

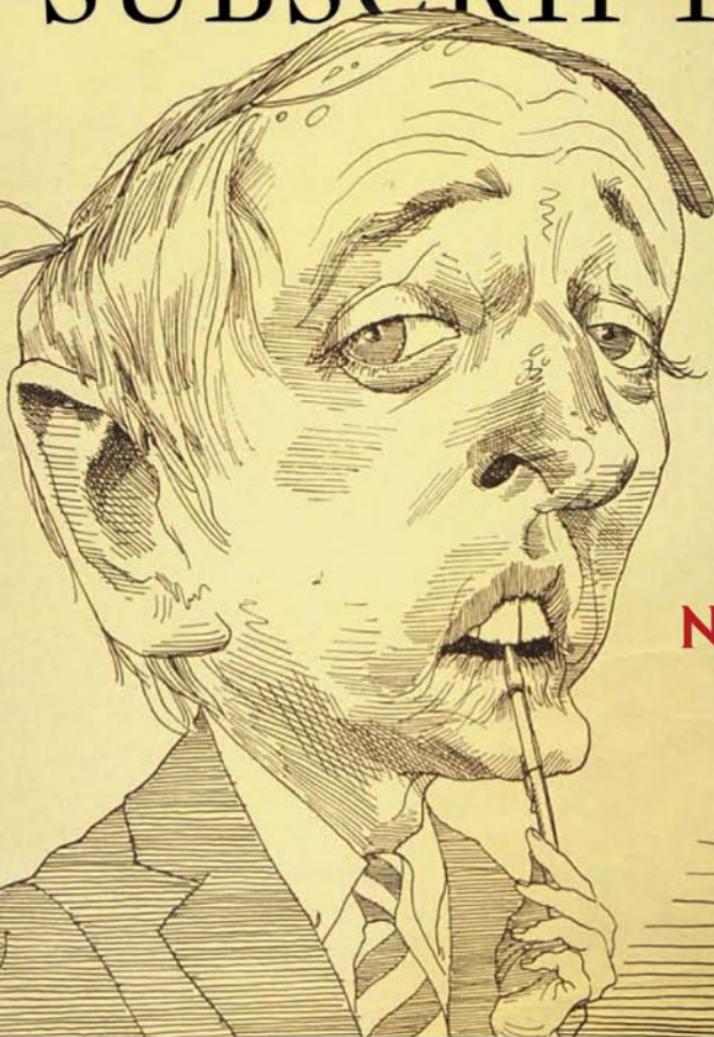
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*Notes  
&  
Asides  
from*

**NATIONAL  
REVIEW**



WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

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Notes & Asides  
from *National Review*

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.



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New York

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For Linda Bridges

—Devotedly

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## One

# “HANGING” EARL WARREN, CONSORTING WITH GOD

*October 1967–April 1972*

**N**ATIONAL REVIEW MAGAZINE began publishing in November 1955. I was its founder and editor and only stockholder. We began with a very small subscription list, but it was made up of lively and expressive people. Most letters addressed to us for publication were satisfactorily dealt with by simply sending them to the magazine’s letters section. Others cried out for different treatment. Gradually the thought crystallized that those who wrote to us exercising special skills or leaving a special flavor should not be treated perfunctorily.

I began to channel unorthodox letters into a department I called “Notes & Asides.” That department evolved as my own personal page in the magazine, available for whatever purposes I had in mind to put it to. Some correspondents made their points in special, even distinctive language. Some were curious, some disparaging, some downright combative. Most of these letters were answered in print, or commented on in some way. Some of them led to exchanges that ran on to succeeding issues. Sometimes “Notes & Asides” was used to reproduce personal bulletins I thought of interest to at least some of our readers. These included occasional letters addressed by me to publishers or public figures.

The feature was popular, and its life was extended after my retirement. This came in two stages. In 1990 I retired as hands-on editor-in-chief; in 2004, I gave away my ownership of the magazine. But “Notes & Asides” survived, perhaps not quite as robust as in its prime, but with more than life enough to warrant the occasional column of space in which it spoke with its distinctive orientation.

At the suggestion of Ed Capano, our publisher from 1991 until his retirement in June 2006, I agreed to bring together in book form material chosen from that huge body of work.

The intention here is to instruct and to divert. I don’t doubt that this book will perform those services for regular readers of the magazine, but I suspect it will do so also—perhaps especially—for others who have never read *National Review*, but who are curious about life, and how the quiddities of life are sometimes expressed.

Much thought was given to how to present the material here. The initial idea was to organize it thematically. Letters were grouped under separate headings. I went to some pains to taxonomize forty years of work, with the critical help of *NR* Associate Editor Alston Ramsay, an agile editorial intelligence freshly with us after serving as editor-in-chief of *The Dartmouth Review*.

Finally, I judged that the thematic version didn’t work. However, Mr. Ramsay could not take sufficient time away from the magazine to help produce a new version. It was great luck for us that another junior editor of *National Review* was friends with a graduate student (in comparative literature) from the University of Virginia, bound for Cambridge but with a month or two uncompromised. Charles Nicholas Chapin was guided by Occam’s razor, the theory that the simplest approach is often the best approach. The result is here before you.

The material is presented chronologically—as it appeared in the magazine over four decades. The reorganization I found refreshing. There are no historical ambiguities. Impulsive thoughts and words are displayed

pell-mell as if still hot from the muzzle that fired them. And moving through the harum-scarum of comments livid and tender, lively and pedantic, we are directly in touch with the journalistic incubator that brought it all forth.

What we then did was divide the material into four sections. The first, beginning in the turbulent late 1960s, runs roughly (to use Roman historical friezes) from Johnson II through Nixon I, never mind that Mr. Johnson and Mr. Nixon hardly show their faces in these fifty pages—they serve as bookends. Section 2 takes us through Watergate and the Carter malaise. Section 3 ushers in the Reagan years. Finally, in Section 4, we go through the last throes of the cold war and some of the attendant tensions, to the challenges of the next decade.

The mail brought every now and then a true surprise. I like to recall one letter, claiming to come from a high-school student, so stunningly precocious I thought it phony. But I published Edward Vazquez and got to know him when he matriculated at Columbia. We were in regular touch during his college years. (“Every time I turn around I’m being offered a scholarship. They think because my name is Vazquez I am an indigent Latino.”) He came once or twice to the offices of *NR*, and wrote two book reviews for us. On graduating he sought employment in the State Department, and for whatever it might be worth to him, I gave him a To Whom It May Concern recommendation which would have been just right for John Adams. I know that he was accepted, and am sorry not to have had word from him since then, thirty-five years ago.

The reader will also find in the first section tastes of the tough language of the day (should we hang Earl Warren?), a counter-roast of black essayist and novelist James Baldwin, a young student—the same Vazquez—who wants to know what exactly is meant by immanentizing the eschaton. Senator Edward Kennedy calls attention to his fiscal husbandry, and wishes me speedy passage to the DMZ in Vietnam. The pulsations of the period are expressively reacted to by individual correspondents.

And President Nixon, having returned from China, where his every step was watched by “us”—the eighty-three journalists who accompanied him—writes to accept my resignation from the outer fringes of his administration: “It was with regret that I learned of your decision . . .” The letter was written three months before the Watergate break-in, and much regretting lay ahead.



October 17, 1967

Channel 13  
N.Y.C., N.Y.

Dear Sir:

It has bothered me sufficient times to warrant my taking pen in hand to ask for your assistance. Mr. Buckley seems to be listing to the left (a side on which he feels most uncomfortable) all the time. To me it has a disturbing value, for I keep questioning--“Is the chair broken? Can it be so every week?”

Perhaps he has concluded this peculiar position allows for a unique camera angle and gives him an advantage.

“Is it possible,” I ask myself, “he has a problem with his back?”

Maybe he never sat up straight at Yale or even before that!

Hasn't any other viewer noticed it? Or am I seeing his position incorrectly?

Respectfully,  
Mack Rapp, Senior Consultant  
Rapp & Rapp & Associates Inc.  
Port Washington, N.Y.

*Dear Mr. Rapp: Channel 13 forwarded your kind letter in which you express concern for my back. I suffer no pains, so I have no excuse other than my natural slouchiness. Might I make a suggestion? Why don't you tilt over when you watch the program until the long axis of your body and that of mine are exactly parallel? Try that and I think you will find that the only thing that then distracts you is my main guest, who will appear to be at an angle. But since each guest adopts a slightly different posture, there will unquestionably be an agreeable variety to compensate for this. Yours cordially, WFB*

**October 31, 1967**

Mr. Buckley:

You are the mouthpiece of that evil rabble that depends on fraud, perjury, dirty tricks, anything at all that suits their purposes.

I would trust a snake before I would trust you or anybody you support.

A. Ruesthe  
[no address]

*Dear Mr. Ruesthe: What would you do if I supported the snake? Cordially,  
WFB*

**November 14, 1967**

Dear Mr. Buckley:

Is *National Review* ever going to do anything about the greatest piece of scum in American journalism? He dumps on everyone who loves America.

Sincerely,  
Betty Patterson  
Whittier, Calif.

*Dear Mrs. Patterson: When we received your letter we were just about to act.  
See below. Cordially, WFB*

*Announcing*  
**A New Patriotic Committee**  
**JOIN NOW**

---

THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE  
TO HORSEWHIP  
DREW PEARSON

---

—Whereas by his foul insinuations on the virtue of Mrs. Shirley Temple Black, Mr. Drew Pearson has outraged the conscience of the community;

**THEREFORE:** We do hereby propose, and solicit support for, The Committee to Horsewhip Drew Pearson.

**Honorary Sponsors:**    **Harry Truman, Esq.**  
                                      **Dwight D. Eisenhower, Esq.**  
                                      **Majority Whip, U.S. Senate**  
                                      **Minority Whip, U.S. House of Representatives**

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**(appointed without prior consultation)**

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Hon. J. Edgar Hoover	Hon. William Miller	Walter Winchell, Esq.
Hon. Lyndon Baines Johnson	Hon. Richard M. Nixon	Lloyd Wright, Esq.

**November 28, 1967**

First, a report on the newest patriotic committee, the National Committee to Horsewhip Drew Pearson, launched by a few patriots as the only appropriate response to Mr. Pearson's slurs on Shirley Temple, and his willingness to sacrifice the future of two families in order to make a cheap

sensationalist point involving Ronald Reagan. Well, the Committee is off to a flying start. Membership badges and buttons are offered at \$2.00. (Write to “Horsewhip Drew Pearson,” 150 E. 35th St., New York 10016.) As I write, the button is being forged in the factory, and early next week will be mailed out to what is likely to become the largest nonpartisan committee in the United States. Typical responses are “Delighted to join!” (Mr. E.V.C., Mechanicsburg, Ohio) “Thanks so much for this new and sorely needed committee. You’ve made it *fun* to be patriotic again!” (Mrs. M.R.H., San Diego, California) Mrs. T.S.L. from Clearwater, Florida sends \$10 “for my membership and perhaps some needy students.” Needy students, no Californians considered, please apply. Address: Scholarship Dept., Committee to Horsewhip Drew Pearson, address above. We shall keep you posted, and meanwhile, don’t forget to wear your buttons at all public gatherings. A committee of Quakers visited us yesterday petitioning us to produce a second, luminous button, so as to keep the Committee’s goal visible at all times. The Executive will consider the economic feasibility and report back in due course. —WFB

### December 12, 1967

It appears that everybody in the entire world desires to become associated with the National Committee to Horsewhip Drew Pearson, with the result that the Board of Directors has decided to limit charter membership to 10 per cent of the population of the United States. So that if you desire to join, write to Horsewhip Drew Pearson, 150 E. 35th St., New York 10016; or wire or cable, HORSEWHIP CARE NAT WEEKLY NEW YORK. First come, first served. The buttons now exist, and will be mailed out, along with membership certificates, towards the end of this week. The NCHDP Executive Whip, C. H. Simonds, has announced that the Committee will also supply little round stickers, appropriate for affixing to loci of moral indignation. They should regularly decorate your letters to your congressmen. They are available at \$1.00 for 25, minimum order \$1.00.

You will recall that a lady philanthropist sent in an extra eight dollars designated for scholarship memberships for needy students, from whom we have heard in droves. Mr. R. H. Jr. of Glen Ellyn, Illinois, who petitions for a scholarship, writes: "I am a needy student just barely getting through the seminary and feel thwarted in my deep passionate desire to horsewhip the Infidel." (R. H. Jr. won one of the scholarships.) Another comes in from Mr. F. T. of Troy, New York: "Last year my resources were worn so thin that I took to eating rice and beans fourteen meals a week, and nothing the other seven meals. And last month, when I was down to my last \$30, I spent \$6.89 on a *National Review* subscription. Furthermore, I feel that Drew Pearson needs to be horsewhipped. Who can be needier?" Not very many people can be needier, Brother F.: and in recognition that man cannot live by bread alone, we offer you membership, gratis, in Horsewhip. Mr. Dick Sartwell, President of the Associated Students of Malone College in Canton, Ohio, wants to know: "Is there anything wrong with starting a campus committee for said purposes?" Certainly not, the Executive Whip advises, suggesting a riding crop as the appropriate symbol for junior membership. And Michael D. Hoffman of Wilmette, Ill., wishes to donate his services to form a "Young NCHDP—after all, shouldn't youth be protected from Drew Pearson too?" Young Mr. Hoffman has received his franchise.

What, meanwhile, has the whippee to say about all this? One of the Committee recently heard him interviewed on the air. What did he think about the Committee to Horsewhip Drew Pearson? "Well," Mr. Pearson answered, "the man behind it all was for Joe McCarthy ten years ago, what else can you expect?" "And besides," Mr. Pearson added, "the Committee is asking two dollars for a membership, whereas I would like people to send me *four* dollars, which *I* would send on to the Boys Club of America." We checked with the President of the Boys Club of America, who observed: "Flattery will get Mr. Pearson nowhere. The Boys Clubs are organizing Horsewhip Drew Pearson Committees all over America. If he thinks he can bribe us, he underestimates the moral fiber of American youth."

So don't forget, the Committee has only a couple of weeks left to accept membership. Act fast. —WFB

**December 26, 1967**

And a bulletin from the National Committee to Horsewhip Drew Pearson, from the Executive Whip: “Everything is in the mail. However, some of you have unclear handwriting, or else you wrote in such haste to inscribe yourselves as charter members of the Horsewhip Committee that your fingers trembled. In case your name appears wrong, please send in your certificate, and we'll give you another one, free, gratis.”

You will find, when you begin wearing your buttons, proudly, that lots of people will approach you and, almost invariably, ask: “Why do you want to horsewhip Drew Pearson?”

To which there is one and only one answer authorized unanimously by the Committee, to wit, “Because of what he said about Shirley Temple.”

Now don't go and gild the lily. That's ALL you should reply. Then tilt your head up just the least little bit, heavenward, and permit, perhaps, a tear to make its way slowly down your idealistic cheek, chick.

A very Merry Christmas to you, from your grateful friend and admirer,  
—WFB

**January 30, 1968**

Shall I reply to the lady from *Good Housekeeping*, who took it all so nicely? She had written in connection with a survey, to ask what my wife found most endearing in me, that might account for the success of our marriage (“We have had interesting replies from President and Mrs. Lyndon Johnson . . .”). I sent the note to my wife, who scrawled in pencil on the letter: “I have always had a passion for men with six toes. When I saw Mr. Buckley in his bathing trunks I noticed he had six toes in one foot, and eight in the other. Bliss! As soon as I saw his feet I asked for his hand, and we have

been happily married ever since.” The lady editor took it all in very good humor: “I knew it must have been hard to fill Mr. Buckley’s shoes, and that there was more of him than meets the eye . . .” Whereupon C. H. Simonds, our valued associate, informed us that his half-brothers were born with six toes and six fingers; but that in an early operation they were cut down to size. Mr. Rickenbacker observed that that was a pity, since six fingers would be especially useful for pointing the fingers of scorn. The chairman brought the meeting to order.

Mr. Rickenbacker, by the way, sends up an uncompleted editorial paragraph, with the notation: “WFB: Could you finish this? I think I’m in over my depth.” Perhaps *you* would care to finish it? It goes: “Suffering from an acute case of infarcted bloviasis of the fantod? Snew Hums, the only riggly chuff! Warsher over flintion! Driputed lexanalysis completely refirmes the findings of the National Institution of Fantodiasis that regular daily son-cumation of Hums, the riggly chuff, underarches the . . .” You have to understand Rickenbacker . . . —WFB

**June 4, 1968**

*National Review*

150 East 35th Street

New York, N.Y. 10016

Dear Sir:

I have before me several copies of printed matter issued by your organization. I feel that you are friendly to organized labor, but note the omission of the New York Allied Printing Trades Council Union Label on the printing referred to.

The more than 2,000,000 members of labor unions in Greater New York, together with their friends, look for the Allied Union Label on printing. It is the only emblem recognized by the general labor movement as an

assurance that the literature was produced under fair conditions in this city.

I feel that you will appreciate having your attention called to this matter.

May we anticipate that you will give consideration to this matter in the same friendly spirit in which it is presented, and that you will advise us of your cooperation to our mutual benefit.

Very truly yours,  
Theodore A. Quets  
Director, Label Department  
New York Typographical Union No. 6  
62 West 14th Street, N.Y.  
Bertram A. Powers, President

*Dear Mr. Quets:*

*When you grant your typographers the right to work without joining your organization, I will believe that you speak for them. Until then, I would no more attach your label to a freeman's magazine, than I would display the emblem of a work-camp. Moreover, National Review would not want its public to think that it was in any way associated with an organization whose consideration for the public is measured by its willingness, during the past few years, to deprive it of all newspapers for a period of five months, and, finally, to force four newspapers into extinction. Perhaps you will, as Director, Label Department, communicate to other publications their option of putting a small "NR" on the corner of an inside page, to signify that a Brotherhood survives which hopes one day to be liberated from your monopolistic yoke. I thought you would appreciate having your attention called to this alternative.*

*Yours faithfully,  
Wm. F. Buckley Jr.*