

[The following "manifesto" was written by Walter Capps as the Capps for Congress project was being organized, in the fall of 1995. The statement is not for publication, but, rather, for staff members and associates to read and discuss as we mount the campaign.]

## WALTER CAPPS' MANIFESTO

The following paragraphs have been written to provide background information on Walter Capps' position on the issues that will be discussed and debated during the 1996 election for the United States House of Representatives in the 22nd District of California.

### **The Larger Global Setting**

At the outset, we must acknowledge the larger context within which the 1996 election is occurring. The Cold War is over, but what peace there is remains fragile indeed. It behooves the nation's leaders to develop a clear sense of the responsibilities the United States carries with respect to the other nations of the world. For good reason, there is increasing reluctance among the citizenry to become involved in military hostilities anywhere, including Bosnia. Yet, the United States does have a relationship of strong interdependence with the United Nations, and is a major participant in NATO as well as in SEATO in the ever restive Pacific theater. In addition, it is of critical importance that we be attentive to current developments in China, with its population of 1.5 billion people. The United States must continue to be vigilant in monitoring and modulating the tensions in the Middle East. And changes in former European eastern bloc nations, including Russia and the new nations formed out of the dissolution of the former Soviet Union, must be monitored with keen attention. The pathway from communism to democracy does not occur automatically. The United States should offer the kind of assistance that enables such nations to develop civil societies, and to assume a new role within the family of nations.

Perhaps little of this will be referenced in the discussions that will become part of the campaign of 1996 in the 22nd District. But Walter Capps urges mindfulness of the larger framework and cautions that the United States is currently experiencing a dangerous isolationist tendency, which is reflected in intense criticism of the United Nations. Walter Capps believes that the United States must exercise its global responsibilities in a cooperative, mutually-supportive manner that is judicious, effective, and

realistic. Republicans and Democrats divide decisively on these issues, Republicans having become champions of an ill-conceived Gingrich ideological ploy that the extension of American civilization is the hope for the world. Walter Capps attests that life does not flow from ideology, and that American imperialism is not the answer to the world's needs.

In addition, drawing upon his background and training in the comparative study of the world's religions, Walter Capps insists that the United States develop a more effective exchange with the Islamic peoples of the world. The recent crises in Iraq, the current crisis in the former Yugoslav territories, and the perennial crises and challenges in the Middle East all call for such improvement and updating of American foreign policy.

### **National and Domestic Issues**

Here at home, Walter Capps sides with those who are working to offer an alternative to the deconstructionist mindset of the Gingrich Republicans. Yes, it is necessary and proper to be fiscally conservative, and to eliminate government inefficiency and waste. Yet, the "tough-love" strictures of the current Congress are much easier to proclaim than to accommodate, and, in the long run, only postpone the enforcement of the kinds of remedies that lead to long-term solutions. Medicare and the welfare system must be reformed, but not via a policy of heartlessness towards those members of the society whose claims to moderate beneficence are legitimate. Instead of grandstanding on this issue by posturing economic stringency, Walter Capps urges a policy of fairness to everyone concerned. It is shortsighted to blame the poor for poverty, to blame minorities for racial strife, and to identify immigrants as the cause of the recent economic down turn. Walter will urge government to work effectively, as a partner with private enterprise, to create meaningful vocational opportunities for the citizenry. He supports the proposed increase in minimum wage. Real jobs at home and the expansion of trade alliances throughout the world must become the economic formula.

And, while Walter applauds the effort to eliminate excessive or needless government regulatory activity, he knows that it would be a great mistake to return to "the dark ages," repealing the progress that has been made in environmental protections, fairness in employment opportunities, and the assumption of responsibility for the greater good on the part of business and private enterprise. Those who have attained the highest positions on the economic ladder will always find ways to protect their interests. It is the responsibility of government -- particularly at the federal level -- to insure that economic policies are fair and just, and that the tax system is equitable. This requires deliberate recognition of the rights and needs of senior citizens and children.

## **The Moral and Spiritual Temper of our Times**

With reference to the moral and spiritual climate of our time, Walter stands in sharp opposition to the shallowness and self-righteousness of the collective mindset now being championed by the so-called Christian Coalition. As a life-long scholar in religion (who has just stepped down as Chair of the most prestigious academic program in religious studies in the world) the candidate will point out that true Christianity, based fundamentally on the teachings of Jesus, is dramatically more expansive, accepting and challenging than the truncated version of the same that is being offered pathologically by the so-called guardians of the nation's moral and spiritual ideals. Their religious subtext is not as inclusive as democracy is required to be, and the theological and/or doctrinal litmus tests they seek to apply to candidates for political office, if successful, would steer the Republic to an atmosphere of suspicion, accusation and suppression that are reminiscent of the darkest chapters in human history.

In contradistinction to the ideological mindset, Walter Capps contends for an orientation to reality that places "the flow of life" before ideological dependency, advocates effective education in place of political sloganizing, and encourages the acceptance of responsibility for genuine social and cultural vitality. This means that he is much more interested in substantive fact-based education about the religions of the world than in responding to the manufactured hoopla surrounding issues of school prayer. And he will try to attract the enthusiasm of individuals who recognize that a fitting and resilient orientation to today's world requires the kind and degree of spiritual maturity that is being advocated from a variety of compelling quarters, and includes the tenets upon which the founders and leaders of the great religious traditions find agreement.

Capps for Congress is being religiously progressive and conservative at the same time. Walter believes in protecting and nurturing those values upon which the greatness of all civilizations depend while protecting and nurturing those values that have been responsible for the improvement of the human condition, increased understanding among peoples, and dedication to the fundamental sacredness of human life. In this sense, Walter invites citizens to vote their hopes and ideals rather than their anger and fear. He offers this position as a necessary alternative to the increasing and relentless secularization of our common life.

## **Restoring a Bond of Political Trust**

When the discussion of politics itself occurs, our candidacy will play strong chords on behalf of reform and revitalization. We will agree that



voter apathy and voter cynicism are direct results of the degeneration of the political process, much of which has occurred because the consignment of politics to the paid-activities of a professional political class has led to the trivialization of the collective conversation upon which a resilient democracy must always depend. In this regard, we will score our opponents' pathetic attempts to point out our shortcomings as being examples of the very political low-life that fosters the pervasive current climate of cynicism, repugnance, and apathy. Indeed, we are running for office primarily to provide a visible and viable alternative to this way of doing politics. And we will offer our candidacy as an example of political reform even if our opponent is unwilling to match the reform measures that we are asking for. It is no good to behave the way everybody else does in order to get elected in order to bring about change.

Capps for Congress will be an advocate of change from the beginning, and base its request for votes and support on this posture, which will be clearly delineated as we proceed and progress. It will not be an easy position to maintain, for there will be pressures on all sides -- particularly in terms of financial support and party loyalties -- toward conformity. But we will maintain an independent course, supported in the main by the peoples' recognition that politics-as-usual has finally arrived at a dead-end street.

We share the peoples' disenchantment, but see in it an opportunity to create an alternative that is fully workable, while being enthusiastically supported by those theoreticians who gave initial voice to our system of government. The restoration of the bond of trust between the people and their government requires bold steps that begin with the way in which politics itself is conducted. We wish our candidacy to exemplify the need and desire to restore such trust, apart from which nothing that is attempted in Washington will carry much integrity or cogency. If possible, we will hope -- a large, but, eventually, a viable hope -- that politics itself might also be restored to the status and stature to which the wisdom of the ages lends assignment.

Given what we know about the world today, given the challenges humankind faces today, why shouldn't today's politics be as inspiring as politics was, say, for Aristotle (the first great theoretician), Locke, Jefferson and Hamilton, Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson, Adlai Stevenson, and, in the larger frame, Dag Hammarskjold and Vaclav Havel? Why shouldn't today's politics be more about conscience than about partisan loyalties and campaign instrumentation? Why shouldn't involvement in politics encourage a deepening of the human spirit rather than a calculated diminishing of the same? The challenges before humankind today are immense, and yet are not at all beyond our reach. But our feeble and shortsighted political expectations tend to frustrate any effort to reach down deeply into substantial

and effective intellectual and cultural resourcefulness. Tragically and perilously, we are being shortchanged. ✓

### **The Environment and Individual and Collective Well-Being**

The 22nd District of California has prided itself on being the environmental capital of the nation. It was here, following the 1969 oil spill in the Santa Barbara Channel, that a very significant and influential portion of the environmental movement was born. It is also from within the 22nd District that examples of environmental effectiveness have been drawn. Under the influence and compulsion of the matchless beauty of the area -- the coastal waters, the coastline, mountains, hills, rivers, forests, recreation areas in abundance -- the citizens of this area have shown their dedication to the principles of shared ecological sensibility, and to sustainability projects that are designed to honor these principles. Despite the smokescreens that will be set up by our opponents, together with fine-sounding phrases and misleading graphic pictures, it should be easy to demonstrate the differences between our stance on these issues and those of the other side.

Without question, Capps for Congress favors dispensing with excessive and outdated environmental regulations. But we will insist that the progress that has been made in the past years not be turned back, for the earth is not simply context for entrepreneurial exploitation but fundamental, indispensable, and increasingly fragile native habitat. We will develop a sense of the sacredness of the habitat, and of deep respect for all of that by which we are continuing to be nurtured and sustained. We will talk about farms and agriculture in this context, inviting farmers to understand themselves as environmentalists who should be allowed to farm without government interference. We shall highlight the culture of farm-life, that it stands for a valuable and still necessary way of life. And we will frame this discussion within a more comprehensive discussion of the nature, dynamics and requirements of human well-being.

Thus, talk about the environment will be combined with talk about health, both individual and collective. If given an opportunity, we will insert into the discussion some recent thinking that calls earth biosphere, as well as some of the insights that have been proposed by such writers as Wendell Berry, Wes Jackson and selected Native American writers. Given the appalling record of our opponent on this subject -- her vote against the Clean Water Act, for instance -- we will elevate this subject into large prominence. But the goal is not to excoriate the other side, but, instead, to raise consciousness regarding the indispensability of resilient and unyielding environmental and ecological sensitivity. We will illustrate that in both the long run and the short run, it even makes good business sense to honor these principles.



## Affirmative Action, Gender Issues, and the Status of "Other People"

We are living in a world of profound demographic change, the consequences of which have certainly affected the life and commerce of the 22nd Congressional District of California. Indeed, the outcome of the 1996 election may be determined by the collective will of the people concerning the initiative to abrogate Affirmative Action policies just as the outcome of the 1994 election turned heavily on attitudes toward Proposition 187 (concerning illegal immigration). Our campaign will be sensitive to the ways in which demographic change has affected fundamental senses of security and well-being, for it is apparent that many are experiencing difficulty facing, tolerating or accepting such change -- they recognize that the temper of life within their communities will never be the same again, and many of them wish for a time of greater dependability and stability.

At the same time -- with 25% of the current population having been born outside the United States -- our campaign will be sensitive to the needs and challenges of recent arrivals in the 22nd District, and will work to find ways to achieve equitable, peaceful and satisfying accommodation. Guiding these two tasks is the principle that the kind of social and cultural change that is occurring in our communities is reflective of social and cultural change worldwide, and, therefore, needs to be engaged rather than denied, and welcomed rather than resisted.

Former State Senator Gary Hart has observed that the voting ballot, every two years, asks for decisions on an initiative that gives citizens the opportunity to voice their opinions about race. It is clear that Proposition 197 assumed this function in 1994, and that the initiative regarding abrogation of Affirmative Action will provide this occasion in 1996. Indeed, we anticipate that the climate of opinion and passion that will frame current election debate will be the transposition of opinion and passion concerning "illegal immigration." Our opponent uses false numbers -- "4,000 illegals sneak across the border each night," she says -- to fan racial hostilities, recognizing that much of her support comes from incensed citizens who wish to stop illegal immigration dramatically and forcefully, as by the building of tall fences and by the appointment of more border patrol police. Capps for Congress recognizes that illegal immigration has gotten out of control, and lays the blame at the feet of Reagan and Bush administrations who, for too many years, evidenced little seriousness in enforcing existing legislation. In the final analysis, a satisfying solution, which must proceed carefully and cooperatively, step-by-step, will require a de-coupling of the dynamics of immigration from intense racial feeling. We cannot bring the end to racial hostility by packing it into urgent questions about the movement of human

beings across boundaries of national sovereignty. On the contrary, if we proceed this way, we will only intensify the hostility, embellish adversarial postures, and severely diminish the depth of civility that a democratic society requires. But we can resolve aspects of the immigration challenge through the imposition and enforcement of wise and effective policy, and we must do this promptly.

Garrison Keillor says that "the soul of America is the immigrant's dream," and "the United States is best described as a family of nations." Moreover, we cannot condone any reversal of the significant strides that women have made in recent decades. In all of these respects, our campaign will insist that the social progress that has been attained not be reversed or repealed; instead, it must be sustained, strengthened, and extended further. The fact that Affirmative Action policies need to be updated does not mean that the aspirations and incentives of Affirmative Action have become questionable. We simply need to reassert and discover effective ways to accomplish these objectives so that what Alexis de Tocqueville identified as "equality of conditions" -- which he also believed to be that which is most definitive of the form of democracy practiced within the United States -- might become prevailing reality within our social, cultural, political and economic life.

### **The Primacy of Education**

The 22nd District can take pride in its impressive educational institutions at all levels of learning. The people of the District have benefitted extraordinarily by the protection of educational priorities that has been exercised by its recent and current representatives to the State Assembly and Senate in Sacramento, and by excellent administrative leaders as well as dedicated and effective teachers. The 22nd District has given such primacy to education that there are few counties anywhere that can boast of more impressive state and private colleges and universities than Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties.

Capps for Congress pledges to strengthen education further within the 22nd District. As distinct from the opponent, who associates advocates of education with the intellectually and culturally elite, who votes against student loans (not gifts), and to abolish both the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, we will work to increase the national commitment to educational incentives. Why? Because there has never been a time when education was more necessary. The transformation which the world is experiencing requires intensive training in the new technologies, sciences, and communications systems, not to mention increased information about the histories, cultures, and lan-

guages of the peoples who are now living in the same neighborhoods, side by side.

There is no substitute access to the world of the 21st century. Education is both the route and the key. Having been an educator for over thirty years, and having served on various national boards and advisory commissions, Walter Capps will be among the most attentive members of Congress to issues involving education.

### **Attitudes toward Representative Government**

Capps for Congress is committed to the Jeffersonian principle regarding representational government. According to Thomas Jefferson, the House of Representatives was to be made up of persons from various walks of life who would be elected to come to Washington to represent the needs and interests of the people of their respective districts. At the end of temporary public service, such elected citizens would return to their homes, take up their professions and occupations again, and live among the people they had represented in Washington. This is the basis of "government of the people, by the people, and for the people."

### **Walter Capps' Personal Ambition**

People may not believe it, but here "what one sees is what one gets." Walter Capps is not looking for a career change. He is not aspiring to re-define and/or relocate himself in some new environment, to give him a new opportunity to attain tenure. Rather, he is following the Jeffersonian ideal, making himself, his family, his talents, and his propensities available for public service, pledging to devote his energies toward this end, applying whatever experience he has acquired and whatever intelligence he has cultivated, for the betterment of the country. His hope is to return to teaching after time in Congress is completed.