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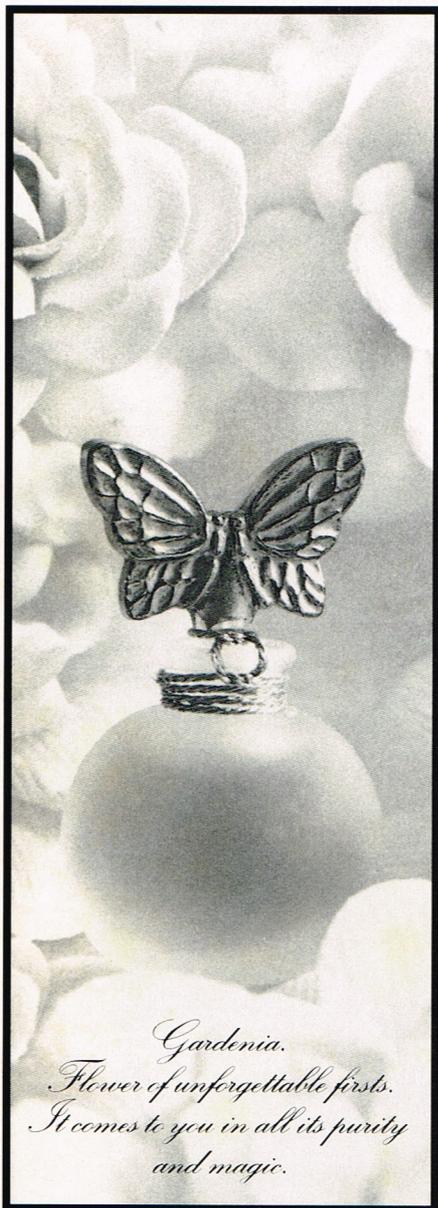
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"I HAPPEN to be pro-life," Dan Quayle said during a relatively civil moment of his televised debate last week with Al Gore and James Stockdale. And so he is, even if a remark he made earlier in the campaign—that he would advise his daughter against terminating a (hypothetical) pregnancy but would support her in whatever decision she might make—suggests that he does not understand the implications either of his own position (which is that abortion should be illegal except in cases of rape, incest, or a threat to the mother's life) or of his party's (which is that abortion should be illegal in all circumstances). There is one issue of human sexuality, however, on which the Vice-President might be said to be unequivocally pro-choice. On the September 13th broadcast of ABC's "This Week with David Brinkley," he was asked whether he thought that homosexuality was rooted in nature or in society. "My viewpoint is that it's more of a choice than a biological situation," he answered, and went on to say, "It is a wrong choice. I do believe in most cases it certainly is a choice."

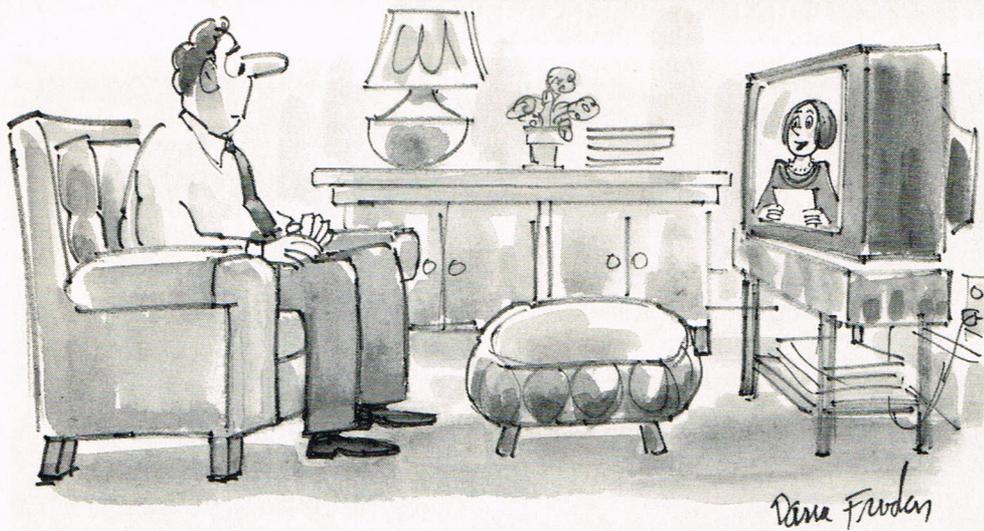
It is impossible to know whether Mr. Quayle truly believes this. But the theory

that homosexuality is a matter of choice—"life-style choice," in the usual formulation—is indispensable to the prejudice against homosexuals. This year, the Republican Party has given voice to this variety of bigotry in all its forms, from the virulent, through the modulated, to the very mild. The virulent form got unprecedented exposure at the Republican Convention this summer, most notably in the speeches of Patrick Buchanan and Pat Robertson. The modulated form was expressed in the Party's platform, which opposed extending civil-rights protections to gays and allowing them to serve in the armed forces. The mild form has been the specialty of the Vice-President and of President Bush himself, who told an interviewer the week before the Convention that homosexuality is "a life style that in my view is not normal" and "not right."

If by "not normal" the President meant that homosexuality is uncharacteristic of the majority—that it deviates from the mean—he was surely correct, but only in the sense that it is also "not normal" to have gone to Yale or to have a vacation house in Maine. But if "normal" means "occurring naturally"—one

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of its dictionary definitions—then he was surely wrong. Homosexuality occurs naturally in every human society, and in roughly the same numbers regardless of the level of social tolerance. Recent scientific evidence suggests, moreover, that sexual orientation correlates closely with genetic factors. A study that was conducted by Michael Bailey, a psychologist at Northwestern University, and Richard Pillard, a psychiatrist at Boston University School of Medicine, and was published last December in the *Archives of General Psychiatry* showed that a man has a fifty-two-per-cent chance of being gay if he has an identical twin—that is, a twin fully sharing the same genetic makeup—who is gay, but only a twenty-two-per-cent chance if he has a fraternal twin who is gay, and merely an eleven-per-cent chance if he has an unrelated, adopted brother who is gay. Bailey and Pillard have since conducted a similar study of women, with strikingly similar results. "In contrast," they write, "research on social factors has been fruitless."

What does correlate with "social factors" is not homosexuality itself but the degree of suffering that is imposed upon homosexuals for being homosexuals. Even in our society, a remarkably tolerant one by global and by historical standards, there is almost certainly no such thing as a homosexual—male or female, acknowledged or "closeted"—who has not at some point in his or her life felt, at the very least, the anguish of self-reproach or of fear of rejection. If the experience of actual human beings is any guide, it is

both preposterous and callous to speak of homosexuality as just another choice of life style. Homosexuality is not an illness, not a contagion, not a moral failing. It is simply a predisposition. One gay man, a forty-one-year-old lawyer who recently "came out" in a newspaper interview in which he disputed Mr. Quayle's view, put it this way: "You can say in some sense I choose to write with my right or left hand, but the point is that it is such an automatic decision. That's how I see homosexuality."

The Republican Party is no exception to the rule that any large aggregation of people has its share of homosexuals, as George and Barbara Bush, if not Dan Quayle, know perfectly well. The lawyer who drew the interesting parallel between sexual orientation and handedness is John Schlafly, who says that he shares most of the political views of his mother, the veteran conservative leader Phyllis Schlafly. The Log Cabin Federation, a national organization of gay and lesbian Republicans, has six thousand members. (It has declined to endorse the Bush-Quayle ticket.) The roster of prominent Republicans known to be gay has included Roy Cohn, the lawyer; Representative Stewart McKinney, of Connecticut; and Terry Dolan, the celebrated New Right fundraiser—all of whom died of AIDS. Robert Mosbacher, one of George Bush's oldest friends, the principal fund-raiser for his three Presidential campaigns, and a former member of his Cabinet, has a forty-three-year-old daughter, Diane, who is a publicly proclaimed lesbian.

President and Mrs. Bush welcomed Dee Mosbacher to the White House in 1989, and the President was photographed with her and the woman her father calls her spouse. And the record of Mr. Bush as President did show, intermittently, some slight consideration for homosexuals, especially with respect to the AIDS plague. According to Administration figures, which have been the subject of much debate, federal AIDS spending has increased under Bush; and Bush has invited gay leaders to the White House for two bill signings, and, with his wife, visited AIDS patients in the hospital. That sort of thing was dropped as soon as the White House entered what Mr. Bush calls "campaign mode." And if in the weeks before the election the Bush-Quayle organization has dropped its attacks on homosexuals, along with most of the rest of its "family values" baggage, it was not from pangs of conscience. It did so purely as a result of realizing that the strategy had become politically counterproductive, driving away moderate voters, who, whatever their discomfort with gay culture, dislike conspicuous displays of intolerance. The earlier attacks have not been repudiated, and they ought not to be forgotten.

"The conservative movement had to find another enemy" after the fall of Communism, Marvin Liebman has suggested. Mr. Liebman, sixty-nine years old, is an elder of that movement: the groups he has helped found include, among many others, Young Americans for Freedom and the American Conservative Union. Mr. Liebman, who two years ago announced that he was gay, in a letter to *National Review*, has said that "homosexuals poisoning society" have been drafted to fill the void. "The rhetoric is almost word for word what they used about the Communists: schools, Hollywood, media elite," he said. "Those code words used to mean Jews, but now they also mean gays."

Communism, of course, actually was an enemy of the values that American society is supposed to stand for. The mistake some conservatives made was, instead of just opposing it, to conflate it with liberalism. Homosexuality and homosexuals are the enemies of no one. When those who should—who must—know better indulge the reflex to demonize, they disgrace only themselves. ♦