

On the Hugh Hefner political preference chart, the Teddy Kennedy lifestyle gets an A while that of Ronald Reagan earns a D-minus. Hefner's operations boast of funding legalization of drugs, homosexual advocacy, and legalization of abortion on demand. And, that Playboy lifestyle is now being targeted openly at our children

Playboy Hugh Hefner's Politics Of Hedonism

BY CLIFF KINCAID

HUGH M. HEFNER is a respected figure in some circles of American society. Politicians, journalists, novelists, and entertainers associate themselves with him and his magazine. The secret of his success in such circles is his ability to divert attention from the thrust of his magazine and the reality of the *Playboy* lifestyle. That, and the willingness of his collaborators to look the other way.

The liberal-left has been an active participant in this confidence game. Liberals don't associate with magazines that preach racism or anti-Semitism, but they climb eagerly into bed with a magazine that, by their own standards, promotes the sexual exploitation of women. Bella Abzug calls it "sexism."

Hefner's appointment of his daughter

Christie as president of the company was viewed as a masterstroke in the campaign to make *Playboy* acceptable and respectable among liberals. Did it not make sense to appoint an avowed feminist as the head of a company accused of rank sexism? Christie's failure fully to expose herself as *Playboy's* "Playmate of the Month" has been said to reflect her father's reported comment that he would never have his own daughter appear nude in the magazine. But the contradictions don't end there.

Hefner's Friends. In a CBS radio broadcast in May 1986, "America's anchorman" Dan Rather tackled what he called the "thorny" issue of pornography. The times they are a' changing. Rather even discussed the research of those social scientists who believe that "soft porn" magazines

CONSERVATIVE DIGEST

like *Playboy* may be as dangerous as the hard-core variety. "The reasoning is that these seemingly benign forms [of porn] still convey the message that women are sexual commodities," Rather told his listeners, "and they offer it in a package that's widely consumed."

Is this the same Dan Rather who gave an interview to *Playboy* on its thirtieth anniversary and appealed to its readers by using vulgarities and obscenities? Even the *Playboy* interviewer was then apparently shocked by what he called Rather's use of "blunt language." Asked about it at the time, Rather responded, "I trust my grandmother will understand." Is Dan Rather's grandmother one of those who buys *Playboy* magazine for the interviews and articles?

Ralph Nader, the self-proclaimed advocate of the oppressed and exploited, would never take money from a corporation that polluted the environment; he would be accused of selling out. Yet, Nader's Center for the Study of Responsive Law has received thousands of dollars from the Playboy Foundation. Although it calls itself a "foundation," it is actually an arm of Playboy Enterprises, a profit-making corporation that pollutes the moral environment and stands accused of victimizing women and children by portraying them as sex objects. Is there a liberal double-standard where pornography is concerned?

Apparently so. During the fall of 1984, the Virginia affiliate of the A.C.L.U. made headlines by complaining that state officials had at-

tended an event that featured nude dancing girls. "I thought presenting women as sex objects passed fifteen years ago," one A.C.L.U. official said in exasperation. Could that A.C.L.U. official have been unaware of the fact that the national A.C.L.U. has been receiving tens of thousands of dollars from a *Playboy* corporation that makes its money by presenting women as sex objects? But of course the A.C.L.U. is concerned about "civil liberties" of the pornographers.

Politicians. Then there is Walter Mondale, the 1984 Democratic candidate for President who made some noises against pornography when he appealed for votes from the feminist National Organization for Women. Earlier, however, he was reported to have personally "courted" *Playboy* president Christie Hefner for her endorsement of his campaign. Unlike his former boss, Jimmy Carter, Mondale didn't grant an interview to *Playboy* in an effort to boost his campaign. He was already considered a friend of the pornography industry.

Walter Mondale held the dubious distinction of being one of only five U.S. Senators who voted, in effect, to accept the 1970 report of a Presidential commission on pornography which found that pornography was essentially harmless and that nearly all laws against it should be repealed. The Senate rejected this nonsense by a vote of 65 to 5. And the recently released report of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography found in 1986 that "substantial expo-

August, 1986

THE POLITICS OF PLAYBOY HUGH HEFNER

sure" to most pornography "bears some casual relationship" to sexual violence and exploitation.

Jimmy Carter remains the most prominent Democrat ever to grant an interview to *Playboy*. Campaigning for President as a moral leader and a "born-again" Christian, Carter tried to assure *Playboy's* readers that although he believed certain behavior was wrong he would not, as President, impose his views on others. Senator Robert Dole, who was the G.O.P. candidate for Vice President against Carter-Mondale, would later joke that Carter had appealed so cleverly to *Playboy* that the Republicans had given up on "the bunny vote." Carter took a lot of heat over the interview and eventually apologized for using *Playboy* as a forum to express his views. He wanted the votes of the *Playboy* constituency, but he also wanted the votes of those concerned about the moral decline of the country — people who view *Playboy's* influence as a symbol of that decline.

Politics aside, *Playboy* has shown its gratitude by reporting a contribution of \$10,000 toward the construction of Jimmy Carter's proposed \$25 million Presidential library in Atlanta, Georgia.

Former Democratic Senator and Presidential candidate George McGovern was another of the five who voted to accept the findings of that now-discredited 1970 panel on pornography. Like Carter, he also granted an interview to *Playboy*. After he lost his Senate seat in a landslide in 1980,

August, 1986

McGovern blamed it on the "radical right," announcing: "I have concluded that the nation needs a powerful antidote to the poison of extremism." He said he was establishing a coalition for "common sense" in America.

With a straight face, McGovern chose as an outlet for his brand of common sense the January 1981 issue of *Playboy*, in which he authored an article, "The New Right And The Old Paranoia." It appeared with another article, "The Astonishing Wrongs Of The New Moral Right."

Playboy was so proud of these articles with catchy titles that it took out a full-page advertisement in the *New York Times* under the headline, "The New Moral Right May Be Dangerous To Your Health." It asked that all concerned Americans read the articles in *Playboy*. Nothing was said about the pictures.

George McGovern was a special guest at a 1982 "dinner dance" in honor of the A.C.L.U. at the Playboy Mansion in Los Angeles, where Hefner resides, and where insiders say a lot more goes on than just dinner and dancing. Another "guest" was John Anderson, the former Republican Congressman from Illinois who ran for President as an independent in 1980 and backed Mondale in 1984.

Political Lifestyle. The claim is frequently made by defenders of *Playboy* that Republicans and conservatives have associated with the magazine, so it must be all right. Indeed, President Reagan's own son is now working for *Playboy*. But the Hefner

THE POLITICS OF PLAYBOY HUGH HEFNER

magazine has never been politically neutral.

As far back as 1970 *Playboy* published a "political preference chart" focusing on that year's major congressional and gubernatorial races. The campaign for governor in California was between Democrat Jesse Unruh and Republican Ronald Reagan. Unruh was given a grade of B-plus while Reagan almost flunked out with a D-minus. Big Daddy Unruh was praised as a "fighting liberal" while Reagan was denounced as someone who "responds to California's right-wing temper."

In 1980, when Ronald Reagan was campaigning for President against Jimmy Carter, *Playboy* published a vicious attack on Reagan by *Los Angeles Times* reporter Robert Scheer, the former Berkeley radical. The June 1983 *Playboy* carried an article by *Boston Globe* reporter Curtis Wilkie that attacked President Reagan as an "ignorant man" and an "intellectual sloth."

On the other hand, *Playboy's* 1970 political preference chart overlooked the deficiencies of Senator Edward Kennedy, who was then running for the Senate from Massachusetts. Kennedy got an A from *Playboy* in every category except "stature," where he received an A-minus. *Playboy* made a vague reference to the "personal crises" in Kennedy's life.

One of those "personal crises," the killing and cowardice at Chappaquiddick, had occurred the preceding year. The body of a pretty 23-year-old woman, Mary Jo Kopechne, was

found at the bottom of a pond in a car owned by Kennedy, who said he had accidentally driven off a bridge. He did not report the incident to the police for ten hours.

From *Playboy's* point of view, it is understandable why such an incident should not have a major negative impact on his candidacy. After all, it was described officially as an accident. And reports that it followed a drunken orgy were not inconsistent with the *Playboy* lifestyle.

Perversities. But the *Playboy* lifestyle involves more than sexual promiscuity. *Playboy*, through the pages of its magazine and the foundation, has played a major role in the acceptance of abortion rights, homosexual rights, and illegal drugs. It brags that it was the "first national magazine to advocate legal abortion." The Playboy Foundation boasts that it has participated in a series of allied legal cases — including *Roe v. Wade*, which reached the Supreme Court in 1973 and resulted in the decision legalizing abortion on demand.

The foundation has poured tens of thousands of dollars into such groups as the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL), Planned Parenthood, the Alan Guttmacher Institute, the National Abortion Federation, Catholics for a Free Choice, and the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights.

Playboy's 1984 annual report said that NARAL had received "twofold support from the foundation," adding: "In addition to choosing the pro-choice organization for a major grant,

the foundation hosted a benefit at the Chicago Playboy Mansion to honor [Republican] Senator Robert Packwood [of Oregon] and [Democratic] Representative Barbara Mikulski [of Maryland] for their support of pro-choice legislation."

Packwood is running for re-election this year. Representative Mikulski is campaigning for the Democratic nomination for the U.S. Senate.

And, although *Playboy* touts itself as a "men's magazine," the Playboy Foundation has played a major role in the creation of the "gay rights" movement. It has given tens of thousands of dollars to such organizations as the National Gay Task Force, the Gay Rights National Lobby, Gay Rights Advocates, and the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund. Hefner has explained that while he prefers the "boy-girl variety of sex," we must also embrace those with different "sexual inclinations."

The Playboy Foundation was also involved in the establishment of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML), which favors the legalization of marijuana. That group is backing an initiative on the Oregon ballot this fall that would legalize the personal use and cultivation of the drug. According to reports, Hefner made the decision to fund NORML after he discovered that marijuana increased his enjoyment of sex.

But the use of drugs didn't increase Roberta "Bobbie" Arnstein's enjoyment of anything. She was Hefner's executive secretary until

1974, when she was arrested and charged with conspiracy to distribute cocaine. Arnstein was convicted, but committed suicide before she could serve her sentence.

Former *Playboy* playmates and bunnies, such as Miki Garcia and Brenda McKillop, have testified that illegal drugs are used at parties at the Playboy Mansion. Testifying before the Pornography Commission, Miki said that Hefner and his friends enjoyed watching some of the centerfold girls perform in lesbian orgies. She reported drug use by the Playmates, and international call-girl activities. Hugh Hefner has even defended humans having sex with animals, being quoted in the *Los Angeles Times* as saying that "the only thing wrong with it [having sex with animals] is that people used to get arrested for it."

Targeting Blacks. Needless to say, abortion, hedonism, and illegal drugs have been destroying our society. These moral and social problems are especially serious in the black community. Yet, some black "leaders" have actively associated themselves with the *Playboy* mentality.

The Reverend Jesse Jackson, who on occasion preaches against drugs and sexual promiscuity among young people, may even have gotten his start from *Playboy*. In 1969, *Playboy* featured an interview with the Reverend Jackson, virtually an unknown at the time. Shortly thereafter, Jackson established Operation PUSH (People United to Save Humanity), and he became a national black leader.

August, 1986

A so-called "self-help" organization for blacks, PUSH received millions of dollars in federal grants and other financial assistance provided by the Playboy Foundation. Indeed, the Playboy Foundation boasts that it provided the "initial financing" for Operation PUSH.

Jackson campaigned for President in 1984 in a "Rainbow Coalition" that included homosexual-rights activists and pro-abortion feminists, even though he had previously spoken out against abortion. His campaign was marred by anti-Semitic utterances and appearances in Communist Cuba and Communist Nicaragua. Amid the controversy, Jesse Jackson still found time for *Playboy* and returned as an interview subject in the June 1984 issue.

Another black leader who may be even closer to *Playboy* is Tom Bradley, the mayor of Los Angeles, where Hefner currently makes his home. Bradley is now running for Governor of California.

In 1978 Tom Bradley declared a "Hugh M. Hefner Day" in Los Angeles. Hefner, in turn, hosted a political fundraiser for Bradley at his mansion in Los Angeles. Even today, Tom Bradley shows no shame over associating with Hefner and his magazine. He signed a letter to the editor of *Playboy* which appeared in the February 1986 issue congratulating the magazine on the fact that it had gotten rid of the staples in the binding that used to mar the centerfold.

"Thank you for sending me a copy of your first perfect-bound edition of *Playboy*," Bradley said. "I am

August, 1986

enjoying the articles and pictorials, too."

Civil Liberties. Politicians and other public figures usually try to avoid references to the "pictorials." Indeed, it is frequently claimed that *Playboy* has real "literary" merit, and we are all but asked to believe that the Founding Fathers had *Playboy* in mind when they wrote the First Amendment.

Hugh Hefner himself tries to create this impression. Not known for his modesty in any respect, Hefner established the "Hugh M. Hefner First Amendment Awards" to honor others for honoring him. Participants have included actor Ed Asner, author Studs Terkel, Alan Dershowitz of Harvard Law School, Martin Agronsky of public television, and Tom Wicker of the *New York Times*. No surprises there.

In Hefner's view, it was entirely appropriate that the Playboy Foundation, in cooperation with the Chicago Public Library, sponsored a national tour of an exhibit called "Freedom Of The Press: The Anglo-American Struggle." The exhibit, which featured the historical papers of journalistic hero John Peter Zenger, was shown in the corporate headquarters of the *Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times*. The lesson was clear: Hefner is a modern-day John Peter Zenger.

It's not surprising that reporters for these newspapers, such as Benjamin C. Bradlee and Bob Woodward of the *Post*, have contributed articles to *Playboy* for fat fees. Correspond-

23

CONSERVATIVE DIGEST

dents for the electronic media have also contributed to *Playboy*, either through articles or interviews. They include the entire cast of the CBS program "60 Minutes" and Sam Donaldson of ABC.

Hugh Hefner has likewise sought to solidify his connections with the literary world by funneling *Playboy* Foundation money to such groups as the PEN American Center, the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, the Nation Institute, the Progressive Foundation, *Mother Jones* magazine, the Center for Investigative Reporting, and the Association of American Publishers. The PEN American Center is the U.S. affiliate of an international association of writers that counts as members many who write for *Playboy*, including John Kenneth Galbraith, Graham Greene, Joyce Carol Oates, John Updike, and Kurt Vonnegut Jr.

Playboy's defenders frequently make the claim that the magazine has never been determined to be legally obscene. That is technically true. But it doesn't mean that *Playboy* and its philosophy are morally acceptable in our communities. Indeed, *Playboy* is now under severe financial pressure because Americans all across the country are objecting to sale of *Playboy* and *Penthouse* in their local stores. Meanwhile, *Playboy* is reported to

have lost forty percent of its advertising pages since the 1970s and forty percent of its circulation. *Playboy* Clubs are folding and the *Playboy* Channel cable television service is reported to have the highest disconnect rate in the industry.

With the heat on, *Playboy's* hope is that younger and younger people can be hooked into the *Playboy* lifestyle. Its 1984 annual report said that the division of the company that markets *Playboy's* merchandise is now placing emphasis on the "16-to-26 age group, a slightly younger market than had been targeted before."

Ironically, a key "target" is young girls. I have seen advertisements for "Playmate leotards and sleepwear" being modeled for girls as young as fourteen. The May 1985 issue of *Seventeen* magazine carried an ad for Playmate swimwear featuring "The Suntan Tattoo." The suit has the *Playboy* rabbit-head design cut into the material, so that when it is taken off the rabbit-head tan remains.

The message: It's sexy and glamorous to be a Playmate. Just like *Playboy's* first-ever Playmate, Marilyn Monroe, the sex goddess who got romantically involved with the Kennedy brothers (John and Robert) and then killed herself with an overdose of sleeping pills.