

# THE TEXAS OBSERVER

A Journal of Free Voices

November 8, 1985

One Dollar

## Phil Gramm's Economics of Despair

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The Texas junior senator longs for a country in which military procurements continue to eat up the federal budget, corporations pay no taxes and suffer few constraints, and federal programs serving lower- and middle-income Americans are eliminated to feed the federal deficit. With help from his colleagues, he may get his wish.

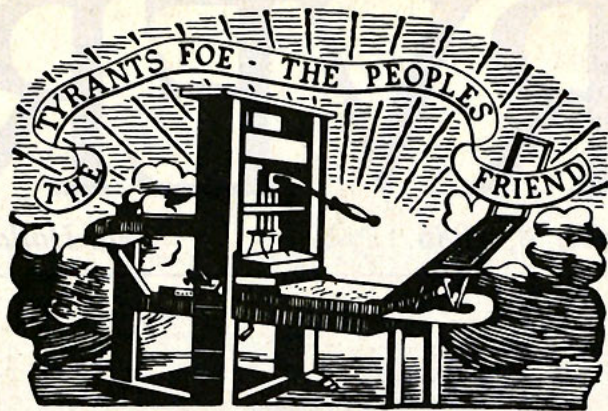
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Dorothy Ahle

*"I want to do what my mama taught me."*

—Phil Gramm, Senate floor, October 4, 1985.



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**EDITOR** Geoffrey Rips  
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**CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:** Warren Burnett, Nina Butts, Jo Clifton, Craig Clifford, Louis Dubose, John Henry Faulk, Ed Garcia, Bill Helmer, James Harrington, Jack Hopper, Amy Johnson, Rick Piltz, Susan Raleigh, John Schwartz, Michael Ventura, Lawrence Walsh.

**CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS:** Alan Pogue, Russell Lee, Scott Van Osdol, Alicia Daniel.

**CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS:** Mark Antonuccio, Eric Avery, Tom Ballenger, Jeff Danziger, Beth Epstein, Dan Hubig, Pat Johnson, Kevin Kreneck, Carlos Lowry, Miles Mathis, Joe McDermott, Ben Sargent, Dan Thibodeau.

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**Managing Publisher** Cliff Olofson  
**Advertising & Development Director** Dana Loy  
**Subscription Manager** Stefan Wanstrom  
**Consultant** Frances Barton

### Editorial and Business Office

600 West 28th Street, #105, Austin, Texas 78705  
(512) 477-0746

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## EDITORIAL

# Phil Gramm's Economics of Despair

AND SO WE have, a little over four years after the ascension of the gospel of Reaganomics formulated as the Gramm-Latta Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981, the dropping of the other shoe — the Gramm-Rudman deficit reduction amendment. There are those, such as House Speaker Tip O'Neill, who say Gramm's 1981 bill is responsible for the mess we are now in and that the current bill is designed to bail the country out after the failure of Gramm-Latta and Reaganomics. That may be called a sympathetic reading.

The truth is that Gramm-Rudman is a logical progression from Gramm-Latta in the economics of Phil Gramm. Gramm's economics are intent upon making this country a mecca for unrestricted business activity, including the unbridled growth of the old military-industrial complex, and dispensing with all government responsibility for the social welfare of its citizens. What Phil Gramm has been working for, all these years, is that so-called free market economy in which the big fish gobble up the little, and the labor force and the poor and consumers are so many worms.

Look at Gramm-Latta. It included federal cuts in agriculture programs and increased interest rates for Farmers Home Administration farm ownership loans. Money was cut for student loans while the interest rates were increased, as were interest rates for small business loans. Funding for Medicaid was cut while eligibility requirements for Medicare, food stamps and Aid to Families with Dependent Children were tightened considerably. At the same time military spending has risen astronomically.

Clearly this plan has not brought down the federal deficit. That has spiraled out of sight. Instead, what it has done is bring the United States into the debtor class of nations. It has led Teddy Kennedy to vote for the Gramm-Rudman deficit reduction because the people he represents — the people who backed Mondale, the once-liberal patrons of the Democratic party — are more concerned about the federal deficit and its effect on corporate earnings than about the social welfare programs they championed in better times.

So, contrary to Tip O'Neill's claim that Gramm-Rudman is designed to correct the mistakes of Gramm-Latta, it is instead a very carefully calculated second step on Gramm's agenda. One of Gramm's Congressional colleagues told the *New Republic* in 1981 that "you could wipe out the social programs entirely, and that would be just fine with Phil."

The Gramm-Rudman bill mandates that half the spending cuts to reduce the deficit must come from the automatic increases for inflation in entitlement programs, including food stamps, Medicare, Medicaid, etc. The other half of the cuts come from across-the-board cuts in remaining discretionary funding. This includes about 60 percent of the defense budget (but exempts the development and procurement of weapons).

Sen. Kennedy, in defending his vote for Gramm-Rudman, said it would force much-needed cuts in defense spending. But there is already talk from the Administration that it may invoke national security interests in refusing to reduce the

deficit through cuts in defense spending. This would, then, force even greater cuts in other government programs. Sen. Carl Levin, D-Michigan, said it will force Reagan "to do something realistic about revenues," i.e., raise taxes. But nowhere are revenues included in the Gramm-Rudman formula. It is based entirely on spending cuts. The Democratic Study Group of the House of Representatives reports, "Many regard the omission of revenues as grossly unfair, especially in view of the fact that the revenue loss from the 1981 Reagan tax legislation is a major cause of the current deficit crisis."

Bill Bradley, D-New Jersey, argues that the Democrats voting for Gramm-Rudman assume that Reagan is a passive actor in the process. "I think he's going to go out there and fight hard to exempt defense," Bradley said on an ABC-TV news program. "I don't believe this will be [an action-forcing mechanism]. The President is too skillful."

Are Levin, Kennedy, et. al., so naive as to assume that, even if Reagan agreed to a tax increase, that it would be an equitable tax increase? Don't expect this President to propose the re-imposition of the corporate tax structure whose cutting in 1981 fueled the deficit. Instead, expect the middle-income wage earner to bear the brunt of any increase.

Bradley has called the bill "a procedural solution to a substantive problem," saying it is hypocritical for Congress to pass a budget that increases the deficit and at the same time pass a bill mandating deficit reduction. But the bill is worse than a mere act of hypocrisy. According to a report prepared by the minority staff of the Senate Budget Committee, the Gramm-Rudman amendment could have a severe impact on federal programs, causing a great deal of hardship and suffering in this country.

**B**ASED ON Congressional Budget Office estimates, the committee staff reports that, under Gramm-Rudman, Community Development Block Grants, subsidized housing (including housing for the elderly and handicapped), Veterans Administration hospital construction, and Environmental Protection Agency sewage treatment grants will be virtually eliminated in fiscal year 1986. In the same year, several major programs would suffer severe cuts, including a 55 percent reduction in Urban Development Action Grants; a 50 percent reduction in job training; more than 40 percent cut from compensatory education programs, eliminating special reading and math programs for 2 million children; and a 30 percent cut in Housing Development Action Grants.

A ten percent reduction in foreign aid by 1991 would include a ten percent reduction in the Food-for-Peace program, reducing food assistance to countries in need and eliminating \$130 million in commodities purchased from American farmers. The deficit reduction could delay or eliminate the funding for cleanup of 50 Superfund sites in fiscal year 1987 and substantial cost-sharing by the Army Corps of Engineers with the states on new projects. It would mean 15,000 Farmers Home Administration borrowers would not receive loans in fiscal year 1987, a reduction of \$375 million in agricultural research, and the possible curtailment of funds for five land grant-colleges. Certainly they don't mean Gramm's beloved Texas A&M.

In addition, room for 27,000 children would have to be dropped from Head Start, 10 million meals per year would have to be eliminated from elderly nutrition programs, community health centers serving 300,000 low-income people in medically underserved areas would be cut. Unless states picked up the difference, pre-natal services for 30,000 pregnant women will be lost, as will \$111 million in block grant funding for preventive health care, immunizations, and alcohol and drug abuse. Is Nancy Reagan listening? Over half the money

for cancer research by the National Institute of Health will be cut, along with another \$350 million for other medical research, and funds for the Center for Disease Control will be reduced so drastically that it could effectively end the recently-ordered AIDS research.

It's not a pretty picture. On a recent Phil Donahue television program, Sen. Gary Hart called the package "an ugly baby," to which Gramm replied, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." Part of the beauty for Gramm must be the discretionary power it affords the President. Reagan, in effect, is given the line-item veto power over many social programs that he has lusted after for so long. Programs such as the Job Corps will disappear in a flash.

But that's not the worst of it. The deficit reduction plan is beautiful to Phil Gramm because it would bring this country that much closer to the corporate statism he desires. The failure to increase government revenues and the escalation in military spending, coupled with a steady diminution of social programs, such as farm and student loans, which serve the middle class, are rendering this country captive to lending institutions.

**T**HE MIDDLE CLASS in this country is losing the farm, and along with it all semblance of economic mobility and political leverage. Phil Gramm's economics are

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a formula by which to turn this country into Pinochet's Chile, wherein austerity is imposed on all social programs in order to repay the national debt while the only major government subsidies go to the military-industrial complex.

The independence of the middle class is mortgaged for years to come, while military spending not only protects the established order but, more important, becomes the only game in town. It is no accident that higher education and high technology in this state are so intimately tied to the military. Gramm's economics require that the U.S. economy become dependent upon military spending. Already some community organizations in South Texas believe that a military base is the only kind of economic aid their region will receive. This is also closely tied to the increasing belligerence of Reagan foreign policy. There needs to be periodic justification for the military build-up.

That ignoble experiment in Chile by the Chicago school of economics is being brought home by Phil Gramm and his ilk. The austerity imposed by international lending institutions on other debtor nations is being imposed on us, only without being so named. If everything goes Gramm's way, we will one day be a nation with no corporate taxes, cheap labor, no worker rights, a large underemployed labor force desperate for work, and Phil Gramm will proclaim that, finally, the great day has come for U.S. industry to return to the United States. He may be lacing up his jackboots at this very moment in eager anticipation.

Phil Gramm is a major architect of our current despair. His deficit reduction bill is not a corrective for his 1981 budget bill but an escalation. Those voting with him do this country a grave disservice.

G.R.

## How They Voted

The Gramm-Rudman-Hollings deficit reduction amendment to the bill raising the national debt limit passed the Senate, 75-24, on October 10, 1985. (Sen. Charles Mathias, R-Maryland, did not vote.) The bill requires a balanced budget by 1991.

Democrats voting for the plan were: Baucus, Mont.; Bentsen, Tex.; Biden, Del.; Boren, Okla.; Bumpers, Ark.; Burdick, N.D.; DeConcini, Ariz.; Dixon, Ill.; Dodd, Conn.; Ford, Ky.; Gore, Tenn.; Heflin, Ala.; Hollings, S.C.; Kennedy, Mass. (Will a future Doggett run campaign ads about Gramm and Kennedy voting together? Or, perhaps, in Massachusetts they'll say, "Texas doesn't need a third senator."); Kerry, Mass. (or a fourth senator); Leahy, Vt.; Levin, Mich.; Long, La.; Melcher, Mont.; Nunn, Ga.; Proxmire, Wis.; Pryor, Ark.; Rockefeller, W. Va.; Sasser, Tenn.; Simon, Ill.; Stennis, Miss.; and Zorinsky, Neb.

The four Republicans voting against Gramm-Rudman were: Hatfield, Ore.; Kassebaum, Kan.; Stafford, Vt.; and Lowell Weicker, Conn., who told the *New York Times* that Democrats and Republicans who would normally have voted against the bill "are up for re-election, and they feel this is an easy thing to have on their resumes."

The 20 Democrats voting against the bill were: Bingaman, N.M.; Bradley, N.J.; Byrd, W. Va.; Chiles, Fla.; Cranston, Cal.; Eagleton, Mo.; Exon, Neb.; Glenn, Ohio; Harkin, Iowa; Hart, Colo.; Inouye, Hawaii; Johnston, La.; Lautenberg, N.J.; Matsunaga, Hawaii; Metzenbaum, Ohio; Mitchell, Me.; Moynihan, N.Y.; Pell, R.I.; Riegle, Mich.; Sarbanes, Md. □

## The 'Mama' Defense

IS THERE anything that can stop Kent Hance's slide into the abyss? First he said he'd never turn Republican, then did. Then he kissed the ring of the leader of Texas anti-abortion forces, begging forgiveness for having voted for several pro-choice measures in the House. Now, in an interview run on October 27 by Sam Attlesey of the *Dallas Morning News*, Hance grovels for Republican support by proclaiming his adherence to the "King's X" school of politics.

Hance tells Attlesey that he "voted for Reagan in 1984 because I knew him, and I voted for Reagan in 1980 because I knew his opponent." He says that, while he'd pledged to "support the Democratic ticket" in 1984, that didn't mean he was going to vote for its candidates. Curious, since it was hard to find any other kind of support coming from Hance.

Trying to make a virtue out of what, at best, can be called disingenuous activity, Hance drags his mother into it, saying, she "voted for Phil too. She was going to write me in, but she was worried it might be a tie. Then if Doggett won, she



was afraid when she got to Heaven, the Lord wouldn't forgive her."

It sounds like Hance's mother has been hanging around with Phil Gramm's much-touted "mama." Don't these women get tired of serving as the last defense whenever their boys find themselves backed up against the moral and ethical wall? It's the old "mama" defense, whereby Gramm saves himself from charges of hard-heartedness and the suspicion that he wants to cut Social Security by pleading that his mama depends on that Social Security check. Apparently Kent Hance is trying to show that he couldn't have been lying to us about his 1984 vote. Instead, he must have been doing the right thing, seeing as how his mama did it, too. And just for good measure, Hance throws in the Lord and Heaven, too. How could anyone flout that kind of authority? Or is this an indication that worms are eating at Kent's subconscious?

The question for Republicans: can you believe Hance now or is this a "Double-King's X" with a path already cleared for hiding behind mama's skirts? G.R.

# The Current Illness

**W**HEN AMERICAN conservatives were finally pushed out of their silence on South Africa by the public clamor here and abroad in opposition to apartheid, it became clear that their concern with that country was not with pass laws or voting rights or the fine points of racial discrimination. What was at stake in South Africa, as the Rev. Jerry Falwell put it, was whether the country was becoming ripe for a communist takeover.

There could be no more telling example of the peculiar psychosis that has taken root in American political culture in the years since Ronald Reagan came to power. One of the most abominable political systems of the modern era is suddenly passed off by conservatives with a wave of the hand and an impatient "but let's talk about communism." More and more, the fear of communism is expected to be the guiding factor by which we judge world events.

This militant anti-communism has traditionally been the concern of a few out-of-whack fringe groups, such as the John Birch Society, or the Liberty Lobby. But, as everyone knows, Ronald Reagan has been only too happy to use the Presidency to elevate the far-right perspective to new respectability. When the World Anti-Communist League met recently in Dallas, the President sent a message commending their efforts to build a better world, even though it is a matter of public record that the group has had close ties with dictators, death squad leaders, anti-Semites, and race purificationists.

One need look no further than the editorial page of the *Dallas Morning News* to find this musty anti-communism given a respectable forum in Texas. Though the paper's news editors didn't find the Anti-Communist League's conference worthy of coverage, the editorialists referred to it with wonderment as "the worldwide convention of freedom-fighters." In a subsequent editorial, the writers treated the event with high seriousness, opening a comment in rhapsodic fashion: "Only two could be chosen as Freedom-Fighters of the Year, but there were so many courageous freedom-fighters at the convention at the Registry [Hotel] sponsored by the World Anti-Communist League."

Nothing provides so much sport for the *Dallas Morning News* editorialists as taking swipes at the Soviet Union or Cuba. In August, they found themselves explaining Soviet alcoholism as the result of communism — "there is nothing to do but get drunk," they wrote. The next day, urging Radio Marfi to take a harder line against Cuba, they declared that "Cuba is a global menace."

But throughout the month of September, when news of unrest in South Africa was on the front page of their paper day after day and when Reagan was forced into making a show of "sanctions" against South Africa, the courageous editorialists at the *Morning News* addressed the issue of apartheid only once. ("More capitalism" was prescribed to cure South Africa's ills.) The subject came up in one other editorial, but it was by way of telling other African nations

that had condemned apartheid to mind their own business. When other newspapers were taking issue with the President's goofy remarks about South Africa's achieving desegregation, the *Morning News* editorialized against the "spreading cancer" of communism fostered in Central America by Nicaragua.

This is a political sickness, an anti-communist psychosis, that would be worth ignoring if it were not that it happens to be perfectly in step with the current foreign policy of our government. Reagan's "Darth Vader" speech locating the Soviet Union as the focus of evil in the modern world delighted his far-right fans, and since then his military chief Caspar Weinberger has reiterated the charge. Weinberger said last summer that the United States holds "philosophical and moral superiority" over the Soviet Union, and he urged conservative groups to help in "spotlighting the inherent evil" of communism.

It is a sickness that has been with us from the first day our empire was challenged by a competing ideology, and to say it is a sickness does not imply that it is wrong to declare that communist repression should be denounced and resisted.

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*"Only two could be chosen as  
Freedom-Fighters of the Year,  
but there were so many courageous  
freedom-fighters . . ."*

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It is sick because it denies — all the more strenuously in periods of vehement anti-communism — that the United States is responsible for any of the evil in the world. It ascribes all evil to the enemy power and reserves all good motives and good character to ourselves. It is a withdrawal from reality.

Ronald Reagan's speech to the 40th anniversary ceremony of the United Nations in late October was one more example of how far the illness has progressed. "It's difficult for us to understand the ideological premise that force is an acceptable way to expand a political system," he said, even as our freelance gang of guerrillas in Central America was trying to force out the Sandinistas. "We cannot accommodate ourselves to the use of force and subversion to consolidate and expand the reach of totalitarianism," he said, even as we were as accommodated as ever to the force used by Ferdinand Marcos in ruling the Philippines and the subversion used to support dictators in whatever places we choose.

His speech was — and we mean to register no surprise here — a transparent attempt to portray Americans, and thus, American foreign policy, as beyond reproach. "It's in the nature of Americans to hate war and its destructiveness," the President said. "We would rather wage our struggle to rebuild and renew, not to tear down. We would rather fight against hunger, disease, and catastrophe. We could rather engage our adversaries in the battle of ideals and ideas for the future. These principles emerge from the innate openness and good character of our people, and from our long struggle and sacrifice for our liberties and the liberties of others." All this may well be true about some Americans (though it has not been our record in foreign policy), but it is impossible to miss the implication of such a statement as "It is in the nature of Americans to hate war. . . ." Is it in the nature of Russians to hate war? Is it part of the Nicaraguan nature? Or are we as a nation somehow of a higher nature than others?

What is it about "the innate openness and good character of our people" that is worth remarking upon if it is not to say that we stand above other peoples in character and goodness?

There can be little doubt that Reagan and his surrounding ideologues believe that we stand above the other people of the world, especially the brown-skinned people and the angry people and the dehumanized people. The purpose of his speech to the UN, of course, was to build up our image in contrast to that of the Soviet Union's, to once again draw a picture of a world locked in combat between benevolent democrats and evil communists.

## The Grenada Syndrome

**I**T HAS BECOME very important in this period of our history to regain a sense of blamelessness. This was demolished so severely in the Vietnam era that the propagandists of the Reagan administration must work diligently at every chance to reconstruct our national self-image, to change the national consciousness, so that we may see ourselves as kindly promoters of democracy and freedom. World events have conspired in certain instances to help this process along: seemingly random terrorist attacks have given us the feeling of being victims in a brutal world, ready now to finally stand up for ourselves.

Those who break with the new "upbeat mood" (as *Time* magazine put it) are suffered less easily these days. They are, in the clever words of Jeane Kirkpatrick, subject to a strange urge to "blame America first." What lies behind this putdown is not a dissatisfaction with whether America is blamed first or second, but that it is blamed at all. We are simply tired of it. "And, darn it all," complained the *Dallas Morning News* in a September 5 editorial, "in an interview in the latest *Time* Gorbachev pinned the blame for world tensions on America's militarism and its 'campaign of hatred.'" Darn it all, we won't hear of it!

No thinking person can miss the obvious blind spots of today's anti-communists. Left to themselves, how long would it be before they would speak up on apartheid? What is the meaning of their silence on repression, brutality and torture in Guatemala, Chile, the Philippines? There are many miserable places they seem to have no concern about. In the

same way, they are fond of turning the question around. Why are those who get arrested in front of the South African embassy not protesting in front of the Soviet Union's embassy? Why do leftists cry for the people of El Salvador, but not Cuba? It sounds like a legitimate call for consistency, but it is cheaper than that.

There is a good reason we choose to protest repression in some places more actively than in others: we are morally obliged to protest evil we are connected to, and in a different way than we protest other evils. But this is the truly frightening thing about peering inside the world view of, say, the *Dallas Morning News* editorialists: all evils come from the outside enemy. The greatest scorn is heaped upon the communists of Cambodia, or Cuba or Central America — and none of the world's ills are because of us. Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman, in *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism*, wrote: "Suppose that some Russian intellectual condemns U.S. behavior in Chile or Vietnam. What he says may be quite true, but we do not admire his courage or moral integrity." The same is true for our own complacent editorialists.

The case of South Africa has been especially alarming to the Right in America because a huge number of citizens have made an unusual connection: the investment of U.S. corporations is related in a direct way to the exploitation of black people in South Africa. Conservatives across the land have uniformly resisted this trend in American protest, suggesting that, yes, condemn apartheid if you must, but do not attack the economic connections between our country and theirs.

It is a connection that needs to be made a hundred times over, in places around the globe. In what ways do the interests of American corporations lead us to a foreign policy that puts investment criteria long before civil liberties and human rights? In what ways is our desire for "strategic" metals and minerals and other resources responsible for our preventing or smothering or overturning nationalist revolutions that may endanger "our interests?"

There is no danger that our country will become blind to the faults of its enemies. But atrocities have been committed in our name, too, and there will be more tomorrow. The longer we are blind to that, the smaller we will be, as a people; the sicker we will be, as a nation.

D.D.

## • OBSERVATIONS •

# The State as Terrorist

**T**HE REAGAN administration has been seeking to rally world opinion against "state-sponsored terrorism," but these are treacherous waters, as daily we learn.

Surely it is state-sponsored terrorism when Khaddafi sends thugs into other nations to murder his critics abroad. If the Bulgarians sponsored the attempt to kill the Pope, that, too, was the hated phenomenon. Every decent person should join in the outcries against the Soviets' maiming of children and razing

Paris

of whole villages in Afghanistan.

But President Reagan would have us condemn only the tortures and murders that are committed by the leftist states. It was also state-sponsored terrorism when Dictator Pinochet's Chile murdered two leftists on the streets of Washington; when Argentina's junta tortured and killed perhaps 6,000 dissidents in the 1970s; when South Africa forcibly removed blacks from their homes and land; and when, and if, the Marcos government of the Philippines assassinated opposition leader Benigno Aquino.

Should we be stimulated by the Reagan administration's crusade against state-sponsored terrorism to evaluate President Reagan's own foreign policy, the waters darken even more. What was it when, acting without a declaration of war, the Reagan administration caused the United States to invade Grenada, a small island nation of black people? What was it when, again acting without a declaration of war, the Administration mounted a revolution against the government of Nicaragua, mined its harbors, set fire to its petroleum tanks, and instructed the contras in how to "neutralize" selected Nicaraguans?

Hesitantly, the Reagan administration has been developing the doctrine that a nation may retaliate violently against terrorists even across boundaries in a

foreign country with which the retaliating nation is at peace. But when is "counter-terror" simply terrorism for the state, a mask for acts of war?

Israel has recently provided a fresh example of a state using military force to kill terrorists abroad. Retaliating, it said, for the murders of three Israelis in Cyprus, Israel sent its planes 750 miles to bomb the PLO headquarters in Tunis, killing scores of people. Israel was not at war with Tunisia, but by customary standards committed an act of war against it. If the people killed were "the people responsible," President Reagan said, the U.S. would approve. The PLO promised Israel a death for a death, an injury for an injury.

The explosion of the Greenpeace ship, *Rainbow Warrior*, in the port of Auckland, New Zealand, on July 10, killing a Greenpeace photographer, provides a clear example of a nation on our side committing terrorism. The government of France has been caught bloody-handed in an act of terror against the activist critics of its nuclear weapons tests in the Pacific. This is the minimum meaning of "l'affaire Greenpeace."

France tests its nuclear bombs in a dormant volcano in the Pacific, 12,000 miles away from Paris, French vineyards and French villages, the Côte d'Azur. The Greenpeace organization sails ships into the Pacific to protest the tests.

In 1972 a French minesweeper rammed a Greenpeace sailboat in the test area. The next year French marines boarded the same boat and beat up the crew. I have learned from a reliable source in Paris that ten years ago, the mechanics who were servicing a Greenpeace ship were infiltrated by French agents, and in consequence the ship never left port for one of its missions — facts that are not known even to this day to Greenpeace.

This year, the commander of the French test site forces, Admiral Henri Fagès, sent a memorandum to Paris asking for action against the Greenpeace plan to sail a flotilla into the area of the French tests of a neutron bomb, scheduled for this autumn. Fagès used the word *anticiper* to describe the action he desired. *Anticiper* means "to anticipate something, to forestall someone's action." *Anticiper sur les droits de quelqu'un* means "to encroach on someone's rights."

In Paris, Defense Minister Charles Hernu twice underlined the word *anticiper* and passed the memo to the head of the French secret service. In the office of President François Mitterrand, the military staff director, General Jean

Saulnier, authorized spending about half a million dollars for an operation that allegedly was to be limited to investigating Greenpeace. The money came from a secret fund held in the office of Mitterrand's prime minister, Laurent Fabius.

A French secret agent then infiltrated Greenpeace, and eight French secret agents who were trained as "combat swimmers" cooperated to sink the *Rainbow Warrior* by attaching two bombs to its hull. When the first bomb exploded twelve crew members were on board, having a birthday party. Most of them fled the boat, but then the second explosion killed the photographer, who had gone below to try to save his equipment. France's bomb could just as well have killed all twelve of these people.

Hernu has resigned and the head of the secret service has been fired; according to a public opinion poll, three-fourths of the people disapprove of the sinking and half of them believe the President himself is implicated. Yet at this writing the Reagan administration, while instantly and publicly applauding Israel's raid on Tunis, still stands silent about France's state-committed terrorism of last summer.

President Reagan is correct that we should condemn state-sponsored terrorism. But to sail confidently in these wild waters we must first cleanse our own decks of terrorism, and then we must hold all nations, left and right, foes and allies, to the same high standard that we ourselves observe.

Otherwise, we will be blown uncontrollably into the wildest waters of

all. "As a matter of U.S. policy," said White House press secretary Larry Speakes, "retaliation against terrorist attacks is a legitimate response and an expression of self-defense. . . . It is a matter of principle that it is legitimate self-defense to respond appropriately to acts of terrorism." Why does not that policy and principle expose France to retaliation for its terrorist attack on Greenpeace? If the Reagan administration invades Nicaragua, does not the same policy and principle expose the American people to retaliatory terrorism? R.D.

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# Jim Hightower on the Populist Moment

*Following are excerpts from Agriculture Commissioner Jim Hightower's speech to the National Press Club, delivered on October 17, 1985. We print them here because we think they address head-on the Democratic party's malaise. — The editors.*

**H**ERE I AM a practicing populist, a Democratic politician from the hinterlands, come here today to the cultured East to bring to you what might seem an unconventional message from the frontier. . . . There are four points to it. Number one, the great masses of middle-America have not become nearly as yuppie-ized, as Republicanized, as happy-faced as many of the pundits and the Republican pollsters and other trendspotters would have us believe. Number two, the political party that seeks refuge in the great yawning, middle ground of American politics is destined to lose. Number three, Democratic leadership, contrary to popular opinion, is experiencing vigorous growth at the grassroots level among people who are running for and winning state and local offices. And number four, the Democratic party can indeed be the majority party again if it will seize the populist moment that is presented to us today. . . .

No matter how hard the political seers and sages try to divide the world neatly between liberals and conservatives, the truth is that's just not where most Americans live. No more than 20 percent, I would venture to say, of Americans are ideologically right-wing or left-wing, period. Most of them don't take what you would consider in the intellectual communities a true ideological position . . . the great center of American politics is not square-dab in the middle of the spectrum, equa-distant from conservatism and liberalism. Rather, the true center is in populism, which is rooted in the realization that too few people control all the money and power, leaving very little for the rest of us. And they use that money and power to gain more for themselves. Populism is propelled politically by the simmering desire of the mass of people

to upend that arrangement.

Now, this is hardly a centrist position if by centrist you mean moderate, but it is at the center of most people's political being and it is a very hot center indeed. You can find it for yourselves, whether you go out there, as some of you do, and take a scientific poll of 800 randomly selected respondents, or if you just go down and greet and meet the morning bunch at the Chat and Chew cafe, you will quickly tap a deep strain of populist resentment at the powers that be — the bankers and the bosses, the politicians and the press, the big boys, and what generally is referred to as "the bastards." Middle Americans — and not meek centrists, which we are being told is the majority constituency the political parties are supposed to be pursuing.

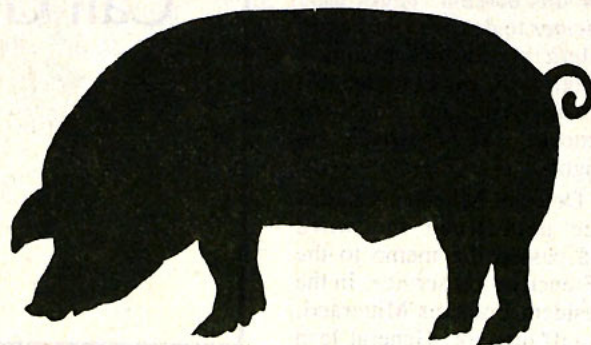
These people are not meek at all. In fact, what they are, in my view, is anti-establishment malcontents. They are disgruntled mavericks and they're mad. They are mad about what's happening in their own lives. These are folks who have a deep belief in old-time, little "d" democratic ideals of fairness, of egalitarianism, of tolerance, and pluralism. But their daily experience teaches them something else. Their daily experience teaches them that life is not so fair, it is not so egalitarian or any of the rest of this stuff. . . . they know that in their daily experience and they resent it, and there is an ingrained populist spirit that is wide-spread and deeply held in the body politic of this country today. These people are looking for political champions willing to kick ass to set that right again, to make that straight.

When I got elected, as always happens to politicians who are a little out of the

norm, I had suddenly a bunch of lobbyists come to visit me. And one of them got hold of me and said, "Well you snuck into office, and I guess you're [there] for at least four years, but now what you need to do if you want to continue is to moderate your views. Go along to get along, generally take the cautious middle path." And then a farmer friend of mine came and said, "Hell, Hightower, there's nothing in the middle of the road but yellow stripes and dead armadillos. We want you out there fighting for us — getting out there on our side of things."

And that's not just a few people who feel like that, it is not just labor, it's not just poor folks, it's not just minority, environmentalists, Volvo-driving liberals; I contend it is the American majority, including the dirt farmer and the hard scrabble rancher, including the Main Street business person, the entrepreneur, the nurses and the keypunchers, the waitresses and the clerks. Not just the beansprout eaters but the snuff-dippers in this society as well who have this kind of feeling. Now, these people are neither right-wing nor left-wing, and frankly, neither Republican nor Democrat. They'll vote for the candidate who appears most willing, and who is most able, to kick ass on their behalf. Now this defies neat categorization and it confounds the political experts on a fairly regular basis. Remember back in 1968, after Bobby Kennedy was assassinated, that a bulk of his supporters bolted not to Hubert Humphrey, as everybody would have assumed, but to George Wallace. Closer to my own heart — 1980 in Texas — the good voters of that wonderful state voted for Ronald Reagan, then they turned in 1982 and voted for Hightower, then they turned back in 1984 and voted for Reagan. And I'm betting that they're going to come home to papa again in 1986, when I'm up. . . .

**T**HE Democratic Party has got to get back in the swim of things again, and I think that means getting in the mainstream of Democratic





populism. We've got to go to the people of this country with a combination of old-time Democratic principle, with common sense, problem-solving solutions, and with hard-core political passion. Principle is first, and it is always foremost. And here we as a Democratic Party go with our strength. From Jefferson, Jackson, Roosevelt and Truman, Kennedy and Johnson, ours has been the party not of the Rockefellers but of the little fellers, of egalitarianism. We've got the principle working for us.

Now, unfortunately, we're hearing today voices inside as well as outside of the Democratic party, urging us to forsake all of that for a trendier tone in our politics. They say that the Republicans have swept the heart of the country away, winning with a more modern, upbeat, and, most importantly, upscaled message and that we as Democrats should be following suit with that. They say that we should give up all this tacky talk about farmers going broke, about unemployment, about the decline in our poverty statistics, about the need for equal rights in this country and around the world. They say just surrender to the trend that is going throughout the country — the Republican trend. They urge us to get happy, get with it, and, in fact, get Republican, I guess is what they're really talking about. Well, I tell you, if the meek ever inherit the Earth, these timid voices are going to be land barons, it seems to me.

Where is the grit in this? The old-time Democratic grit. And more important than that, where is there a Democratic future in that? We are not going to build a Democratic majority by offering more cuisinarts and L.L. Bean gift certificates to the people of this country. The yuppies are not a base for any political party in my view, and certainly not the Democratic Party. If you lined up every yuppie that there is in America today, they would stretch from here to the nearest gourmet stand. The well-off already have a party working for them and doing very nicely for them. Even as we sit here partaking of this good meal, these folks are out there at the clubs right now enjoying a mid-day repast of cold melon mélange and asparagus and goat cheese and a delightfully fruity and frisky California white wine. But most of America doesn't live there. The majority of Americans are down at the 7-11 picking up a Budweiser and a Slim Jim and wondering is there anybody in America who's going to stand up on their side. That is the populist constituency that's down there at the 7-11. And those are the people that the Democrats must begin to speak to.



File Photo

Ag Commissioner Jim Hightower

Now, no one is advocating, least of all me, some sort of mule-stubborn dedication to the old, stale, tired policies and programs of the Democratic past, but neither can we abandon our base: the people who are the true Democratic party, including the blacks and Mexican Americans in our culture, including the women, including the small business people and the entrepreneurs and the farmers, the mass of people who are in the middle-class, the lower middle-class, and the lower economic classes in our society. That's the vast majority. We cannot abandon that base, and we have a proud agenda of being able to seek a broad sharing of economic prosperity in this society that appeals to that base.

It is an unfinished agenda. An agenda that needs new attention, fresh approaches, renewed dedication. American voters support this goal. They might not care to join hands and march off across the horizon together humming folk songs, but they are a whole lot more community-minded, a whole lot less selfish than the prevailing yuppie Republican approach of "I've got mine. You get yours," "caveat emptor," "never give a sucker an even break," "adiós, chump." People are a little bit better than that if we reach out to them and appeal to them with a sensible program that puts substance to our old-time principles — a program that's got pocket-book appeal and that can deliver what it promises.

At the center of this must be a consistent theme that the Democrats must begin to advocate again, of grassroots economic growth. Democrats have got to develop programs that make ours the party of genuine economic

opportunity again, of upward mobility for all the people, not trickle-down mobility, but percolate up from the grassroots; an investment of our nation's economic future in the truly productive people of our society, by which I do mean those family farmers and the worker cooperatives and small and medium-sized businesses that are out there — entrepreneurs, minority businesses, the wildcatters, and the up-and-comers. Those are the people that create genuine wealth at the grassroots. That is a natural constituency for the Democratic party. That is a constituency that no one is basically talking to right now, and it's a constituency that we can build a majority base on for our party well into the future.

... I don't have to tell most of you, there's a world of hurt in agriculture right now. People are going broke at a historic rate.

Well, what do you do about this crisis? The classical liberal solution, of course, is well, let's give them some subsidy money in there. Well, we've been doing that and that hasn't been producing very happy results for us. We've put in massive subsidies. We've had massive bankruptcies. The whole program's been a massive failure. Instead, it seems to me, we've got to find ways to give farmers a fair price structure in the market place, number one. And, secondly, give them an opportunity to sell their products at a better price. The first of those, the fair price structure, pretty much has to be done at a national level. Now, the Congress has an opportunity before it to do exactly that. Unfortunately, the House of Representatives has chosen just recently not to do it, to reject a populist solution in favor of a liberal solution.

**T**HE populist solution that we proposed was the Farm Policy Reform Act introduced by Senator Harkin of Iowa and Representative Alexander of Arkansas — a program that was written by farmers themselves. We went to the countryside and said to farmers, "What if you were to write a farm policy, what would be in it?" This is the program that they came up with. The guts of it, without taxing your patience too long with arcane farm policy matters, is simply giving them a good business tool that other businesses enjoy. And that is the tool of supply-management. McDonald's is not making more hamburgers today than they think they're going to sell. If they do, they adjust production tomorrow. . . Only farmers in our society are in

that position because no individual farmer can cut back and have an impact on what's going to happen in the next county or the next state. That has to be a national program.

So what we did was to offer a supply-management program that would allow farmers to produce only the number of bushels and bales and gallons that there

was an actual demand for in this country, in the world cash and credit markets, and in the world hunger market, and that's how much we would produce. In return for which, farmers would get a high price floor. That meant that what they produced would be sold in the marketplace, which meant it was a zero crop subsidy payment program to the farmers. There was no tax exposure under this. Instead, as I say, the House of Representatives voted last week to reject this, and it's voted out a piece of legislation that is going to cost somewhere between \$37 billion and a \$100 billion over the next three years, nobody seems exactly sure, and it's not going to save any farmers. Well, we're on to the Senate with that program. Senator Harkin is carrying the bulk of our water over there. We're going to be active. The problem isn't going away and neither are we going to go away. But the point I want to make to you is that that was a populist-oriented solution to create a new mechanism, not to do anything negative to the Cargills and Continentals and the big cotton shippers and grain traders of the world that hold prices down on farmers, not to try to bust them up or reorganize the economy, but to create an additional marketing channel starting with the farmer — with the person that is the wealth creator in



the society. And it did it without heavy infusions of tax dollars involved. . . .

**M**Y POINT is, again, that the role of government in all of these populist approaches to problem-solving is to serve as an activist — as an anti-establishment institution helping people help themselves by getting involved in free enterprise. I believe in free enterprise, but not like Exxon does, putting it up at their annual meeting and saying, "We are free enterprise," and then clubbing anybody that dares to try to come out there against them. I believe in a thousand flowers blooming out there. And that means that government can form partnerships, be a catalyst to help free up the enterprise of people. And so you use the "free" in free enterprise not as an adjective but as a verb. If we do that, then we have a program that we can go to the people with. And that's my third and final point, which is that we've got to go to those people with passion. You hear all of these people saying we've got to tone it down, avoid loud noises and hot appeals, don't upset the people. The Democrats keep getting that kind of advice. And these people point to the South and say, "The the South's filled with all these conservative moderates. Now let's not wake them up; they'd be real upset if anybody said anything loud." The South is a culture that has invented better than two dozen pepper sauces to put on its breakfast eggs. That is not a moderate culture, it seems to me. And we like our politics just as spicy as that. You cannot beat pepper sauce with milk toast, and that's pretty much what these people would have us do. If you want to look at recent history, look at Mr. Reagan, who was the hot right-wing radical candidate against Mr. Carter, son of the South and a clear moderate, or against Mr. Mondale. The hot candidate beat the moderate candidate both times and, I think, will every time. . . . people do want to know that you believe in your own program and believe in the constituencies that you claim to want to serve. So we need to combine that populist principle, programs, and passions. And if we do that we'll win. Not automatically, of course, but at least you're in the fight and you're in the fight with integrity and you're in the fight with the hope to win and a hope to make a difference in this country. This is no time for Democrats to be ducking their heads and hiding, hibernating and hoping this Republican wave is going to go away. It's a time to go to the countryside and to fight. . . . □

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# Texas Universities Become Star Wars Boomtowns

By Nina Butts

**W**HEN HANS MARK, former secretary of the Air Force and former deputy administrator of NASA, became the chancellor of the University of Texas System in 1984, there was cause for celebration among those UT scientists who are willing to do work for the Pentagon. Mark is a long-time supporter of the development of a space-based missile defense — Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), a.k.a. Star Wars.

Mark came to the UT System about the same time that Congress was appropriating the first \$1.4 billion for Star Wars research. Some of the UT labs were already working on projects that lend themselves to space weapons, such as the moving and controlling of massive amounts of energy and the firing of projectiles at super-high speeds. Now, 18 months after Mark's arrival at UT, two new labs have been built with university funds to house research into the esoteric science of shooting rockets from satellites.

Star Wars was once the realm of only the politicians and scientists of the ultra-right — men like Joseph Coors and Edward Teller. The idea of laser weapons in space to defend against intercontinental ballistic missiles was a good topic for AM radio talk shows in the afternoon, and it appeared in print mostly in pamphlets circulated by the Lyndon LaRouche "Feed Jane Fonda to the Whales" groups, who maintain a presence in airports. But in March 1983, Reagan made a speech on television that elevated the status of the concept. The speech is reported to have come as a surprise to many of the White House senior aides, who said they had not seen it before it was delivered. Reagan appealed for the creation and deployment of a space-based defensive "umbrella" over the United States that would make nuclear weapons "impotent

and obsolete." Suddenly Star Wars was taken from those on the political and scientific fringes and placed in the hands of the Pentagon planners and Congressional committees.

With the help of Chancellor Mark, the University of Texas was able to amass millions of dollars in Star Wars contracts. According to John Pike of the Federation of American Scientists, the UT System has contracts with the Pentagon for almost \$20 million in Star Wars research. The contracts are divided between UT-Austin and UT-Arlington and extend from two to four years.

"It is neither in our interest nor not in our interest to do SDI research," Hans Mark said in an interview with the *Observer*. "We leave the investigators free to choose who they want to accept funding from. In each case, their interest is to pursue a particular technological track or scientific discovery. Whether or not you get that autonomy is called academic freedom. . . . We'll do some of it [the research for SDI]. It's not the UT System [doing the research]. It's individuals on the faculty."

One of those individuals is Dr. Charles Smith, deputy director of the Center for Energy Conversion Research at the University of Texas at Arlington, which acquired a \$3.9 million contract for three-and-a-half years of SDI research. That money has been supplemented by an \$800,000 grant from the state through the Texas Engineering Experiment Station, a state agency. (In its last session, the Texas House of Representatives passed a pro-Star Wars resolution, written by the Washington, D.C., lobbying group, Americans for the High Frontier, and sponsored by Dallas Rep. Lee Jackson.) "We're presently negotiating with SDI for substantially more money than this contract calls for," Smith said.

The research involves ways to move a large amount of energy from its source to its user at a specified time and variation. The power is for directed

energy weapons: lasers, particle accelerators, and electromagnetic launchers.

The Center for Energy Conversion Research built a lab exclusively for this state- and federally-funded Star Wars research at the old Arlington High School gymnasium. Using "on the order of \$80,000" in university funds, according to Smith, the gym was turned into the Power Conditioning Laboratory, with six faculty members and about a dozen students. "There are going to be a number of young ladies working on the project," Smith noted.

Texas Tech University is doing similar research for SDI at about the same level of funding. The two schools are part of an SDI consortium that also includes Auburn University, Polytechnic Institute of New York, and State University of New York at Buffalo.

Another major Star Wars research project at the University of Texas is the

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## *Outside the Reagan administration and the Pentagon, the main defenders of Star Wars are the researchers who benefit from SDI.*

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rail-gun study at UT-Austin. A rail gun, or hypervelocity launcher, fires projectiles at very high speeds. It can be used in several ways: in oil drilling, as a tank gun, and to fire at missiles. At the UT lab, the Center for Electromechanics, rail-gun insiders call the device the "Gedi gun" with a "G" to distinguish it from the Jedi of the movie.

The Center for Electromechanics has been at UT-Austin since 1972. In 1982, its budget was roughly \$2.8 million. This year (fiscal year 1986) it is \$10.5 million. William Weldon, the lab's technical director, said the jump came from Star Wars research money. This summer the lab moved off the main UT campus to a site north of Austin at Balcones Research Center. Eighty people work at the facility, which was built with university money.

The lab has one contract to work on the rail gun for SDI for \$11.1 million for 23 months. So far, \$2,496,234 of that money has been paid. In addition, the lab has a second contract to do SDI research into the power supply for the rail gun, called the homopolar generator, for \$4.7 million over 29 months. Work under that contract was begun in September, and the outlay so far has been \$123,346.

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*Nina Butts is a freelance writer, and an instructor at Austin Community College.*

**W**HILE the Star Wars idea has come under considerable attack since Reagan's 1983 speech, its main defenders outside the Reagan administration and the Pentagon are the researchers who benefit from SDI. Early in 1984, a report by the congressional Office of Technology Assessment concluded, "The prospect that emerging 'Star Wars' technologies, when further developed, will provide a perfect or near-perfect defense system . . . is so remote that it should not serve as the basis of public expectation or national policy." Shortly after the release of the report, at a Senate subcommittee on Foreign Relations hearing, representatives of the Pentagon acknowledged that, because an SDI system would have to be triggered on very short notice, triggering it might preclude the President's go-ahead. "Perhaps we should run R2-D2 for President in the 1990s," remarked Senator Paul Tsongas of Massachusetts. "At least he'd be on line all the time."

Later in 1984, an analysis of the SDI technology published in *Scientific American* by four members of the Union of Concerned Scientists questioned the feasibility of the project and pointed out

that "the reliability of the proposed defense would remain a mystery until the fateful moment at which it was attacked."

This summer, a former Navy scientist who was employed on the "panel on computing in support of battle management" for SDI resigned. The scientist, David L. Parnas, said that the huge

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***"I firmly believe that academics are called to engage in this research. The responsibility of the university is to contribute to the society in which it is embedded."***

**Charles Smith, UT-Arlington**

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computer system needed to run the space defense could never be tested or, therefore, trusted, and that scientists and engineers have a duty to tell Reagan that it is not possible to invent the technology to render nuclear weapons "impotent and obsolete." Then, in September of this year, a second congressional Office of Technology Assessment report said that a leakproof space shield against nuclear missiles was probably not feasible, that an effective defense would require tight restrictions on the number of Soviet offensive missiles, that the current urgent effort to develop the system could threaten "the entire arms control process," and that development of the defense might make nuclear war more likely.

Over the summer, university scientists were quietly gathering signatures on petitions asking Congress to end support for SDI, and, in some cases, pledging to refuse to work under SDI funds and urging colleagues to do the same. "Participants in SDI by individual Cornell researchers would lend Cornell's name to a program of dubious scientific validity," one petition read. Physics and computer science faculty are circulating similar petitions at UT-Austin this fall.

"The scientists and professors that are opposed to SDI have gotten a lot of press," said William Weldon of the Center for Electromechanics. "What's not been presented is the support and the involvement of professors and scientists. The people busy working on the project and supporting it don't seem to be as vocal."

"There are some faculty on this campus that are opposed to the research," Charles Smith at UT-Arlington

said of SDI work. "I firmly believe that academics are called to engage in this research. The responsibility of the university is to contribute to the society in which it is embedded. Our President has asked us to look at this, so it is fully justified to look at it, using the gifts God has given us. I don't think it's a request that you can avoid. You contribute, or sit to the sidelines and contribute in a negative way."

"We don't design SDI guns," Weldon said. "We design the technology that supports them."

"I object to taking a technological field and then saying that's SDI research," Chancellor Hans Mark said. "The rail gun has a lot of applications. The money [to do research on it] has been coming from the U.S. Army for some years. The Army application has been a long-standing one. . . . The world is more complicated than you think."

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***"Even if we could do SDI and SDI could be successful, we're going to expend a tremendous amount of the time and treasure of our society."***

**Charles Smith**

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"The problem is not with technology," Charles Smith said. "Technology just provides the means. Politics is the will. Some 40 years ago, academics invented nuclear weapons. Let me point out that there has not been any global warfare in these 40 years. . . . The two superpowers have an excess of nuclear capability and have implemented a political strategy of deterrence. If any failure occurs, we have the potential for catastrophic failure. What Reagan is trying to address is: is there a technological solution to get out of this political box? . . . The science of it has matured so it is reasonable to look at the prospect of defense against a missile with a nuclear weapon."

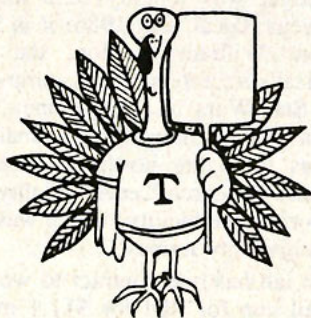
"The problem we face," Smith said, "is that there is a lot of concern of the moral issues. Should academics be engaged in any research that may be directed toward devices that may be used to kill human beings? . . . Even if we could do SDI and SDI could be successful, we're going to expend a tremendous amount of the time and treasure of our society — are there more worthwhile projects?"

"I don't have the answers," Smith said. □

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## Nobody But Us Chickens

✓ When new Republican Bill Powers announced on October 21 his candidacy for state agriculture commissioner, he was long on accusation and short on answers.

Powers began the press conference by letting the reporters around the state capitol in on a little secret: It seems that, while both Hightower and Powers had been journalists, "his [Hightower's] journalism is somewhat different from mine." Powers then revealed that Hightower in fact used to be the editor of the *Texas Observer*. "For those of you who do not know," Powers explained, the *Texas Observer* is "the liberal newspaper for the liberals of Texas. If you would like to do away with the Texas Right-to-Work law and you support compulsory unionism in Texas, then I suggest you subscribe to the *Texas Observer*." Powers edited *Texas Agriculture* from 1967 to 1969 before becoming executive vice president of the Texas Poultry Federation. For those of you who do not know, *Texas Agriculture* is the house organ of the Texas Farm Bureau.

Powers then accused Hightower of dismantling the marketing division of the agriculture department and rebuilding it with his own people. When asked by the press to cite an example of poor work by Hightower's marketing division, Powers declined. In fact, Powers declined to answer any substantive questions. He offered no opinion regarding the Reagan administration's farm program, saying only that it must have been better than the program offered by Rep. Bill Alexander, D-Arkansas, and Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, and supported by Hightower because the House voted the Harkin/Alexander bill down. Powers had no opinion he would reveal on farm price supports, and, when asked by Dave McNeely of the *Austin American-Statesman* what he would tell Reagan if Reagan called him for advice on a farm program, Powers would only say that he would gather the leaders of "mainstream agriculture" together to tell him what he thought. Powers said he regarded the commodity groups and the Farm Bureau as "mainstream," but not so much the Farmer's Union.

One interesting development: Powers did say that he agreed with Hightower on pesticide regulations, seemingly eliminating what had figured to be a

major campaign issue in the 1986 election.

In a campaign contribution statement filed with the Secretary of State, Powers listed \$27,400 in contributions for the period July 1, 1984, through June 30, 1985. \$25,000 of that was contributed by Lonnie "Bo" Pilgrim, the boneless chicken king. According to stories in the September 27 and October 3 editions of the *Houston Chronicle*, a Mount Pleasant processing plant owned by Pilgrim — a former member of the Texas Water Development Board — has "repeatedly violate[d] state pollution regulations without penalties." Pilgrim told the *Houston Post* that the violations had been corrected. Is it a coincidence that Powers takes credit for helping pass the Texas Right to Farm Law, which, Powers said, gives farmers a "defense against nit-picking lawsuits" on air and water quality? Or are Powers and Pilgrim just birds of a feather?

✓ Rep. Jim Wright's Cowtown Jamboree, a major bigtime very large affair, is set for November 15 and 16 in Fort Worth. Wright is raising money for his Majority Congress Committee, which gives money to select Democratic House candidates. The first night will feature a \$1,000-a-plate fundraiser for business people and PAC leaders. The following day Wright will host a "people's party" at Billy Bob's, with tickets on sale for \$15 apiece.

## Off The Bus

✓ When, on July 2, 1979, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed with a lower court ruling that the Austin Independent School District intentionally discriminated against Mexican Americans in drawing up its desegregation plans, one of the most vocal opponents of that decision was University of Texas law professor Lino Graglia. It is not surprising, then, that Graglia should now turn up at the top of Edwin Meese's list of possible nominees for the federal court of appeals. But Graglia seems to be difficult for even the conservative American Bar Association to swallow.

The December 13, 1979, *Austin Citizen* reported that Graglia addressed an anti-busing crowd at Austin's Anderson High School, calling for civil disobedience to stop the busing plan proposed by the Austin school board to comply with federal court rulings. According to the *Citizen*, Graglia exhorted bus drivers to stop driving, parents to refuse to accept busing, and

teachers to stop teaching, telling them they were "under no obligation to go along with busing. Busing can be stopped, if we all get together and stop it."

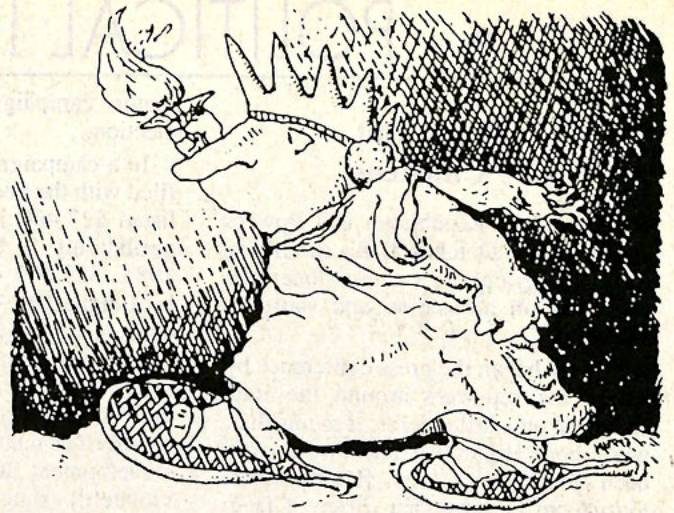
✓ Wendy Gramm, wife of Sen Phil Gramm, R-College Station, has been appointed to head the regulatory affairs office of the Office of Management and Budget. Her appointment coincided with the move of James C. Miller, her former boss at the Federal Trade Commission, who is now the director of OMB. Ms. Gramm's OMB salary will be \$72,000/year, probably making family budget-balancing somewhat easier.

✓ Republican state District Judge Roy Barrera, Jr., of San Antonio has begun a series of fundraisers in his bid to become state attorney general, tapping the great financial reserves of former Gov. John Connally, Fort Worth oil magnate Eddie Chiles, Dallas developer Trammel Crow, and Dallas financier Nelson Bunker Hunt. The *San Antonio Light* reports that, although Barrera is unabashedly soliciting the financial backing of conservative millionaires, he says he hopes at the same time to appeal to minority groups as a Hispanic candidate and to break the traditional Democratic hold on South Texas. In the GOP primary, however, Barrera must first face state Sen. J. E. "Buster" Brown of Lake Jackson and former Williamson County District Attorney Ed Walsh.

Other millionaire Republicans at recent Barrera fundraisers included: San Antonio developer H.B. Zachary, Jr., oil baron-rancher B.K. Johnson, and Sam Barshop, chairman of La Quinta Motor Inns, Inc.

✓ The Reagan administration has recently proposed a \$1 customs-user fee, to be used along the borders with Mexico and Canada to help underwrite the costs of the Customs Service. As a part of House Resolution 3128, the proposal, which has yet to reach the floor of the House, has already encountered widespread opposition, primarily from representatives of the border states. Rep. Ron Coleman, D-El Paso, and Sen. Lloyd Bentsen have criticized the proposal as detrimental to the economy of the Southwest, and members of the El Paso business community have echoed their statements. The Senate Finance Committee has postponed a vote on the controversial proposal until accurate figures may be obtained from the U.S. Customs Service on the possible impact of the fees. □

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# Rolando Hinojosa's Valley of Politics

By Louis Dubose

**D**EAR RAFE is an epistolary novel; a young bank officer writes from Klail City in the Rio Grande Valley to a cousin in the V.A. Hospital in Wm. Barrett, a place somewhat like San Antonio. Jehu Malacara (bad of face), the bank officer, and Rafe Buenrostro (good countenance), a Belken County Detective and attorney, are cousins from Hinojosa's earlier novel, *The Valley*. A packet of letters in the possession of "P. Galindo, Profession: writer, poet, journalist" is offered up as Part I of this novel. In the space of 59 abbreviated pages — for Hinojosa brevity (and abbreviation) is the soul of a lot more than wit — the author develops an intense story of money, power, political machination, thoroughly compromised candidates, and even integrity.

Jehu Malacara's epistolary relationship with his friend and cousin, Rafe Buenrostro, is the hook on which this novel hangs. Through 29 letters, Jehu follows the course of the Belken County Precinct 3 commissioner's race: letter by letter the political movers and shakers of this fictitious Valley county are revealed.

There is one mover: rancher-banker Noddy Perkins. He controls most of the county's money and owns, or is acquiring, much of its land. With a few phone calls he can alter the region's political landscape. He recalls incumbent congressmen almost as easily as he makes county commissioners.

Noddy Perkins is a self-made man (thus a motherless bastard, he jokes) in his sixties:

Echeverria (a long time ago) told me that Noddy didn't have a pot or a down payment for one when he married Blanche Cooke; a head for business, yes, then and now. (He speaks Spanish, oh, yes, & he likes for his mexicano hands to call him *Norberto* when he dresses up like a Laredo cowboy on weekends. I keep telling you: it takes

Louis Dubose is a freelance writer living in Austin.

all sorts to populate Belken County. . . .

Noddy has 1) few illusions & 2) less friends. It could be that he has the type of friend the rich have, BUT! in Klail, who's rich, besides them? . . .

One more thing, he won't rattle. To be sure, he's got more than half the deck in his hand at all times; still, you've got to see him in action. Nota Bene: you've got to watch him every second; don't turn your back on him. He's the type that'll watch your hide dry.

## DEAR RAFE

By Rolando Hinojosa

Arte Público Press, Houston, 1985  
134 pp., \$7.50.

*Dedocracia* is the term used on the Left Bank of the Rio Grande to describe the personal and paternalistic political system by which Mexico has been governed since the Revolution. Like many political idioms it travels well, at least through South Texas. The *dedo*, in the Spanish, is the digit political: the finger that appoints, annoints, and at times beckons.

Appointed to run for a Belken County commissioner's seat is a junior bank officer of standard Rotarian caliber: Ira Escobar. I give little of the plot away by here allowing that he wins his seat on the court; it is what he loses between appointment and annointment that matters. Though the loss is not great, for this fellow it is considerable. More pathos than tragedy here:

Noddy sat him down (literally) and talked about the importance of water rights in the Valley. How the water is apportioned in Belken County; who manned the irrigation ditches; who assigned the watering days and the amount, and when it was to be let out. Plain as Salisbury it was. Noddy talks about water rights, but Ira sits there and nods and agrees, and he still doesn't know that what N. is really talking about is pure and simple *control*.

"Last entry: Noddy offered Ira a beer, and he took it; the man's allergic to beer for Christ sake!"

There are no other movers, the rest are shakers or shaken.

**J**EHU, all the while, casts a cold eye on the private side of public life in this Valley county. He knows, and, at times, writes in the first person omniscient. And knowledge of what adversaries and allies are about is something of a reserve currency in this very political bank. The ranch also owns the local savings and loan.

In fact, who knows what about whom is much of what this novel is about. Noddy and Jehu know a great deal; Ira knows very little. And Morse Terry, an incumbent commissioner who is about to be eased out of public life (or is he?) knows only that his personal fortunes are changing and that his wife is being harassed by a local policeman. Even the most perspicacious reader will be caught off guard by one or two twists in a fairly straight-forward plot.

Though the results of the political races are evident early in the novel, Hinojosa sustains considerable dramatic tension while he fully develops characters that could have easily surrendered to stereotype — characters who are revealed in Part I (as gradually as 59 pages allow) through suggestion, fragments of recounted conversation, third-hand stories, and occasional fact, all within the 29 letters to Rafe.

Hinojosa's characters are not allegorical, nor stereotypical, but they do stand for something.

Both Jehu and Rafe are Korean War veterans and University of Texas graduates. The Korean War returned a generation of *mexicanos* leaner and meaner than World War II's political veterans of the G.I. Forum. It is to this generation — somewhere around the age of the author — that Jehu and Rafe belong. If they belong.

A group of minor characters are young entrepreneurial *mexicanos* with designs on old family property in the Valley. While Anglo bankers acquire land as a commodity, these young men are out to reclaim a patrimony 50 years lost, with a little help from their friends.

Too human to qualify as a stereotype, Ira Escobar suggests a class of *politico mexicano* that can't always be bought, but usually can be rented:

"And what if he should lose, you ask? Let me say this. One: the Valley mexicanos are convinced that Ira's their man. Two: the Anglo Texans know he's their boy. Money is bilingual, kid."

Hinojosa's gallery of characters is ample. And most are firmly rooted in the Valley's rich alluvial soil. Literary geneologists will find *Dear Rafe*, and earlier Hinojosa works, a rich vein. There should be at least a masters thesis or two in following bloodlines, from Part II of this novel, back to the Escandon expedition.

Part II is a journalistic-documentary speculation on the past and future of Jehu Malacara. Defenders and detractors all have their say. This section is the work of P. Galindo, Hinojosa's writer and journalist. There are elements of Galindo's style that annoy. His surfeit of abbreviations and parenthetical asides, (he claims compl. objectivity) his knowingness and underhanded editorially, all grate on my mind's ear. But, then again, I like him. And the

abrupt change in narrative style works well.

Galindo is working some pretty fertile (actually fecund) ground. Twenty-one characters, discussing the protagonist, reveal a great deal about themselves, and life in their corner of the state. Few see with the penetrating insight of Jehu Malacara, and some see very little. It is, however, in Part II that Hinojosa's standard characters engage the reader with accounts of political life in the Valley, a very political place. Noble and vengeful, most of these characters are rich in texture. Three paragraphs of dialogue, and an aside by the narrator, and there they are. Each adds something to the puzzle that is Part II of this work.

Then Part III, a brief conclusion by P. Galindo, something of a resolution of conflict, but not quite. Like a good vaudeville comedian, Rolando Hinojosa always leaves his audience wanting more. And here I harbor a few suspicions. Are we being strung along for yet another novel of nouvelle length and

novel, that is innovative, narrative style? Or is it that these narrative devices, fragments, personal letters, interviews, depositions, and sketches cannot be sustained long enough to complete one fat novel on the valley?

And one more suspicion. Jehu Malacara is too substantial a character to leave where Hinojosa has here left him. There is a certain tragic element in this fellow that needs to be played out. Thinking in those terms, a goodly part of his hubris is sexual — a flaw that goes back at least as far as Don Tirso de Molina's most famous don. It would be interesting to see where all of this ends.

I, for one, will go on record predicting that we will see *The Valley* and Jehu Malacara continued. It would be unseemly to say sequel, and I dare not speculate on narrative form. But, whenever professor Hinojosa and Arte Público again see fit to publish, I'll buy two copies. □

## Odyssey of a Radical Christian

By James C. Harrington

*Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces.*

— Abraham Lincoln  
Second Inaugural Address  
April 10, 1865

*... when the Christians in Latin America take seriously the revolutionary teachings of the gospel, the revolution will be invincible.*

— Che Guevara

RECENTLY a Texas grower of some repute announced that Christian duty compelled him to move much of his operation into Central America. Was it really compassion that brought the move, or was it that increasingly organized farmworkers in Texas were pestering him for fair wages and working conditions? Was the

*James C. Harrington is legal director of the Texas Civil Liberties Union. In May 1984 he was part of a group touring Nicaragua and Honduras.*

grower simply following the historical path of U.S. economic intervention set by United Brands and Standard Fruit and roundly condemned by the Latin American Catholic bishops at Medellín, Colombia?

### TO BE A REVOLUTIONARY: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

By Padre J. Guadalupe Carney

Harper & Row, San Francisco, 1985  
473 pp., \$15.95.

The perplexing part is the appeal to religion, illustrative of the current worldwide debate about religion and society. Bishop Desmond Tutu and Rev. Jerry Falwell — one condemning apartheid and the other blessing it — each claims God for his side. And, in *To Be A Revolutionary*, we read the deeply moving odyssey of a Jesuit priest who grows from catechism teacher to chaplain and fighter with Honduran guerrillas in the name of Jesus Christ. Carney's autobiography is an intensely personal history written with the same judgmental harshness by which he guided his own life.

Jim Carney grew up like many of us. Born to a large Irish-German family and living in middle-class Catholic ghettos in the Midwest, Carney was an all-American boy. He went to college and off to World War II, to the same European army camps as some of our fathers.

Yet something happened to Carney that, unfortunately, rarely happens to most. Something moved Carney's spirit. He was so profoundly affected by the horror of war and the poverty of the Europeans around him that he became a secret pacifist in the middle of the war, vowing to be killed rather than shoot at another human. He rebelled against senseless military rules and came to doubt the existence of God.

Jim Carney returned from the war, worked on the assembly line, fell in love, and went back to college. On the verge of graduating from the University of Detroit as a civil engineer, he opted, to the enormous pleasure of his mother, to join the 400-year-old "shock troops" of the Catholic Church, the Jesuits, themselves founded by a Spanish ex-soldier, Ignatius of Loyola.

In the seminary, Carney's moral development continued away from his admittedly self-centered "primitive ideas about God" into living with "the God crucified for seeking justice and liberation of the poor."

Carney's years in the Society of Jesus are filled with the same rebellion he had in the army against mindless discipline and hypocrisy — so much so, that the Jesuits twice put off what would other-



wise be routine advancement through the Society. Yet, despite his difficulty with religious superiors, he never stopped seeing the Jesuits as a brotherhood that supported him and that assured him "down to the depths" of his being "that there has to exist . . . this personal God."

This is not the typical saga of a plaster-cast, pietistic saint. It is the painful journey of a man whose religious beliefs compelled him finally to renounce his American citizenship so as to live in solidarity with the Honduran *campesinos* and then to take up arms against oppressive Honduran military leaders. It is the stunning story of a rebel who becomes a revolutionary. "To be a Christian is to be a revolutionary," he proclaims in the same pages where he tells us that professionals must share their learning with the world's poor.

For Carney, the essential message of Christianity was that Jesus had come to liberate the oppressed (Luke 4: 18-19). Carney ended up in Honduras because he felt called to serve the poor of the Third World. He simply could not tolerate the selfishness, wealth, and exploitation of American society.

Working with the farmworkers of Honduras drew Carney more and more to an analysis of the pervasive role of American capitalism and the role of the Church. He felt that "riches, possessions, and power" were ruining the Church and that only poverty and persecution would bring it back to its proper role of helping (but not leading) in the effort to shape a just society, the Kingdom of God.

His day-to-day life as a priest among the poor and rich of Honduras led him away from seeing personal sins and failings as the principal evil in the world:

By putting the most emphasis on avoiding the personal . . . sins, one calms the conscience so there is no worry about the large social or structural sins and injustices that are what most ruins this world. Not only does it fail to instill a social, revolutionary conscience, but rather it is a substitute for this. . . .

. . . the charismatic or Pentecostal renewal movement within the Catholic Church . . . is often alienating by putting too much emphasis on personal conversion, on the personal relationship with Jesus . . . thereby keeping the people from getting involved in politics, in the struggle to change the sinful structures of society.

This whole trend of false spiritual-

ity says that to change the unjust structures of society you have to first change people. If individuals are just and loving, society will be just. They do not realize the great fact of reality: that a selfish, unjust society inevitably produces and forms selfish, exploiting, violent men and women. We must change at the same time the person and the society, with its structures for exploitation of the workers. We have to have a continual, double revolution; the economic-social-political revolution and the cultural-spiritual revolution.

Carney couples his moral judgment with his contention that the United States invests funds through the CIA in charismatic and evangelistic movements in Latin America in order to "challenge and counteract the movement of liberation theology."

Although Carney led a devout, religious life, he worked more and more in Honduran movements to organize farmworkers. He even became a recognized *campesino* leader, a thorn in the sides of the government and the church hierarchy. If the momentum of the book ever slows, it is in Padre Carney's detailed histories of the different *campesino* union organizations; but it may be one of the most accurate and full accounts of the movement.

During the description of the *campesino* organizations, Carney lays out the startling effects of American development in Honduras. For every \$1 made from African palm margarine or vegetable oil produced by Standard Fruit, five cents goes to the farmworker cooperative, ten cents to the truck owners, 30 cents to the land owners, and 55 cents to Standard Fruits' operations in the United States. He calls neocolonialism "the greatest of all U.S. sins," which "Christians of the United States have the serious obligation to help get rid of."

Maybe Carney's analyses are too overtly Marxist for our liking, but he does not hesitate to fault contemporary Marxist governments as strongly as he does capitalist states; he does believe that at least modern-day Marxism is more orientated toward serving humanity than is the exploitation endemic to American state capitalism. For Carney, "Marxism explains a lot, but needs the Christian vision to complete it."

Carney's religion led him to work to build a society that would be (1) egalitarian ("with laws fixing not only the minimum wage, but also the maximum wage"), (2) communitarian ("a mixed economy of small private prop-

erty and also of state property, with nationalization of the most essential services of the country, like the banks, energy, transportation, and so on"), and (3) participative ("with autogestion, or self-government by the workers in the cooperatives and state enterprises, and with cogestion or shared direction and profits in private enterprises").

Padre Carney's daily work also included helping originate and build the Basic Christian Communities in Central America, which were modeled on the pre-Constantine Christian communities of the early centuries ("After the first Christian communities, Christ has not been able to penetrate much into the mentality of most Christians . . ."). Not only did the faith of the Honduran poor



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## Part IV

# Feeding the "Trillion-Dollar Rat Hole"

By *Tristram Coffin*

This is the fourth in a series of reprints from Tristram Coffin's newsletter, *The Washington Spectator*, describing the Pentagon's extravagance and mismanagement of military contracts.

"These murderers of our cause ought to be hunted down as pests of society and the greatest enemies to the happiness of America. I wish to God that the most atrocious of each state was hung . . . upon a gallows five times as high as the one prepared for Haman."

The angry words of George Washington were aimed at the merchants who supplied his Continental army with defective arms and bullets.

This is not simply a macabre note from the past. Regularly, the nation erupts with outrage at scandals involving the "merchants of death." The Nye Committee offered "sensational disclosures of WWI profiteering and arms lobbying." (*The United States, American Democracy in World Perspective*, Rinehart & Co.) A little-known Senator from Missouri, Harry Truman, found himself catapulted into the Vice Presidency because of his investigation of WW II arms-makers. Today, news of profiteering and shoddy war goods pours out almost daily to feed the "trillion-dollar rat hole."

The effect of cheating by military contractors today could be a universal disaster. The *Washington Monthly* reports: "On June 3, 1980, three miles inside Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado, the computers of the Strategic Air Command signaled that Soviet nuclear submarines had launched two missiles toward the U.S. Within 18 seconds, the terminals showed 22 Soviet missiles. Then, 222 B-52's carrying nuclear bombs were prepared for takeoff while SAC frantically sought to confirm the impending attack through its other monitoring sites."

The report was false: the signal was activated by a faulty silicon chip in a communications multiplex, an electronic device that converts information into messages for transmission. The *Washington Monthly* observes: "The false alarm at Cheyenne Mountain was a harrowing lesson in how failure in the smallest link in the system can cause the machinery of nuclear war to whirl into action." The chips have become "the nuts and bolts of the electronic military age," used to detonate nuclear warheads, aim guns and guide pilots.

Companies that manufacture the chips "have regularly been caught cutting corners in testing military chips. Over the past four years, five semiconductor companies have admitted to 'irregularities,' ranging from minor infractions to full-scale cheating on critical heat tests." One company pleaded guilty to 40 counts of fraud.

The corruption that is inherent in war-making is a side effect of a basic human emotion, a fascination with war-making. This lies deep in the human subconscious, inherited from primitive times. Fighting was a diversion from the grim and boring business of survival. It ennobled such savage emotions as greed, vanity and hate. The strong stole food, women and baubles from the weak and were honored for it.

Such heroic terms as "patriotism . . . national security . . . bravery" were coined to entrap man's imagination and sanctify mass murder. Ogres were invented to frighten taxpayers and conscripts into accepting the bloody business of war. Poets, priests and politicians more often than not went along with the game. Politicians found out that arousing primitive emotions was a quick and easy way for entertaining the public and taking its mind off such unpleasant subjects as taxes and famine.

There was no logical reason for Caesar's conquests except the lure of booty and the emperor's overweening vanity. The British would have been far smarter to have junked repressive taxes, such as the one on tea, and to have given a measure of self-government to the American colony than to fight an exhausting and losing war.

Hitler bamboozled the Germans by calling them "the master race" and lured them into the folly of WW II. Japan was led by its lust for the resources of Asia. The Vietnam war was begun to restore France's pride, humbled by the Nazi occupation, and to recover the cheap resources of Indochina.

The American past is loaded with demagogic appeals to similar emotions. The unhappy War of 1812 was brought about in part by a gang of grandstand politicians in Congress who proudly called themselves the "War Hawks." They "spoke for a generation which had grown up since the Revolution. The Federalists might sneer at them as 'young politicians, half hatched, the shell still on their heads,' but their words and gestures thrilled the country. They talked, breathed and dreamed of a glorious war which would end with Canada, Florida, Mexico and various points south all safely wrapped up in the American Union. They were supremely confident that Americans could take on anybody." (*The American Past*, by Roger Butterfield, Simon and Schuster)

They won such public support that they could extract from President Madison a promise to declare war in return for their backing of his reelection bid.

Reprinted by permission from the April 1985 issue of *The Washington Spectator*, Tristram Coffin, Editor. A one-year subscription (22 issues) is \$10, from P.O. Box 442, Merrifield, Virginia 22116.

increase and mature, but social and religious leadership grew — much to the uneasiness of the “official” church and the government.

As was inevitable, the Honduran military, in the face of a burgeoning *campesino* movement demanding land reform, cooperatives, and collective bargaining rights, had to remove Carney from the country. He was eventually seized after a risky internal flight within the country, put on a plane, contrary to law governing Honduran citizens, stripped of his citizenship by military edict, and sent back to the United States.

Eventually, Padre Guadalupe as he came to be called, returned to Central America and was assigned to work with the *campesinos* of northern Nicaragua. He describes the spirit and will of Nicaraguans to rebuild after the Somoza regime; he also recounts the horror of the *contra* attacks on the civilian

population and the schools and clinics of the countryside.

Three years later, in 1983, when he was 58, Carney made up his mind to return to Honduras. He resigned from the Jesuits so that he could serve as a military chaplain and fighter with the revolutionary forces. He slipped into the country with a small poorly armed band of guerrillas, which was eventually spotted and pursued by the Honduran military and a 150-soldier United States counter-insurgency force.

What happened to Father Carney remains a mystery, but two possibilities are advanced by investigators: either he starved to death while surrounded in the jungle by Honduran and American military or he was captured and killed at the secret CIA base at El Aguacate, used to train the anti-Nicaraguan *contras*. The fact that his body has never been produced suggests the probability

of a brutal murder.

When we were in Honduras some eight months after Padre Guadalupe entered the rolls of the “disappeared,” some of our group made frequent inquiries of Honduran authorities about his existence and whereabouts. The questions were met with a nervous “we don’t know where he is,” always followed by an attack upon him as a meddler in the internal affairs of Honduras.

Carney’s family has tried hard to learn of his final days, in experiences reminiscent of the movie *Missing*, but without avail.

But, ironically, it may be Padre Lupe’s Bible that tells us what happened — he wrote in the margin of the Old Testament story of Jeremiah of being held prisoner in the bottom of a cistern (a common Honduran military tactic) in his own country’s military base. □

## The Personal and the Political

By Michael King

**B**OTH *Kiss of the Spider Woman* and *Plenty* are rather heavily burdened by their literary origins, the former an adaptation of Manuel Puig’s novel, the latter an adaptation of David Hare’s play. They have verbose screenplays, full of heavily portentous lines that sound full-dressed in quotation marks, and both are constricted by novelistic or stage conventions that force their directors to elaborate subterfuges of naturalism. But both are very strong political melodramas, with a good deal to say about the current predicament of the left; and it seems no coincidence that both films, widely disparate in origin and context, are profoundly, though ambivalently, feminist in sensibility.

Puig is rare among Latin American intellectuals in that his own politics are rather tentative and quiet, which makes him suspect among those who regard his affection for American cinema, among other things, as insufficiently *engagé*. *Kiss* is in effect a closet allegory, of the revolutionary activist vs. the apolitical artist, although the closet is, in this case, a prison cell and the artist

a flamboyant transvestite obsessed with pop-romantic movies. That there is more than a little irony in this premise goes without saying; as *Kiss* turns out, Puig very poignantly suggests that there may be more real heroism in romance than

### KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN

Directed by Hector Babenco

### PLENTY

Directed by Fred Schepisi

in the cold political choices of the activist. But that is, of course, the central premise of Romance itself, and one would not be too far wrong to describe *Kiss of the Spider Woman* as a gay *Casablanca* for the left.

The unlikely Bogart in this film is William Hurt, as Molina, a homosexual jailed for seducing a minor and incarcerated in the same cell with the revolutionary Valentín (Raul Julia). Julia gives his usual fine performance, but this is Hurt’s film (for which he has been justly praised and awarded), and it is no exaggeration to call his Molina a triumph. The success of the film depends upon Molina’s transformation from a rather pathetic informer to a

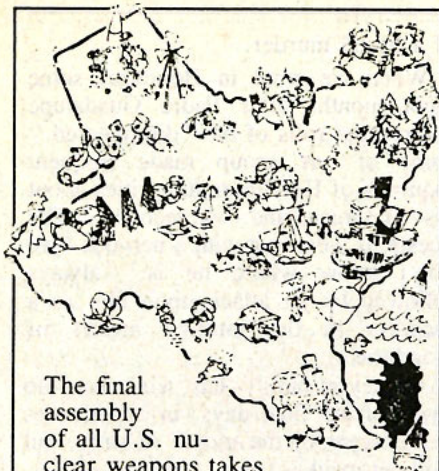
courageous hero — or rather, heroine — and Hurt has managed to invest that transformation with convincing delicacy and grace, resisting the temptation to campy theatrics.

Almost all the action takes place in the prison cell of a nameless South American country where Molina and Valentín are held, and the explicit narrative concerns Molina’s attempts to cooperate with the authorities in getting Valentín to expose his comrades. Molina, like Rick in *Casablanca*, has no use for politics and wants only to be left in peace. But again like Rick, he is vulnerable to love. Having fallen for his cellmate, he is moved to desperate heroism, and he sacrifices himself for the love of his friend.

The center of the film is the romance of Molina and Valentín, accomplished first by Molina’s enraptured recounting of an old romantic melodrama, and then by his tender affection for Valentín when he is ill. Valentín is eventually moved, by Molina’s sensitivity and his kindness, to respond to his unwanted physical affection, and Molina is moved in turn to attempt a revolutionary action. None of this is straightforward, however; the old film Molina lovingly retells — and director Babenco has shot internally in romantic half-tones — is discovered to be a Nazi propaganda film, oozing with sentimentalized Aryanism; Valentín’s illness is brought on by the jailer’s poison, administered with Molina’s cooperation; and the revolutionary action, a simple but dangerous rendezvous, seems doomed and suicidal from the outset.

These complications make *Kiss of the Spider Woman* in effect a debate on the

Michael King lives in Houston and writes on cultural matters for the Observer.



The final assembly of all U.S. nuclear weapons takes place in the Texas Panhandle. Houston has more oil company headquarters than any other city in the world. The state is overrun with Sunbelt boosters, strident anti-unionists, political hucksters, and new industry and money.

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nature and efficacy of political heroism — Valentín arguing for clear politics, uncompromising rebellion, and a fiercely male rationalism, while Molina comes to represent apolitical romanticism, simple kindness, and emotional humaneness — and despite his own gender, Puig's Molina is presented as the repository of traditional female values: in the words of the feminist movement, the personal is the political. Early on, Molina has bluntly defied Valentín's polemics against his fantasies: "If you have a key to that door, I'll follow you, but until then I have a right to my own escape." In the long run his escape, Puig implies, into aesthetics and love is the more permanent and more humane.

**D**AVID HARE'S *Plenty* stages much the same internal debate, but it comes down just as strongly on the opposite side. Perhaps only a transvestite could now defend Molina's position in a contemporary film; Meryl Streep's Susan in *Plenty* is in keeping with the dozens of current heroines who find traditional female values utterly stifling and familial kindness merely a trap for the unwary woman. Susan has had a brief moment of revolutionary optimism, as a young British courier working in the French Resistance during World War II. After that political and psychic liberation, ordinary experience after the war seems a degrading confinement, even a betrayal of the battle against totalitarianism. Stuck in a dismal clerical job, she complains bitterly to a friend, "I want to change everything, and I don't know how."

Although the film is set roughly in

the twenty years following the war, Streep's Susan is a broadly politicized version of the leads in those recent "women's films" — Jill Clayburgh's *An Unmarried Woman*, or Streep's own *Kramer vs. Kramer* — who chuck domesticity and security for independence and adventure. Indeed, the grandmommy of the film is Ibsen's *The Doll's House*, and as Susan climbs from frustrated secretary to desperate wife of a diplomat, she takes on the regal hysteria of an Ibsen heroine. The only response of her proper British husband — admirably played by Charles Dance — is patient and suffocating kindness, a personalized version of the British political atmosphere of muddling hypocrisy that has driven her round the bend in the first place.

In Schepisi's direction and Streep's bravura performance, *Plenty* is to a large degree a character study of a particular kind of trapped personality, too large for her social circumstances. But clearly Hare has also intended Susan to embody a more general idea about the British political climate since the War, once bright with momentary triumph and now relentlessly constricted by a diminished empire and a failing economy. Ian McKellan has a brilliant turn as the head of the Foreign Service, explaining pointedly to Susan that hypocrisy and diplomacy are by definition one and the same — but she will not make her peace with such bitter wisdom. The film's last shot of her is a flashback to the golden days of the victory in France, as she looks over the dazzling countryside and announces things will never be the same: "There will be days and days and days like this." Her peasant companion is less exalted: "For a Frenchman, it is work or starve."

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Like Puig, Hare is interested in the conflict between the personal and the political, but where *Kiss of the Spider Woman* suggests that *only* the personal is political, *Plenty* implies that the private world is for most of us, and particularly for women, only a small theater within which larger political issues are masked, disguised, and viciously unresolved. The content of those political ideas is at loggerheads in the two films: Molina dies for the hopeless ideals of his lover in the same melodramatic way that his movie heroine died for her romanticized Nazi, and Puig dismisses the difference between left and right in a movie kiss — the *Casablanca* syndrome. But for Hare, Susan's radical politics — her anti-

Nazism, anti-imperialism and inchoate feminism — are explicitly admirable ideals which must find a public field of action or they will be frustrated, repressed, and eventually turn monstrous.

Although I find Hare's justification of activism more to my liking than Puig's defense of romanticism, *Kiss of the Spider Woman* is the more satisfying film, partly because of Hurt's stunning embodiment of Molina and partly because the material itself seems richer and less hackneyed in Babenco's hands, less hamstrung by its novelistic origin. Molina's recollected films, as shot by the director, become a commentary about the act of watching movies itself,

and, therefore, a challenge to the audience's own perceptions of political cinema: the small world mimics the larger. Schepisi takes a similar risk in imitating the stage conventions of abrupt time and scenic transitions, almost without explanation — the idea seems to be to make Susan a generational figure — but he only succeeds in making periodic confusion that must be sorted out in order to follow the narrative. The curious result is that, as feminist heroine, William Hurt is much more convincing than Meryl Streep; and *Kiss of the Spider Woman* speaks more eloquently than *Plenty* about the costs and consequences of political engagement. □

## • SOCIAL CAUSE CALENDAR •

### RURAL HOUSING

The National Rural Housing Coalition is sponsoring a conference "Rural Housing at the Crossroads" in Washington, D.C., **December 4-5**. The conference will focus on issues such as changes in federal policy and the emerging importance of state and local governments in addressing housing needs, avenues for alternative financing, the impact of tax legislation on rural development, and prospects for the future. The conference will be held at the Capitol Hill Quality Inn and the registration fee is \$125 per organization. For more information or to register, please contact the National Rural Housing Coalition, 2001 S Street, N.W., Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20009.

### THE NUCLEAR AGE

"Forty Years of the Nuclear Age," a conference sponsored by the Austin chapters of Physicians for Social Responsibility, Public Citizen, and United Campuses to Prevent Nuclear War will be held at the University of Texas at Austin **December 5-7**. The keynote address will be made by John Kenneth Galbraith on Thursday, December 5. Talks will be given December 6 and 7 by participants, including Jack Geiger, M.D., and Victor Sidel, M.D., of Physicians for Social Responsibility; Laurama Pixton, American Friends Service Committee U.S. State Department representative; Zdena Tomin, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament; Sanford Gottlieb, United Campuses to Prevent Nuclear War; and Lloyd Dumas, UT-Dallas.

The conference will conclude with a debate, "Star Wars: Strategic Defense Initiative," between Hans Mark, Chancellor of the University of Texas, and Admiral Eugene Carroll of the Center for Defense Information on Saturday, December 7 at 7:00 p.m.

The conference is free and open to the public. For more information write: UCAM, Texas Union Box 312, P.O. Box 7338, Austin, Texas 78713.

### OBSERVANCES

**November 9, 1935** — John L. Lewis founds Congress of Industrial Organizations.

**November 10, 1924** — First U.S. gay rights organization, the Society for Human Rights, founded in Chicago.

**November 12, 1971** — Berkeley City Council votes to provide symbolic sanctuary for draft resisters.

**November 13, 1974** — Karen Silkwood dies in auto crash en route to meet *New York Times* reporter.

**November 14, 1983** — First U.S. cruise missile arrives at Greenham Commons, England.

**November 16, 1983** — Federal District Judge Jack Tanner orders Washington State to pay female employees their "comparable worth."

**November 17, 1973** — President Nixon says, "I am not a crook."

**November 18, 1872** — Susan B. Anthony arrested for voting.

**November 21, 1966** — National Organization for Women (NOW) founded.

### TEXTURED ART

"Experiences in Touching," textured paintings by Gert Jacobson designed for the visually impaired, will be on exhibit in the San Antonio Museum of Art's START Gallery **November 5-November 30**.

### EL SALVADOR EDUCATION SEMINAR

CRISPAZ, a Christian volunteer organization, will sponsor a Christian Education Seminar in El Salvador **November 23-30**. For content and travel information, contact Suzy Prengor, (512) 433-6185, in San Antonio.

### WAR

PBS viewers be on the alert for the series "The History of the Institution of War," prepared by the University of Washington in Seattle to examine the training of soldiers, war technology, questions regarding deterrence, nationalism, and the politics of war every Tuesday **through November**; check local listings.

### AND PEACE

The Fellowship of Reconciliation, a national peace by non-violent means organization, will have its Southern Regional Conference and Retreat **November 14-17** in Castroville. The "Power of NonViolence Conference" will feature resource people such as Don Mosley, national FOR chair; sanctuary activist Jack Elder; Mobei Ho, Buddhist Peace Fellowship; and Glen Smiley, who worked with MLK to organize freedom riders. Contact FOR, 2215 W. Mistletoe, San Antonio 78201, for details on workshops and registration.

### TOWARDS PEACE IN NICARAGUA

Witness for Peace is organizing a Hispanic/Latino/Third World delegation to Nicaragua for **June 3-17, 1986**, in an effort to educate and mobilize the Hispanic/Latino community on the hazards of U.S. interventionist policies in Central America. Donations are needed to build a scholarship fund to insure representation on the delegation of all sectors of the Hispanic/Latino/Third World population. For more information, contact Laura Hernandez, 1121 N. Locust #9, Denton, Texas 76201, (817) 383-2862, or send donations to: Casa de la Cultura, 1227 East Yandell, El Paso, Texas 79902, attn.: Laura Hernandez. Checks should be made out to "Casa de la Cultura," earmarked "Witness for Peace."

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# POEMS

By Margie McCreless Roe

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## THE TREE AT OUR NEW HOUSE

It is only a small slip of a tree,  
Barely taller than a woman  
seeking to know it.  
It bends in the early summer breeze  
Like a single plume  
in our pin-cushion lawn.  
It is all future.

But a sparrow, tree-busy, accepts it  
And settles onto a thin branch without hesitation,  
Pronouncing the blessing I was trying to form.

## MARCH FIRES

In March my father would go to the lake  
Lighting fires in the spring-cold woods  
And I was sent along to help.

They were small fires, like votive lights,  
Smoke rising thin in the leafless trees.  
They burned the cactus and fallen limbs,  
Dry grass and briars we brought  
As we cleared old growth from the ground.

My father moved steadily, silently,  
Absorbed in his purge.  
But I sometimes would stop and watch  
The year's burning.

Sometimes his shout through the quiet air  
Would startle me back to the harvest of brush  
And I'd try to do as he did  
But I couldn't see what he had in mind  
What he was working toward or against.

It was the fires that had something to say to me  
And their smoke lingers still  
Through time, dark and branching.

## WE MOVE LIKE ROACHES

Increasingly  
We move through life  
Like roaches through rare books.  
We miss the meanings of this world.  
We forage on the glue  
That keeps the bindings bound.  
And all the while  
We know there must be something written here  
If only the poor, greedy threads  
We twitch in front of us  
Could sense something,  
Something more than ink and dust.

## IN OUR TWENTIETH YEAR

How can we in our twentieth year  
Go out among the dying mariages  
And return at night unwounded  
To this same bed?

How can we, through the spasms of these years,  
Still feed each other  
Flavor upon familiar plates?

Or keep this one body, growing softer,  
Going the way we want to go?

This yoke shifts upon our shoulders  
But so far,  
In this our twentieth year,  
Does not rub to rawness  
Or from this wonder slip away.

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Margie M. Roe, a native of Fort Worth, works in the Trinity University library in San Antonio, where she lives with her husband and two sons. Her work has appeared in Cedar Rock and The Pawn Review.

# A Letter to Liberty County

By Louis Dubose

**L**IKE BELLOW'S Herzog, I compose more letters than I write, write more than I post, and post more than I should. For better or for worse, much of my relationship with reality is epistolary.

Here then are the circumstances of one composed but never mailed; but like a pebble in a shoe, something about it annoys me just enough to want to be done with it:

Governor Bill Daniel — the title is recognized only in Guam and Liberty County — is an unlikely hero for the pages of what *The Atlantic* recently called Texas' "arch-liberal" magazine. Here is a fellow who once carried in the statehouse a bill that would have made membership in the Communist party a felony in Texas (Governor Shivers wanted the death penalty), who is always ready with a story on the union-bully politics of Senator Ralph Yarborough, and whose brother, Price, Sr., as governor and U.S. senator rarely embraced the causes of Texas progressives.

But in 1982, when an Ohio-based waste handler, backed by a \$2.7 million conglomerate, announced plans to locate a Class I toxic waste disposal facility in southeast Liberty County, Daniel, who during the Kennedy administration served as governor of Guam, drew a line in the dirt and, invoking none less than the Martyrs of the Alamo, heroes of San Jacinto, and the participants in the Battle of Anahuac, urged locals to make public their intentions to keep the Yankee miscreant's poison out of the acid soil of this place so sacred to the Texas Revolution.

Here is precisely one of those us-against-New York issues, as described by Nicholas Lemann in November's *Atlantic*, that can make Texas liberals, Texicrats, and Republicans act down-right collegial. All four of Liberty County's liberals, its seven environmentalists, and about half the adult popula-

tion closed ranks with Daniel, raised a half-million dollars, and to this day have kept Envirosafe, Inc., bogged down in the permitting process.

When the initial Air Control Board meeting was convened in Austin, exactly two years ago, to decide on a minor point of procedure, opponents packed the auditorium of the state agency building on Hwy. 183. Young corporate-type attorneys discussed the most arcane provisions of the citing statute, and the morning dragged on. Before the meeting adjourned, legal counsel for each of the principals were allowed time for closing statements. Daniel, a trial lawyer who had done some *pro bono* work for the Liberty group, waited until the hired lawyers concluded.

Then, while pilgrims from Liberty County exchanged commiserating glances, Governor Bill leaned into a speech that William Jennings Bryan would have considered excessive.

He talked of fighting the Indians, of winning the good land from the Mexicans (he did have a small speaking part in the John Wayne-filmed-at-Brackettville version of the Alamo), of draining swamps and surviving malaria, of the long fight to turn the south end of the Big Thicket into productive farmland. He spoke on behalf of the people, livestock, deer, armadillos, snakes, possums, and trees. Once, he let slip a damn (with apologies), referred to members of the Air Control Board as "the jury," and how-dared those yankees to even propose to pour their poison

into the soil of Liberty County when not a quart of it was produced there. Twice, while he spoke, he placed his hand on his chest and looked toward the acoustical ceiling suspended some thirty feet above. Before he concluded, he introduced his wife Mrs. Vera (one of the kindest and most genteel ladies in the state), declaring that through his many years as a trial lawyer, she had never missed a day in court. Finally, he reminded the members of the Air Control Board of their sacred trust, thanked them and the Almighty for the allotted time (which he had exceeded), and sat down.

I was assigned to cover the meeting by the managing editor of the Liberty paper. When I walked across the room to speak to Daniel, he was still winded. "How did I do," he asked? "Do you think I moved them? Was it effective?"

I had thought the speech was an anachronism, full of bombast and histrionics — certainly inappropriate for the occasion. "It was great, sir," I proclaimed. I wrote down a few quotes and left.

A month later I took a stab or two at the truth in a letter that still marks a place in a volume of Will and Ariel Durant's history. The truth, I told myself, is sometimes as unfortunate as the lie.

That very winter I read *Quijote* and realized that I hadn't lied after all; in responding as I did I had only anticipated a truth that at the time I didn't understand. It is this, in part, that I will include in my next letter to the governor of Guam and Liberty County. For though *Quijote* is many things, it is essentially a study of prudence and passion. When passion is gone, well, so is *Quijote*; the fight isn't necessarily lost, but it's over. And when passion in public affairs goes the way of ceiling fans and mahogany in this state's district courtrooms, a good part of the good fight will be over. □

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Louis Dubose, a contributing writer to the *Observer*, lives in Austin.

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