



# Cohen . . .

Continued from Page 4

The same holds for homosexual rights. It is one thing to proclaim traditional values, but homosexuality is a reality for millions of people — many of whom hold values just as traditional as heterosexuals — and who exercised about the same choice in choosing their sexual orientation as the majority did in choosing theirs. To say, as the Rev. Jerry Falwell has in his mailings, that homosexuals should not teach in the schools merely because they are homosexuals, comes down to nothing more than a loss of civil liberties based on who you are. The same holds for the conservative positions, upheld recently by the courts, that homosexuals can be booted out of the armed services — not for making a pass at

their sergeant, but simply for being homosexuals.

Similarly, the attempt to have the government mandate prayer for school children is yet another attempt by the majority to impose its values and even its religion on a minority. In the scheme of things, it is not the same as abolishing the freedom to choose abortion or to be what you are — homosexual — but neither is it a recognition of the right to be different.

There are some, maybe many, on the New Right who hold tenaciously to their social agenda and you argue with them at your peril. But there are still others who extol the social agenda as a sop to their conservative constituency. In this, they are like the Southern populists of old who swathed their radical economic

message in reactionary racism. Always, it poisoned their movement and confined it to a geographic region.

For the moment, the avuncularly inept figure of Ronald Reagan unified the GOP. But Gingrich and his colleagues in Buck Rogers conservatism have none of Reagan's twinkle in the eye. There is nothing in either writings or rhetoric that suggests a Reaganesque proclivity to sleep off an ideological drunk with a good afternoon nap.

They want to give America something — economic prosperity. But they also want to take something away — personal freedom. The program is packaged as something new, but it's not. It's the same old bargain with the devil. You lose by winning.

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