from the past. The conditions of our cities are so different from the way they used to be that one is left standing afraid in them. Wars do not seem to be fought with the same old, decisive American zip anymore. As a result of these and a dozen other disorienting and slightly mystifying circumstances, our society has found itself, more than societies usually find themselves, operating in a world in which the old certainties no longer seem so sure.

Eric Hoffer has written that "a population subjected to drastic change is a population of misfits—unbalanced, explosive, and hungry for action." Perhaps that is too extreme, for the vast majority of our population is not composed of misfits. But it seems undeniable that the absence of certainty sets up in all of us a strong yearning for the time when there really was certainty. Some of us succumb to the yearning and return, if you will, to a kind of childish world view, or looked at in another way, a world view characteristic of a more primitive, less mature state of civilization.

For many people who find themselves bewildered and confused in a world from which the certainties have been ripped, the candidacy of George Wallace offered some of the things they sought. But in the process of pursuing the dream, it seems to me, they retreated into the less mature and more primitive posture.

IV

In defining the characteristics of this world view, I believe one needs to talk about at least five traits:

1. There is the need for a leader, the "father figure" who sums up in his personality, authority, power, and strength of will. The leader must exhibit confident surety in an unsure world. He must talk to us in terms we can understand and assure us that, with trust, everything will be all right.

2. There is the related need for simplicity. Problems must not be portrayed as being complicated. They must be seen in clear moral imperatives, in blacks and whites, with obvious solutions if we but dare act as secretly we know we must.

3. There is the immature disposition to rely upon clear force in complex situations. Power is the language everybody understands and strength is the solution to everything—the strength of the father who protects us by applying it. There is, in this world view, then, a love of power confrontations—the good man and bad man shooting it out in the dusty street.

4. There is the primitive and childlike inability to discern causation. Evil is *in* the field, or *in* the house, or *in* the storm. One attacks evil by confronting its manifestations—like a cat who stares intently at a scratching finger without realizing that she is being

teased and troubled by a cause which lurks behind the finger.

5. Finally, there is the disposition to see as enemies those who tell us that it is not so simple. Like the ancient kings who executed the messengers who brought bad news (another example of difficulty in distinguishing between the cause of evil and its mere manifestation), this primitive mentality cannot tolerate those who deny the principle of sure simplicity.

I submit that Governor Wallace, to many of his supporters, is the yearned-for leader who represents to them authority, power, and sure strength of purpose. Further, he speaks to his following in the old certainties, in the old language which everyone understands: People should work for what they get. Wars should be fought to win. Cities should be safe for women and children. Negroes should be like ole Carlton.

Moreover, there is in his appeal, the clear willingness to use force to solve everything. Frady quotes the Governor as offering this solution to the race problem:

Nigguh comes up to a white woman down here like they do up North, tryin' all that stuff, he's gonna get shot. Yessuh. Or get his head busted. That's why we don't have any of that business down here. They know what's gonna happen to 'em. They start a riot down here, first one of 'em to pick up a brick gets a bullet in the brain, that's all. And then you walk over to the next one and say, "All right, pick up a brick. We just want to see you pick up one of them bricks, now." Let 'em see you shoot down a few of 'em and you got it stopped.

The disposition of Wallace and his followers to "solve by force" made the choice of Curtis LeMay entirely appropriate. The love of the power confrontation makes, quite properly, the silly socio-drama which took place in the doorway of the University of Alabama the symbolic act of Wallace's career.

There was also, in the Wallace campaign, the persistent failure to discern causation. Evil is in the manifestation. The rioters are evil and not the society which produces them; the hippies are evil and not the conditions which have alienated them. He stares at the finger like a transfixed cat, unable or unwilling to confront the deeper cause.

Finally, there was the disposition to slay the bringer of bad news. This was why, I think, professors, writers, social workers, social scientists, students of military tactics in jungle warfare, and anyone else who said, "Wait a minute, it's not that simple," was the automatic enemy.

V

As a result of the essential non-rationality of his approach, Wallace, more than any other national candidate in recent years, was permitted to smuggle in—under the cloak of this appeal to feeling and emotional certainty in the leader—enough glaring inconsistencies and contradictions to baffle those who tried to approach him rationally.

He was labor's candidate, he said, and proud of the inroads he made in this traditionally Democratic stronghold. Yet as governor he killed every attempt for a minimum wage law, supported the state's "right to work" law,

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(created in part by the GI Bill) and the corporate and military demands for research created, in Fischer's words, a "highly strategic position" which opportunistic professors began to occupy. The only difference is that they now find themselves accountable to their military and corporate contractors, instead of directly to their university administrations. Hence a power shift within the university did occur, but as a response to the machinations of the corporate and military conglomerates in the external society, not as the result of a faculty insurgency.

So much for the professor's revolution, and hence so much for the students' counterrevolution. The next

question is, what is the student movement really all about? Fischer is correct in that a lot of it is a reaction to the poor quality of undergraduate education, but he is incorrect in implying that this condition is a creation of the professoriat. Many student activists have begun to extend their analysis to include a critique of the corporate capitalist society, of which the university is an integral part, in their quest to understand the miserable conditions of American "higher education." And this seems to upset people like Fischer. So his response is to write an article which says, essentially, that, students, the capitalist system is not to blame for your problems—the greedy, autonom-

ous professors are to blame. Fischer, whether consciously or not, is attempting in this article to heighten the antagonism between students and teachers, whose interests would better be served by uniting to defend their common interests. Both groups have an interest in high quality, socially beneficial *education*, which is not the same thing as the *training* which is being dished out to prepare people to meet the needs of the corporate, administrative, and military elites which run the country. To achieve such a goal, activist students and professors interested in teaching must direct their antagonism not toward each other, but toward these elites. They must work to make a real revolution.

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and fixed Alabama with the most unfavorable workman's compensation law in America.

He was a Populist, he said, and the "little man's candidate," objecting to the way government steals from pay checks and frustrates legitimate yearnings. Yet as governor he prevented any increase in income or property taxes while raising the sales tax to four percent and permitting Alabama's largest communities to hike it to six percent (which they have done). He boosted the beer tax and the tobacco tax; he doubled the cost of a driver's license and tripled the cost of plates. In addition, this candidate of the people seems to be in sympathetic communication with the same sources who have always financially supported right-wing or strongly conservative movements: wealthy businessmen, oil and wheat interests, and conservative lawyers and bankers. Moreover, the candidate of the small man has presided over the most wretched school system in the nation. Alabama's ratio of pupils to teachers is the worst of any state (28.1); the state spends \$403 on each pupil, which is forty-ninth to Mississippi's fiftieth (but Mississippi's new pay raise for teachers will give Alabama undisputed last place). All this simply means that the little men, who cannot afford to send their children to private schools, will see them suffer: of every 1,000 Alabama 9th graders, only 194 go on to college, and this is the worst record in America; only 607 of every 1,000 graduate from high school and forty-seven states do better than that.

He was, he said, the candidate for "law and order." Yet Alabama has the highest murder rate, per 100,000 of the population, of any state in America according to the FBI. There are 11.7 murders in Alabama for each 100,000 people—the national average is 6.1 (Oklahoma's record is

only 4.4.) Birmingham, the state's largest city, reported the worst murder record of any big city in the country (12.5)—second place Chicago boasted a considerably better record (9.5). For every assault which takes place in Oklahoma (per 100,000 of the population), two occur in Alabama.

He was, he said, the candidate of those who want to limit the power of the Federal Government to come into the states with its financial programs and take over the control of local institutions. Yet he was in the forefront of those who wanted every available dollar of Federal aid—he accepted \$2.50 of Federal money for every \$1.00 which Alabama paid into the national treasury. He promised, moreover, to make the cities safe after he was elected President, but precisely how he would have made cities safe while sitting in Washington, D.C., without, in some measure, exerting or introducing Federal influence, has never been made very clear.

He was, he said, the candidate who would stand for state authority against the attempts of the Supreme Court to alter state laws. Yet during the campaign it was Wallace who demanded that the Supreme Court strike down Ohio's election law and permit his name to go on the ballot. (Ohio's law was certainly a bad one, and we may be relieved to see it declared unconstitutional; but there is surely an inconsistency in Wallace's contention that it was proper for the Court to act that way in Ohio, while insisting that it is illegal to strike down election laws in Alabama.)

He was, he said, the candidate who stood for responsible spending, living within your means, and ending extravagance and waste. Yet during his four years as governor, he doubled Alabama's indebtedness from \$281 million to \$569 million. And in his wife's shortened administration, the debt shot up another \$232 million. Much of this total, moreover, was in revenue bonds which were issued without allowing Alabamans to vote on the question.

What is the point of this review? It is certainly not to argue that everything Wallace has done is bad, for some of the things he has done must be applauded. If one is governor of a state like Alabama, for example, one may very well need to double indebtedness. Wallace's record in establishing new schools and vocational schools is quite creditable: in the period 1964-66, he increased spending on higher education 39 percent for which he must be praised (although it must be pointed out that 39 percent was below the percentage of increase in the nation as a whole, and that neighboring Florida went up 40 percent and neighboring Georgia rose 44 percent).

The point of reviewing Wallace's record is simply that viewed from a rational and dispassionate posture, the Wallace campaign contained certain discrepancies and unaccountable inconsistencies and contradictions. But no one who supported Wallace seemed to be very much troubled by them. And the reason is just as simple. The Wallace campaign, for those who found emotional certainty in it, was never to be apprehended or approached or understood on the level of rationality at all.

Wallace asked for the same kind of faith in his ability and in his capacity to guide as a father asks of a child. And the one who would question simply had no place in the home—he was too adult to trust blindly the leadership of the father in all instances and without reference to fact. The questioner thus became an enemy. He was a pin-headed bureaucrat whose briefcase had to be thrown into the Potomac River, for he told us that force might not *always* be the right response or that issues are more complex than they seem. Men who question have never been good believers. And it is this, I think, which helps to account for the anti-intellectualism of the Wallace campaign.

But one cannot retreat into immaturity without leaving behind some of the most valuable gains of manhood. One cannot revert to a more primitive world view without sacrificing some of the important things men have tried to learn and treasure as they have struggled painfully forward. In this case, one can talk about two sacrifices.

Where is the Christianity in this man? Where is the compassion in George Wallace, the pity for those who suffer? Where is charity and love and all the other things which Jesus suggested ought to guide our relations with other men? One has a difficult time picturing Jesus driving a car over the anarchists or pointing a gun at a Negro and daring him to pick up the brick.

Second, where is the slowly acquired knowledge of how society works? Where, in George Wallace, is the acknowledgement that learning, that social science, history, philosophy, science, may have something to contribute to the solution of our difficult problems? By making the intellectual into the new "nigger," Wallace said that the application of intelligence and reason is somehow out of place—that because problems are simple, those who tell us that they are complex are not merely wrong, but personally unclean, morally suspect, and totally irrelevant.

Wallace united, then, those who hate with those who are bewildered. This is a frightening alliance, partly because it offers only defensive, emotional, and essentially uncreative responses to our feelings. And it is frightening also because it resolutely and somewhat arrogantly turns its back upon two of our most important legacies as men—compassion toward our fellows and the life of the mind. All who treasure those things and who want to see them applied to our common life must regard the Wallace phenomenon with some alarm. □

Campus Notes

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gents, who had gathered to discuss various issues facing the University, that if the legislature could provide Oklahoma higher education with an increase of from \$25-30 million this year or the next, the system could then probably exist well in the future on annual increases proportionate to the state's economic growth.

The disparity between the governor's proposal and the Higher Regents' request is unusually large. It will be interesting, and important, to see at which point between the two figures the legislature will finally decide upon.

Professor Burgett Dies

William S. Burgett, professor of architecture at the University of Oklahoma, died Dec. 25 following an apparent heart attack. The 51-year-old Burgett had been ill for several months and was on leave from the University. A member of the faculty since 1949, he was a licensed architect in Hawaii (he once studied at the Uni-

versity of Hawaii), California (he also studied at USC and three other Los Angeles schools—Art Center School, Chouard Art Institute, and Otis Art Institute), and Oklahoma. At OU he designed Burton Hall (the home economics building) and the Aeronautical Engineering Building on the North Campus. His research interests included low- and middle-income housing, rehabilitation of old neighborhoods (his Norman home at 304 S. University Blvd. was an old house which he had remodeled and renovated), and state and regional planning. He had been a consultant to the Oklahoma City Urban Renewal Authority and the Oklahoma City Public Housing Authority, and he had been involved in several large-scale planning projects which included schools, hospitals, churches, residences, office buildings, and low-income housing. Burgett also was recognized as an expert on the Oriental influence in world architecture. He is survived by his wife, a

daughter and son of the home, and a son who lives in Little Rock, Ark.

Outside Agitators

Vital colleges and universities import outside agitators as an integral part of the educational experience. To agitate is to excite the mind, to stir up public discussion, and one of the goals of programs which bring prominent national figures, intellectuals, artists, business leaders, and celebrities to the campus (along with aims to inform and/or entertain) is precisely this sort of agitation.

The University has had steadily improving visitation programs, of which there are two main kinds. One is directed primarily at the general audience, the other is specialized in a particular field of study. In the former classification, OU this year has been the host for people like Dick Gregory, David Brinkley, Art Buchwald, John Gardner, and Betty Friedan. Julian Bond and John Lindsay were to have appeared but last-minute conflicts prevented their coming. (Some have been critical of the imbalance of the general program, pointing to the preponderance of speakers with a liberal political philosophy. Those responsible