

EYE HARD RIGHT

POLITICAL SAMARITANS

In the last Congress, the religious right, led by the Christian Coalition, pushed something called the Contract with the American Family. Undaunted by the fact that much of that contract never actually got through the legislative process, the coalition is back this year, with a new agenda called The Samaritan Project.

Ostensibly geared to helping low-income people, the project calls for scholarships for poor kids, giving more money to states that fight juvenile crime, convening a "Congress on Racial Justice," and creating "enterprise zones" to encourage economic development in low-income areas. But hung onto this framework of social justice are any number of decorations more consistent with the Christian Coalition's usual moralizing tone and campaign to entangle religion with politics.

For instance, states would be allowed to give tax dollars to religious-based drug treatment programs, and "discrimination" against such "faith-based" programs would be prohibited. Additional monies would be available to states that make it harder for couples with young children to get a divorce. Late-term abortions would be outlawed, and the National Endowment for the Arts privatized. Also privatized would be the Legal Services Corporation, which provides legal assistance to the poor.

The Christian Coalition, which has been trying to broaden its base in recent years (with, among other things, outreaches to African Americans and conservative Catholics), is apparently now targeting the poor. The Samaritan Project calls for the coalition's network of 125,000 churches to adopt and support "inner-city" churches as they combat social problems.

THE PHONE COMPANY HAS NO CLOTHES

In February, *U.S. News and World Report* published a cover story entitled "The Business of Porn." The ink was hardly dry before conservative crusaders began using its findings and conclusions for their own purposes. Chief among them was LifeLine, an affinity telephone company based in Oklahoma City that markets its services to fundamentalist Christians and donates a portion of its proceeds to far right organizations.



LifeLine's sales pitches usually attack AT&T, MCI and Sprint for their support of Planned Parenthood and the "gay agenda." But after *U.S. News* concluded that major telephone carriers are profiting from phone sex calls, LifeLine began trumpeting that news as yet another reason to switch carriers. LifeLine claims to have 900,000 subscribers, and company officials say they hope to be pumping \$84 million a year into far-right organizations by 1998.

PREACHER IN THE COURTHOUSE DOOR

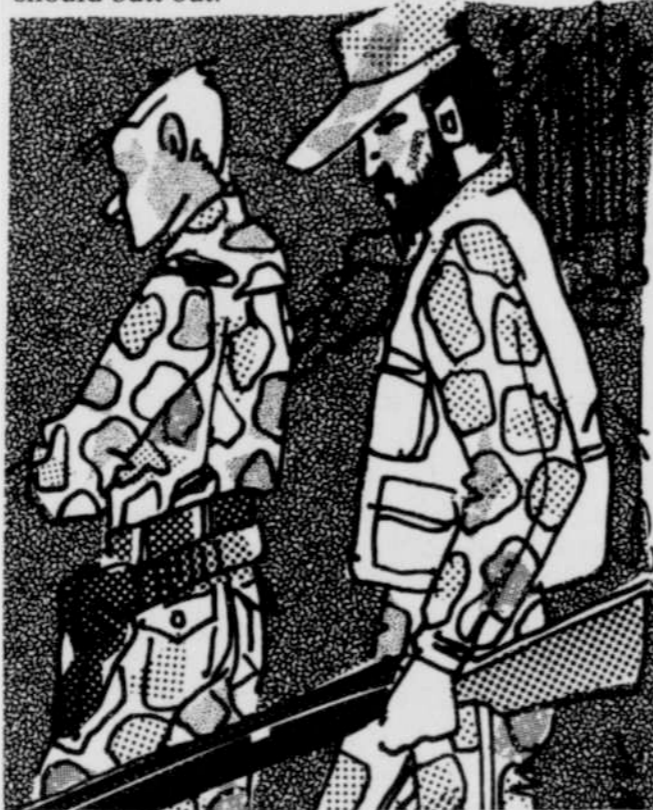
Here's the scene: an Alabama governor vigorously vows to use force of arms to defy a controversial court order that conflicts with his rigid ideology. George Wallace fighting integration in 1963? No. Try the current governor, Fob James, fighting to dismantle the separation of church and state in 1997.

Gadsden Circuit Court Judge Roy Moore has been in the habit of displaying the Ten Commandments on his courtroom wall and opening court sessions with a prayer. The ACLU sued him to stop these practices, and, after much legal wrangling, another judge, Charles Price, ordered Moore to cease and desist.

Enter Gov. James, who has vowed to call out the National Guard and state troopers to prevent anyone from forcing Moore to remove the Commandments or stop the prayers. The only way that will happen is "with the force of arms," says James, whose actions have made him something of a hero in far-right circles.

THEIR GUNS AIN'T THE ONLY THINGS SMOKIN'

"Marijuana is, of course, very safe for all but a select few—such as cardiac arrhythmia patients. And, it is certainly safer than many prescription drugs used legally. That some in government do not want it used is, well, immaterial. Unless the bureaucracy can learn to do the necessary research to invent a better replacement, they should butt out."



That's not a quote from some hippie home page. Rather, it comes from the Web site of the Central Michigan Regional Militia, defending medicinal use of marijuana.

LORD, GRANT US GUNS

"Strengthen and increase our admiration for honest dealing and clean thinking, and suffer not our hatred of hypocrisy and pretense ever to diminish. Encourage us in our endeavor to live above the common level of life. Make us choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong..." —from a "Militia Prayer," on the home page of the South Carolina Civilian Militia.

ZEUS, WE REBUKE THEE

A Baptist preacher who sits on a school board in Pickens, S.C., wants a course on Greek mythology taken out of the curriculum of a local high school. Fair is fair, says Rev. George Case, who opines that if Christianity can't be taught in the public schools, than a "pagan" religion ought not to be taught, either. Another board member pointed out, however, that mythology was purely an academic matter, because precious few people in South Carolina (or even in Greece, for that matter) still worship Zeus and his divine cohorts today. The board was set to take up Case's request in late February.

Reported by Richard Shumate. Comments and news tips for Eye Hard Right can be sent to eyehardt@aol.com



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