

says bluntly: “This is tantamount to Holocaust-denial. His arguments about the Boer concentration camps are similar to the arguments of the Nazi apologists about those camps.”

Yet Roberts’s denialism extends to an even greater crime by the British Empire: the creation and perpetuation of famines that killed millions. In the 1870s, under British rule, India was reduced to a state of extreme famine. One dissident British civil servant, Lieutenant-Colonel Ronald Osborne, described staggering through the horror: “Mothers sold their children for a single scanty meal. Husbands flung their wives into ponds, to escape the torment of seeing them perish by the lingering agonies of hunger.”

Roberts presents this string of famines as a natural disaster, which the British dealt with through “fairness and decency and astonishingly little interest in personal gain.” He also explicitly praises the British viceroys who adopted the policies that worsened the starvation. In his biography of Lord Salisbury, he praises Viceroy Lord Lytton for “his excellent management of the famine”—think of it as “Heckuva job, Brownie,” a hundred years too soon.

Yet the research of Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen shows that the famines in the Raj were a direct—if unintended—result of British rule: “The best response to people like Roberts is to show that India continued to have famines right up to the time of independence in 1947,” Sen explained to me. “But, since the British left, there ... has been no substantial famine.”

ROBERTS’S RAW imperialism informs the advice he offers Bush today. For one, he urges Bush to adopt a supreme imperial indifference to public opinion. He counsels that “there can be no greater test of statesmanship than sticking to unpopular but correct policies.” The real threat isn’t abroad, but at home, among domestic critics. Roberts writes, “The greatest danger to [the British and, by extension, the American] continued imperium came not from declared enemies without, but rather from vociferous enemies within their own society.”

In this Bushian history, democratic debate—especially in wartime—is a sign of weakness to be suppressed. “Contrary to the received view of the Vietnam War, the United States was never defeated in the field of battle,” he writes. It was Walter Cronkite, not Ho Chi Minh, who was the true menace: “Some of the media was indeed a prime enemy of the conflict.” Self-criticism is only ever interpreted in

these histories as “self-hatred,” which he says is “an abiding defect in the English-speaking peoples, and for some reason especially strong in Americans.” It can only sap the “willpower” of any empire.

It doesn’t appear to occur to Roberts that the British or U.S. empires could simply hit up against a limit to their power. Could there be a worse adviser for George W. Bush right now? Roberts’s advice is a vicious imperial anachronism: Target civilians, introduce mass internment, don’t worry about whether people hate you, bear down on dissent because

it will sap the empire’s willpower, ignore your critics because they’re just jealous, and—above all—keep on fighting and you’ll prevail.

It seems that Bush looks to historians as he looks to his advisers: to be told he’s doing just fine. But to hear that message, he’s had to scrape around for a fifth-rate Rudyard Kipling mocked by almost all serious historians and soaked in slaughter.

JOHANN HARI

Johann Hari is a columnist for *THE INDEPENDENT* newspaper in London.



Bada Bing Club

How Democratic machines keep women out.

OFTENTIMES, the women who gain access to New Jersey’s behind-the-scenes political gatherings aren’t wearing much in the way of clothes. That, at least, is the impression James McGreevey imparts in his memoir, *The Confession*. Strip clubs, he explains, play an integral part in the Garden State’s power culture. “We used to order beer after beer at Cheeques,” McGreevey writes, “watching the dancers twirl on their poles while debating everything from local policy initiatives and tax rates to the merits of silicone breast enhancement.” Presumably this ritual didn’t hold much appeal for the gay future governor. Still, for the sake of political ambition, McGreevey didn’t dare forgo it. Strip clubs, he writes, are the “fraternal lodges” of New Jersey politicians, places

where “lasting and productive connections” are forged.

New Jersey is one of the country’s most reliably liberal states. It has favored the Democratic candidate in the last four presidential elections and hasn’t elected a Republican senator since 1972. Yet its political culture is also among the country’s most sexist. It ranks in the bottom third of states in proportion of legislators who are women, while its congressional delegation contains no females. And New Jersey isn’t the only state with deep-blue political tendencies and a virtually all-male power structure. Massachusetts and Rhode Island don’t have any women in their congressional delegations, either, and Pennsylvania has one of the lowest percentages of female state legislators outside the South. In Rhode Island, female delegates make up a paltry 19.5 percent of the legislature—placing the state behind such liberal bastions as Kansas, Nebraska, and Idaho.

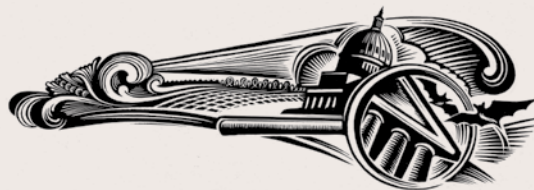
BETTMANN/CORBIS

Indeed, if many left-leaning Northeastern states have proved surprisingly inhospitable to female politicians, the reverse is true of many conservative Western states. In 1999, women held the top five statewide offices in Arizona, which is also the only state where female governors have served back-to-back. Meanwhile, Colorado has the fifth-highest percentage of female legislators in the country and is one of only six states where a woman serves as speaker of the state Senate.

WHY DO SO many liberal states lag behind conservative states in female representation? It's a puzzling question with a simple answer: machines. Northeastern states may be some of the most liberal in the country, but they are also the most likely to have political cultures shaped by bosses. In New Jersey, county chairmen (and they are pretty much all men) still decide who will receive official party support in primaries and reap financial backing. "Those decisions are generally made behind closed doors," says Debbie Walsh, director of the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University. "It makes it harder for women, and outsiders in general, to get involved."

McGreevey's methodical rise through the state's political ranks sheds light on the phenomenon. As he writes in *The Confession*, he paid numerous visits to the powerful county bosses to beg for their support and unleashed charm offensives on their closest allies. He patiently listened to a political operative's description of his fiftieth birthday party, which had taken place in a warehouse in the Dominican Republic, and, on another occasion, enlisted the owner of an Irish bar he patronized to plead his case to a powerful boss. Other glimpses of the Northeast's frat-like political culture have occasionally spilled into public view: In 2000, during an all-night budget session in Massachusetts, legislators chanted "Toga! Toga!" and rumors circulated that a freshman member who had fallen asleep woke up to find his leg shaved. The House speaker later compared the evening to a "keg party."

In the West, political conventions are very different. Claudine Schneider, who represented Rhode Island in Congress for ten years before relocating to Colorado, offers this comparison: "You don't have the old boys' club inner circle here, which is almost institutionalized on the East Coast. Here, it is wide open spaces. If you can build a constituency, you can run." And women have: Not only were Western states the first to grant women



On the Hill

PURE BRED

Washington gets purge fever.

IS THERE anything sorer than the modern party boss? Once, bosses presided over Congress like emperors. They sealed who would live and who would die, picking the incumbents who could face reelection and instructing a few doomed souls to spend more time with their families. But that era is gone. Gunning to take the bosses' place are blogger NZ Bear, talk-radio host Hugh Hewitt, and *Washington Times* columnist Frank Gaffney. This trio helped start the newly minted Victory Caucus—dedicated, in part, to defeating Republican incumbents



who have criticized George W. Bush's Baghdad surge. In that capacity, the group has not only angled to usurp the bosses' old job of forcibly retiring pesky congressmen; it has invited the masses to help wield the hatchet, encouraging its website's chat forums to nominate the most deserving and conquerable victims, à la "American Idol." Virginia Senator John Warner and Florida Representative Ric Keller are particular favorites. But, as one commenter announces, "Lawn Boy Keller is just the beginning!"

Washington is now awash in ideological groups intent on purifying the parties. First, there came the supply-side Club for Growth, which has spent several election cycles try-

ing to purge Republicans who fail to genuflect before the Laffer curve. But Ned Lamont's triumph over Joe Lieberman in last summer's Democratic primary—and the Club for Growth's near-toppling of Lincoln Chafee in *his* primary—has inspired a new mania for purging. In Lamont's wake, MoveOn, some unions, and the blogger Markos Moulitsas founded Working For Us (WU), a liberal PAC, which targets Democratic congressmen who deviate on core issues like trade or labor practices. WU's nonprofit counterpart has already raised \$200,000 to spend on ads and phone blitzes in the run-up to the 2008 primaries. Everywhere you look, it seems, there's a wannabe Robespierre.

It is a strange time for such an outburst of internecine struggle. The two parties are locked in an epic struggle for control of Congress, where every incumbent occupies precious turf. And what makes the fratricide even more striking is that many of its participants were so recently relatively content with the party. Take NZ Bear (he won't disclose his real name), a dirty blond from Southern California who holds the exalted title Conservative Political Action Committee (CPAC) Blogger of the Year. Before the midterms, NZ never imagined that he would launch a movement to sabotage the National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC). But, after the majority had been lost and the Republican leadership freed its members to vote for the Democrats' antiwar resolution, NZ began to feel deeply frustrated. "Basically, Hugh [Hewitt] and I sort of mentally snapped," he recalls. The result was the Victory Caucus's precursor, a petition where more than 30,000 signers promised not to donate to the NRSC unless it withheld money from anti-surge senators. They expressed their mood with a poem on the pledge's website: →

←

*There's 100 seats
Where the Senate meets
And they serve at our command,
As the derrieres
That sit on those chairs
Had better understand*

The NRSC only found out about the pledge when an employee ran across it on a blog—the Internet equivalent of finding a dead horse's head in your bed. Likewise, Maryland Representative Al Wynn's team discovered he was on the WFU top offenders list when somebody in the office Googled the boss. At first, Wynn's team thought it was a hoax, on the level of those loopy faxes that pour into Washington offices sprinkled with boldface and exclamation points. But, when they and other targeted representatives figured out what it really was, a small firestorm ignited, especially among members who were scared they might be next. Steny Hoyer called WFU's founder to complain, and the list was taken down—temporarily: The group has since launched its own contest to "Nominate a rep. today." "In times like these, no one is safe," says a House aide.

In a gesture toward pragmatism, WFU has vowed to target Democrats who are more conservative than their districts, so as not to risk the seats changing hands. But the nonprofit's first official action was to launch a flurry of radio ads against Senator Max

Baucus of Montana, hardly a safe liberal state. No matter what you think of Baucus—this magazine has called on the leadership to strip him of his chairman's gavel—to attack him carries political risks, given that the Democrats have a one-seat Senate majority. But the group prides itself on working beyond the narrow calculus of preserving incumbents. Tom Mattzie, a WFU board member and MoveOn's Washington director, tells me the group decided "to stay focused on the big goal: a progressive majority in Congress, not a minority." In other words, an ideological majority—not a party majority. That's not an outlandish goal, but it's bound to set up more conflicts with the congressional leadership and groups like the NRSC, who exist to protect party majorities.

If party bosses are being replaced, they have only themselves to blame. Parties long cultivated the likes of Hugh Hewitt to spout their line in the face of evidence to the contrary. Hewitt's own elevation to party hero began when he tried to bar Bob Woodward from entering the Nixon Library; last year, he could be found doggedly defending Harriet Miers even after most Republican lawmakers had abandoned her nomination. He's one of the last men you would have expected to start an intraparty insurgency. But if you breed an attack dog, you shouldn't be surprised when it bites back. *EVE FAIRBANKS*

suffrage, they were also the first to send a congressman to D.C. and to elect a female governor.

The part-time political culture of the West—where elected office can seem more like a hobby than a job—also tends to favor women. As Alan Ehrenhalt pointed out in the late '80s, when he investigated why Colorado's state legislature had the highest percentage of female delegates in the country, the Colorado legislature only meets part-time (which makes it more family-friendly) and doesn't pay much (which may dissuade some male breadwinners from running). "While men tend to get involved in politics as a premeditated career option," says Walsh, "women often run because they want to *fix* something."

In the Northeast, bosses long had an interest in making government service a profitable profession. As a result, many legislatures pay a sizable salary—and demand a full-time commitment. "In a

part-time legislature, service can be an extension of volunteerism," says Jennifer Mann, a Democratic state legislator from Allentown, Pennsylvania. "In a place like Pennsylvania, you don't fall into a political career by happenstance. It's not something you add to your life—it really replaces what you used to do."

THE MACHINE culture of many liberal states helps explain another odd phenomenon: why so many of the women who *have* succeeded at high levels of state politics in the Northeast—think governors Christine Todd Whitman (New Jersey), Jane Swift (Massachusetts), and Jodi Rell (Connecticut)—have been liberal Republicans. Schneider, who is pro-choice, was an environmental activist before she ran for Congress and probably would have been a more natural ideological fit in the Democratic Party. "But, when I looked at Rhode Island's Democratic

politicians, all I saw were white Catholic males," she says. "And I thought, 'Whatever party the incumbents are, I am not.'" If the majority party appeared unreceptive to women, the state GOP welcomed her with open arms. Republicans in the Northeast are often so outmatched that they are happy to have just about anyone run. And, in Schneider's case, attempting to depose an incumbent with sky-high approval ratings *did* seem like a fool's errand. But, after a failed first attempt, she snagged the seat and was sworn into Congress at the age of 31.

That's not the only time allowing a woman to embark on a kamikaze mission ended up paying off handsomely for the GOP. Whitman challenged Senator Bill Bradley in 1990 because no one else wanted to take on the giant of New Jersey politics. After unexpectedly coming within a few points of toppling him, she emerged as the obvious choice to run for governor three years later.

Beyond Whitman, there are signs that women are finally beginning to circumvent the New Jersey machine. Two state senators, Nia Gill and Loretta Weinberg, have managed to serve as Democrats while simultaneously cutting ties to county bosses. Gill ran without the support of the Essex County organization in 2003 and stunned party officials when she eked out a victory against their anointed candidate. Weinberg landed in the Senate only after a bitter public fight with the Bergen County boss, who wanted to install the local sheriff instead. Both women champion independent legislative agendas, which is one reason they have feuded so publicly with the chairmen. "When women exercise discretionary power, an uproar ensues," says Gill.

Because they won't play by the traditional rules of New Jersey politics, and because they have an incentive to expose the foibles of the old boys' network, women like Gill and Weinberg are a threat to the long-term dominance of the machines. And so, while it isn't likely that New Jersey female politicians will match the level of representation that women have achieved in a state like Arizona anytime soon, they may be accomplishing something even more important: hastening the day when the bosses—and their strip-club political culture—are finally things of the past.

ALEXANDRA STARR

Alexandra Starr, who writes frequently for SLATE, is a 2007 Milena Jesenská journalism fellow.