



## Controlling the Debate: Phony Alternatives

by John F. McManus

Reprinted with permission from THE NEW AMERICAN magazine, September 18, 1995

Seventeenth century English horse trader Thomas Hobson told potential customers they could examine all the horses in his stable, but if they wished to purchase one, they had to choose the horse in the stall nearest the door. The term “Hobson’s choice” thus became synonymous with no choice at all — or the choice between equally unappealing alternatives.

Most Americans are completely unaware that they are being presented with the equivalent of a “Hobson’s choice” in the political realm. Here are some examples:

- Should government redirect foreign aid giveaways from customary recipients? (The unexamined alternative is an end to *all* foreign aid.)
- Should the “former” Soviet republics and satellite nations be given seats in NATO, or should we preserve the alliance just as it stands? (The ignored alternative is for the U.S. to withdraw from NATO and allow Europe to provide for its own defense.)
- Should Congress raise or lower farm subsidies? Increase or maintain current levels of aid to education? Provide funding for food stamps and other welfare programs directly or through block grants to the states? (The missing alternative in each of these budgetary debates is the end of federal intrusion into these and any other activities not authorized by the Constitution.)
- Should the Federal Reserve raise or lower interest rates? Expand or contract the money supply? Heat up or cool down the economy? (Proper alternatives are based on a recognition that no organization should possess the power to determine the value of money and credit.)
- Should the United Nations be reformed? Should UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali be re-elected for another five-year term? (How about complete U.S. withdrawal from the UN?)

### **Arch Allies**

Perhaps nothing illustrates the “Hobson’s choice” principle better than presidential politics, as illustrated by this year’s choice of either Bill Clinton or Bob Dole. Although Dole properly derides President Clinton as a big-spending, tax-raising, counter-culture leftist, as Senate Majority Leader Dole was a fairly consistent political ally of Mr. Clinton. For example, Dole provided invaluable help to the Administration in shepherding through the Senate the disastrous NAFTA and GATT treaties, and approval of the unconstitutional Bosnia occupation.

Some conservatives may believe that Dole is preferable to Bill Clinton because, unlike the incumbent, he is not a member of the globalist Council on Foreign Relations. However, *Insight* magazine reported earlier this year (without specifically mentioning the CFR) that a Dole Cabinet would probably include CFR members Jeane Kirkpatrick, Colin Powell, Dick Cheney, Richard Perle, Richard Burt, Paul Wolfowitz, Robert Ellsworth, and Paula Dobriansky. Republican foreign policy analyst Peter Rodman (CFR) confidently informed *Insight* that the “internationalist ... sentiment will be represented in the next administration.” To help assure this, Republican commentators William Kristol and Robert Kagan recently published an essay outlining “A Foreign Policy for Candidate Dole” in the July/August issue of the CFR journal *Foreign Affairs*. Their recommendations boiled down to an admonition that the GOP nominee eschew the “pinched nationalism of ... ‘America First’” and commit the party to pursuing “benevolent global hegemony” through UN and NATO military missions — in short, the same foreign policy pursued by both the Democratic Clinton Administration and the Republican Bush Administration.

### **Pattern of False Choices**

*Washington Post* ombudsman Richard Harwood, who describes the CFR as “the nearest thing we have to a ruling

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Date: January 13, 2025



establishment in the United States,” has examined the dominant influence of the New York-based globalist cabal in America’s media organs. As Harwood observed in the October 30, 1993 *Washington Post*:

In the past 15 years, [CFR] directors have included Hedley Donovan of Time Inc., Elizabeth Drew of the New Yorker, Philip Geyelin of The Washington Post, Karen Elliott House of the Wall Street Journal, and Strobe Talbott of Time magazine, who is now President Clinton’s ambassador at large in the Slavic world. The editorial page editor, deputy editorial page editor, executive editor, managing editor, foreign editor, national affairs editor, business and financial editor and various writers as well as Katherine Graham, the paper’s principal owner, represent The Washington Post in the council’s membership. The executive editor, managing editor and foreign editor of the New York Times are members, along with executives of such other large newspapers as the Wall Street Journal and Los Angeles Times, the weekly newsmagazines, network television executives and celebrities — Dan Rather, Tom Brokaw and Jim Lehrer, for example — and various columnists, among them Charles Krauthammer, William Buckley, George Will [a former CFR member] and Jim Hoagland.

While some — Rush Limbaugh being the most notorious example — might dismiss the preponderance of CFR influence in the media as unimportant, Harwood reported differently. “The membership of these journalists in the council, however they may think of themselves, is an acknowledgement of their active and important role in public affairs and of their ascension into the American ruling class,” Harwood declared. “They do not merely analyze and interpret foreign policy for the United States; they help make it.... They are part of that establishment whether they like it or not, sharing most of its values and world views.”

Harwood’s on-target analysis demonstrates the fraudulence of the CFR’s frequently stated disclaimer, found in each edition of the organization’s *Annual Report*, that the Council “takes no institutional position on issues of foreign policy; it is host to many views, advocate of none.” To illustrate the influence of the CFR’s media cabal, Harwood pointed to the Somalia debacle as “Exhibit A. American troops are there ... because of a decision by NBC to air a BBC film of starving Somalian children. It set off a chain reaction in the press and humanitarian concern among the public, forcing the Bush administration to intervene.” Of course, such a “chain reaction” easily occurs in the CFR-dominated media, and the Bush Administration, larded as it was with CFR members and alumni (including the President himself), was hardly “forced” to carry out the UN Somalia mission. **Shaping the Agenda**

In 1978, CFR President Winston Lord stated that one of the CFR’s key roles was to “mirror and shape the national mood.” The CFR’s 1984 *Annual Report* reported CFR Chairman David Rockefeller’s delight about “the ability of the Council to provide an even greater range and scope of programming for its membership and the nation.” In 1988, the CFR’s current chairman, New York investment banker Peter G. Peterson, bluntly stated in the *Annual Report* that he wanted the CFR “to help define and illuminate the foreign policy agenda for the future.” A year later he announced that the CFR’s “Board of Directors and the staff of the Council have decided that this institution should play a leadership role in defining these new foreign policy agenda,” and should “help define new and broader meanings to the concept of national interest.”

In his 1993 “Letter from the Chairman,” Peterson proudly pointed to the many government posts held by CFR members, and he joyfully noted that “these appointments testify to the value of maintaining a pool of leaders thoroughly informed about international issues and prepared to assume the burdens of office. That task is one of the hallmarks of the Council on Foreign Relations.”

In 1994, Peterson enthusiastically wrote: “Statesmen and politicians alike need a better informed public and better defined national interests. Our infusion of talent and purpose enables us to respond to both needs.” And in 1995: “We must help spark and shape the debate about the new foreign policy challenges and our country’s proper global role....”

All of these statements amount to admissions, however oblique, that the CFR does play the role of advocate, and does promote specific positions on matters of public policy. **Inside Information**

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Occasionally, a CFR member will describe how the organization operates. Policy analyst Doug Bandow, a former member of the CFR, is a visible and consistent supporter of free market economics, sound constitutional government, and U.S. disentanglement from NATO and the UN. What was his perception of the CFR? Bandow told THE NEW AMERICAN that he considers the CFR to be a “talking shop, an opportunity for me to hear debates among policymakers that I wouldn’t have had access to otherwise.” However, he admitted that he had been quite out of place on the Council because of his preference for forbidden policy alternatives: “I suppose they can have a few people like me on the Council from time to time, as long as they don’t threaten to become a significant force.”

Veteran CFR member Paul H. Nitze offered an even more compelling glimpse of the organization’s internal workings when he gave the featured address at the opening of a new CFR branch office in the nation’s capital in March 1990. He began by paying tribute to the “enormously important New York business and intellectual community” — meaning those CFR members who reside in greater New York. Then, referring to the period prior to World War II and beyond, he stated:

The State Department and White House might conduct diplomacy in peace and raise and command armies in war, but policy was made by serious people, men with a longer view, i.e. the great men of finance and their advisers.... In the postwar years, the Council has continued to represent an invaluable way for many of us Washingtonians to tap the enormously important New York business and professional community.

Nitze’s boast that this nation’s policy has been and is being set not by the elected and appointed representatives of the people, but by “serious people” who can be found in and around CFR headquarters in New York demonstrates that it is a lie for the organization to claim that it “takes no institutional position” and “is host to many views, advocate of none.”