

Charles Hynes at 14 percent. Unknown former Asst. D.A. Eliot Spitzer, who's been running a lot of ads on TV, is only getting 1 percent of the poll so far, perhaps the least productive TV campaign ads in memory. The undecided vote is very high at 44 percent. Whoever wins the primary will face former Buffalo U.S. Attorney Dennis Vacco in the general election.

The final statewide race is over Comptroller; here, Manhattan black incumbent Carl McCail, will face Republican-Conservative Herb London. So far, in the early going, McCall is leading London by only five percent, 27 to 22.

Finally, a recent blow to the Pataki camp: former New York Republican chairman, the self-made millionaire [Avis] J. Patrick Barrett, has been denouncing the antics of the D'Amato machine at the convention, and has threatened to refuse to back Pataki, even if he wins the primary. Strange behavior for a recent Republican party chairman! But that's New York. ■

## For Mel Bradford

by M.N.R.

I was happy to see *Chronicles* dedicate its May issue to Mel Bradford, who died last year. Appropriately enough, the issue contains a posthumous article by Bradford, "Donald Davidson and

the Calculus of Memory," on the great Southern poet, and literary critic, and on theme of memory in poetry.

No one who knew Mel Bradford could ever forget him. An erudite scholar, historian and literary critic, Mel radiated kindness, benevolence, and good humor. The term "gentle giant" could have been fashioned for Mel. Combined with his pervading goodness was firm devotion to principle, and a great love for the South.

Mel Bradford also played a crucial role in that historic

first coming together of leading paleo-conservatives and paleolibertarians at Rockford, Illinois, in December 1989. Except for Mel, no one on what was then "either side" had met anyone on the "other side." Mel was therefore the original bridge between the two groups.

I had met Mel Bradford some time in the late 1970s, when I spoke on some aspect of economics at the University of Dallas. Mel and Marie were there; I was amazed, in our age of academic specialization, that anyone from the English department would bother. I liked Mel enormously from that first meeting;

any person would whose attitude had not been so corrupted by ideology as to believe that "the personal is the political." In those days of the Cold War, I had lost contact with most conservatives who were not economists, and so I valued meeting Mel all the more.

Then, in the first year of the Reagan Administration, I noted with sadness and astonishment that Mel, who was slated for appointment as head of the National Endowment for the Humanities, had lost the position as a result of a coordinated neocon

smear campaign in Washington orchestrated by Irving Kristof. It was the success of that campaign, which resulted in the appointment to head NEH of the then unknown Bill Bennett, that inaugurated the dominance of the neocons in the Reagan Administration and in the conservative movement generally, and led, in response,

to the creation of an embittered paleoconservative minority.

As an Old Rightist, I had always considered the neocons as once and always social democrats carrying on the old Menshevik/Trotskyite struggle against Stalin, but I

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was not yet wise in their ways. I was particularly dumb-founded that the neocons should win—among conservatives!—on the ground that Mel Bradford's principled hostility to Abraham Lincoln demonstrated that Mel was a "fascist," and therefore unfit to head the NEH. The Old Right had always regarded Abraham Lincoln as the premier "fascist" in American history, having brought to America a mass-murdering, centralizing, collectivistic despotism, a despotism that had permanently changed American life and politics for the worse. I had also remembered that, in the mid-1960s, Bradford and my old friend Frank Meyer had debated, in the pages of *National Review*, both against the despot Lincoln, with the neocon political theorist Harry Jaffa. In those days, the idea of a "conservative" favoring Lincoln seemed bizarre, and I thought the Meyer and Bradford had far the better of the argument. It completes the irony, as well highlighting the decline of *NR*, that, a few years ago, Mel Bradford, a long-time and valued contributor to *National Review*, should have felt forced to break with that magazine because it refused to run a review of a book on Lincoln that it had commissioned Mel to write.

On reading about the success of the neocon smear campaign, I dropped a note to Mel, expressing my outrage, and said that *given* the existence of such an agency as

NEH, he would have been the ideal person to head it. Mel answered with a very friendly and thoughtful letter, thanking me and admitting that he "couldn't find any grounds for the existence of the NEH in the Constitution," but that he supported it at the present time on "prudential" grounds.

It was the overriding fact of Mel Bradford's sweetness and goodness—the fact that he was the sort of person he was—that made his savage treatment at the hands of neocon barbarians so hard for any genuine conservative to bear. If the same unjust treatment had been handed out to any of the rest of us more suited to the cut and thrust of ideological politics, it wouldn't have hurt so much. As Tom Fleming writes in his fine tribute to Mel in *Chronicles*: "As a leader of the conservative coalition, he had been an excellent fighter on behalf of principle. His only weakness was that he was a very poor hater. He could get temporarily incensed against those who lied against him...but he could not bring himself to seek revenge and would not countenance it in his friends. As Paul Gottfried always used to say, Mel was too much of a Christian to make a good politician." It is a tribute to the paleoconservative movement that it began as an act of honor: in outrage at the way a wonderful person such as Mel Bradford could be treated by vicious Lilliputians who would then not only get

away with but ride over Mel's beaten body to political triumph. Perhaps the rest of us are poorer Christians or better haters.

In any case, it was marvelous to have Mel Bradford there at the founding of the new fused paleo movement, and to have the benefit of his active participation in the meetings of the John Randolph Club. His contribution to our Washington meeting in January 1992 was particularly memorable. It was a final Sunday morning panel to a meeting centering around politics and the exciting new Buchanan-for-President movement. Political theorist Claes Ryn asked a crucially important question of the panel, essentially: "Why have you been spending so much energy on the question of recapturing the presidency and the federal government, when the major questions are cultural, and by the nature of government and of conservative criticism of government, it can't and shouldn't do much to reshape or mould the culture?" Mel Bradford rose and gave a powerful reply, in essence: "Yes, you're right, government can't remould the culture, but it can stop pouring in the poison, and allow the culture to heal itself." Stop pouring in the poison" is the crucial reply to Left-libertarian charges that paleos want government to run and dominate the culture. We owe that reply, as well as so many other things, to Mel Bradford. ■