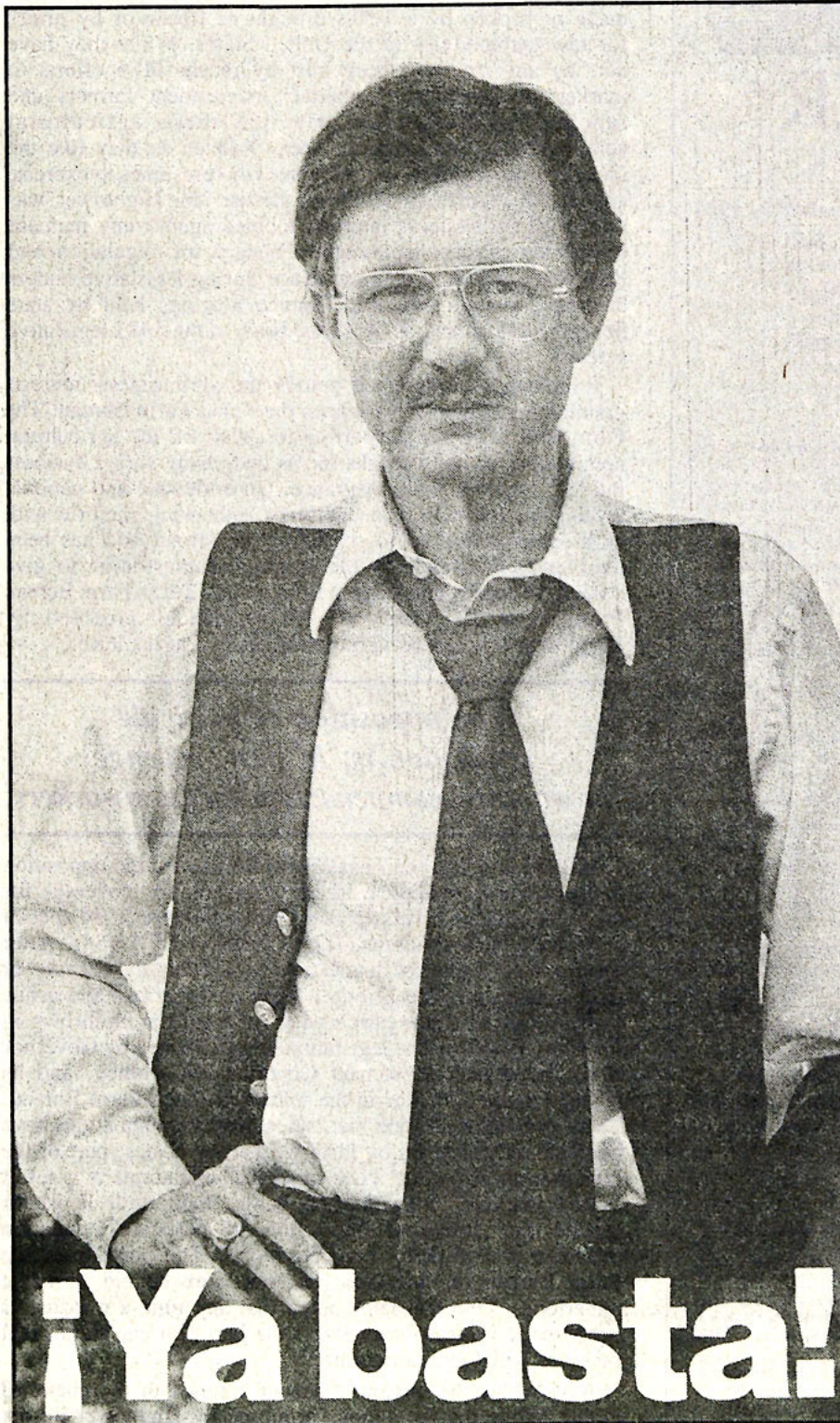


THE TEXAS OBSERVER

A Journal of Free Voices

November 9, 1984

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Pesticide Battle

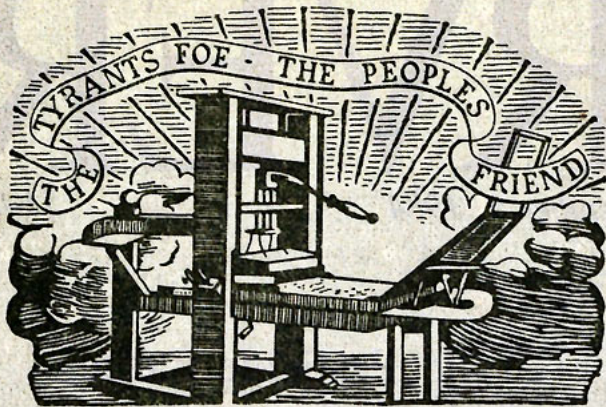
Lines Drawn In the Dirt

By *Geoffrey Rips*

Austin

When Agriculture Commissioner Jim Hightower, announced on Wednesday, October 19, that the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) was promulgating new regulations for the application of agricultural pesticides, a political range war that had been raging for months underground suddenly burst to the surface. While the regulations proposed for public comment were the result of exhaustive negotiations and heated skirmishes between TDA and public and private interest groups, they are not the actual point of contention they are made out to be by groups opposing their implementation. Rather, the pesticide regulations are being used by large political and private interest groups to draw the line on Jim Hightower and on a process of change that has shaken these interest groups loose from the stranglehold on the state's agricultural and economic policies they so long enjoyed.

Photo by Alan Pogue



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Lines *(Continued from Cover)*

Ever since the election of Jim Hightower in 1982, conservative political and farm interests have been itching for an opportunity to take a shot at him. Among those interests have been agribusiness concerns who had enjoyed a cozy relationship with Hightower's predecessor, Reagan Brown. For the most part, these interests reap the most benefit from a farm economy in which the large producers control the market. Some of these interests are multinational and are not made or broken by a Texas drought or freeze or by prices for raw commodities in the United States. While they have not, by any measure, been hurt by recent TDA efforts to market the products of smaller, independent farmers and ranchers of Texas, in principle these agricultural conglomerates don't like the idea. Neither do they like the idea of an agriculture commissioner who presumes to exercise any of his regulatory authority. Before Jim Hightower was sworn in, agribusiness interests lobbied against any increase in the agriculture department's budget for regulation and inspection, wielding their influence during legislative budget hearings, including Senate Finance hearings held by state Senator Grant Jones, D-Abilene, prior to the 1983 legislative session.

Prominently represented among the agribusiness interests gunning for Hightower has been the Texas Farm Bureau. The Farm Bureau, while purporting to speak for the agricultural community, actually speaks for its own many varied business interests, most notably insurance. On both state and national levels, the Farm Bureau combines right-wing rhetoric with an assumed authority to speak for the farmer and has been used more than once by the Reagan administration to give a stamp of approval to Reagan farm policy. Texas Farm Bureau President S. M. True said the regulations proposed by Hightower "would be very detrimental to agriculture."

The opposition to pesticide regulation is, in part, revenge for workers' compensation for farmworkers.

In 1983 and '84, the Texas Farm Bureau led the opposition to legislation providing workers' compensation coverage for farm and ranch workers, passed during the June 1984 special session of the legislature (TO, 1/13/84 and 7/13/84). After a protracted fight, the legislation passed largely because of the formation of a coalition of Mexican American and urban legislators with a few progressive rural legislators thrown in for good measure. The legislation was supported by Governor Mark White and Lieutenant Governor Bill Hobby, and its passage marked a nadir in the influence of the Farm Bureau. There is every indication that, since pesticide regulations have been pushed for years by farm worker advocates, part of the rancor inspired by the TDA pesticide regulations is a result of the workers' compensation battle. One rural legislator termed the organized opposition to pesticide regulation "revenge for workers' compensation." The position of the Farm Bureau on this issue has not been devoid of racist undertones. One legislator noted that any time a measure is proposed to protect farmworkers the Farm Bureau claims that measure will "end agriculture."

Add to this the obvious financial interest of the chemical lobby. While the regulations proposed by Hightower do not

ban the use of any chemical, they do restrict periods during which persons may re-enter fields sprayed with certain chemicals. Any attempt to regulate chemical use in Texas is met with swift legislative reaction orchestrated by the chemical lobby, usually in the person of Harry Whitworth or Jon Fisher of the Texas Chemical Council, which claims to represent 90% of the chemical industry in Texas. When a first draft of the pesticide regulations was circulated for comment in August, Jon Fisher quickly rounded up opposition among farm commodity groups and solicited the support of the Texas Farm Bureau. On September 29, Fisher told a conference on pesticide use that "the regulations propose undue stress for farmers." He did not mention any concern for possible stress on chemical manufacturers but, as a lobbyist for the Texas aerial applicators, Fisher did add that "sections discriminate against aerial versus ground [spraying]."

But that, of course, is not all there is to it. Texas is a major center for chemical manufacturing with large production facilities owned by Dow, DuPont, Monsanto, Diamond Shamrock, Union Carbide, and other industry leaders. The chemical industry gravitated to Texas because of low cost petroleum and what the president of E. I. Du Pont de Nemours has termed "local and state policies . . . that have encouraged industrial growth." The last thing these industries want to see is any sort of regulation of chemicals or their use. The chemical industry has poured large sums of money into statewide and local races in an attempt to shore up its influence. Among the recipients of money from the Free Enterprise Political Action Committee (FREEPAC), run by Harry Whitworth, in the past year have been new state Rep. Robert Earley of Portland and state Sen. Bill Sarpalius of Hereford. In addition to using FREEPAC as a conduit for contributions, a number of chemical manufacturers contribute money to campaigns through their own political action committees or indirectly through law firms that represent company interests. Robert Earley, for example, received campaign contributions from Dow Chemical, Monsanto, AG-AIR PAC (the aerial applicators' PAC), as well as loans from Harry Whitworth and Jon Fisher. Then there are the notorious dove hunts in South Texas and Mexico, through which Whitworth entertains members of the legislature. Rep. Robert Saunders, D-La Grange, chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture and Livestock, has been so entertained.

Add to this the fact that, while Whitworth and Hightower have met on several occasions to negotiate various issues,



Citrus grower and friends at House committee hearing on regulations.

Photo by Alan Pogue

Whitworth is said to still harbor a grudge against Hightower for the latter's role, while head of the Texas Consumer Association, in hearings on the Agent Orange Bill in 1981. Former Ag Commissioner Reagan Brown had considerable chemical company backing in his 1982 primary race against Hightower, as did Hightower's 1982 Republican opponent, Fred Thornberry, on whose behalf Whitworth worked actively.

It is not the issue of pesticide regulation *per se* that has the chemical industry upset. Rather, it is the fact that the industry perceives the regulations to be emblematic of a trend toward greater regulation of industries that for decades have been virtually free of government supervision. The chemical industry, for instance, is not nearly as wary of the implications of pesticide regulation as it is of recommendations TDA will propose in the near future for the management of hazardous waste disposal. Since legislators would have difficulty



Photo by Alicia Daniel

Hightower, shown promoting native plants earlier this year.

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opposing the politically popular regulation of hazardous waste disposal, the chemical lobby has found it necessary to marshal opposition to Hightower and chemical regulation on an issue that does not directly touch most Texas voters. It is on pesticide regulation that the chemical industry decided to draw the line.

In so doing, they reflect the interests of the big business lobbies that ran state government without interference for several decades. While these interests still hold considerable sway in state government, they fear what the re-aligned constituencies of the 1982 state elections could mean, especially in terms of the growing influence of Mexican American, black, urban, and consumer coalitions in the legislature. They regard the implementation of the pesticide regulations as a symbolic act.

AND, IN MANY WAYS, the chief importance of the pesticide regulations is their symbolism. For the first time in its history, the Texas Department of Agriculture is addressing head-on the human health hazards of agricultural pesticide use — the way it affects farmers, farm families, farm workers, and rural neighbors.

“While we hail the over-all good intent and record of this vital industry [the agricultural chemical industry],” Hightower told an October 19 press conference, “we can no longer avert our eyes from obvious evidence that people are being poisoned, too. . . . Mishandled and misapplied, pesticides can injure anyone who comes in contact with them. . . . Even a cursory look will turn up recent cases of West Texas water wells poisoned with arsenic, of elementary-school yards inadvertently sprayed with a pesticide to kill termites, of fetal damage suffered when a pregnant woman worked amidst chemical residues on crops, and of farmers and workers alike who have died by unwittingly walking into ‘hot’ fields. . . . Texas has programs, sanctions, and safeguards to protect water, crops, and wildlife from harmful exposure to these chemicals, but we do next-to-nothing to protect our people. This is not a question of finding fault with an industry, but of merely taking sensible steps to do what we must do — protect the safety of people first.”

***“That’s what the regulations
are all about — just
asking people to be responsible.”***

While the standards proposed by Hightower were criticized by the Texas Farm Bureau’s director of farm labor, Keith Garrison, as being “overly stringent,” several environmental and farmworker advocacy groups called for stricter regulation. The standards proposed by TDA include: the mandatory notification of all adjacent neighbors requesting notification prior to aerial spraying of fields; required intervals before re-entry into fields for labor intensive crops with which workers have substantial body contact, with lengths of intervals determined by the chemicals in use; and the posting of flags in fields of labor-intensive crops with re-entry intervals longer than seven days.

To augment the regulations proposed by the agriculture department, Hightower announced: the formation of a Texas task force on pesticide use to educate and train those who use chemicals and those who treat chemical victims; the appointment of a committee to study the problems created by a pesticide’s drifting beyond the intended target and to recommend anti-drift training and state standards; the addition of human health problems to the investigatory duties of the 17 TDA inspectors and the determination by TDA to request

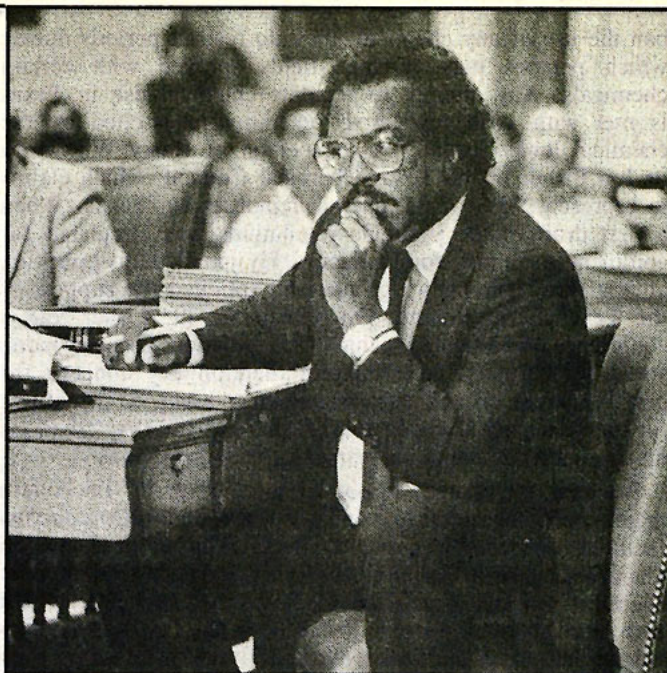


Photo by Alan Pogue

TDA legal counsel Sam Biscoe at House hearing.

funding for five additional inspectors; and the intention of TDA to implement a more effective system of recording pesticide use in the state, as well as pesticide poisonings.

Tani Adams, of the Texas Center for Rural Studies, said the proposal represented “an enormous first step forward in the creation of a system to protect Texans from pesticide hazards.” Joe Rankin, vice president of the Texas Farmers Union and a cotton producer from Crosby County, said, “It’s kind of hard for me to understand what the hoopla is all about. My friends tell me they don’t spray with people in the field. Then there’s no change. That’s what the regulations are all about — just asking people to be responsible.”

According to Hightower, his proposals will give Texas farmers and ranchers “some legal defense against suits stemming from pesticide poisonings. With no standards in place for notification, warning, and re-entry, producers now have unlimited liability, which will be narrowed by simple compliance with these operating procedures.”

But that’s not how the Texas Farm Bureau, the Chemical Council, and their allies choose to see it. The Farm Bureau’s Keith Garrison said the regulations would “cripple agriculture in some parts of the state.” A Farm Bureau radio broadcast said Hightower’s proposal would “shut down agriculture” in Texas.

When Hightower appeared in an October 19 press conference in San Juan to explain the proposal, he was confronted by an angry crowd of farmers and aerial applicators. According to the McAllen *Monitor*, Farm Bureau member Newt Dyer said the regulations were “part of a larger effort to socialize agriculture and divert land from private use to state control.” Another farmer said the rules would make it “impossible to grow vegetables in the mid-Valley area.”

Both the Farm Bureau and the Chemical Council contend that there is no documented evidence to support the implementation of the regulations. While the inadequate documentation of pesticide abuse is one of the problems the agriculture department is trying to correct, there are, nonetheless, a number of cases on record of people injured by pesticide misuse. Many are documented in a 100-page TDA report issued with the proposed regulations. They include cases

of injured farmers and farmworkers, most of which would have been avoided if the precautions outlined in the proposed standards had been followed. According to TDA legal counsel Sam Biscoe, the number of pesticide complaints received by the department has increased dramatically in the past year.

NOT WANTING to be confused by the facts, the chemical and agribusiness lobbies have drawn their line in the dirt and are preparing to fight Hightower every inch of the way. Rep. Saunders held an October 31 hearing of the House Agriculture and Livestock committee on the pesticide regulations. The committee membership includes Robert Earley, beneficiary of large chemical PAC campaign contributions, and Pete Patterson, a staunch advocate of the pre-Hightower days of the agriculture department. State Sen. Bill Sarpalius has been making noises in the Panhandle media that the proposed standards would break Texas agriculture, and he has let it be known that he plans to look into the operations of the agriculture department. It was Sarpalius who, in 1983, did the bidding of the Farm Bureau and killed workers' compensation coverage for farmworkers with an eleventh hour filibuster, only to have his own bills deregulating agricultural trucking and providing low interest farm loans killed in retaliation. Sarpalius has on several occasions expressed his desire to run for the agriculture commissioner's job in 1986.

Rep. Al Luna, D-Houston, chairman-elect of the Mexican American Legislative Caucus said he expects a fight over the regulations during the upcoming legislative session. "I would not be surprised if the Farm Bureau decided to make a run legislatively at the standards," he said. "The leadership of the Farm Bureau is sometimes more vocal or vociferous in positions they take than the rank-and-file members."

The lobbies are playing hardball. During the summer the Chemical Council was in close contact with a second-level official of the agriculture department's regulatory branch,

apparently creating a few roadblocks to the department's progress in formulating the regulations. When Hightower was apprised of the delay, he turned chief responsibility for the regulations over to department counsel Biscoe, who proceeded through the difficult negotiations and lawmaking to produce the standards. ("He's had both ears burned off," Hightower said of Biscoe.) In late September, Hightower's former associate commissioner, Crockett Camp, accompanied the Chemical Council's Jon Fisher to a meeting in Dallas of groups opposed to the regulations. Fisher told the *Observer* that he had invited Camp because he thought Camp would be interested in the meeting. He said Camp paid his own way to and from the meeting. Camp also said he had not represented anyone at the meeting. Crockett Camp, once an aide to former House Speaker Billy Clayton, has close ties to members of the old guard of Texas agricultural politics. His attendance at the meeting raised a few eyebrows.

The Dallas meeting, led by the Texas Farm Bureau, produced a request for a 60-day extension of the public comment period. But Hightower did not back down. He told the *Dallas Morning News* that state authorities have been sticking their heads "in the sand for the past decade. We're not giving them 60 days to basically go out and beat my brains out. We've had a year of studying, and we're through studying."

State Sen. Hector Uribe, D-Brownsville, says, "The strategy of the Chemical Council and the Farm Bureau is to divide and conquer. They take consumer issues and make them farmer and farmworker issues. This is a public health issue first and foremost."

"We have to make sure the rhetoric is not being captured by the other side. The real challenge is how we're going to reshape the public debate. I can just hear some of those lobbyists for the Farm Bureau saying, 'This will end agriculture in our time.' Now, they're saying you'll destroy agriculture if you try to protect the public health. Jim Hightower is not trying to destroy agriculture. Instead he's trying to act courageously to protect the public health." □



Photo by Alan Pogue

Gary Graham in Austin.

Poisoned by Pesticides

by Terri Langford

HIS RIGHT hand trembles constantly and he leans on crutches for support. When asked his age, Gary Graham turns and speaks to his wife, Margaret, through a surgical mask. "How old am I, honey?" "Thirty-six," she answers flatly. Gary's question is a standard one by now.

The tremors, the weak knee joints, the respiratory problems, and the memory loss are the direct result of pesticide poisoning.

Graham was in Austin September 29, where he told his story to citizens participating in a statewide conference on pesticide use. The conference, "Pesticides in Texas: Our Time to Act," was sponsored by the Texas Pesticide

Terri Langford is the editorial intern at the *Observer*.

Project of the Texas Center for Rural Studies. Workshops were held to discuss such topics as federal pesticide regulations, pesticide alternatives, and farm workers' rights.

On Aug. 25, 1981, Graham, a Sherman County sheriff's deputy, helped rescue two victims from a cropduster crash. Following standard operating procedure, the pilot "dumped his load" of the three pesticides he was carrying — Ambush, Parathion, and Azodrin 5 — before the plane hit the ground.

Unwittingly, Graham had walked through the flight path the plane had taken as it crashed. "After about an hour and a half, I got kind of sick," Graham said, adding that he kept smelling a chemical odor in the air. He attributed his weak state to fatigue. After being doused with a fire hose, Graham was

taken to a hospital, where, he said, the "doctors didn't know what to do," because of the lack of information on dealing with pesticide poisoning.

When Graham failed to return to his job, still suffering from tremors, hallucinations, severe depression, and memory loss, he was fired, his superiors saying no one could "really" be harmed by pesticides.

Today, Graham cannot travel outside his bedroom without crutches and the surgical mask he wears over his mouth and nose. Since the pesticides knocked out his immune system, Graham's body has little defense against synthetic materials.

"I am now hypersensitive to any kind of fumes, perfumes, toothpaste, cooking smells. I lost a good deal of my memory, past thoughts and feelings," Graham said. "My digestive system collapsed. I have to drink spring water in glass bottles only and have a special room [his bedroom] with a filter."

Graham went to court to try to recover his workers' compensation. He said so far he has only received \$2,000 to cover a whole host of bills that add up to over \$100,000. He is in the process of appeal. Graham has filed suit against one of the manufacturers of one of the pesticides but declined to name which one. □

After Graham told his story to reporters outside the conference, a man dressed in a business suit approached Graham and corrected his pronunciation of the insecticide, Azodrin 5. The man assured Graham of the correct pronunciation because "I manufacture it." A stunned, but polite, Graham thanked the man for the correction. The man then turned and left.

No one knows why anyone would quibble over the pronunciation of a pesticide. Its use and possible harmful effects are, instead, subject for argument. Azodrin 5 is manufactured by Shell Chemical Company. □

Organizing Fort Worth

"People" Equals "Power"

By Dave Denison

Fort Worth

THE REVEREND D. L. Ellison is talking:

"I've got an example of a lady in my church here. She's in her forties, maybe 44. But she has a chronic condition, a blood condition, and she has to use an oxygen tank. She's on social security, disability, whatever — she gets a check. She lives with her daughter. She keeps some kids sometimes for extra income. [Now] if her daughter makes \$20 a week they deduct that. From her [the mother's] check. They cut that. What they say is, if she doesn't want her check cut, the \$20 of the \$50, whatever the case is, her daughter needs to move out. . . . So her daughter would have to start paying utilities and rent — an 18-year-old girl, working, going to school full-time, full load each day and works a little part-time job at night.

"Those people are living on the poverty line, and it is everything they make now. And it's just started, that's my point. She can see it very vividly because she knows it just started."

Rev. Ellison sees it vividly, too. "Regardless of what Ronald Reagan has been saying," he says, "many of those services have been cut."

From the Pilgrim Rest Missionary Baptist Church on Fort Worth's near south side, where Ellison is pastor, it would not take much of a walk in any direction to find people who are living on the poverty line and who do not feel befriended by government at any level. Ellison is part of Allied Communities

of Tarrant (ACT), a group that seeks to include such people in the decisions that affect their lives.

"You can't keep hurting me without hurting you," Ellison says. "You can't have a poverty pocket or destitute situation in one part of Fort Worth, on the east side, and it doesn't eventually affect the west side."

Ellison is on the eight-member leadership team of ACT. He and the group's lead organizer, Sister Mignonne Konecny, sat down with the *Observer* in October to discuss ACT's philosophy and its role in Fort Worth politics.

ACT IS MADE UP of 20 membership churches, representing about 10,000 people. The group has a "tri-racial makeup," Ellison said; it is an equal mix of blacks, whites, and Hispanics. Ellison described the largest member church as "upper middle class," but a greater number of the churches are small and mostly black. The diversity of the group and its popular base are a source of pride to Ellison and Konecny. Ellison said he does not admire "other religious groups . . . who claim to represent the people, but they represent only the people who think like they think."

"We don't have a group that dictates to our group, that we all have to believe the same thing, walk the same way, act the same way, or we're not a part of it," he said. "Diversity. And we're proud of that. That's a strong point, not a weak point."

But ACT is not without guiding principles. Ellison puts them this way: "Our families are important; our communities, our children are important. The quality of life for our people is what we share. That all of our families ought to be able to share the highest quality of life that is possible and that they ought to have something to say about the things that bring that quality of life."

The group seeks to empower citizens — especially the ones who have been left out traditionally — by forging relationships with different interest groups and those in power. ACT is part of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), a network of citizens groups that also includes Citizens Organized for Public Service (COPS) in San Antonio. Although ACT had been in an "incubator stage" for six years, the group went public only two years ago.

"Relationship-building" is a key part of the ACT vocabulary, and, according to Ellison and Konecny, it indicates a key difference between their group and the "movements" that are usually identified with social change. "There's a difference," Konecny said, "between a movement that has only a single purpose and a broad-based organization like ACT that has its purpose in being able to participate in the decision-making that is taking place. Our issues may change from education to streets. We're not a single-issue organization; we're a multi-issue organization."

"Or, by the same token," Ellison added, "our issues may remain the same and politicians change. Democrats go out and Republicans come in. You know, that's not our concern. Our concern is the issues that are affecting our people regardless of who's in, who we're having to negotiate with."

A movement, such as the civil rights movement in the 1960s, tends to focus on one issue, Ellison said, "and then once that's achieved there's no reason



Photo by Alicia Daniel

Rev. D. L. Ellison.

for it. The movement's over. We don't see ourselves as a movement."

"We're talking about negotiation. In order to negotiate you've got to have something to bring to the table yourself. You're negotiating with a power person, and you've got to have some power. You've got to have something that equals power. We don't have a lot of money, we've got people."

ACT was a part of the statewide IAF voter registration drive that signed up 104,000 new people to vote. ACT registered about 7,500 people in 23 Fort Worth precincts, Ellison said.

"When you register hundreds of thousands of folk around the state of Texas, you are again bringing something to the table that speaks of power," Ellison said. "And I don't care if you're a Republican or a Democrat or an Independent. If you want to go back in office, you can't keep ignoring those kinds of numbers."

Konecny acknowledged that the "business people" may turn out as many voters in the November election. She said a victory for ACT would mean "that our precincts vote at a higher rate" than usual.

"We don't just have an election in Fort Worth in November," she said. "We have an election in Fort Worth in April." Those city elections will be a much more crucial test of ACT's political muscle than how Tarrant County votes in the Presidential race.

In some of the areas of the state most affected by unemployment and poverty, the Presidential candidates did not always seem to be addressing central

issues. Ellison said, "Who cares about the rhetoric about the deficit in areas like that? What they want to know is, when can I go to work? When can I start providing for my family?"

There is no hesitation about the one issue that would catch fire in the ACT community: jobs programs.

"We want to know what they're going to do about the issue of jobs, the issue of unemployment, the issue of full employment," Konecny said.

One of the projects Ellison and Konecny are most proud of is the group's work in the Polytechnic area of Fort Worth — the declining neighborhood on the city's near east side. "We've been instrumental in bringing together a group of really diverse interests, people who have an interest in the Polytechnic area — everybody from citizens to members of the college [Texas Wesleyan is in the area], educators, etcetera — and develop a plan for the revitalization of the Polytechnic area," Konecny said.

Ellison said it was an ACT press conference about a year ago that raised the issue of what was to be done in the neighborhood. "And [because] an attitude of those of us who live here changed, things changed in Poly [the Polytechnic area]," he said.

"In order to negotiate, you've got to have something to bring to the table yourself."

ACTIVISTS AND city officials in Fort Worth tend to refer to ACT as "a growing organization" or "still a building organization." There is a sense that the development has been slow so far. But Ruth Ann McKinney, an assistant city manager, says the task is not an easy one for ACT. "Fort Worth doesn't have a history of strong participation from grassroots organizations," she says.

As to whether things have "turned around" in the Polytechnic area, she says, "We're not to that point yet." Vernell Stearns, another assistant city manager, says ACT is "a force to be reckoned with" but that other groups deserve credit too for the progress in Polytechnic. ACT's contribution, he says, is that it "promoted a more comprehensive approach" — one that involved wider citizen participation.

Mayor Bob Bolen's office tends to see ACT as a player in the government's

efforts to revitalize the southeast quadrant of the city. With typical pluck, Ellison tends to turn the equation around. The mayor is "in very close relation with ACT," he says, and "he's part of what we're doing in Poly."

The ACT philosophy, Ellison says, is to take a "this is what we expect you to do" attitude to politicians. "We keep building our numbers," he says, "so we can hold them accountable." □

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Trouble in Paradise

By Steven Long

Clear Lake

NOT FAR from the seamy east end of Houston, comfortably tucked away from the smoke-stack industries of Pasadena and Texas City, lies the American dream. It is called Clear Lake, a generic term for nine municipalities on the shores of that shallow waterway that empties into Galveston Bay. The community is an outgrowth of the Johnson Space Center. Only 24 years old, it is an infant city, even by Texas standards. The first generation of children to have spent their formative years on "the lake" are coming of age. They are also killing themselves.

The community was rocked by the deaths of six students or former students of Clear Lake and Clear Creek High School in a five-week period. Rumors of a suicide pact circulated around the towns, and concerned parents began to ask fundamental questions about the schools — and the small cities in which they live. Some remembered Jonestown where 900 adults and children took their lives. Police say that the six suicides were only those which were reported. They say that there were probably more.

A siege mentality exists in the administration of the Clear Creek Independent School District. Superintendent Dr. John F. Ward will only communicate with reporters through press releases. A secretary says, "We are getting tired of talking to snippy reporters."

IT ALL BEGAN on February 14, 1984, when 14-year-old Ruth Schafhauser was found hanging from a tree behind a Safeway store on NASA Road 1 near the small community of El Lago. The girl was allegedly unhappy about her parents' move from West Germany to the Clear Lake area in 1982. She had been despondent and had complained to friends and family that she wanted to return to her homeland. Her father was employed by a NASA contractor.

Steven Long is publisher of In Between Magazine, Galveston and Clear Lake.

On August 9, Warren Edward Kuns was found in a field near Seabrook with a gunshot wound.

By mid-September, Sean Brian Woods, age 19, again of El Lago, was found dead in his pick-up truck. Again a gunshot wound. He had attended Clear Lake High School.

On October 3, Wesley Tiedt of El Lago took his life. Tiedt was described as a "bright, good-looking boy." Acquaintances say that he just did not appear to be the kind of person who would take his own life. They say that he had everything going for him.

Lisa Schatz, 15, was a pretty Clear Lake sophomore. She lived in the very affluent Brook Forest area. Again, acquaintances say that her death was a big surprise because she seemed so normal. The evening before her death, Lisa spent the night with a friend, went to the football game, did teenage things. The following morning she ate breakfast and returned home to shoot herself. She left eleven suicide notes saying that she "couldn't handle it any more." She also left similar messages on her bathroom and bedroom mirrors in lipstick.

One girl left notes saying she "couldn't handle it anymore."

Gary Shivers, 15, lived in Middlebrook. He was under the care of a therapist. In newspaper accounts, his mother said that she felt that Gary was progressing. He even told his mother, upon hearing of the death of Lisa Schatz, that what she had done was "crazy." Yet, three days later, he hanged himself in his home.

Darren Thibodeaux made good grades. Friends describe him as being nice and polite. The ninth grader went into the garage of his home, started the engine of the family automobile, and died of carbon monoxide poisoning on October 11.

The following day, an unidentified Clear Creek student attempted, but did

not succeed, to end his life. For days after that, concerned parents wondered if the deadly cycle were over.

Community and media reaction was swift. While network crews descended on the area, concerned parents and school officials assembled students and imported psychologists to counsel the students. Everyone seemed to have good advice about how to prevent further suicides, yet nobody could put a finger on why people were killing themselves in Clear Lake in the first place. Some answers may lie in the nature of the community itself.

IN 1960, what is now called Clear Lake was mostly bald prairie, cattle land covered with the salt grass of the Texas coast. About the only building that really amounted to anything was the mansion Tom West had built on the shores of the lake. There were a few "bay houses" built out of plywood and tar paper and used by affluent Houstonians who wanted to escape their growing city. They lolled away their weekends under watercolor skies while fishing or watching their children water-ski on the always calm waters of the lake.

Near the fishing villages of Kemah and Seabrook, more imposing summer homes and a few actual residences dotted the shoreline. The children of these few year-round residents attended the small Class AA Clear Creek High School. Clear Creek in those days was a basketball power, and nearby Dickinson kids looked with envy to their near neighbors to the north for this reason. Clear Creek considered itself superior. Even their rivals privately agreed that they probably were.

In one afternoon, President John F. Kennedy changed all this and took America into the space age. Speaking in Rice Stadium, the President announced his administration's commitment to the newest frontier of all — space, and he resolved that the United States would land a man on the moon in a decade. NASA was born.

Shortly thereafter, it was announced that the Manned Spacecraft Center would be located near the small Gulf Freeway town of Webster, close by the shores of Clear Lake. The power and might of the United States, Lyndon Johnson, Sam Rayburn, and Brown and Root had the facility constructed in very little time. Along with this came development. Las Vegas developer Del Webb and others began building communities like Clear Lake City and Nassau Bay. Families arrived from Cape Canaveral, Boston, Kansas City, and Huntsville, Alabama. Even a few native-

born Texans from League City and Friendswood made the grade.

Throughout the '60s, the best and the brightest of America's scientific community gravitated to the shores of Clear Lake. Most thought that the move was a sojourn, a temporary home to be used until the job was over and they could return to Duluth, Kansas City, or Minneapolis. Few considered that they would raise their families, live, and die on that stretch of barren Texas plain. Most are still there.

Clear Lake is a city which is not. It is a community without a past. Houston holds a large part of it hostage through a series of annexations carried out in the '70s. The hottest political issue of the '80s is still disannexation. There aren't many grandparents in Clear Lake. As one high school student said, "Grandparents are people who live two thousand miles away, who we visit every two or three years at Christmas." Several years ago a funeral home opened in Clear Lake and was forced to close for lack of business.

Clear Lake is a city without a past.

Clear Lake residents don't consider themselves Texans, while many of their first generation children do. That could be part of the problem residents are facing today, according to University of Texas Medical Branch child psychiatrist Dr. Kay G. Holt. "First generation Americans faced many problems which their parents had not faced. They were on new ground, blazing trails which the parents had never traveled. It can be very rough on the children. Suicide was just one of the many problems which first generation Americans faced."

Jane Supkis moved to El Lago in 1960. "We couldn't afford the house, but we had to get away from the pollution of Texas City." Supkis has seen it all. Her neighbors have been astronauts, engineers, and NASA contractors. She is now municipal judge in that small but affluent community. She is also very critical of the school system. Jane Supkis is not surprised at what has happened in her town. She relates that her 25-year-old son says that he is surprised that the suicides did not happen sooner. "The people in the schools are looking for National Merit scholars, the brightest students. If a kid doesn't fit into that mold, the teachers and the administration are just not interested in him. They have institutionalized cliques. If you don't fit in, you drop through the cracks."

Are there more cliques in Clear Lake than in other high schools? Perhaps. Peer imitation has reached a state of art in the area. Designer clothes, swimming pools, new cars, and credit cards for 16-year-old kids are the norm, not the exception. In Clear Lake most parents can afford it; others just try. Income levels are among the highest in Texas. Supkis says, "The pressures are great. Clear Lake is supposed to be the best in everything. If you don't measure up, you are a second-class citizen."

A few years ago, the New York-born Supkis became so fed up with the system that she tried to start a Jesuit school. "I ran up against a brick wall," she says. She could get no organizational support from other parents. They liked Clear Lake just the way it was.

Bryan Jackson is the 17-year-old editor of *Lake Reflections*, Clear Lake High School's student newspaper. In a strident 1983 editorial, Jackson called for a resident psychologist for the district's 20,000 students. Among other things, he cited depression and suicide as reasons for the need. "Though numerous counselors at both high schools have repeatedly requested such services, their requests have continuously been denied by a budget-wary central administration . . . there have been suicides and attempted suicides. Yet none of the students were able to turn to their school for assistance or therapy." Jackson ended his appeal with this message: "It will not be inexpensive. It will not appear positive to the parents or the local public. But if one student's life can be saved, if only one problem can be solved that might have ruined an entire life, then the money would have been well spent, and most importantly of all, the action will have been a moral one." The appeal was ignored by the administration.

Bryan Jackson is furious at the administration of his school. He says that they are more interested in the image of the school than the students' welfare.

Suicide is nothing new to Clear Lake, and the phenomenon is not limited to students. Robert Incerto, Jr., a young man in his twenties, shot himself in his apartment. 1983 began with the news that Shaynon Grant Ford, 21, shot himself in Oakbrook Park after breaking up with his girlfriend. A week later, Dr. Nanette Bruckner, a University of Houston at Clear Lake psychologist, shot herself.

Bryan Jackson says, "I don't remember a year going by since I have been old enough to know what is going on, since I started junior high, that one or

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two people, either students or teachers, didn't kill themselves in the course of the year."

Veteran police officers are quick to point out that there are no statistics that show that Clear Lake leads other parts of Harris County in suicides. They do say, however, that it seems that a higher incidence of suicides are reported in more affluent areas than in poverty areas.

Psychologists argue that the peer pressure that encourages an adolescent to speak with a Valley Girl accent, wear designer jeans, and drive nothing but a Pontiac Fiero may also contribute to the copy-cat nature of the Clear Lake suicides. According to Roberta Diddel, a psychologist with Houston's Pain and Fitness Center, "In a sense the roles which teenagers provide for themselves are good things. They are addressing real serious problems. When there are a group of peers which are suicidal, if an individual is without a sense of identity, or depressed to a point where they see no future for themselves, then the structure of someone else's behavior may be attractive."

Of the seven teenage suicides since last February, six have been of a violent nature. Diddle says, "You can't ignore the statement that makes about the value of their bodies and themselves, that they would blow themselves away. Often the comment you hear is that 'I'd kill myself, but it would upset my parents, or my wife would find the body, or if I could find a way to do it, I would, if it wouldn't upset anyone.'" Diddel

says that those who commit suicide in a violent fashion do it "with the objective of making a point. That may be consistent with the sense of emptiness — of really not having an existence."

The quality of life in Clear Lake is the lifestyle to which most Americans aspire. Parents are actively involved in

*"It's kind of
a sore subject
to bring up."*

making sure their children participate in activities from youth soccer games to the renowned Clear Lake High School Choir. Families live in homes which are markedly a cut above the way most other people live. Everyone is close to the water, and many have a boat. The restaurants are generally superb, and there is a plethora of unique shops to serve the community's needs. Most residents are members of some sort of club, and the backyard barbecue has been raised to a culinary art. The economy is booming, and has done so without a break since the '60s.

With the attractiveness of living in Clear Lake has come growing pains. Traffic is horrendous, and civic organizations are trying to do something about it. So far, their efforts have been futile. But traffic does not generally drive people to take their own lives.

Like most large high schools, Clear Lake has had its share of drug-related

problems. Students who prefer not to be identified say that the problem has improved somewhat this year. Yet, while it is improving overall, they also say that their peers are moving toward harder drugs, such as cocaine. The controversial Palmer Drug Abuse Program (PDAP) had been active on campus in past years, but it seems not to be maintaining such a high profile today. At one time it had been fashionable to be involved with PDAP. Some of the Clear Lake suicide victims had problems with drugs in the past, but, significantly, autopsy findings did not reveal that drugs were related at the time of death.

The business community has had little interest in the social problems in their community. David Ross is the president of the Clear Lake Area Chamber of Commerce. He says that the subject of the suicides has not been brought up at a single board or committee meeting. The Clear Lake Chamber is one of the most active in the state. It is interesting that the community leaders are not discussing a problem which has gained national attention.

The Chamber's attitude may reflect the thoughts of many in the community who wish that the problem would go away. Clear Lake is used to pleasant things, good publicity, space spectaculars, and local festivals. The glare of media attention to the problems at the school don't reflect the image the community would like to project. On a Monday following several deaths, a 16-year-old high school junior said, regarding the talk around the school about the problem, "It might as well have been forgotten. It's kind of a sore subject to bring up."

CLEAR LAKE is a community of superachievers: they have put man on the moon, they rightfully take credit for bringing the world into the era of high tech, their lives have been successful. Failure is unacceptable. Most Clear Lake parents expect their children to measure up to their achievements. Some simply do not. Psychologists admit that this year's educational reforms, with the accompanying tightening up of academic standards, could be playing a part in the Bay Area tragedies. Supkis says, "The pressures at home to achieve are tremendous. Some kids don't make it. They just aren't what their parents expect." There is something fundamentally wrong with Clear Lake, and the experts don't have any solid answers. The disturbing thing is: if there is something wrong with Clear Lake, is there something wrong with the American dream?

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Comanche Peak Hazards

Saving Utilities from Themselves

By Betty Brink

CALLING THE Comanche Peak nuclear plant whistle-blowers "patriots . . . who took their consciences to work with them," Ralph Nader, in early October, joined the fight to deny the plant's owners, Texas Utilities Electric Company, an operating license.

In a news conference in Fort Worth, where he was joined by four of the whistle-blowers recently fired from the plant's construction site near Glen Rose in Somervell County, Nader said that Comanche Peak is now "nationally recognized as a troubled plant . . . with many sisters and brothers." "Based on information from the workers here and testimony before the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board," Nader continued, "very severe design and construction deficiencies [have been found at the plant] . . . which have led to cover-ups by management and NRC inspectors." Without a complete and independent reinspection, he said, "from top to bottom [along with] all of its records . . . answering all safety questions," the plant should not be allowed to operate.

Nader's consumer advocacy group, Public Citizen, has opened an office in Austin and will now join opponents of Comanche Peak, who include: Dallas intervenor Juanita Ellis, head of Citizens Association for Sound Energy (CASE), which has opposed the plant since its beginning in 1973; the Washington, D.C., based Government Accountability Project (GAP) led by Billie Garde (*TO*, 6/1/84); and Trial Lawyers for Public Justice led by Tony Roisman. Roisman, whose group is focusing on the whistle-blower cases and alleged harassment of quality control inspectors working for Brown & Root, Inc., the main contractor for Comanche Peak, is a former Justice Department lawyer. His reputation for aggressive and effective prosecution of hazardous waste violators led to the inclusion of his name on the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's "hit list" (the

names of government employees the Chamber wanted fired) when the Reagan Administration took over.

After leaving the Justice Department, Roisman founded Trial Lawyers for Public Justice. He also represents Charles Atchison of Azle, [*TO*, March 25, 1983] the man other whistleblowers call "the granddaddy of all whistleblowers" in Atchison's \$10 million lawsuit against Brown & Root, filed after the Department of Labor ruled that Brown & Root fired Atchison illegally for reporting defective welds back in 1980. It was the first ruling against Brown & Root under the protected activities, or "whistleblower," act. Since then, four more workers have been ordered reinstated after being fired by Brown & Root for reporting illegal activities at Comanche Peak.

The four former Brown & Root workers who appeared with Nader in Fort Worth had been either fired or forced to resign. They were Sue Ann Nuemeyer, an American Society of Mechanical Engineers quality control welding inspector; Dobie Hatley, document control supervisor; Linda Barnes and Meddie Gregory, both of whom worked in document control and the permanent records vault.

***"I know how unsafe
this plant is."***

All but one of the women are divorced or widowed and the sole support of their families. Only one has found other employment; Hatley and Gregory are awaiting the outcome of Brown & Root appeals after the Labor Department ruled in the women's favor and ordered B&R to reinstate them with back pay, benefits and legal expenses. Barnes's husband, a former deputy with the Granbury Police Department, is also out of work after being fired for reporting police brutality to the Granbury City Council. Granbury is the nearest town to Glen Rose, and the plants twin containment towers can be seen from

Granbury's resort and retirement lake community just outside town.

The women, whose main testimony before the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board (ASLB) and in depositions forwarded to the Justice Department dealt with falsification of documents, falsification of inspection reports, and harassment by their supervisors when they attempted to protest illegal activities, all said that despite the personal sacrifices they have made and the threats against their homes and lives, they would all do it again.

Hatley, who was a supervisor for five years, said, "I know falsification has gone on, and I know how unsafe this plant is. The threats and harassments [against me] started two days after I left the plant. . . . I've had to move and we've all learned that it's not safe to drive the same car all the time. I've gotten threatening phone calls; we've all gotten threats to burn our houses.

"We wouldn't be here if we didn't know [the plant] wasn't safe. We didn't know *how* unsafe it was until we all got together and began to compare notes."

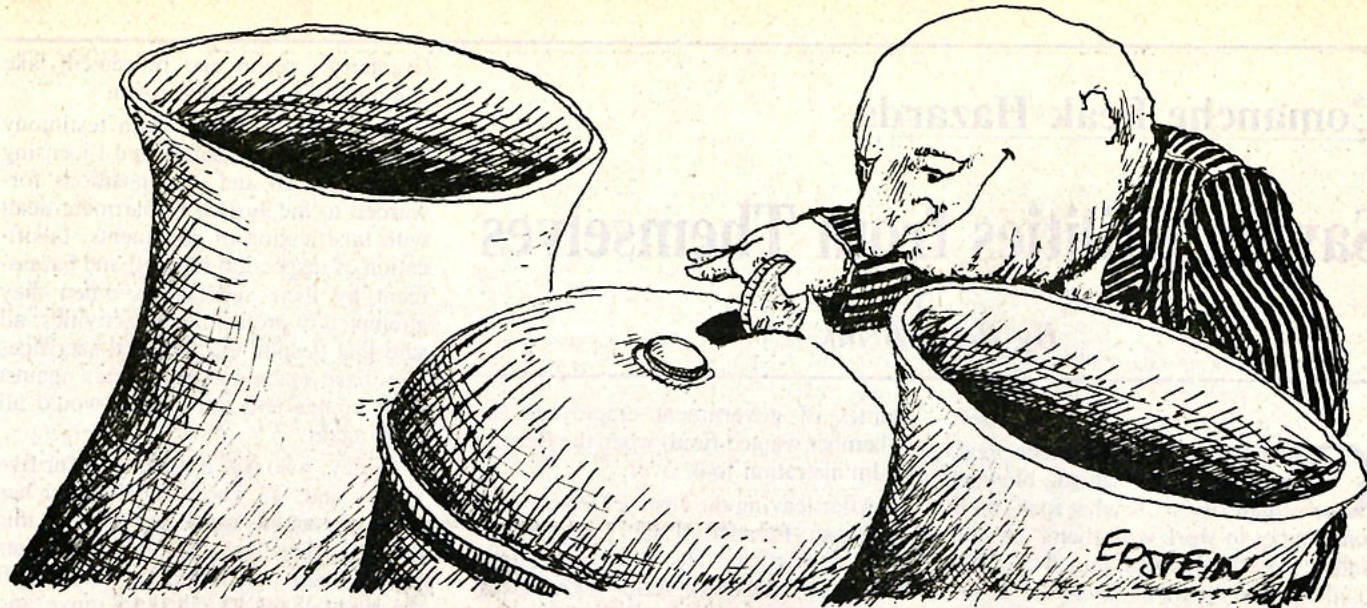
Nuemeyer said that, along with the threatening phone calls, "you get calls from people telling you about other things that are wrong at Comanche Peak. Other workers who will say, 'Let me tell you what I know . . . you've already risked everything . . . but I can't afford to go public.'"

Nuemeyer said that she had decided once to sell everything she had and take her children and move as far away as she could. Then she decided, "No, this is my home. Texas is my home. I can't just walk out and give this state to the people who want to destroy it."

Gregory, who is the sole support of her invalid sister and nephew, and who was one of the highest paid women of the group, making \$1000 a week when she was fired because Brown & Root suspected she was working with the other whistle-blowers, said, that she "could not sleep at night" if she had not reported what she knew about falsification of documents, and in many cases no documentation at all, of critical safety installations. "This plant may kill people, and no one's paycheck is worth *one single life*," Gregory said.

The women's testimony, taken in depositions by Billie Garde and Tony Roisman this summer and introduced into evidence before the ASLB, has been credited with extending the life of the licensing hearing process and opening doors into other areas of construction deficiencies formerly glossed over by the utility and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC).

Betty Brink, a frequent Observer contributor, lives in Kountze.



Beth Epstein

For example, during the harassment hearings held in Fort Worth in September and early October, Nuemeyer testified that she had been forced by supervisors to sign "stacks and stacks" of inspection reports which she had never seen before — inspections that had supposedly been performed on welds on the stainless steel liners in the spent fuel pool, the transfer canal between the containment building and the fuel pool and the reactor containment liner, the most critical radioactive containment areas of the plant. To further complicate the problem for Nuemeyer, the work on the liners and inspections had been performed before she was even hired.

Under regulatory law, no inspector except the one who actually performs an inspection can sign a report testifying to the validity of the work being performed. Nuemeyer, who knew the law and knew that she would be at great risk if she signed the reports, protested. She was switched from the night shift to the day shift and told that one of her co-workers was also signing the reports without protest. Nuemeyer caved in, signed the reports, and was subsequently switched back to the night shift after she completed the sign-offs.

The reports she signed were supposed to show that the welds on the liners were safe.

However, questions raised to intervenors and the NRC as far back as 1979 by welders, who said the liner welds were defective and would leak over time, suddenly began to dovetail with Nuemeyer's testimony of falsified inspection reports.

In June of 1979, welder Dave Butler went to his supervisors and told them that he was having problems with the liner plate welds because they were not being done to procedure. His supervisors ignored him, Butler said.

Butler, who charged then that the faulty welds were in the "north and south fuel storage pools, containment building number 1, and the transfer canal" told the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* in a 1979 interview after he quit the job in protest, saying, "Gravel, sand and pebbles washed down between

and the official report found no "safety violations," even though it did confirm many of Butler's charges. Butler's allegations and the NRC report were forgotten until Nuemeyer's testimony triggered intervenors' memories of Butler as well as other welders who confirmed the charges at the time. In September, the chairman of the licensing board, Peter Bloch, ordered the NRC to reopen its investigation into the defective weld allegations first raised in 1979.

In a telephone interview recently, Butler, who is now self-employed in Oklahoma and had no wish to come back to Texas to testify "unless there's no other way," told me that all of the allegations he made in 1979 were valid and then he made a few more.

A former welder said the welds were not up to standard.

the liner and concrete walls when workers hosed down buckets used to pour concrete." The stainless steel must be "mirror clean" in order to be welded on safely, Butler said.

"Some of the material washed down between the seam being welded and its metal backing strip," Butler continued, leaving an area "between the backing plate and the weld filled with the sand mixture, leaving the seam vulnerable to slippage and leakage."

Butler further said that cooling water "circulating around the [spent fuel] pellets could cause faulty welds to crack . . . [allowing] radioactive water to seep into the concrete wall."

At the time, Butler's allegations were investigated by the regional NRC office,

"In 1979 I was 24 years old and had been welding since I was 17," Butler said. "I welded on the liners in the fuel building [the spent fuel pool], the transfer canal, and the containment exclusively." He said that he not only welded on the liner but he "made repairs on the liner welds that were bad . . . at least those that we found with the liquid penetrant test [a dye test] . . . but the liquid test is no good since it only shows up surface problems, so we only fixed surface holes. If there were cracks or cavities behind the plate or below the surface more than 1/4 inch, then they are still there. I worked on weld repairs for about three months.

"In 1982, a friend, who was then a quality control inspector at Comanche Peak, called and said 'I need to know where all the bad welds are in the liners . . . we're reinspecting and I was told to call you and find out what you can remember.'

"I told him that they were *all* bad. But I'd been gone too long, I couldn't tell him where to find specific ones. He

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told me they were still using the liquid penetrant test, and I said then it doesn't matter, you'll never find them."

As to inspections, Butler said, "I hardly ever saw a Brown & Root inspector down there and I never saw an NRC man; as far as I know it was never inspected. I spent two or three months making repairs and there was never any paper work . . . no numbers, like weld seam certification numbers.

"I was concerned then and I'm concerned now because procedures weren't right . . . it was just one big cover-up."

In September, under persistent questioning by Peter Bloch, chairman of the ASLB, Tom Brandt, an engineer for Texas Utilities, admitted under oath that documents which would have confirmed that the inspections on the stainless steel liners in the spent fuel pool, in particular inspections done for cleanliness before welding was done, had been "lost" and that plant builders could not document that the inspections were done, even though Brandt said that he was "very confident" the inspections had been performed.

Meddie Gregory told the *Observer* that, in 1979, when Butler made his allegations and when the NRC conducted its investigation into the validity of the welds in the liners, "document control was totally out of procedure . . . in other words there were no documents for the NRC to review because three-fourths of the chits [used to verify materials and welder qualifications] were lost."

At the time, she said, "no one at the plant knew who welded on the liners or if it was ever done. Those 'lost' chits," she said, "were part of the documentation brought to Suzy [Nuemeyer] to sign in 1982."

Brandt later testified that the plant's document control center had been out of procedure from 1977 until 1982.*

Questions raised by other whistleblowers, concerning cover-ups by paint

contractors who have been charged with using defective paint inside the reactor containment building, paint which could slough off and clog critical cooling systems needed in an emergency to safely shut down the reactor, are still pending before the board along with further testimony on harassment and other technical issues.

A ruling on the license request is not expected until some time in 1985, but for the first time in the long and frustrating fight to deny Texas Utilities an operating license, opponents speak

of the real possibility that the plant may not go on line.

Roisman, who feels strongly that the license will be denied, says that more than any other thing, Texas Utilities is "doing it to themselves.

"It's like they're pouring themselves a glass of lye and then drinking it," he said earlier this fall, an analogy which gave Nader's closing summation at the press conference in Fort Worth added weight:

"Some utilities," Nader said, "need to be saved from themselves." □



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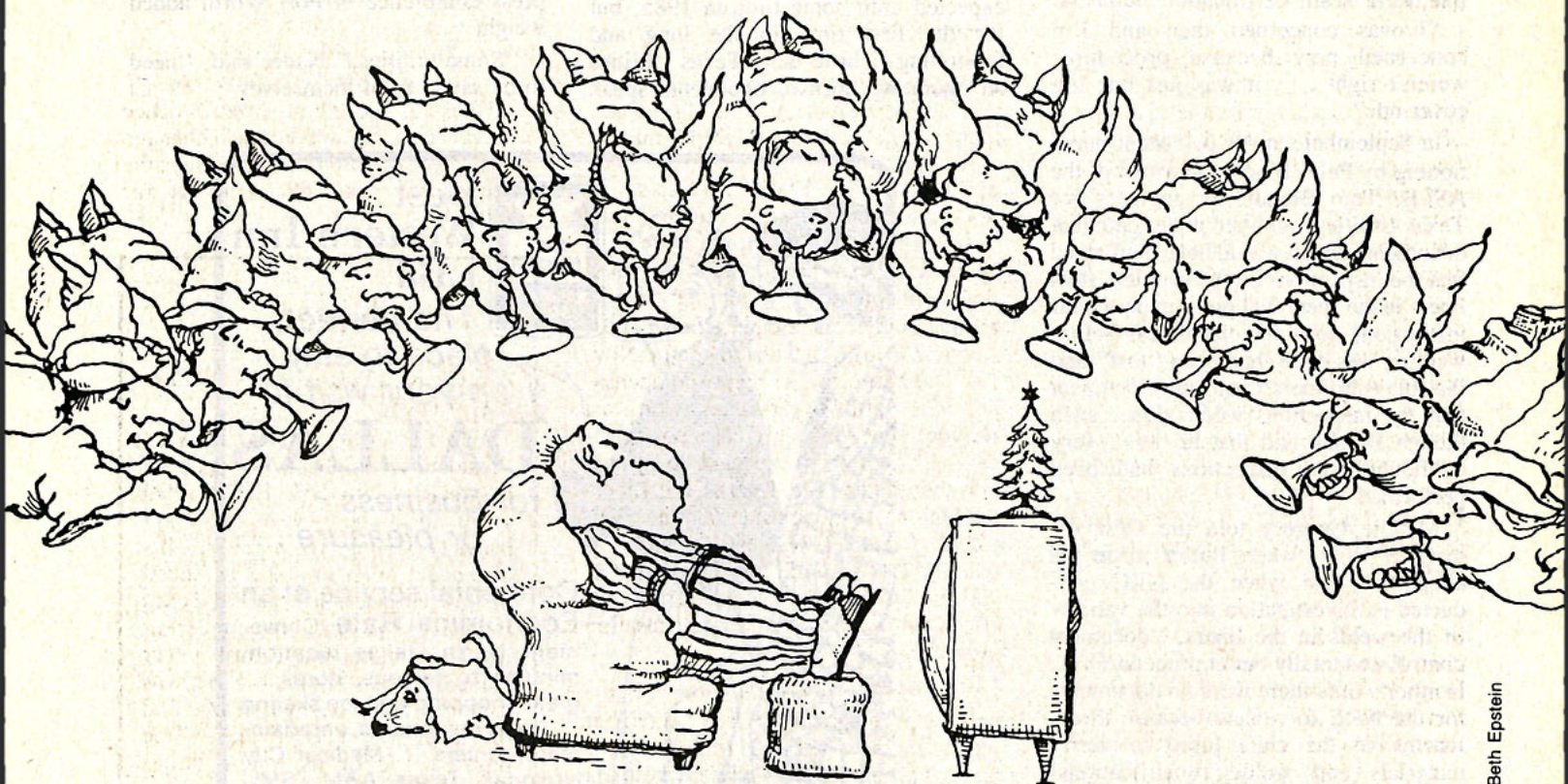
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Rumors of Wealth

✓ Rumors get out once in a while that most of the wealth in America is in the hands of very few people. Now the government is embarking on a project to look into this. The Federal Reserve Board and six other federal agencies are conducting a survey on the distribution of wealth in the United States. Initial findings were disclosed in October and participating researchers called them "striking." The study found a concentration of wealth in the hands of "a small number of families with very high incomes." Specifically, the top 2 percent of the families control 30 percent of all financial assets. One problem the researchers have is getting those rich folk to talk. "The wealthy are a very elusive group and we really don't know very much about them," a Federal Reserve researcher told the Associated Press. "It is harder to interview wealthy people. They are usually unwilling to participate in surveys."

✓ The *Wall Street Journal* reports that plans have been advanced to move Hong Kong to Texas rather than to have the merchants and workers stick around when China takes over the city in 1997.

Leo J. Tolle, Jr. of Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio told the *Journal* the Rio Grande Valley is the "ideal location" for Hong Kong manufacturing firms that wish to relocate. Four Hong Kong entrepreneurs have reportedly expressed interest already, and Texas business executives are forming a task force to lure even more.

Press Tax

✓ Comptroller Bob Bullock has asked Attorney General Jim Mattox for an opinion on whether the sales tax on newspapers is constitutional. Bullock says, "freedom of the press and freedom of speech are directly endangered" by the tax. Also, he says "the tax is an administrative nightmare." The legislature included the tax in part of the plan passed in special session last summer.

✓ A handful of the nation's largest farmers received a disproportionate share of government farm benefits, according to a recent Senate Budget Committee publication. The 17 percent of the farmers working 500 acres or

more got 60 percent of the government benefits. According to the report, "If Congress desires to provide a greater income assistance to the smaller producers a different mechanism for determining payments would have to be devised."

Though farmers in Arizona, California, and Mississippi got the highest average benefits, farmers in Texas received about a fourth of all the money spent by the Agriculture Department.

✓ Judge Harley Clark on October 24 held off from issuing a temporary restraining order that would have prohibited the Texas Employment Commission from continuing to deny farmworkers unemployment compensation claims. Another hearing is scheduled for Nov. 13. The battle for workers' compensation for farmworkers was won last summer, but the court case on unemployment comp is expected to stretch into the winter. The Texas Civil Liberties Union is arguing the case. State Rep. Lloyd Criss, D-Galveston, has announced that he will carry legislation in the coming session to include farmworkers in the unemployment compensation program.

✓ The TCLU won a victory on the privacy rights front in late September when Judge Joseph Hart of Travis County prohibited the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation from using polygraph tests on its employees. Hart ruled the tests violated the employees' right to privacy.

Surprise

✓ Governor Mark White said at a press conference October 18 that he was "surprised" at the firestorm caused by his reappointment of Ruben Montemayor to the Texas prison board. Rep. Ray Keller, R-Duncanville, had called the appointment "a dramatic step backward." CURE, the prison reform group, said Montemayor's previous record on the board was "deplorable." CURE director Charles Sullivan said Montemayor is "a board member who said everything was fine when he was on the board a few years ago," and said the reappointment is not an encouraging sign for prison reform. "The house is on fire and he comes up with a used fire extinguisher that never worked in the first place," Sullivan said.

White claimed there is "an indiscernable difference between Harry

Whittington and Ruben Montemayor." Whittington is a board member who is seen as a progressive advocate and who White says had an almost identical voting record to Montemayor's. But Whittington does not now defend the board's history over the worst years of the prison crisis. Montemayor told a newspaper recently that the prison board had "acted properly" in those years.

CURE advised the governor's office in advance of the appointment that the group would oppose it. Sullivan says the governor "is kind of taking us for granted." □

Noted

On George Bush's "kick a little ass" remark:

"With this crude display the Vice President accomplished the opposite of what he intended. His strained effort to to be one of the boys proved nothing so much as his distance from them. He defended his gracelessness as "an old Texas football expression," only underlining his inauthenticity. Bush never played "Texas football." He was captain of the baseball team, and the team was Yale's. One of the boys is one of the many things George Bush is not.

"Bush is a Yankee who tried to make it as a cowboy, and the Stetson makes him a very peculiar-looking Yankee indeed. He's too conservative to be a New England Republican, yet he's not a blood-red Sunbelt conservative, and he's not a moderate, either. He votes in Texas, his only home is in Maine, and he works in Washington. The Vice Presidency, a job that demands no independent identity, compounds his identity crisis. Even larger-than-life figures such as Lyndon Johnson were diminished by it. What happens to someone who is not larger than life?"

Sidney Blumenthal, The New Republic, November 5, 1984.

BED & BREAKFAST — CORPUS CHRISTI

Take a break from the sameness of motel accommodations. Over 20 listings, many within walking distance of the water. Friendly, hospitable hosts. Breakfasts — continental to Texas-size. Rates from \$20. Sand Dollar Hospitality, 3605 Mendenhall, Corpus Christi, Texas 78415. (512) 853-1222.

Dr. B. and EDB

I read with interest Dave Denison's article on TDH Commissioner Robert Bernstein, particularly the section on EDB, which provides a key case study in my research on agricultural ethics. Denison's article does not acknowledge the distinction between toxic and carcinogenic risks associated with this (and many other) agricultural chemicals. In sufficient doses, EDB is toxic, or poisonous; it may also be carcinogenic or cancer causing in doses which are well below the levels indicated as safe with respect to toxicity. (Denison's citation of an NBC documentary appears to reference two workers who died from toxic exposure to EDB; I have not seen the program and cannot be sure. If so, it does not disprove Bernstein's claim that no human cancers can be traced to EDB.) Toxic risks are generally born by handlers of the chemical, and residents of communities in which it is used; carcinogenic risks are born by this population as well as by people who consume traces of the chemical in food. The regulatory problem of controlling toxic and cancer risks is complicated by the fact that some of the substitutes for EDB which are less carcinogenic are more toxic; thus, the "simple" solution to the EDB problem is to shift the relatively small risk to a large number of consumers (who also happen to be politically powerful) toward a larger risk to a smaller number of agricultural laborers (who also happen to be politically weak). Is this the sort of regulatory strategy liberals want to endorse?

Risk problems become even more difficult to sort out; sincere regulators (and if Denison's article is any indication, Bernstein is no exception) often fail to distinguish between politically acceptable risks (as auto accidents, smoking, and barbecue apparently are) and ethically acceptable risks, or risks which should be accepted or allowed in virtue of their necessity for achieving vital or extremely valuable social benefits. The mere fact that the risks of smoking or military adventurism appear to be accepted politically by many Texans is not, in itself, decisive evidence that anything of significant moral worth is gained thereby. It is politics, however, and not ethics which makes news; hence journalists will always be more interested in politically unacceptable risks (like EDB), too. It is little wonder that analysis and comparison of the risks and benefits (including considerations of

justice) of available actions seldom permeates such barriers to public discussion.

*Paul B. Thompson,
Asst. Professor Philosophy
and Agricultural Economics
College Station*

A Friend (?) Writes

A couple of years ago, a friend purchased a subscription to your publication for me as a Christmas gift (as a joke, of course). I received *The Texas(?) Observer* for a full year and let the subscription finally expire. (By the way, I have never received so many "last issues" of a magazine in my life.) Recently, and for no reason, I began receiving your magazine again, and believe me, I do not want to endure another year of *The Texas(?) Observer*. First of all, your magazine is misnamed. We must live in different states because the views and opinions expressed in your magazine certainly do not reflect the views and opinions of the state in which I was born and have lived all of my life. This is why I am typing your magazine's name the way it should be typed: *The TEXAS(?) Observer*.

Your publication conducted a vitriolic attack on former Governor Clements in favor of the messianic Mark White — saviour of the common man. Oh, you remember his sermon on the hill: lower utility bills, no new taxes, take politics out of education, the list goes on and on. Your publication offered him to its readers on a silver platter. But wait! He was only an appetizer. Your house speciality is now Fritz Mondale and Geraldine Ferraro — vintage HHH 1960's liberalism. For dessert, you recommend the savory Lloyd Doggett, who lacks not only the fundamental qualities but also the social and political polish to be a United States Senator.

So, please? Stop sending me *The Texas(?) Observer* and kindly delete my name from your records. You see, I am also tired of receiving junk mail from Save the Whales, Gay Lib, Doggett for Senate, Common Cause, Sierra Club, People for the American Way, Nader's Raiders, and so forth.

*William C. Keese,
Longview*

P.S. I have had some fun with your publication. I have enjoyed circulating your "Social Cause Calendar" to my colleagues to inform them of socially important causes such as the annual "San Antonio Gay Fiesta." Ole!

English Wars, Cont'd.

In his account of "The English Wars" in the Sept. 28 issue, Rod Davis ignores Section 10 of the Constitution: "The Legislature shall . . . establish . . . a university of the first class . . . styled 'The University of Texas', for the promotion of literature, and the arts and sciences . . ." There is every reason to believe that the authors of the Constitution, written in 1876, subscribed to the definition of "literature" of their contemporary, Matthew Arnold, namely the best that's been thought and said in the last 3,000 years. Mr. Davis dismisses this concept as "Institutional Literature," but the authors of the Constitution were no doubt aware, as most of us are, that reading the best that's been thought and said is the best foundation for learning how to write. In this context, Mr. Davis's assertion that UT tenure-track faculty teach only 8% of the "composition work-load" is a gross oversimplification. In fact almost all English literature courses require a great deal of composition; indeed many are officially designated as substantial writing component courses. Mr. Davis, however, apparently would be happier if something closer to 100% of the faculty taught E306. If that were the case, there would be no courses for English majors (over 500), English graduate students (over 100), or the hundreds of students from other departments who need advanced English courses. In short, we would become a junior college, in clear violation of the constitutional requirement that this be a university of the "first class." Many of our competitors in the latter category have achieved eminence in research by cutting basic English requirements to two, one, or no English courses. After all, teaching writing is very difficult and very expensive. It would be much easier for this university to respond to Mr. Davis's complaints by cutting basic English requirements, in which case Mr. Davis will have talked himself out of a job. Hence we should be praising rather than blaming this university for resisting such temptations and taking on the heavy burden of hundreds of required English courses even as it attempts to meet the constitutional requirement that it be a university of the first class in the promotion of literature.

*Jerome Bump,
Director, Sophomore English Program,
University of Texas at Austin*

GOD FROM A MACHINE

American Income is pleased to reprint this Sept. 27th sermon by Rabbi Mordecai Podet of Temple Rodef Sholom in Waco.

Watching a few minutes of soap opera, I was reminded of ancient, classical drama. Ancient Greek and Roman playwrights sometimes enmeshed their characters in such complicated and perplex dilemmas that *no* human solution seemed possible. But the crisis would be resolved. Stage machinery would waft a god — many being available in the Greek and Roman pantheons — onto the stage to intervene in the action and set everything right.

This dramatic device has given us the expression "god from a machine" — *deus ex machina* — a phrase used in literary criticism to characterize an artificially introduced, improbable solution to a plot problem.

We Jews, at a particularly painful period of our ancient history, developed a similar device not for the stage but for real life. We were so tormented by invading oppressors, so wracked by fratricidal dissensions, so distressed by tortured uncertainty regarding the future that *no* human remedy seemed possible. So we conceived of a supernatural intervenor who would usher in an era of perfect freedom and security, a messiah.

Because we have endured many periods of such deep distress that *no* human capacity seemed equal to overcoming them, there have risen among us many claimants for the role of messiah. None ever won the broad or lasting allegiance of Jews because of a surprisingly simple, starkly functional test which Judaism sets the announced messiah. If he brings about what men have called God's kingdom on earth — an era of perfect freedom and security — he is the messiah. But if, despite his appearance, freedom remains for many men a dream for the future, if security remains for most of mankind a mirage, if his efforts do not much *change* let alone *end* hatred, hunger, misery, war — clearly, he is not the messiah.

Now by that test, a messiah has not yet appeared. If the past is a guide to the future, it seems unwise to hold one's breath in expectation of one.

Still, *something* in our human nature makes us turn hopefully, gaze eagerly toward the latest *deus ex machina*, the newest messianic claimant, as the longed for solution for the perverse perplexities of human existence. In our time, the claim is made not for men but for systems and technologies.

Do you recall the excitement, the exaltation, the idealistic expectations that bloomed with the appearance of each of these?

... *Nuclear energy* — By making war too awful to contemplate, it was to usher in an era of lasting peace. By producing cheaply whatever mankind needs, it would end need and toil and free us for higher pursuits. Remember? I do. I enthused about it . . . and joined in the conferences and preached about the new priorities of life . . . So far, salvation is delayed.

... *The United Nations Organization* — that was going to be the arena for civilized airing of differences and nonviolent settlements in an atmosphere of reason and good will. Remember? I do. I enthused about that, too . . . and worked for its success through involvement in its lay support groups, through preaching and teaching from pulpit and platform . . . My, how that has soured!

... *The re-creation of a State of Israel* — For a hundred years Zionist literature promised that with the establishment of a Jewish commonwealth, Jewish problems would cease and all

mankind would bask benignly in the glow of blessings that would emanate from the commonwealth . . . Remember? I do. But by then I had become a little cautious in my enthusiasm.

By then I could recall that not many years before, men of good will had pressed ardently for *education* as humanity's universal healer, as the path to peace and plenty and justice. Then, as we witnessed the murder of millions and the degradation of millions more at the hands of the most educated society the world had known, that hope shriveled. Who mentions it today?

By then I could recall the high expectations that energized so many people to welcome and advance the social system of which it was enthusiastically said, "I have seen the future and it works!" Remember that? Social engineering was going to bring redemption from war, hate, pestilence, sorrow . . . The "Soviet experiment" as it was called. Well, that red rose has surely lost its bloom.

There have been many new entrants in the messianic sweepstakes. The Technocrats — does anyone remember them? Universal psychoanalysis as the royal road to utopian humanity. Harvard Professor B. F. Skinner's psychological engineering excited many including some Wacoans . . . So did the Greening of America, Consciousness Three, the Age of Aquarius, now off stage; and the advent of the computer, now just taking center stage.

Surely each of these has some virtue, some value for human betterment.

But none has or can come near fulfilling the expectations for social betterment attached to them. The reason they must fail is given in a Chassidic observation. "Why," a Chassidic sage asks, "Why has the messianic age not arrived neither yesterday nor today?" "Because," he explains, "Because we are the same today as we were yesterday!"

So far in human history, all great, all noble ideas and schemes for human salvation have foundered on the hard rock of our human propensity to stay as we are and to look to some irresistible force outside ourselves to save us from our troubles, our failings and distress.

But, my friends, the *deus ex machina* is to be found only in bad plays, in make believe. In real life, what seems to be a sweeping messianic wave of the future, an overwhelming force for social, economic and political good, inevitably dissipates amid the shoals of unchanged human character. If we remain the same today as we were yesterday, it is clear that even the nuclear bomb will not end wars, nor the computer age bring social peace and security. We must change.

Which is what these high holy days are all about. Judaism assures us that we *can* change ourselves, that change from within is possible. It had better be. Experience teaches us that no other way works.

If we remain *today* exactly the same selfish, greedy, impulsive, egotistical, envious, grudge bearing creatures we were *yesterday*, we will find ways to distort every promising idea and pervert every fresh invention to our own corruptive purpose.

But as — however gradually and slightly — we change ourselves inwardly, we find even the old and banal acquiring a glow and leading toward salvation.

Therefore, make this the high holy day season it is meant to be: A time of self knowledge, of self judgement and of change. That way lies the road toward becoming the men and women we were meant to be.

SOCIAL CAUSE CALENDAR

Notices of future events must reach the *Observer* at least three weeks before the event.

LEGISLATIVE WORKSHOP

The Sierra Club, Austin, will have a legislative workshop **November 10**, South Austin Multi-Purpose Center, 2508 Durwood, Austin, to discuss and report on sunset review of natural resource agencies, concurrent sessions on state water resources policy, regulation of hazardous waste disposal, and funding of acquisitions of parks and natural areas by the state. Call Ken Kramer, (512) 476-6962, for details.

FERRON TO PERFORM

Canadian singer-songwriter Ferron will perform at Liberty Lunch, Austin, **November 10**, 9 p.m., to benefit the Texas National Organization for Women. Admission, \$6.50. Contact Kathy Cornell, (512) 327-8129.

CATHOLIC GAY RIGHTS COALITION: SEMINAR

Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Center will offer a workshop on Homosexuality and Family Ministry, **November 14**, at the Center, 1225 W. Division, Slaton, 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m., for educators, counselors, social workers, priests, ministers, and families and friends of gay and lesbian persons. Workshop leaders will be Robert Nugent, SDS, and Jeannine Gramick, SSND; topics are "Homosexual Lifestyles: Fictions and Facts" and "Homosexual Christians and the Church: Challenges and Responses." \$30 registration fee includes tuition, materials and lunch. Contact Father Lawrence Hemp, St. Joseph's Church, 205 S. 19th St., Slaton, (806) 828-3944.

IN THE HOUSE OF MARY

"In the House of Mary," a contemporary harvest celebration and pageant by Austin composer, Tina Marsh, will be **November 14-17**, Capitol City Playhouse, 2 p.m. and 8 p.m.; \$6. A 12-member children's chorus, dancers, musicians and visual artists will be featured.

BLACK ARTISTS' EXHIBITION

The Black Arts Alliance will present its "1984 Regional Black Artists' Exhibition," a mixed-media exhibit of works by 23 central Texas artists, **November 15-January 5**, George Washington Carver Museum, 1165 Angelina St., Austin. An opening reception will be **November 15**, 5-8 p.m., at the Carver Museum, with artists in attendance. Reception and exhibit are free.

ETHNIC WOMEN'S SYMPOSIUM

Southwest Texas State University, the Governor's Commission for Women, The University Women's Network, and related organizations will sponsor "Ethnic Women in Texas," part of the continuing symposium series, "Multicultures of the Southwest," **November 14-17**, Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos. Guest speakers will include many noted cultural historians including Ruthe Winegarten, Blandina Cardenas-Ramirez, Susan Cayleff, Melissa Hield, and Marcella Washington. Workshops will treat all aspects of the history and culture of ethnic women in Texas — for example, folk medicine and curanderas, the writing of black women, black women in Texas politics, women workers, Mexican undocumented women, and the history of German-Texas women. Conference fee, \$14. For a complete schedule and to register, contact Office of Continuing Education, SWTSU, U.S.C. Room 217, San Marcos, TX 78666, (512) 245-2507.

OBSERVANCES

November 18, 1977 — National Women's Conference opened in Houston.

November 21, 1966 — National Organization for Women founded.

November 21, 1922 — Rebecca L. Felton appointed first woman U.S. Senator.

November 22, 1963 — President Kennedy assassinated in Dallas.

November 26, 1883 — Former slave and abolitionist Sojourner Truth died.

TEXANS AND THEIR LAND

The Philosophy Department and Office of Continuing Education at Texas A&M University are sponsoring a public program of lectures, discussions and films, **November 16-17**, Rudder Conference Center, Texas A&M University, College Station. The theme of the program, "The Land Myth in Texas Agriculture," expresses the idea that the land and people of Texas have a special relationship which influences the moral character and aesthetic values. Speakers will draw from geography, history, folklore, film studies and philosophy in making their presentations. For complete program schedule contact Pearl Thompson, Department of Philosophy, Texas A&M, College Station, 77843, (409) 845-5660.

FELLOWSHIP OF RECONCILIATION CONFERENCE

The 3rd Regional Fellowship of Reconciliation Conference will be **November 16-**

18, Dallas, with speakers Jim Wallis, editor of *Sojourners* magazine, and Nora Hallett, Director of the Regional Development for FOR. Workshops, films, music, games, and worship are being planned. For registration information contact Barbara Hunter, 5544 N. Colony, Lewisville, 75056, (214) 370-3805. The public is invited; registration costs are low; childcare is available.

NLG CONFERENCE

The National Lawyers Guild, Texoma Region, Annual Conference will be **November 16-18**, Austin. Speakers and topics include: legal services for prisoners, Charles Sullivan (CURE co-founder); women in prison, Martha Quinlin (CURE member); toxic wastes and pesticide disposal, Robin Alexander; Central America update, Roberto Soto; legal support to the sanctuary movement; and, a post-mortem of the election. To register or for details call (512) 447-6859.

WILDLIFE HABITAT PRESERVATION

The Texas Coast is undergoing increasing changes as pressures from population growth and coastal development continue at a rapid pace. Development activities can negatively affect wildlife habitats and environmental quality. A workshop on coastal development and mitigation, "Wildlife Habitat Preservation," sponsored by the Galveston and Houston Sierra Clubs, will delve into ways that environmental quality and wildlife habitats may be maintained while allowing sensible coastal development. **November 17**, Texas A&M's Galveston campus on Pelican Island, \$8 registration, 8:30 a.m.-6 p.m. For more information contact Brandt Mannchen, (713) 522-1489, or 645-5316.

TRANSPORTATION CRISIS IN HOUSTON?

"Does Houston Have A Transportation Crisis?" will be the theme of a forum sponsored by the Citizens' Environmental Coalition and Rice Student Interest Center, **November 20**, Rice University, Memorial Center Grand Hall, 7 p.m. Assumptions regarding Houston's mobility needs, cost effective ways to deal with traffic, and continuing growth is the area will be discussed by transportation specialists from the public and private sectors. Contact CEC, 1413 Westheimer, Houston, (713) 523-3431, for more information.

ARTISTS FOR PEACE

The Austin Peace and Justice Coalition will sponsor an art auction, **December 8**, Catholic Student Center, 2010 University Avenue, Austin. Donations of artwork are now being solicited to help the Coalition

Good morning,
Central
Intelligence
Agency.



Yes Mr. Prime
Minister, we are
planning to
overthrow your
gov't in the very
near future.



I'm sorry to
hear you haven't
been officially
informed.



Would you
like me to
send you a
BROCHURE?



Carol Simpson ©1984

Carol Simpson 1984

and its 31-member organizations continue educational work to reduce nuclear weapons, stop military intervention, and redirect military spending to meet human needs. Contributing artists will receive 25% of the selling price for their donations. Deadline for donations is **November 24**. Contact Nancy O'Keefe, (512) 451-5877, to contribute a work.

BOOK SIGNING

Philip Russell, author of *Mexico in Transition*, will autograph his new work, *El Salvador in Crisis*, **November 30**, Paperbacks ¡Y Más!, 1819 Blanco Rd., San Antonio, 7 p.m.

ZIEGLER FELLOWSHIPS

The Samuel E. Ziegler Fellowship is a \$2,000 award used to support research in fields benefiting civil liberties and human rights work. Undergraduates, graduate students, full-time faculty, or individuals engaged in such work are eligible. Deadline for application is **January 15, 1985**. A paper not to exceed 5000 words is required. For information contact, The Samuel E. Ziegler Educational Fund, 1900 Southland Center, Dallas, 75201.

CORRECTION: HANDWORK EXHIBIT

Women and Their Work will present "HandWork: Women's Folk Textiles," an exhibition of fine needlework from the ethnic traditions of Texas, at the Scurry County Museum, Snyder, through **December 21**. This is a correction from the Diamond M Museum, Snyder. For information on the exhibit call (512) 477-1064.

SIGNED TOURS

In order to make museums in the San Antonio Museum Association more accessible to the deaf community, the Art Museum, Witte Museum, and Transportation Museum will begin signed tours in **November**. For more information about these special tours, contact Martha Smith, (512) 226-5544.

CHILDREN OF WAR TOUR

Thirty-three young people, ages 12-17, from war zones will tour schools, churches, community centers with children from the Children's Peace Network. Six skilled group leaders are needed to accompany this group as it travels throughout six regions. To volunteer or to get more information on sponsoring a visit by the group to your city, call or write Judith Thompson, Religious Task Force/Mobilization for Survival, 855 Oxford, Brooklyn, NY 11217; (212) 858-6882.

CARTIER-BRESSON IN MEXICO

The Art Museum of South Texas will feature the exhibition, "Henri Cartier-Bresson: Photographs from Mexico 1934 and 1963," a collection of 45 photographs taken by the French photographer who was a master at capturing the "decisive moment" in his photographs of life as it was lived in the streets; through **November 25**, Art Museum of South Texas, 1902 North Shoreline Drive, Corpus Christi.

Progressive Organizations

The *Observer* has built up lists of organizations in Texas we regard as progressive. The editor invites communications recommending organizations for inclusion. We will generally print the listings for Austin and Around Texas in one issue, followed by Dallas, Fort Worth; Houston and San Antonio in the next. The

complete list is available for a \$5 processing fee to any group deemed progressive in purpose.

AUSTIN

ACLU, 447-5849; ACORN, 442-8321; Alternative Views (ACTV), Box 7279, 78712; Amn. Friends Service Cmte., 474-2399; Amnesty Intl., Box 4951, 78765; Anti-Hunger Coalition of Tx. (ACT), 474-9921; Assoc. for Retarded Citizens (ARC), 476-7044; Audubon Scty., 472-4523; Audubon Scty. (National), 327-1943; Aus. Lesbian-Gay Pol. Caucus, 474-2717; Aus. Nghbrhood Fund, 454-0963; Aus. Peace and Justice Coalition, 474-5877; Aus. Tenants Ccl., 474-1961; Aus. Women's Alcohol Resource and Education Center (AWARE), 472-5553; Aus. Women's Centr., 472-3775; Aus. Women's Political Caucus, 474-1798; Aus. Writers' League, 444-9379; Austinites for Public Transportation, 454-9060; Black Aus. Demos., 478-6576; Blackland Nghbrhood Ass., 474-1243; Brthrhod of Viet Vets., 892-4220; Center for Battered Women, 472-HURT; Central America Resource Center, 476-9841; Central Aus. Demos., 477-6587; Central Tx. Lignite Watch, 479-0678; Citizens Party, 459-1022; Ctzn. Party (Gay Caucus), 472-1717; Ctzn. United for Rehab. of Errants (CURE), 476-4762; Cmte. in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, 477-4728; Common Cause, 474-2374; Demo. Socialists of America (DSA), 458-2472; Ecology Action, 478-1645; El Central Chicano, 472-9832; Grandparents for Nuclear Disarmament Action, 453-1727; Gray Panthers, 458-3738; IMPACT, 472-3903; In These Times (Tx. Bureau), 477-3281; Lawyers Alliance for Nuclear Arms Control (LANAC), 476-5121 League of Women Voters, 451-6710; Leonard Peltier Support Group, 472-4142; Live Oak Fund for Change, 476-5714; Lone Star Alliance, 472-3998; LUCHA, 477-5770; LULAC, 477-6511, ext. 2859; Max's Pot, 928-4786; Mxn.-Amn. Demos., 473-9444; Music Umbrella, 476-1324; Nat'l Lawyers' Guild, 472-6270; NOW, 452-7276; Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign, 476-3294; Organizing Cmte. for a Nat'l. Writers Union, (OCNWU), P.O. Box 4184, 78765; Pax Christi, 258-3942; People for the American Way, 472-7007; Phogg Foundation, Box 13549, 78711; Planned Parenthood, 472-0868; Poverty Education and Research Center (PERC), 474-5019; Box

13549; Poverty, Education and Research Center Professionals for Nuclear Arms Limitations, 443-9826; Red Ryder Preservation Soc., 479-8548; Save Barton Creek Assn., 451-7739; Sierra Club, 478-1264; Socialist Party, 452-3722; Sponsor Coordinator for Refugees, 454-2519; Txns. for Children, 445-0414; Tx. Abortion Rights Action League (TARAL), 478-0094; Tx. Alliance, 474-5019; Tx. Center for Rural Studies, 474-0811; Tx. Cmte. on Natural Resources, 443-8037; Tx. Council on Family Violence, 327-8582; Tx. Death Penalty Action Group, 3104 Dancy, 78722; Tx. Environmental Coalition, 476-3961; Tx. Farm Workers Union, 441-0837; Tx. Fathers for Equal Rights, 452-0848; Tx. Mobilization for Survival, 474-5877; Tx. Pesticide Project, 474-0811; Tx. Solar Energy Society, 472-1252; Tx. Women's Political Caucus, 474-1798; Travis Cty. Demo. Women's Cmte., 443-0479; UCAM, c/o Carlota Smith, Dept. of Linguistics, UT-Austin, 78712; UNICEF, 837-7248; United Farm Workers Union, 474-5019; Univ. Employees Union, 478-0546; Univ. Mobilization for Survival, 476-4503; West Aus. Demos., 454-2828; Women and Their Work, 477-1064; Women's Advocacy Project, 477-8113.

AROUND TEXAS

Amarillo: Clergy and Laity Concerned, 373-8668; Panhandle Environmental Awareness Cmte., 376-8903; Women's Action for Nuclear Disarmament, 381-1039. **Arlington:** United Viet. Vets. Organization, 461-6453. **Arp:** NOW, 566-8263. **Bastrop:** Central Tx. Lignite Watch, 321-5246. **Bay City:** Matagorda Co. Citizens for Environmental Protection, 245-2261. **Beaumont:** NOW, 833-9966; Sierra Club, 866-2814; United Viet. Vets. Organization, 727-4873. **Bonham:** Citizens Party, 111 E. 5th St., 75418. **Bryan:** Brazos Civil Liberties Union, 846-1436. **College Station:** Alternative, 846-8022; Brazos Valley Peace Action, 693-1532; Brazos Valley Sierra Club, 696-7437; Bread for the World, 696-2802; Gay Student Services, 846-8022; NOW, 696-9538; Women

and Agriculture Information Network, 846-2506. **Corpus Christi:** American GI Forum, 241-8647; Amigos de las Americas, Box 1437, 78403; Coastal Bend Sierra Club, 883-0586; C.C. Cmte. on Justice in El Salvador, 884-6699; C.C. Coalition of Black Demos., 151 Jade Dr., 78409; Gulf Coast Conservation Assoc., 991-9690; League of Women Voters, 991-4059; LULAC, 882-8284; NAACP, 884-8541; NOW, 883-4469; OPUS, 881-6308; Tx. Pesticide Abuse Coalition, 855-7061; Women's Shelter, 881-8888. **Denton:** Tx. Gay Task Force, 387-8216. **El Paso:** El Paso Interreligious Sponsoring Organization, 772-1483; El Paso Peace Coalition, 9524 Bellis Ave., 79925; Santa Lucia Reach Out, 518 Gallagher, 79915. **Eules:** Dist. 10 Demos., 283-7001. **Fredericksburg:** Fredericksburg Peace Alliance, 997-3263. **Gainesville:** Organizing Cmte for Nat'l Writers Union, 411 N. Morris St., 76240. **Galveston:** Sierra Club, 765-9289. **Garland:** Bread for the World, 495-1494. **Hereford:** People Opposed to Wasted Energy Repository, 258-7583; Tx. Rural Legal Aid, 364-3961. **Littlefield:** Socialist Party, Box 926, 79339. **Lubbock:** National Lawyers' Guild, 799-2714; Network, 796-1905; NOW, 793-0582; South Plains Alternative Resources Coalition, 796-1905; South Plains Clergy and Laity Concerned, 2007 28th St., 79411; West Tx. Demos., 792-5720. **Midland:** United Viet. Vets. Organization, 684-3768; Tx. Women's Political Caucus-Permian Basin, 683-3863. **Muleshoe:** Chicanos Unidos-Campesinos, Inc., 272-4233; Defensa, 272-4233. **Nacogdoches:** Tx. Cmte on Natural Resources, 564-9728. **Raymondville:** Centro del Pueblo, 759 W. Hidalgo, 78580. **Robstown:** Citizens Against Dumps, Rt. 2, 78380. **San Angelo:** Concho Valley Sierra Club, 944-2424. **San Marcos:** Americans for a Secure Future, 396-4222; Students Against Continued Involvement in El Salvador, (Austin) 443-8525. **Saratoga:** Big Thicket Assn., 274-5000. **Temple:** Ground Zero, 771-3779; Temple Peace Group, 771-3779; United Viet. Vets. Organization, 773-7987. **Texas City:** Gulf Coast Council on Foreign Affairs, 938-1211, ext. 296/297. **Tyler:** Interfaith Peace Fellowship, 593-5650; NOW, 566-2705; Tyler Peace Group, 561-5501. **Valley (Rio Grande):** Border

Assn. for Refugees from Central America, 585-4003; Cmte. Against Public Utilities, Box 789, Brownsville 78520; La Raza Legal Alliance, 402 E. Harrison, 2nd Floor, Harlingen, 78550; Oficina Legal, Box 1493, San Juan, 78589; Proyecto Libertad, 425-9552; Sierra Club, 687-2169; Tx. Health Coalition, 113 W. Harding, Harlingen, 78550; United Farm Workers Union, 787-2233; Valley Citizens for a Bilateral Nuclear Weapons Freeze, 682-1857; Valley Inter-religious Taskforce on Central America, Valley Pesticide Coalition, 968-9574; Valley Troqueros, 1101 Vine, Suite A, McAllen 78501. **Waco:** ACLU, 755-3611; American GI Forum, 799-8712; Audubon Society, 3701 Beverly Dr., 76711; Baylor Young Demos., 756-4839; Bread for the World, 772-3135; CURE, 754-2008; IMPACT, 772-7006; League of Women Voters, 754-1066; LULAC, 776-0438; NOW 752-5975. **Wichita Falls:** Citizens for Nuclear Awareness, 691-6001.

FORT WORTH

ACLU, 534-6883; ACORN, 924-1401; Allied Communities of Tarrant (ACT), 332-1830; Bread for the World (Dist. 12), 924-1440; Citizens for Education on Nuclear Arms (CENA), 295-6587; Citizens for Fair Utility Regulations, 478-6372; Citizens' Party, 834-5123; Coalition of Labor Union Women, 540-1393; Conscientious Objector Awareness Cmte., 457-6148; Dist. 10 Demos., 283-7001; Dist. 12 Demos., 535-7803; Farm Workers' Support Cmte., 927-0808; Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), 274-7554; First Friday, 927-0808; Ft. Worth Task Force on Central America, 921-0419; IMPACT, 923-4806; Mental Health Assn., 335-5405; Mexican-American Demos., 626-8305; NOW, 338-4456; Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign, 926-3827; Sierra Club, 923-9718; Tarrant Co. Demo. Womens' Club, 261-6583; Tarrant Co. Precinct Workers' Club, 429-2706; Tx. Coalition of Black Demos., 534-7737; Tx. Tenants' Union, 923-5071; Traditional Native American Circle, 926-9258; Women's Political Caucus, 336-8700.

• BOOKS AND THE CULTURE •

Electoral Discrimination

By James C. Harrington

LYNDON JOHNSON often bragged about the 1965 Voting Rights Act as his premier piece of civil rights legislation; just give 'em the vote, he reasoned, and other civil rights reforms wouldn't be far behind.

History may yet prove him right. In almost twenty years, the mostly white male leadership in the South and the Southwest has begun to give way.

James C. Harrington is the legal director for the Texas Civil Liberties Union.

Blacks now make up 12 percent of the Texas legislature, and Hispanic representation in the state Senate may

MINORITY VOTE DILUTION

Chandler Davidson (ed.),
Howard University Press, 1984
298 pages, \$24.95

hit 20 percent in two years. Texas can now boast of a Supreme Court justice

who is a Valley Mexican American; a black woman is now Secretary of the State (the same position from which Mark White began his political climb to the Governor's mansion).

In the last 10 years, Hispanics have come to dominate electoral politics in the Rio Grande Valley. San Antonio elected Henry Cisneros as mayor, and more than half that city council is Hispanic or black. And so on in Houston, Corpus Christi, and with countless school boards, county commissions, and justices of the peace.

However, despite such progress, there remain large gaps in representation. Even though blacks are 12 percent of the Texas population, only 124 elected officials of the 24,728 covered by the Voting Rights Act preclearance provisions are black — a mere 0.8%.

The same is true of Hispanics, who make up 21 percent of the state but only 6.3 percent of its elected officials.

Texas also has lower minority representation than most other states of the South and Southwest. Blacks in Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, the Carolinas and Virginia are represented at about 20 to 25 percent of what their population would merit; in Texas the figure is 6.7 percent (even worse than Georgia's 14 percent).

The figures for Hispanics in Texas are just as dismal. Arizona has a respectable 81.5 percent representation of its Hispanic population. California and Colorado show 34 percent and 47 percent respectively. But Texas checks in with a low 30 percent.

These startling figures underline two points.

First, they show how pervasive the discrimination has been in Texas. The gains compelled by the Voting Rights Act are dramatic only because the numbers had nowhere to move but up. Going from zero to one minority representative on the Abilene City Council is an impressive gain of 100 percent but still short of the two council members one would expect in a population which is 7 percent black and 22 percent Mexican American.

Second, the statistics show the continued vitality of ever more clever techniques to delay or deny voting rights, such as at-large elections, run-off elections, place voting, decreased size of governmental bodies, exclusive slating groups, and gerrymandering (cracking, stacking, and packing) — all of which are effectively manipulated to dilute minority voting strength.

Minority Vote Dilution, an excellent collection of 12 essays, edited by Chandler Davidson of Rice University, contributes to our understanding of these various schemes. The essays analyze past and present-day practices of vote dilution, one of the major tactics of electoral discrimination (the others being candidate dilution and disenfranchisement).

The historical essays make intriguing points about Texas' past, especially the discriminatory impact of the Progressive movement and "reform" government. For example, the 1905 Terrell Election Law, widely hailed as "progressive," was Texas' major disenfranchising legislation. All the essays are well-researched, some are analytical, some center on legal arguments, and a few offer creative remedies to ensure voting strength and enforcement of voting laws.

The essay format saves what otherwise might have been a dry academic

treatise. The essays speak to different topics but overlap enough to show the different perspectives and approaches of the authors. (Davidson co-authors two of the essays, one with George Korbel, a noted voting rights attorney from San Antonio).

The result is a scholarly, easy-to-read volume, discussing the ins and outs of electoral discrimination and the Voting Rights Act. Political scientists, government teachers, civil rights workers, and lawyers will find it invaluable; others will find in *Minority Vote Dilution* a challenge to complacency — as Davidson puts it, "minorities can now vote — they just cannot cast an effective vote."

The lack of an effective vote is more the case on the local level than on the state and national levels, where minority votes can at long last make or break an election — and result in more minority appointments to state and national policy-making positions. Stronger national strength explains why Ronald Reagan did an about-face and signed into law an extension of the Voting Rights Act, which he had opposed and which strengthened voting rights legislation.

But it is local government that is more important in our day-to-day lives. Local

governments not only set policy and take actions which affect us directly, but they also are large (and often the largest) employers in the community. Especially in poorer, rural areas the school district often provides the county's largest payroll.

In a real sense, winning a truly representational vote is a bread and butter issue for minorities, since they are often the poorer members of the community.

That accounts in part for "the fierce tenacity" and deviousness with which the minority voter is resisted. The issue becomes intertwined — as it should — with economic opportunity in our society. Just like Lyndon said.

Davidson puts it well:

It would be a mistake to minimize the future potential of . . . the Voting Rights Act, as well as the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, as levers to pry open the tightly shut political systems of the South and Southwest. Yet the history of racial minorities in America, and in those areas in particular is a troubling reminder of the skill, the resourcefulness, the fierce tenacity, and, above all, the patience of privileged groups in fighting to uphold the social and political structures that guarantees their dominance. □

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POEMS

By Grady Hillman

Execution

Through the guard's lounge
through the nervous paper sack clutching crowd
in pre-release
through the visiting room
beige curtains covering bars
through the concrete maze
through the locker room
through the yard packed with wooden shacks
tar papered and raw
through the dog pen, concertina wire and chain link
hovering above the cinderblock box
where the condemned exercise
through death row, ten cells
#1, next to the shower, wire screened
for visitors
through the green door to

The gurney grabs you
clean white sheets
leg straps on the other side
neck and arm straps towards you
placed near the window that holds the snake
plastic silhouette of death
no less violent than chalk marks on a sidewalk
except non-random
organized

The room so small, so intimate

During electrocutions
reporters must have been frightened
that fire would leap and scorch
from the ignited anemones of fingers
to the graphite pencil lightning rods
only four feet away
much too close to escape the smoke

Now the scribes hover like angels
seeking the last utterance of consciousness
or venomous spit

Untitled

Haloed family in late model car
door cracked, a luminous island in the deserted asphalt
Two women in front study the pickles on their hamburgers
Two children in back murmur quietly over their fries
furtively scanning the sidewalks
uncomfortable in the exposure of the overhead
They chose this street for safety
Only a block from the square
parked in front of an office
no cop will ask them to move
Here they'll sleep until
the birds of dawn alert them to the city
Then, with the softness of cats
they'll slip into the cafe near the courthouse
and sip coffee until 9 or
until the patience of the waitress is stretched beyond refills
They'll pay and leave for the prison
two blocks to sign the sheet
Fearful of red-eye guards
They enter the brass/glass door to the eyes of
daddy son mate

Song of Autry

Helicopter drone entering the room on a swell of green
Springtime mid-afternoon window by the bed
sheds a strange limning to our lovemaking
Aching in his throat, he nestles in the yellow room
Doom comes with the moon, the appointed hour
Dour beaked choppers aim aerial cams
Slam of prison gates rippling through the media flock
locked on every movement below
Slowly, i touch her breast; finger to nipple makes
poignant contact

Meeting the Walls Prison Writer's Workshop for the First Time

7 men in white
the jury
sitting in on my life
Faces frozen
they observe and feel
my groping for the key
that will unlock
space

Grady Hillman was writer-in-residence with the Windham School System of the Texas Department of Corrections from the fall of 1980 to January 1984. He is the author of a book of poetry, Forces (Place of Herons Press) and a forthcoming book of Inca translations.

The Monster of Dinosaur Valley

By Georgia Earnest Klipple

GLEN ROSE, Texas, 50 miles from the Fort Worth-Big D Metroplex, was an elegant resort from the 1850s to the 1920s. Fourteen spring-fed spas strung out along the Paluxy River catered to the affluent who were either ill or indulging the physical fitness kick of the times. A handful of natives — owners of spas and related business, no doubt — prospered; witness the half-dozen, once-charming Victorian houses dripping the celebrated gingerbread. They crown hills and bluffs well above the threat of floods that always came, wiping out a spa or two each time until only one was left.

That isn't all that is unique to Glen Rose. Up and down the Paluxy in various attitudes of chase and repose are the tracks of meat-eating and plant-eating dinosaurs forever frozen in stone. A group of gigantic rocks shaped like dinosaur heads and bodies looks like a petrified dinosaur graveyard. (Strange. Those heads with eyes are straight out of Walt Disney. This is petrified wood country. Homes, stores, gasoline stations built of it dot the town. Dinosaur fossils?) The impressive collection of dinosaur tracks housed at the Texas Memorial Museum in Austin was cut from the rock bed of the Paluxy River at Glen Rose. Texas developed the 1500-acre Dinosaur Valley State Park around the tracks. An oil company donated life-size statues of Brontosaurus and Tyrannosaurus Rex — elysian to a child's eyes. (But where are the children? The tourists? Other state parks are elbow to elbow in late summer.)

We chose Glen Rose for our vacation because two members of our family were under nine and interested in dinosaurs. It turned out that the rest of us, well over nine, were intrigued by a number of things at Glen Rose. We stayed in that one remaining spa across

the road from the dinosaur graveyard. The swimming pool, spring-fed, was Olympic size. Not intentionally — the Olympic idea hadn't reached the U.S. when the pool was dug. Two dozen cabins built of petrified wood surrounded the original bath house, which is complete with white pillars and still used. But the cabins were vacant. (This town is almost as dead as the dinosaurs. Curious vibes. Isn't that a federal marshal unhappy over his breakfast at Linda's Other Place? Over Linda's heavenly cream gravy? How could he be?)

Between the spa and the dinosaur graveyard a public park holds picnic tables. Glen Rose by local option is dry, so — typical result of such prohibitions — the ground around is strewn with empty beer cans and smashed liquor bottles. Between the eras of dinosaurs and Victorian spas, Indians could survey their territory of the many waters, some medicinal (sulphur springs).

A sign, heavily defaced, evidently with the same rebellious vigor that strewed forbidden empties, gives directions on how to get out of town in emergency. (What emergency? Flood? Well, all you had to do was get up on the bluff, out of the flood plain. Glen Rose had been doing that since before the Civil War. This sign is new, just scratched up. New things are hard to find in Glen Rose. We never did find the grocery.) Wait, here was something new — a brand new, 6-lane, superhighway, smooth as a mirror, heading nowhere. We drove it. Drove until we came to a brown-uniformed, armed guard in the middle of the highway. To one side, a narrow road led to — ah, this was it — the fearsome, round-top towers of a nuclear power station — Comanche Peak. (So this was the source of possible emergency.)

That's still not all. The *Glen Rose Reporter*, a weekly, carried this headline: **BODY FOUND IN DINO PARK.** A couple of days before we arrived, Bruce Center, identified as a safety engineer with the Comanche Peak plant,

was found dead in Dinosaur Valley State Park. (So this was the cause of the uneasy vibes, the pensive Fed.) Center had been working only a short while. He had been hired to test computers. He was from Washington state. He was 33. He told a co-worker he was going to the park to take pictures of dinosaur tracks and Texas longhorns. When he didn't show for work subsequently, the volunteer fire department, sheriff, D.P.S., Park Rangers, Brown and Root employees, and others, some mounted, searched for two days. A Ranger found Center. He was lying under a tree, his camera a few feet away. (What was on the film?) He was in remote reaches of the park, where visitors rarely go — up on a mountain, just inside the park property fence. (Maybe some longhorns would climb that mountain, but the dinosaur tracks he wanted to photograph were far below in the river bed. And how far from the park property fence was Comanche Peak?) Rattlesnake bite, the locals said. Plenty of rattlesnakes at Glen Rose. Two small puncture wounds below the knee. (Can other things make fang marks?) No official ruling made public at the time.

The story is not ended. Earlier in the year the *Dallas News* mentioned protesters at Comanche Peak. The *Texas Observer* did a story. Recently a back page item in the *Austin American-Statesman* observed that a federal investigation of Comanche Peak was under way.

Meanwhile, Comanche Peak broods from its hilltop home. Broods over the dead town, the abandoned Indian medicinal springs, the stomping ground of the long extinct dinosaur. Broods with a terrible new kind of catastrophic capability. Tyrannosaurus Rex, the terrible king lizard, stalked his doomed prey 200,000,000 years ago along the bed of the Paluxy. Undammed Paluxy waters obliterated the works of God and the works of man for 70 years as spa after spa went down the river and owners went bankrupt. Now it is nuclear power — the High Tech king lizard. A cagey sign (don't alarm anyone — bad for business) says "go this way, go that, in emergency." (Never is the term "nuclear power" used, but always "steam electric station.") You can't leave town by way of the slick, new superhighway because — "broad is the path that leadeth unto destruction," as the Bible says — the new highway leads into the mouth of the monster. To each epoch its own destroyer. □

Georgia Klipple is a long-time contributor to the Observer.

AFTERWORD
Dinosaur Valley

Patricia Watts
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TOXIC WASTE CITIZENS HEARING. Houston. Tuesday, October 2, 1984. 6:00 to 10:00 p.m. Free. Speak out on toxic waste; learn about the problems, and solutions, and ways you can help. University of Houston, Hilton, University Park Campus, Entrance #1, Constellation Room 261. Contact: Pamela Brodie, Texas Toxics Campaign, 713-526-2667.

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