Falwell’s beliefs damaged America

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STEPHEN ROGERS (1912-2002), President

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It’s the time of his death last week that Falwell had become a certain aspect of our culture — a virtuous victim of his own egoism and excesses. The organization he founded in 1979, The Moral Majority, had long since disbanded and his name had become associated with right-wing extremism. He will be remembered most for his blustering pronouncements — such as blaming homosexuals and feminists, among others, for the “9/11 attacks” — for anything else.

Nevertheless, his influence on American politics has, sadly, been profound. He and his followers have created a climate of intolerance for diversity, dissent, and dissent. As the key figure in the anti-public school movement, he has helped to undermine the very foundation of American education.

Accordant Christian conservatives forced traditional Republicans — those who believed in a strong, uncorrupt government — to stay out of adults’ beds, to bar Jews and others from their tables, to reassert principles. The Grand Old Party is now hostage to a group of flat-earthers who deny evolution, mock gays, denounce stem cell research, oppose contraceptives, and believe all Muslims are going to hell. In some of them, we see a willful confusion of the Second Coming of Christ.

And that’s not all. When Falwell extended to the White House, he allowed loyalty to him and to Christian fundamentalism to dominate the hierarchy. The university is no longer a place for the studying of any idea.

Graduates of fundamentalist Christian institutions, especially Liberty University and Roberterson’s Regent University, have been given free reign. (Well-received but less-discriminatory institutions founded with a Christian mission, such as Notre Dame, are subject to the University’s scrutiny because of their central role in the surrounding community.) These students are given broad control over hiring attorneys, despite her limited exposure.

In his book “Imperial Life in the Emerald City,” Washington Post reporter Stephen Weissman wrote that similar loyalty tests were used in the process for those charged with rebuilding Iraq. Two applicants in a Balkan region who were asked their views on Roe v. Wade. Given those priorities, the reconstruction process was doomed from the start.

Outlook once was good

A little over a year ago, there were high hopes for B.C. Saul, the surgical manufacturer in Saratoga, now due to close within the next 18 months.

In February 2006, Angiotech Pharmaceuticals Inc., of Vancouver, British Columbia, announced that it was purchasing the company that employs 200 people. No layoffs were planned. “Angiotech has intellectual properties that are unique, and we have reasons to believe that the company is a competitive advantage to be had there.”

But on Wednesday, former CEO Robert Petraitas said Saul, which employed 700 people of its 2,000 staff, was closing. The company’s plant would not comment, and an employee said workers were not notified to talk, either.

What a difference a year makes. Unfortunately, not a positive difference for employees, or the area.

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T H E 3 4 t h a n n i v e r s a r y o f t h e Rochester drug laws passed this month without fanfare.

Yet the more than 15,000 mostly non-American and Hispanic offenders incarcerated under some of the harsher drug laws in New York surely would have liked someone to notice. Too many non-violent drug offenders remain imprisoned under laws that in some cases require stiffer penalties for possessing small amounts of marijuana than for committing rape or manslaughter.

And although almost every political leader, past and present, including those who drafted the lock-em-up-and-throw-away-the-key statutes in 1973, believes the laws are harsh, the momentum for change seems to be slowing considerably. Three years ago, the Drug Task campaign by celebrities such as Alvin Tressler, Russell Simmons, and others from lawmakers and advocacy groups like the Drug Policy Alliance and the ACLU was a major step forward, but they didn’t go far enough.

Under the reforms, which were further amended in 2005, some drug offenders with Class I and II felonies could apply for resentencing, which could make them eligible for release. Some sentence times were shortened. But many non-violent drug offenders did not benefit from the changes, and Gov. Patoki and legislative leaders agreed that the reforms were only a first step.

The Assembly seems motivated to continue the work. Last month, it passed more reforms, including the much-needed provision that gives judges discretion in sentencing, which would allow non-violent offenders to drug treatment programs, where many belong. The Assembly plan also lengthens sentences for drug kingpins.

But the Senate, which had resisted drug laws changes for years, has not moved on the issue. Some critics have suggested the Senate doesn’t want to change the law because Upstate communities would lose some of their prison populations, and the Census counts. Communities with lower Census counts could face redistricting.

It is doubtful that senators are that callous or calculating. But whatever their reasons, the Senate’s inaction has diminished the chances of fundamentally re-forming the Senate and Gov. Eliot Spitzer, who has backed drug law reform, needs to re-engage in this effort. It would also be nice to hear Attorney General Andrew Cuomo’s vote on this issue; he has a history of fighting for the cause.

Next year, there should be no 35th anniversary commemoration of drug laws that have diminished some 35 non-violent offenders more than child rapists and killers.

Consider This

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Anyone can win a gun

The Blood-Drunk Giveaway in Virginia had a big winner.

It was billed as a reaction to New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s proposal to curb the “straw purchase” of firearms for criminals in gun-control locales. New York has twenty dozen gun dealers in Virginia and four other states after undercover agents filled out the required forms and paid the dealers for undocumented companions. This is how new guns end up in the wrong hands in places like New York City.

A pro-gun group called the Virginia Citizens Defense League announced it would give a raffle ticket for every $100 a customer spends at gun dealers in Richmond and Danville. Two lucky winners would receive a free handgun and rifle.

Enter the state of Virginia, saying the raffle is illegal — unless the raffle tickets are handed out without requiring a purchase.

At last report, the Defense League had postponed the original state, but would proceed with a new, wide-open gun raffle. Stay tuned for the results.

The ‘greatest’ of them all

Eliot and John Calhoun’s “green house” beside Skaneateles Lake in Skaford was not built to raise hothouse flowers. Architect Andi Rumford and builder Kevin Stack had something else in mind to create the most environmentally advanced house in New York state.

They succeeded. The U.S. Green Building Council recently presented the Calhoun’s house New York’s only “gold” rating — one of only four in the nation.

The house is something of a demonstra-tion project, with its soy-based insulation, floor radiant heat, recycled glass shower tiles, cabinets made of wheat straw boards and concrete foundations. Recycling by ash. The heating and cooling systems are rated 94 percent effi cient.

The builder lovingly preserved tall maple trees around the house.

IT may still cost a bit more to build a house like the Calhouns’ than conven-tional structures. But the price is coming down as other builders catch the “green” bug. Syracuse’s Center for Excellence in Environmental and Energy Systems and affiliated Central New York enterprises are poised to lead the way.

Will France get off entitlement mentality?

GEORGE WILL

Aron is a form of contin-

uance favored by the French.

Armenia’s President Siranour Royal after she was defeated 55-47 by Nicolas Sarkozy. Last spring, in the face of an economic argument when the govern-

ment proposed, there were widespread protests, and a solution that would have made it easier for businesses to hire workers for the first two years of employment. The idea behind the legislation was that employers would be more likely to hire someone if they knew the government would support the company.

The riots were, of course, mostly young.

France’s president, a country of 60 million, is 8.7 percent, nearly double the U.S. rate of 4.5 percent. Among persons under 25, a cohort that supported Royal, the rate is 21.2 percent, and is up to three times the national rate.

Protesters in demonstration of the welfare state.

Two decades ago, the social-

ist government of Mitterrand called the “cultural contradictions of capitalism” to express this worry. This was because of virtues that it found undermining. In success, the nation believed, men and women of the nation are becoming more acute here; the cultural contradictions of the welfare state.

The French will be finely tuned for the coming of a new age, but the French are not ripe for the coming of a new age, but the French are not ripe for the coming of a new age, but the French are not ripe for the coming of a new age, but the French are not ripe for the coming of a new age, but the French are not ripe for the coming of a new age, but the French are not ripe for the coming of a new age, but the French are not ripe for the coming of a new age, but the French are not ripe for the coming of a new age, but the French are not ripe for the coming of a new age, but the French are not ripe for the coming of a new age, but the French are not ripe for the coming of a new age, but the French are not ripe for the coming of a new age, but the French are not ripe for the coming of a new age, but the French are not ripe for the coming of a new age, but the French are not ripe for the coming of a new age, but the French are not ripe for the coming of a new age, but the French are not ripe for the coming of a new age, but the French
Unfinished Business

There's still work to do in reforming harsh Rockefeller drug laws

The 34th anniversary of the Rockefeller drug laws passed this month without fanfare.

Yet the more than 15,000 mostly African-American and Hispanic offenders incarcerated under some of the harshest drug laws in the land would surely have liked someone to notice. Too many non-violent drug offenders remain imprisoned under laws that in some cases require stiffer penalties for possessing small amounts of cocaine than for committing rape or manslaughter.

And although almost every political leader, past and present (including those who drafted the lock-em-up-and-throw-away-the-key statutes in 1973), believes the laws are archaic, the momentum for change seems to have slowed considerably. Three years ago, the Drop the Rock campaign by celebrities such as hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons, and other efforts from lawmakers and advocacy groups like the Drug Policy Alliance, brought some changes, but they didn't go far enough.

Under the reforms, which were further amended in 2005, some drug offenders with Class I and II felonies could apply for resentencing, which could make them eligible for release. Some sentence times were shortened. But many non-violent drug offenders did not benefit from the changes, and Gov. Pataki and legislative leaders agreed that the reforms were only a first step.

The Assembly seems motivated to continue the work. Last month, it passed more reforms, including the much-needed provision that gives judges discretion in sentencing, which would allow them to send non-violent offenders to drug treatment programs, where many belong. The Assembly plan also lengthens sentences for drug kingpins.

But the Senate, which had resisted drug law changes for so long, has not moved on the issue. Some critics have suggested the Senate doesn't want to change the laws because Upstate communities would lose some of their prison populations, which are included in Census counts. Communities with lower Census counts could face redistricting.

It is doubtful that senators are that callous or calculating. But whatever their reasons, they have not been pushing the reforms.

The Senate and Gov. Eliot Spitzer, who has backed drug law reform, need to re-engage in this effort. It would also be nice to hear Attorney General Andrew Cuomo's voice on this issue; he has a history of fighting for the cause.

Next year, there should be no 35th anniversary commemoration of drug laws that have punished some non-violent offenders more than child rapists and killers.