

# IN JESSE'S IMAGE: THE MAKING OF A NEW GENERATION

BY BARRY YEOMAN

For the past seven years, the National Congressional Club—Jesse Helms' conservative political organization—has been plucking little-known professors from Eastern North Carolina colleges and running them for office. First, the Club tapped John East from East Carolina University who turned into one of the U.S. Senate's most vocal crusaders against "secular humanism;" then the fiercely anti-communist David Funderburk emerged from Campbell University last year for his unsuccessful U.S. Senate primary against Jim Broyhill.

## THE CONSERVATIVE CAUSE 1987

Now, the Congressional Club has reached out to Roanoke Bible College in Elizabeth City and found a new protégé: Dr. C. Barry McCarty, a Church of Christ minister and anti-abortion activist who is being offered as Helms' choice to lead the state's Republican Party.

In local circles, McCarty is known as the guy who sits in the middle of the room at county political functions and cheers loudest for the Republicans. His local newspaper, the *Daily Advance*, hasn't paid him much mind; editors there say he hasn't made much of an impact on the Pasquotank County political scene.

Nonetheless, on May 30, McCarty will stand before the state party convention and make his case to the 6,194 delegates as to why he should replace the more moderate incumbent, Jack Hawke. Then, in all likelihood, McCarty will be trounced.

The inevitability that McCarty will lose can make one wonder why he even bothered get-



Barry McCarty

Photo by Barry Yeoman

ting into this race—not to mention why the Congressional Club couldn't find someone a little less obscure. McCarty seems easy to write off—this Bible college debate professor with immoderate views and an aw-shucks smile who, at 33, is heading for his third election defeat.

But while North Carolina may never see a New Right leader as effective as Helms, it will be Barry McCarty—and people like him—who carry the New Right's torch into the 1990s and the next century.

**"When you are one-on-one with Barry, he is hard to dislike. He's so convincing that I think he's dangerous to be in a position of power."**

On the horizon, there is a second generation of New Right leaders—ambitious, articulate, telegenic men like Funderburk and former Congressional Club staffer and potential U.S. House candidate Tom Fetzer. They are still young, and some are virtually unheard of. But they're there.

Perhaps no one is more exemplary of that second generation than McCarty. The Bible college professor bears the classic stamp of a Congressional Club supporter: a devotion to New Right social issues and a bitter distaste for compromise.

As chairman of the state Social Services Commission, McCarty has pushed for regulations to make it harder for poor families to collect welfare, and for poor women to get state-funded abortions. He considers abortion the country's No. 1 problem, saying, "It is the social blight of Western Civilization, and if we don't correct it, we're going down the tubes."

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Independent Associate Editor Barry Yeoman covers state politics and government.

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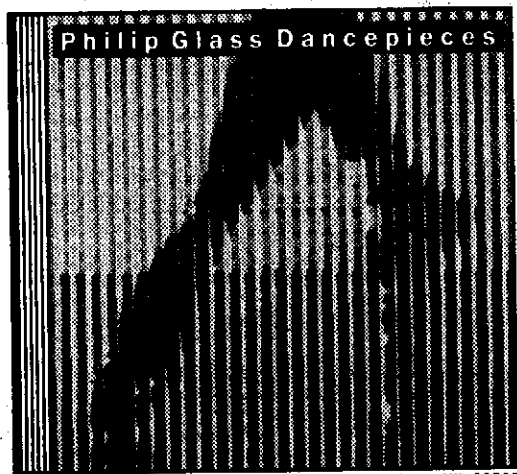
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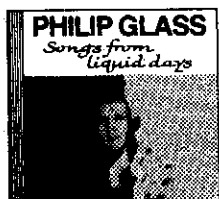
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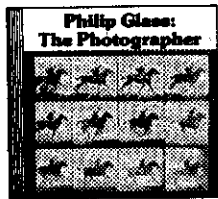
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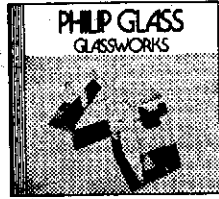
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## NEW GENERATION

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As a member of the state Jail Standards Commission, McCarty said last year that the General Assembly should consider a proposal to use painful electric shocks as the punishment for certain crimes. “A return to corporal punishment in some instances may be a more humane alternative, and it ought to be considered,” he says.

And McCarty often talks about why he opposes a holiday commemorating Martin Luther King Jr.: “I would be opposed to a holiday honoring any liberal socialist. Even his supporters will describe his political philosophy as very liberal and his economic ideas as at least socialistic in their tendencies, if not being outright socialism.”

But there will always be people like McCarty on the far right. What makes him important is that, as a handsome and eloquent politician, he stands at the point where substance and style intersect.

In our age of sharp, well-groomed television personalities, McCarty is a model politician. He has deep-set blue eyes and a strong, square jaw. As a professional debater, he talks with precision, every “T” and “K” clicking, but with a gentle Georgia lilt. When he speaks on an issue, he interweaves Christian theology and Constitutional law with a dash of the inflammatory language that is the Congressional Club’s trademark. He smiles a lot. And, at least in an interview setting, he is a gentleman, which makes his radical conservative politics go down easy.

After meeting him, it’s hard to shake the nagging suspicion that, a decade down the road, Barry McCarty is going to emerge from Eastern North Carolina as one of the great minds behind New Right politics in North Carolina.

### “The best in Christian education”

It should not be too surprising that the Congressional Club has developed a fixation on obscure Eastern North Carolina college professors.

Most of North Carolina’s established Republicans come from the Piedmont and the mountains. What success the Club has had has come from recruiting fresh faces—political purists from outside the Republican Party establishment. The eastern part of the state has very few Republicans at all—but those few eastern Republicans are often the most devout New Right conservatives, the type the Congressional Club is looking for.

And what institution breeds purer ideologies than the college or university? There, “they study (politics), they know it, they speak it, they teach it,” says Tony Maupin, a Club supporter and former Wake County Republican Party chairman.

Perhaps the place to take the purest glimpse at Barry McCarty’s world view is in his own academic setting, at Roanoke Bible College.

There, he’s not playing politics—he’s just teaching what he believes.

Roanoke Bible College sits on the Pasquotank River, three blocks north of Elizabeth City’s historic downtown district. The college’s architecture is 1960s and 1970s functional, but the small campus is surrounded by a tree-lined neighborhood of turn-of-the-century houses with big front porches.

About 1,600 students have passed through the college since its founding in 1948. The present enrollment is 170 students, who the college says are receiving “the best in Christian education.”

“Foremost in the philosophy of education of Roanoke Bible College is the conviction that all education should be Biblically oriented,” says the school’s catalog. “The Bible, therefore, is not just a textbook which is studied in the curriculum at Roanoke, but the core around which the total program of education is formed.”

### As chair of the 1984 GOP

convention, McCarty expelled two News and Observer reporters for their newspaper’s anti-Helms editorials. He announced that the “cancer” had been “surgically removed” from the meeting.

The college is affiliated with the Church of Christ, a denomination thickly concentrated in the rural counties of eastern North Carolina. Its adherents practice full-immersion baptism and weekly communion, and they believe in a literal interpretation of the New Testament. But they eschew the term “fundamentalist,” saying, “Our aim is to . . . build a church of Christ without denominational name, man-written creed or other barrier to Christian unity.”

Fifteen years ago, McCarty left the Atlanta home of his conservative, religious parents and came to Roanoke Bible College for his undergraduate work. There, he got his bachelor’s degree in Bible— and northeastern North Carolina. After he received his Ph.D. in rhetoric and argumentation from the University of Pittsburgh in 1980, he returned to his first alma mater to teach.

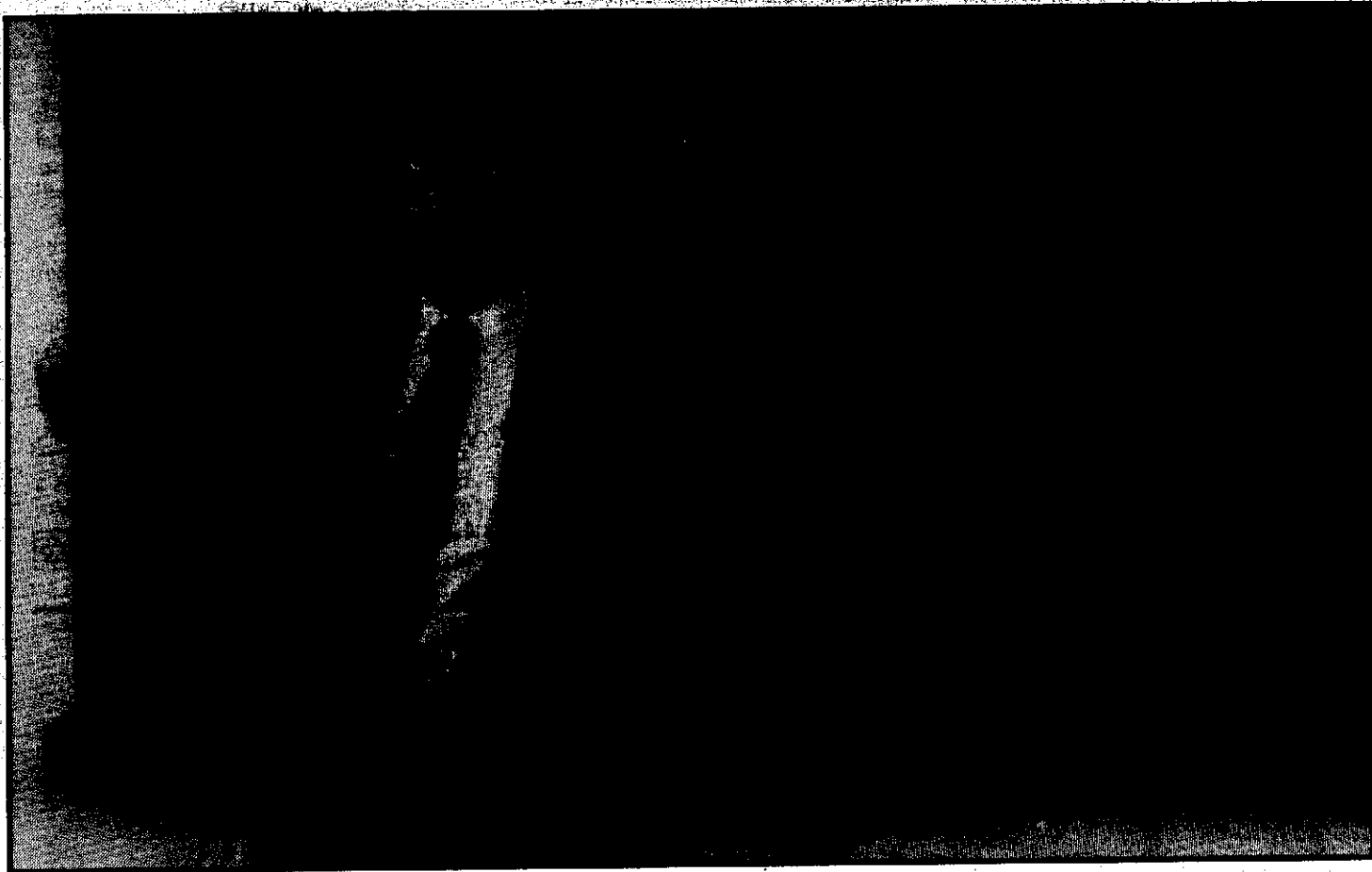
It’s Monday morning at 11, and in a cinder-block classroom in Heritage Hall, McCarty is telling his Introductory Philosophy class about the student movement of the 1960s—a movement that most of his students were too young

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In Barry McCarty's Introductory Philosophy class you can hear his world view at its purest. The student activists of the 1960s, he says, "really thought you could find truth inside your head. Once Western culture was divorced from its Biblical roots, people would believe anything."

Photo by Barry Yeoman

to remember, and with which they seem to have little sympathy.

McCarty explains to his 11 attentive students, "These college kids began to take the secular ideas that their professors began teaching them in the classroom—they began to take them in the streets. If these ideas that the teachers were teaching were true, this would have made sense. (But) people were teaching them there were no values."

He asks a young blond woman named Donna: "To what did young people turn after they rejected their parents' values?"

"Drugs," says Donna—and McCarty tells her she is right. "I remember the hippie movement and the Yuppies, and the Haight-Ashbury scene. These people really thought you could find truth inside your head. Once Western culture was divorced from its Biblical roots, people would believe anything."

Drugs, he adds, were "a desperate attempt to come back to the truth after they had dismissed the Bible." And so was Marxism. "You have students who, by the thousands, are being taught by Marxist teachers. When I was at the University of Pittsburgh doing my doctoral work, over in the political science department they had a Marxist professor. I bet you can't go to any university in America without finding a bona fide Marxist."

To Ruth, another blond student, he asks, "Why is Marxism a leap into the area of non-reason?"

By rote she recites, "It gives no basis for the dignity or rights of man."

Another correct answer. "To the Marxist," says McCarty, "because they cannot believe man is created in the image of God, we are simply complicated pieces of matter. If I am just a complicated piece of matter, what's to say I cannot be manipulated any way the people in power want?"

### "A breath of fresh air"

The story of McCarty's entrance into Congressional Club politics, as he tells it, goes something like this:

The 1983 state Republican convention was at a crucial moment. The conservative forces backing David Flaherty for state party chairman seemed to be losing ground. A rumor had started on the convention floor that moderate Republicans were trying to force an early vote on the state chairmanship, before all of Flaherty's supporters had arrived. At least one motion had been offered that would dilute the voting strength of Flaherty's delegates.

Then McCarty stood to raise a point of order. He made a series of parliamentary maneuvers and began debating. His speech "raised the troops," McCarty claims—and R.E. Carter Wrenn, the Congressional Club's executive director, took notice. Wrenn dispatched a runner to fetch McCarty.

"Carter said, 'I don't know who you are, but we sure need you on our side,'" McCarty recalls.

Whether or not the story is precisely accurate, it's clear McCarty's oratorical prowess

and parliamentary skills endeared him to the Congressional Club. In 1984, when the Club still controlled the North Carolina Republican Party, McCarty chaired the state GOP convention—and made headlines by expelling two *News and Observer* reporters for their newspaper's anti-Helms editorials. He announced that the "cancer" had been "surgically removed" from the meeting.

Later that summer, in the thick of the bitter U.S. Senate race between Jesse Helms and Jim Hunt, McCarty escorted Dorothy Helms, the senator's wife, to the Republican National Convention in Dallas. There, he was asked by Helms and Congressional Club co-founder Tom Ellis to analyze the first televised debate between Helms and challenger Jim Hunt—a debate that, by all accounts, Helms lost. "My advice to the senator was, 'You've got to pull off your gloves and go after the guy.' Helms was just way too nice."

McCarty fondly recalls how "Helms, who's a very tall man, put his arm around me and said, 'Barry, you're a breath of fresh air.'"

Since then, McCarty says he's been "an at-large worker for Senator Helms in northeastern North Carolina." He's been an active member of the Pasquotank County Republican party, and in 1984 launched an unsuccessful campaign to succeed conservative Democrat Melvin Daniels in the state Senate. (He also ran unsuccessfully for mayor of Elizabeth City in 1981.) For the past two years, he's been called upon to introduce Helms at the Con-

gressional Club's annual appreciation dinner. "When I introduce the senator," he grins, "I really give it all I've got, because I love him."

### A Stand Against Squishiness

In 1985—in a gesture of good faith to the New Right—Gov. Jim Martin appointed McCarty chairman of the state's Social Services Commission, which writes the rules governing such programs as food stamps, Aid to Families with Dependent Children and the state's abortion fund for poor women. The commission controls \$1.3 billion in state and federal funds.

McCarty came to the commission with a clear agenda: cutting state funding for abortion, which he calls "the crime of the century," and curtailing welfare programs, which he refers to as "modern slavery." As a member of the Church of Christ, he believes the Apostle Paul was speaking literally when he said: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

Since his appointment, with the help of a Republican majority on the commission, McCarty has pursued that agenda. When the commission has had the chance to set eligibility requirements for social programs, McCarty has pushed to make those requirements as stringent as possible, in order to exclude as many people as possible from receiving government monies. "You've really got to be in need to get assistance," McCarty says of the rule changes that have been enacted under his chairmanship.

"He seems to have a course he would like to steer the commission in, and he does a very good job of it," says fellow commissioner Larry Norman, also a Republican.

Outgoing Social Services Commission member Alice von Oeson recalls her service under McCarty's leadership with no uncertain bitterness in her voice. "We did not see eye-to-eye on anything," she says. "For two years, I felt his presence on every issue. We moderate Democrats flinched and cringed." Von Oeson's term expires next month; she has been replaced with a Republican.

Most of McCarty's work on the commission has not been headline-grabbing. But the commission did make quite a stir when, under McCarty's leadership, it agreed to consider three rules that would curtail poor women's access to state abortion funds.

The rules, proposed by anti-abortion leader Paul Stam, would have required parental con-

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sent for teen-agers' abortions; required counties to provide models of a fetus to abortion fund applicants; and mandated that county workers report cases of rape or incest in which the victim applied for state abortion funds.

In a memo, Assistant Attorney General Henry Rosser made it clear that the Social Services Commission had no authority to enact any of those rules. But McCarty told *The News and Observer*, "I think they are very reasonable proposals," and continued to push for them. Another legal opinion was sought, and the second attorney okayed the rape-reporting and model-fetus rules. A hearing was held in October, and by a one-vote margin the commission adopted those two rules. They go into effect June 1. Also, in January of this year, the commission passed a resolution urging the legislature to pass a parental-consent law.

McCarty says it was his moral obligation to try to pursue the most conservative approach to abortion and welfare. "All of the work of the commission is too important to become squishy," he says.

### Laying the Groundwork

By all counts, McCarty is losing the race to Jack Hawke, the governor's candidate for state party chairman. That's not surprising. "We knew all along that going up against someone who has taken the endorsement of an incumbent governor will be an uphill fight," says Carter Wrenn, the Congressional Club's executive director.

What is surprising is how little support McCarty is getting even from his home territory down east. Active Republicans who usually support the Congressional Club say that it was foolish for the Club to challenge Gov. Martin, and many are turning their support to Hawke.

"I'd like to see Barry run for a state political office. I'd like to see him be governor. But I just don't think it's the time and place for Barry McCarty," says the Rev. Walter Leake, a Craven County GOP activist. "I'm about as conservative as there are in this state, but I don't think the party needs to divide over the state chairmanship."

Unless McCarty unexpectedly wins, this is not the contest that will catapult him into the forefront of North Carolina's New Right movement. In his first statewide race, McCarty has been rather reserved—trusting the Congressional Club to write the script. Left to run his own campaign, McCarty could probably give any opponent quite an intellectual challenge—but that was not how this race has been run.

"Barry McCarty is a very talented individual—very intelligent, very skillful in debate," says Alan Pugh, the political adviser to Gov. Martin. "But this campaign has very little to

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do with Barry McCarty. Carter Wrenn completely controls Barry in this race. The strategy, the tactics, the issues are completely Carter's."

But if nothing else, this year's campaign is laying the groundwork for McCarty's political future. On May 30, he will be standing before thousands of Republicans—and many will remember his name and his eloquence.

"Barry McCarty is going to be one of the key leaders in the conservative movement for a long time," says Wrenn.

That alarms some people—people who know McCarty's abilities but deplore his politics. One Martin administration member, who asked not to be named, says the danger of McCarty lies in the fact that he's a talented, amiable man. "When you are one-on-one with Barry, he is hard to dislike," she says. "He's a good communicator and parliamentarian. He's so convincing that I think he's dangerous to be in a position of power." 



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