

A runaway Supreme Court is the real danger

Washington—There is a specter haunting official Washington. It is the specter of a constitutional convention — a wide-open conclave where delegates, chosen by the people, debate and decide upon alterations in the Constitution on issues ranging from the right to life to the death penalty.

What has given the specter shape and form is that 30 states have issued a call for a constitutional convention, the purpose of which is to draft an amendment mandating a balanced federal budget.

**patrick
buchanan**

If four more states join, Congress may be required to issue the call. If the conclave is held, who is to say it will restrict itself to the discussion of mandated limits on federal spending?

If we truly believe, however, in the capacity of a free people to govern themselves, what do Americans have to fear from a constitutional convention?

In their eternal wisdom, the founding fathers made the amending process long and laborious — as the advocates of ERA have come to discover. Whether a proposed amendment emerges from Congress or from a convention, it must still win the

support of both houses of the legislatures of 38 states. Any frivolous or foolish proposal to come out of a constitutional convention would perish long before it attained that considerable height. The D.C. Voting Rights Amendment, for example, approved overwhelmingly by both Houses of Congress two years ago, has yet to be ratified by 10 states. It is dead in the water.

We are told, for example, that if the untutored American people were allowed to vote today on the Bill of Rights, they would reject it in a referendum. "Does anyone want to test that proposition?" asks the *New York Times*.

Well, yes. Why not? If the American people would reject the Bill of Rights in a national referendum, perhaps it is not because they oppose the Bill of Rights, but because they oppose the interpretation, the construction, placed upon the first 10 amendments and the rest of the Constitution by the Supreme Court.

This free people still believes deeply in its tradition of free speech and freedom of the press. It does not, however, believe in the right of organized crime, under the shelter of that amendment, to run a multi-billion dollar business in hard-core pornography.

This free people still believes in the Fifth Amendment right of an individual not to be forced to testify against himself.

It does not, however, believe that some killer or rapist has the right to be turned loose to prowl the urban jungle simply because his arresting officer failed to inform him of his right to keep his mouth shut.

This free people does not wish to return to the days of racial segregation. It does not, however, believe in court-ordered busing to achieve racial balance in the public schools. It has said so in a hundred surveys and referenda. What does it take to get this message through to Washington? What does it take to get Congress to muster the courage to take back the legislative powers usurped by the Supreme Court?

This free people does not believe in lynch law, or in hanging horse thieves. It

does, however, with good reason, wonder how the devil the Supreme Court could claim the death penalty is "cruel and unusual punishment," hence unconstitutional, when the death penalty was commonplace in the states of the union which originally ratified the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Instead of wringing their hands in horror at the remote prospect of a runaway constitutional convention, why do not our terrified Lords Temporal look at the cause — the real and present danger, a runaway Supreme Court?

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Reagan deserves no more notice than lowliest victim

I have been contemplating these past few days the assassination attempt on President Reagan and the predictable responses that have followed. My personal response to the whole incident has been that we should be grateful that no one yet has lost their life due to this shooting, but other than that, I find myself cold, detached and uncaring, certainly feeling a good deal sorer for James Brady than for Reagan.

There is renewed fuss about gun control, capital punishment, violence, and so on. This fuss does not mean very much to me simply because nothing more will be done than already has been done in the wake of the assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy, Medger Evers, Malcolm X or Martin Luther King Jr. Violent murders have not changed our minds in the past and I suspect the pattern will continue.

guest opinion

What is really frightening to me is what already has happened and what will happen: specifically, the hypocrisy that has already manifested itself in the form of hyped-up "shock and horror," and the political fallout that all this will have. These are the sub-surface questions that few really will come to grips with. I would like to give it a try. If nothing else, the questions may prove thought-provoking.

In the first place, who is it that was shot? Was it truly Ronald Reagan? It seems not. If Ronald Reagan were at this point a former grade B movie actor who was washed up at 70 years of age, would we be as upset as we are now?

Even if he were still a marginal political figure, would the concern be as great? The fact is that the president of the United States was shot and that is why we are all upset. The president could have been anybody at all; it just happened to be Ronald Reagan.

This means a person who holds considerable power or high political office deserves more attention when shot than ordinary people who have the same thing happen to them. When "important" people are wounded, all the talk on gun control becomes louder, but people are shot every day and nothing is ever said or done about this situation. I feel no sorer for Reagan than I do for any other victim of violent crime in this country. I feel no sorer for the president than for the lowliest bum who gets knifed in any slum in this country for his few pennies. It is all violent, all horrifying, even for the least and meekest of us, as well as for the most powerful. Special attention is uncalled for.

In the second place, this assassination

attempt shouldn't horrify us at all. We are a nation that revels in violence. We glorify it in our history and in our entertainment. We are a nation that has carved its territory out at the point of a gun, wiping out an entire pre-existing culture in the process. Violence happens in our urban areas every day. We witnessed an entire war on our television sets. We salivate over every Mafia execution. An assassination attempt should be right up our alley, complete with instant conspiracy theories and the imminent collapse of government. Why be hypocritical about it? Let's pretend that we're at the movies.

This syndrome of exalting to some higher stature the deaths or near-deaths of presidents and the subsequent response of pity, sympathy and concern shown by new-found loyalty for the president and his cause deserves the most concern. A gunshot wound is no trivial matter, to be sure, but compared to the injuries sustained by the others involved, Reagan was merely scratched. Blown out of proportion, this scratch makes it easy for us to forget that Reagan is supporting and expanding our further involvement in El Salvador, where thousands of peasants are being brutally suppressed and murdered; trimming the federal budget on all the wrong places and dangerously escalating the arms race by way of massive expansion of the military budget; refusing to talk to the Soviet Union and rattling Cold-War sabres at them while still refusing to lift the grain embargo as he promised to do during the campaign. (Ironically, aid for cities to combat crime is getting the ax.) In the wake of sympathetic outpourings, all this is easily forgotten.

One last scene of hypocrisy that sticks out is the behavior of Secretary of State Alexander Haig. Recently, while testifying before a Senate committee on El Salvador, he was asked about the four women who were raped, tortured and killed. Haig tried valiantly to brush the whole affair off as one of those things that happens and even suggested that the nuns were in some way responsible for their own deaths. His concern for American slaughter abroad should be just as great as his concern for a wounded president.

I care no more for the president being shot than I do for any other person in this country who is the victim of senseless violence. If we continue to condone violent attitudes in this country, then this is no more than we should expect to happen.

We cannot let this incident serve as a political smokescreen for the continuance of brutal domestic and foreign policies. If we're going to do something to halt these events from happening, let's get on with it. If not, then let's cut out the media circus, all the tears and all the pious moanings and groanings and let life, in all its brutality, go on.

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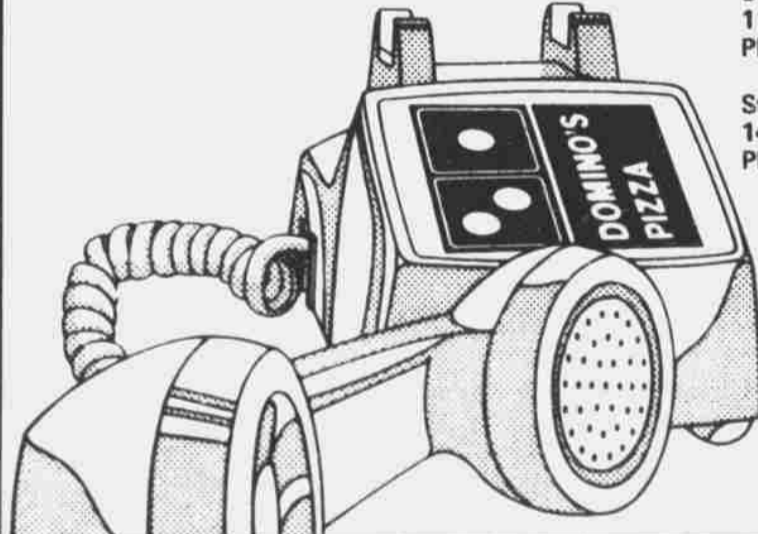
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