

R's Gone Loopy

Ever optimistic to the point of idiocy, I am convinced it's a wonderful thing that Newt and the Newtzis continue to do mean and dumb things at an accelerating rate. This can only redound to the credit of the other guys. The R's must be staying up late to plan and ensure a Democratic victory in November. What else could account for their outrageous performance?

And the beauty part is, none of this dumb, mean stuff is becoming law. Either the Senate balks or Clinton vetoes, and in the meantime, we all get a chance to see what the R's would do if they had more power.

Repeal the ban on assault weapons, now there's a great idea. Just what the country needs, more assault weapons.

Cut off education for the children of illegal immigrants, most of whom are American citizens: another fabulous proposal. We need a new underclass, illiterate kids who will grow up to be hopelessly unemployable.

And note the brilliant thinking on the job-training bill, passed last year and now in conference committee. This bipartisan bill would consolidate more than eighty education and job-training efforts, make sensible changes in the administration and coordination of the programs, and give flexibility to displaced workers through a voucher system that allows them to select training programs important to the local economy.

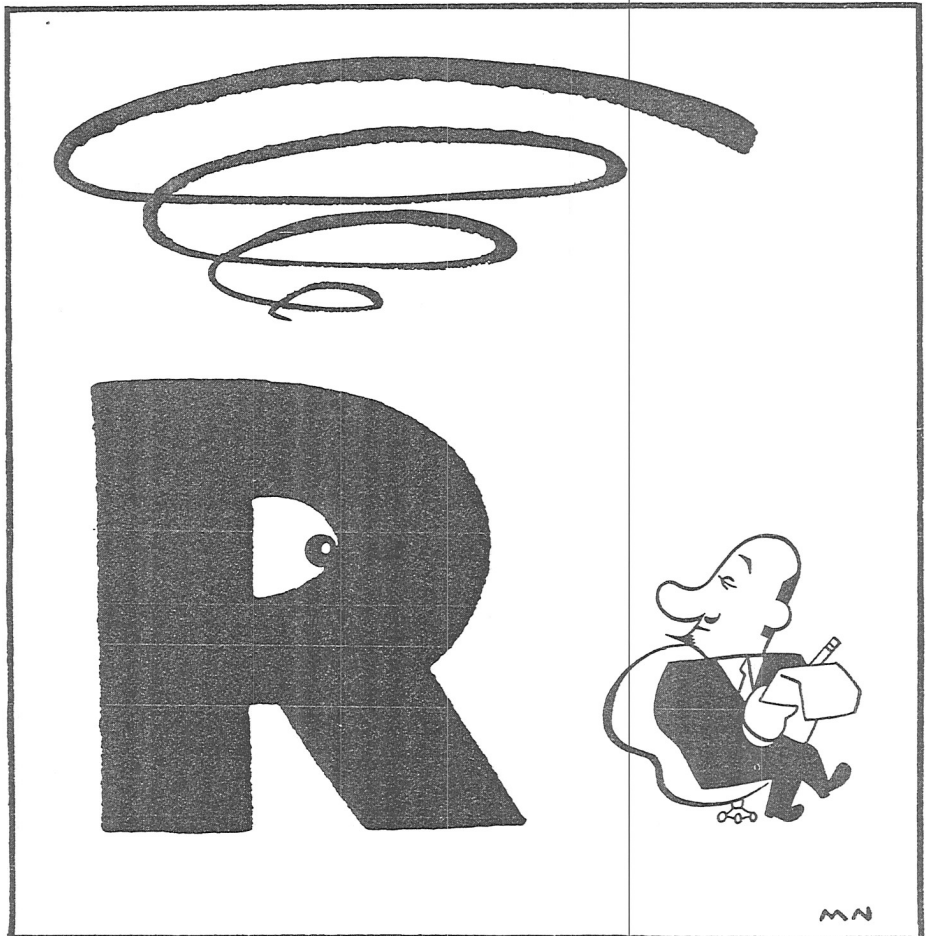
So the Republicans have decided it's "part of an effort to remold our American Dream, free-enterprise-driven economy into a socialistic, government-controlled and managed national system for human-resources development—the American Forced Labor Bill."

Undeterred by facts, the loopy right has mounted a scare campaign that has such clear thinkers as Representative Henry Hyde of Illinois frightened to death.

Then there's the secret Republican plan to ensure a Democratic Congress by opposing a modest increase in the minimum wage. With the minimum at \$4.25 an hour, \$8,800 a year, it seems McDonald's will no longer be able to afford burger-flippers if the minimum goes up to \$5.15.

Now let's see, average CEO salaries have doubled from \$2 million to \$4 million in the last few years. If every CEO gave back \$2 mil, he could afford another 227 burger flippers.

Is there no end to their creativity? Sen-



MARK NEWGARDEN

ators Kennedy and Kassebaum have this dandy bill that will make health insurance portable: You can carry it with you from job to job and between jobs. This plugs up one of the most notorious holes in health insurance—using preexisting medical conditions as an excuse for turning down coverage.

All hands agree it's a great idea, except the House Republicans are now planning to load the bill down with special-interest amendments that will make it unpassable. My favorite is medical savings accounts, an insurance executive's wet dream that allows health-insurance companies to skim the cream from the low-risk pool of the healthy and wealthy and leave everyone else with higher premiums.

Medical savings accounts are the brainchild of the Golden Rule Insurance Company, which has contributed \$1.4 million to the Republican Party. J. Patrick Rooney, an executive at Golden Rule, contributed \$103,000 to Gingrich and GOPAC, Gingrich's political-action committee. Wonderful, isn't it?

Then there's cutting the Earned Income

Tax Credit for the working poor, a program even Ronald Reagan supported.

I also like slashing funds for the Legal Services Corporation, a long-time fave target of the right. I see this as a pro-family measure: Poor women won't be able to get divorced anymore. They'll just have to stay married to men who knock them around and beat their kids to a pulp. And the 52,000 cases Legal Services handled last year getting deadbeat dads to cough up money for their kids? Hey, no divorce, no problem with child support, see?

I especially like the Republican plan to open the national wildlife refuges to more hunting and fishing. Why don't Democrats ever have nifty ideas like that?

The Republicans have now filed 139 proposed amendments to the Constitution of the United States. Whatthehell, who's James Madison compared to Congressman Steve Stockman of Texas, a man so stupid that if you put his brain in a bumblebee it would fly backwards?

I think the R's should shut the government down again. That was truly brilliant. How can you not love them? ■

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