

# modern muse

## MIDNIGHT BASKETBALL & A CURE FOR IDEOLOGY

LAYNE LONGFELLOW

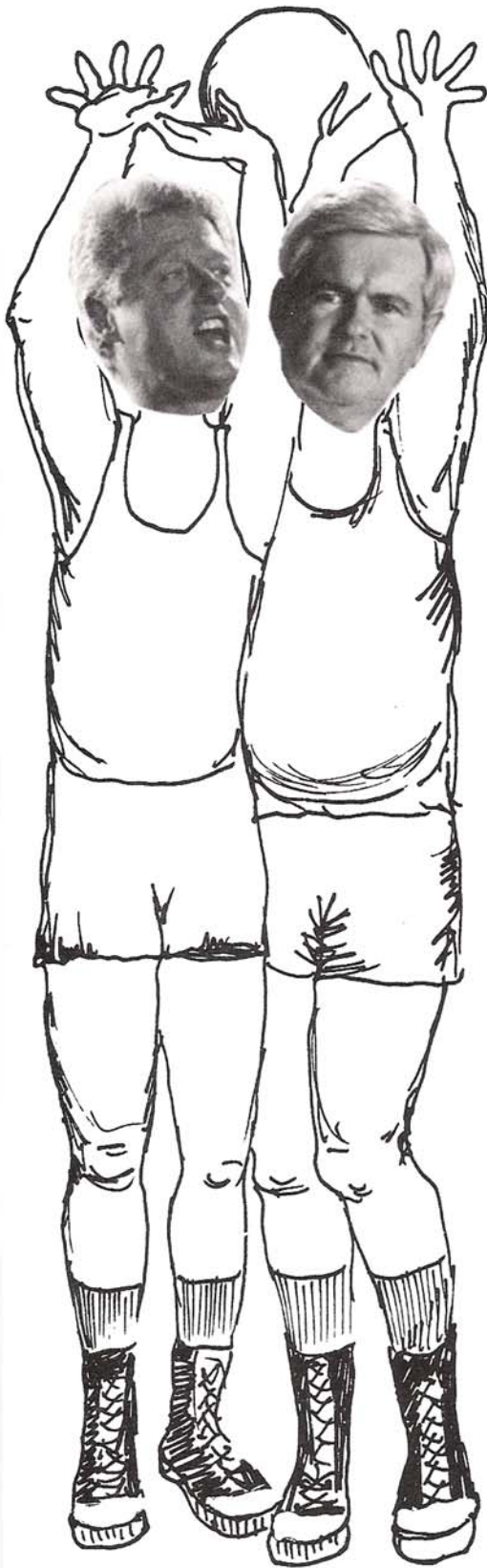


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**Y**ou know what Republicans and Democrats have in common? They both believe in something. They have ideology. And you can catch it. They want you to catch it. People who have ideology want you to share it and they don't want you to get it from somebody else. Theirs is the malady of choice. ¶ The problem with political parties today is that they believe in something—or behave as if they do—and they'd rather be right than do right. They'd rather win the argument than find the best answer. ¶ Do we—you and I—care whether a certain program is liberal or conservative? No. We care if it works or doesn't work. We don't care if it's good for one political party or belief system or power structure. That's a luxury this democracy can no longer afford. We care if it's good for the Nation and the people. We care if it's good for us. ¶ Remember high school Latin? Veni, Vedi, Vici? Now it's WIIFM, WIIFY, WIIFUS. What's In It For Me? What's In It For You? What's In It For Us? Americans are devoted to WIIFM, and political parties are doing their best to whip up a matching political philosophy to meet our selfishness. We're suspicious of WIIFY; we want to be sure that WIIFY does not exceed WIIFM. Political parties are responding by eliminating all programs that subtract from WIIFM to add to WIIFY. That leaves us—What's In It For Us? ¶ There is a way to answer all the questions raised in the hollowed halls of Congress. WIFFUS. Not WIIFNEWT or WIIFBILL. We don't care who wins or who is right or who can out-maneuver whom. We care who gets the most things done to make the most things better for most of the people, most of the time. Results. Ideology is irrelevant.

**E**nter the Pragmatic Party. Identify the needs of the people and the Republic and the Earth. Come up with ideas about how to meet those needs, how to fix it if it's broken. Try everything you think might work. Stay open to outcomes. If it works, keep it. If it doesn't, ditch it. If you don't think it should work but it does, scratch your head, laugh out loud, say "Well, I'll be!" and get on with it. That's the first step toward a cure for ideology. If you think it should work but it doesn't, say "Well, who'da thunk it?" and get off it. That's the second step in the cure. And be glad, because you learned something really important for people either way. ¶ Midnight basketball, for example. It works. Every major city in which it's been tried says it works. Results have shown it to be an effective and cost-effective way to prevent crime. ¶ There's only one argument against it. Right, Ideology. There are a significant number of lawmakers who would prefer to lampoon the program (that's so easy to do—it's a slam-dunk) than to check it out. They would prefer to preserve their belief system than to prevent crime. ¶ Would you rather prevent crime or preserve their belief system? Would you rather prevent crime than preserve your belief system? Can you say WIIFUS? ■