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BUSH'S FOLLY IN NICARAGUA

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DIALOGUE

Animal Rights Tripe

I hesitate to dignify Richard Ryan's tripe on the animal rights movement with a response (*TO*, 2/24/89), but I would like to take this opportunity to defend animal rights activists' "hidden agenda" to reduce meat consumption. Perhaps reading a few facts will help people to give up their meat-eating habit *voluntarily*:

Cattle are fed tasty mixtures including feathers, shredded newspaper, plastic hay, and cement dust, not to mention the growth hormones and pesticides. Meat consumption has been linked to numerous ailments, from heart disease and cancer to arthritis and multiple sclerosis. Every day, the animals raised for food in this country produce 20 billion pounds of waste (excrement), which pollutes our nation's waterways.

Those who belittle advocates of animal rights and vegetarianism have clearly not educated themselves fully about the issues, for any thinking person who has made the effort to overcome ignorance about meat production and consumption would make the switch for the health of humans, animals, and the planet.

Christine Jackson
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
Washington, D.C.

Misgivings About Meat

I would like to comment on Richard Ryan's piece about animal rights groups (*TO*, 2/24/89). I am a member of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, and I don't hunt or fish. I do eat meat, though not without misgivings. I guess I want somebody else to do my dirty work for me. Still, I might well kill an animal that I needed for food. Doing it for fun is different.

Not that I offer an out-of-hand condemnation of hunting, although I certainly question its wholesomeness. It isn't necessarily pointless to condemn something that has a long history and a wide acceptance; slavery and child labor, though imperfectly analogous, will serve as examples. But given certain not absurd assumptions, the hunter's point of view makes sense. And many hunters have a fairly well developed ethical awareness — some have a pretty sharp sense of what is "sporting," some don't kill anything they don't intend to eat, and so on. I don't share their attitudes in the matter, but they are not all evil men. On the other hand, few hunters, in my experience, could be mistaken for environmentalists. Ryan's observation that many of them are conservationists doesn't necessary mean any more than that they want to make sure there continues to be enough ducks or whatever for them to shoot at. They generally take the view, at least implicitly, that nature is there for man to exploit.

Neither would I ban all animal research and testing, though I would look closely at methods and alleged benefits in individual cases. Whether in this or in other connections, I don't see militancy as being my function in the world. Still, there are widespread-enough practices clearly beyond the bounds of what I consider acceptable that with regard to them I am willing to make a certain political commitment. That doesn't mean that I agree with all of the positions taken by a particular organization or any of its other members. Such is the nature of most political organizing.

Ryan's point about ladies in furs and bikers in leathers is well taken to a degree: one group is certainly safer to harass than the other. But I'm not aware of any animals that are raised exclusively for leather, and those that are used for leather are mostly not raised under particularly cruel conditions. Mink farms are another matter. So is seal-clubbing.

I don't know much about or have much interest in Congressman Dornan, but a good portion of Ryan's piece gets lost in a kind of *ad hominem* argument that at best is off the point. If he is really the pragmatist he claims to be, he should understand the potential wisdom, regarding someone with whom you mostly disagree, of catching him being good when you can. I'm not much of an awards man myself, but if the things are to have any political value, they probably should go to people other than the already converted and the doctrinally pure. For all I know, getting Mr. Dornan to accept whatever award it was he got from such an effete group may have been an accomplishment in itself.

One more thing. I haven't asked him, but I should imagine that Alex Pacheco would prefer to have his name spelled right.

Dennis Vail
Beaumont

On the Fringe

I take issue with Richard Ryan on his article "Fur-Fetched," in the February issue of your journal (*TO*, 2/24/89).

Mr. Ryan has taken the actions of Bob Dornan and his staff as those of people concerned with the welfare of animals and has managed through implication in his next to the last paragraph to connect Dornan's and his staff's offensive attitude towards

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EDITORIAL

Big Oil, Big Risks

AS THE OIL SLICK off the coast of Alaska continues to disperse we can expect to hear more about the ocean's natural abilities to cleanse itself, and some will come to regard the story of Exxon's gigantic spill as yesterday's headlines. The oil industry, especially, will hope to see the event fade from the public's memory and Exxon will attempt to settle quietly with the local fishermen who have had their livelihoods ruined.

Already industry apologists, including the President of the United States, are insisting that there are no broad lessons to be learned from this environmental disaster. A suitable scapegoat has been fingered; he is Captain Hazelwood, who was apparently not sober and not in control of his ship when it went off course and ran aground outside of Prince William Sound in the early morning hours of March 24.

Finding a culprit in Hazelwood has nearly absolved Exxon of responsibility for the 240,000-barrel spill. In fact, financial analysts doubt the accident will harm Exxon's business at all. The corporation's stock held steady during the crisis; the damage claims by Alaskans will be paid for by Exxon's insurers; and to top it all off, the price of gasoline at the pumps jumped by at least ten cents around the country, as the oil companies and refineries moved to take advantage of a temporary shortage (real or imagined) of oil.

But Exxon is demonstrably concerned with its public image. A week after the oil spill, the company took out full-page magazine and newspaper ads in which chairman Lawrence Rawl expressed "how sorry I am that this accident took place." Perhaps Rawl is sincerely sorry about the dead fish and the oil-drenched ducks and the frozen sea otters. Perhaps he really hates to see a beautiful area spoiled by gooey sludge and regrets the hardship it has caused Alaskans. But most likely he is especially sorry about the political effects the spill is likely to cause. He regrets the connections that environmentalists will make between the wreck of the Exxon Valdez and other issues.

The most obvious connection is with further oil exploration in Alaskan wilderness areas. For several years the big oil companies have been eyeing the last frontier of Alaskan oil reserves: the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Of Alaska's 11,000 miles of coastline, this is the only part that has been off-limits for the oil companies. Now they want the government to open it up.

The Arctic Wildlife Refuge is at the opposite end of the 800-mile Trans Alaska pipeline, which runs north to south from Alaska's northern shore to its southern coast. (It was at the southern terminus that the Exxon Valdez loaded up with 1.26 million barrels of oil before its ill-fated March 24 departure.) Environmentalists say the refuge is the last stretch of unspoiled habitat in Alaska. But the oil industry says there are 3.2 billion barrels of reserves under the frozen ground — enough to last about 30 years if pumped out at the rate of a million barrels a day.

A bill in Congress to open up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge has been bottled up in committees, largely due to Democratic Rep. George Miller of California. Last summer, reports filtered out of Washington that Speaker of the House Jim Wright was leaning on committee chairs to bring the bill to a floor vote. But opponents of the bill stalled long enough for the clock to run out on the last session, by which time Speaker Wright was preoccupied with his own problems.

Then at the beginning of this year the bill began moving again. The Speaker began making noises about "energy independence," his code words for Alaskan oil exploration. The Senate Energy Committee passed a bill just a week before Exxon's oil spill that would permit drilling at the arctic refuge. The day before the spill, a bill was introduced in the House by North Carolina Democrat Walter Jones.

Until Exxon's environmental disaster, the oil industry had been promoting arctic exploration with sophisticated propaganda about how oil development could exist in harmony with a pristine area. Now it will be difficult to go forward with such a campaign, while memories of Prince William Sound are still fresh. Rep. Miller of California, who recently visited the disaster area at the Port of Valdez, is now more intent than ever on blocking the exploration bill. But the industry wants the legislation to move this year rather than next because, as one industry official told the *Wall Street Journal*, "It would never pass during an election year."

Naturally, Big Oil has an ally in the nation's chief environmentalist, George Bush. The President affirmed at an April 7 press conference that he still favored development of the arctic refuge and that he saw no connection between the spill and the arctic refuge issue. He asked if opponents of oil development would argue "that we [should] shut down all the offshore production in the Gulf of Mexico."

"We're not saying that," says Tim Mahoney, a Sierra Club lobbyist in Washington. "We're saying don't go into a wilderness area." Mahoney says the leases that oil companies are seeking are on the coastal plain in the heart of the refuge, where many animals go in the summer. Oil exploration would bring in workers, machinery, roads, pipe, pads, and docks. "Pollution and industrialization are a certainty," he says.

Only in the most narrow of senses is Bush correct in saying there is "no connection" between this issue and the oil spill in Prince William Sound. It's true that one issue involves taking oil out of the ground, and the other involves shipping it at sea. But any true environmentalist would see the link immediately: industrialization and oil exploration, by definition, put us at odds with the environment, all the more so when it occurs in wild habitats. Phony politicians like George Bush are always ready to put the environment at risk in the name of "national security" or "energy independence." But an environmentalist President would look for bold new ways to push us toward lower energy consumption, and toward renewable resources and cleaner fuels. A real environmentalist would look for the connections. —D.D.

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FEATURES

DEPARTMENTS

The Past is Always With Us

BY RICHARD RYAN

Washington, D.C.

IMAGINE HOW you'd feel if the raven of arbitrary temporal divisions came to you in the early hours of the year and, perched upon your mantel, croaked, "The '90s are the '80s. The '80s are the '90s. WRAAK!" The blackbird has become my constant companion, reminding me of things I'd rather not know. Our public life has faded into a stale continuum; the predictable cycles of technology and the rhythms of the media have reduced history to a monotonous, post-industrial consistency. Quoth the raven, "Evermore."

1992 is 1984, almost by definition. Once again we'll have an outrageously dumb president with a lo-calorie grin and a complete detachment from policy, running on a platform of imagery. Once again mainstream economists will be predicting a major financial contraction and once again massive military spending and huge amounts of foreign borrowing will keep the illusory economic expansion going. Once again Jesse Jackson will be running. Once again he'll get fewer votes than Gary Hart or Ted Kennedy in their respective presidential bids, and once again his supporters will demand — despite the Reverend's mediocre showing and dereliction of substantive accomplishments — that Jesse be given "what he wants." Once again I will think good thoughts about some drab liberal bureaucrat (Bill Bradley, odds are) who once again will betray me by running an utterly vapid, centrist campaign. For the 17th year in a row the only radio worth listening to will be local college stations, despite the fact that they devote huge sections of their broadcast day to zoning commission meetings and Chilean flute music.

If that's not enough to make your skin feel like a colony of lizards, just reread a newspaper. Any old newspaper; one from seven or eight years ago will do just fine. The Central American news is especially durable. An unsteady leftist government reigns in Nicaragua, complaining about U.S. "nonmilitary aid" to its otherwise insignificant opposition; a massive rebel offensive is underway in El Salvador; corrupt, U.S.-backed military regimes grind on in Guatemala and Honduras while the Democrats in Congress wring their hands and let the Administration define the terms of the policy debate. How can the situation in one of the world's most volatile regions remain so static? Easily enough, if the United States, still the wicked landlord of the continent, refuses to alter its alignments.

On February 13 and 14 the five Central American presidents convened in Tesoro Beach, a Pacific coast resort in El Salvador. On the table were the continued hostilities along the Nicaraguan/Honduran border. In previous agreements the presidents had hammered out broad principles respecting each other's mutual sovereignty and pledging noninterference in one another's politics. What made the Tesoro Beach accords potentially revolutionary were the specifics on which the parties resolved. The Sandinistas agreed to permit "unrestricted" political activity by the opposition from late April to late August of this year. In the fall a political campaign will get under way, culminating in presidential and legislative elections on Feburary 25, 1990. In exchange for these guarantees from their southern neighbors, Hondurans agreed to direct the contra army based in their country to lay down its weapons and return to Nicaragua.

This sensible approach, the latest in a series of regional diplomatic breakthroughs that began with the so-called Arias accords of 1987, has been quickly undermined by the "bi-partisan" agreement struck between Secretary of State James Baker and the Democrats in Congress last month. The Baker plan, which will provide $4.5 million a month to the contras, through the Nicaraguan elections, essentially pays the Honduran-based terrorist opposition to continue its border piracy. (A cease-fire between the contras and the Sandinistas has been in effect for several months, though contra violations have continued.) At a stage at which Central American leaders agree the contras should be demobilized and repatriated, the United States continues to prolong the agonies of Nicaragua.

While investigating the genealogy of the Baker plan, I met with an aide to the House leadership who retraced for me the events leading up to the State Department's new sado-gringo exercise. He told me that in the early stage of the Congressional negotiation the House delegates stood firmly against renewed contra aid of any sort. The White House only prevailed after Senate Democrats — including Connecticut liberal Chris Dodd (an invertebrate who also voted for the Tower nomination) — swung over to Baker's side on the issue of nonmilitary support. The House leaders involved with the negotiations had to go back to the Democratic caucus and squelch liberal opposition to the scheme.

The plan is being called bi-partisan because it allegedly represents Baker's pragmatic desire to see some sort of negotiated settlement to the Nicaraguan conflict. In fact, since the chance of getting military aid for the Nicaragua opposition was shaving the hair off nil, the Administration has skillfully kept alive its "contra option" despite the patent failure of the contras themselves. Baker managed to work language into the agreement which presses for a renewal of military aid in the event that the February elections are held to be "fraudulent." (What fraudulent means here and who has the privilege of defining it are issues that have not been worked out, though you can bet the Administration will be looking for some excuse to start the arms flowing again.) In the Baker plan, cold warriors and interventionists have found a vehicle for pursuing policies that should have been shot down with Eugene Hasenfus.

Nevertheless, House liberals still have an opportunity to yank the Administration's chain on this one. The authorization for the contra funding will be working its way through the relevant committees over the next several weeks, and while it's almost sure to clear them, righteous members can still put some significant conditions on the delivery of the aid. By establishing a threshold of acceptable conduct for the contras — no cross-border raids, no attempts to disrupt the Nicaragua elections — legislators who know a band of mercenary cutthroats when they smell them can put a leash on the Administration's dobermen.

Jim Matlack of the American Friends Service Committee in Washington has been monitoring the contra aid pipeline for a number of years. He recently obtained a copy of an internal report by the Agency for International Development, which now handles the disbursement of funds to the contras. In addition to distributing prepaid supplies at the contra refugee camps in Honduras, in the past AID has also given "cash-for-food" to the thousand or so

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Richard Ryan writes about politics from Washington, D.C.

contras who operate inside Nicaragua. There's no telling how this money is actually spent, of course, and Matlack rightly insists that elimination of outright cash payments to the contras should be a precondition for Congressional approval of the Baker pledge.

The contras will be getting other money from Uncle Sam besides the humanitarian aid. The *L.A. Times* reported in January that the contras were receiving $4.8 million a year in "political funding" from the CIA. The figure emerged when the press learned that the Agency couldn't account for all of the slush fund, and was auditing Adolfo Calero's travel expenses. In the annals of spookdom, "political funding" has meant everything from financing disinformation broadcasts to paying off informants and spies. No one seems to know at what level this funding will continue, but it's safe to guess that the CIA is planning a major destabilization campaign once the election season gets under way in Nicaragua. There's nothing worse than a democratically elected communist government to mess up a hawk's world view.

Quantum physicists have recently speculated that famous "indeterminacy" of subatomic events is constantly giving rise to parallel universes, separate realities whose features we can only dream. What a tantalizing possibility. I want to go to the cosmos where the Democrats aren't useless cowards, where Tom Foley stands up in the well of the House and says, "A few weeks ago the Sandinistas freed nearly 1900 imprisoned members of Somoza's National Guards; for the last year Managua has offered an open amnesty to all contras, in full compliance with the Arias plan. The death squads rage in Salvador and Guatemala while the Sandinistas, despite our crushing economic boycott, maintain democracy — truly a phenomenal record. Yet in the face of public opposition, in the wake of Ronald Reagan and Oliver North's siege on national and international law, the Bush Administration has the nerve to try to bully Congress into coughing up more money for its mercenary hooligans."

If such a world exists, I'm ready to go.

A COMPENSATORY delight of the last few weeks has been the spectacle of a hapless Jesse Jackson thrashing like a mastodon in the tar pit of Chicago politics. By the time this appears, Jackson's stake in the windy city's mayoral race should be swept off the table, as the revived political machine of Richard Daley celebrates its victory. (A Daley regime back on track in Chicago! I told you we were in a rut. In appears that Santayana was being optimistic: even those who remember history are condemned to repeat it.)

Jackson has gotten himself in trouble by supporting Tim Evans, an African-American city councilmember running as a third-party candidate against Daley. The current electoral battle is more fallout from the tragic death of the noble Harold Washington, a paragon among urban politicos. Following Washington's death a vile nonentity by the name of Eugene Sawyer took City Hall with the backing of a junta of right-wing council members, who apparently knew a tool when they saw one. Sawyer's mumbling, do-nothing style became a joke throughout the city, and he managed to destroy what was left of Washington's multi-racial coalition when he took a week to fire an assistant who claimed that Jewish doctors were deliberately giving AIDS to black babies. Daley easily defeated Sawyer in the Democratic primary, and Evans stepped to pick up the progressive mantle with his "Harold Washington Party."

National Democratic leaders are grumbling that Jackson has put race ahead of party loyalty by supporting Evans. Jackson's response, reasonable on its face, is that Evans is clearly more progressive than Daley and that Daley and other fair-skinned Chicago Democrats backed a white third-party candidate against Washington in the last mayoral campaign. But Jackson, as usual, is being disingenuous; if quality, rather than race, were his priority, he would have sat out the Democratic primary and waited for Evans's entry. But Jackson did campaign in the Democratic contest — for Sawyer, beside whom even Richie Daley looms large. When asked why he backed first Sawyer and then Evans, Jackson said that African-American residents of the city deserved "two shots" at the Mayor's office. In other words, race, not merit, was Jackson's first priority. Fine, Reverend. Thanks for reminding us.

Saying that you're no worse than Chicago's white politicians is like telling a judge you're no worse than all the other child molesters. I have to confront this sort of reverse-racism all the time in Washington, where one often hears local African Americans defend our degenerate mayor, Marion Barry, on the grounds that he's no different than the pugs the white establishment kept in power for years — the logical corollary being that attacks on the mayor are racially motivated. Here we see the dark reflex of race politics in America, the one tangible result of Jackson's perpetual and useless presidential candidacy. If you criticize a black politician you risk being called a racist, or a dupe of racists. Observe the attacks of the appropriately named Gus Savage, a black Congress member from Chicago who called fellow African-American Ron Brown, the newly elected leader of the Democratic party, an "Oreo cookie" for offering to campaign for Daley.

It used to be if you criticized Israel you were an anti-semite, or a dupe of anti-semites. Recently, Israel has begun acting so abominably that this canard no longer plays anywhere outside the pages of *Commentary*. With the Jackson/Barry duo chewing up newsprint, perhaps it will soon be safe for white progressives to have their own opinions on African-American politics.

The disaster in Chicago, a fiasco in his own backyard, is naturally a terrible setback for Jackson. Having strutted his stuff in his hometown, Jackson now threatens — and I use the verb advisedly — to take his special brand of magic to New York, where David Dinkins, a Queens liberal, is hoping to end the reign of Ed "Who Can I Offend Today?" Koch in an upcoming election. Dinkins happens to be black, which means Jackson takes a proprietary interest in him. Still, it's hard to see what sort of political capital Jackson brings to a city he once referred to as "Hymietown."

Dinkins should cast an eye on Texas, where, by associating with Jackson, Ag Commissioner Jim Hightower has seriously damaged his fundraising capacity and knocked himself out of a Senate race against Phil Gramm. Hightower, who has been a rising star in the national party, now looks so vulnerable that the Republicans are actually threatening to eliminate his job. The *Observer*'s former editor is paying a stiff price for supporting a racist demagogue who has never held elected office. Where's the populist movement, Commissioner?

I can see the mail coming already and that's fine, but, my fellow progressives, grant me this about Jesse Jackson: he may not hold the keys to the kingdom, but he does have the nails to the cross. □

RETROSPECTIVE ON NICARAGUA

Bush Continues U.S. Interventionism

BY MERCEDES LYNN DE URIARTE

FOR THE PAST eight years, North American politicians have attributed to the Sandinistas abilities greater than those of the United States government itself.

Ever since these Nicaraguans took power American leaders have accused them of exporting revolution to their neighbors. The charge may be tinged with envy, for despite 200 years of experience the United States has been unable to export democracy to those same Central American nations.

Last month, President George Bush and Secretary of State James Baker announced the latest U.S. strategy toward Nicaragua. It promises more of the same mismanagement. For decades a certain myopia has blurred U.S. perception of its neighbors' needs.

The newest policy leaves me once again juggling images between those that I have collected in frequent trips to Nicaragua during the past nine years and the descriptions of that nation promoted by U.S. interventionists.

Historical amnesia undermines the foundations of U.S. foreign policy. If our strategists were better informed, and not so intent on seeing developments in Latin America through an anti-communist grid, they might note that the roots of the current struggle stretch back into the 1910 Mexican Revolution. Two Central American heroes, Augusto Sandino of Nicaragua and Farabundo Marti of El Salvador, discovered the revolutionary philosophy and fought in the Mexican war.

Later, as Mexico began rebuilding with a mixed economy divided between state and private enterprise, Sandino and Marti headed home where they, too, organized resistance against an unjust system. That struggle has continued with varying degrees of intensity ever since. And in Nicaragua (as in other Central American nations) it has meant opposing U.S. intervention.

U.S. meddling led to the 1927 founding of the Nicaraguan *Guardia Nacional* headed by Anastasio Somoza and the 22-year U.S. military occupation during which time Somoza was installed as president. The Sandinistas ousted his relatives in 1979.

A number of Nicaragua's modern revolutionaries were educated in U.S. colleges during the 1960s civil rights movement. "Most of us couldn't afford to go home for spring break," Maria Louisa Vargas, a top legislative attorney with a law degree from the University of Pittsburg, once told me. "So we'd meet at someone's place in the U.S. and plan how we'd change things in Nicaragua after graduation."

Now the U.S. backs the contras — a substantial number of whom, including almost all of the leadership, are former members of the Guard.

"We have an opportunity to start a new day in Central America," said Bush, who announced Congressional unity between the parties and with the Executive in the contra support agreement. He did not explain how continuing the pattern of interference or providing funding to the same old contra forces heralded a fresh dawn. But the move refueled Latin American resentment of interventionism in U.S. policy. And highlighted its hypocrisy.

"We do not claim the right to order the politics of Nicaragua. That is for the Nicaraguan people to decide," said Bush. He then outlined U.S. goals in that country: democratization, an end to Nicaraguan subversion and destabilization of its neighbors, and an end to Soviet bloc military ties that threaten U.S. and regional security.

Many Americans (public opinion polls repeatedly show that a majority opposes U.S. policy in Central America) hoped that a change of presidents — even within the same party — would bring a fresh perspective. But over the years consistency has been the rule in U.S. policy toward Central and Latin America.

Further, with the classic historical arrogance that has so alienated U.S. politicians from their Latin American neighbors, Nicaraguan efforts at autonomy were dismissed. "We all have to admit that the Reagan policy basically failed to some extent because we were not united," said Baker, citing past conflicts between U.S. legislative and executive branches.

He did not discuss other reasons why it might have failed, including Nicaraguan reluctance to join U.S. efforts to redesign their government. Although the Sandinistas have armed civilians for their own protection against the contras, these weapons have not been used against the current government in support of American policy. Nor have the contras ever been able to hold territory within Nicaragua. (Indeed, it has been said that the only reason they can hang on to the space they occupy in Honduras is because the U.S. government pays for their tenancy.)

Beyond that, North Americans often fail to build productive relations with Latin American nations because their analysis of realities south of their own borders is so limited. For example, government actions and policies that address social issues are either perceived to imitate the United States, and therefore are endorsed, or are denounced as being communist. Often they are just pragmatic.

Regardless of the conclusions drawn, in the ensuing arguments too often we lose sight of the people.

Several years ago, while crossing Nicaragua's only east-west transnational road — a rough, gravel track — by jeep with four international journalists, we stopped for repairs in a small town beyond the reach of telephone or electric lines.

A British reporter and I wandered up to a small wooden shack where such medicines as were available were sold, scattered artfully across the otherwise bare wood shelves. A young mother stood there holding her 18-month-old daughter whose legs were purple and inflamed by the common tropical skin rash that kills or handicaps so many children in Central America. The mother was clutching a small tube of yellow salve, raving to the storekeeper about the improvement it had made in the rash and how it soothed the baby's pain.

"Is the doctor Cuban?" we asked.

"I don't know," she said. "We've never seen a doctor here before."

The exchange reminded me of a conversation I had when, during the late 1950s, I was a young Air Force wife stationed in the South. My neighbor explained to me that her medical records

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Mercedes Lynn de Uriarte, a former assistant editor of the Los Angeles Times *opinion page and a former Alicia Patterson fellow is now an Assistant Professor in Journalism and Latin American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin.*

at the base carried the statement: "Do not assign a Negro doctor." Coming so recently from Mexico then, I marveled at a nation so rich in expertise and services it could afford to put discrimination before survival.

But in the Third World, where resources are shallow or absent, help is not attached to "isms" in the mind of the recipient. Need outweighs the shadows of capitalism, socialism, and communism. Few can afford to reject scarce food, shelter, medical aid, or education. An egg, a chicken, are free of ideology. Nor can it be expected that a child be allowed to suffer and die because some distant politician disapproves the source of available aid.

Some days after our visit to the rural clinic, in a discussion with Carlos Tunnerman, then the Nicaraguan minister of education, I remarked that there was much U.S. criticism of the literacy campaign and of the fact that some Cubans assisted in the drive which won several international awards.

"Look here," Tunnerman said, pulling out a box of supplies. "These are the posters we put up in major U.S. cities seeking American volunteers to help us. Only a handful answered. But Europeans and our Latin American neighbors came instead."

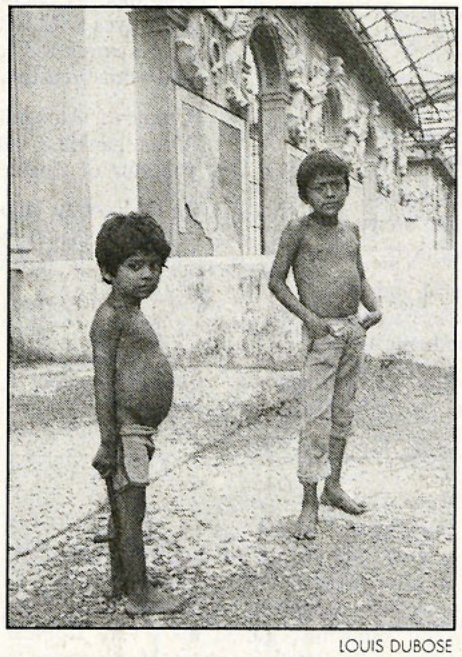
The textbooks used in that campaign offended many Americans, spelling out as they did the number of U.S. interventions in Nicaragua and striking a nationalistic chord. One editorial writer for the *Los Angeles Times*, whose assignment it was to comment on the books, told me how communist they were. He did not read Spanish and admitted to not having seen the books personally. But he had talked to other journalists, he said, who had. Although I gave him examples of how much they followed the messages in my own Mexican elementary school texts, which told a similar history of U.S.-Mexico relations, he wasn't interested.

Labeling prevented insight.

The question to be asked, in pursuit of a new day in Central America, is how it happened that those small, poor nations so long dominated by U.S. interests and supported by U.S. aid, still managed to have some of the highest illiteracy rates, infant mortality rates, and malnutrition in the world.

TO ACCOMPLISH the recently announced agreement objectives, Congress has now committed to provide $4 million in U.S. tax dollars per month until next February to continue "humanitarian" aid to these proxy troops — who for at least eight years have been supported by aggressive U.S. policy toward Nicaragua. During this time, 12,457 civilians, including women and children, have been killed, wounded, or kidnapped by the contra. Among these victims are 130 teachers, 649 students, 27 doctors, and 11 nurses killed.

According to President Daniel Ortega's state of the nation address, Nicaragua has suffered more than $12.2 billion dollars in economic losses, not counting lost international funding due to U.S. pressure against it and damage from the U.S. economic embargo. Last year Hurricane Joan destroyed crops and millions of dollars in homes and infrastructure. Refugees now come in a steady stream to U.S. border cities in Texas and California.



LOUIS DUBOSE

In Managua

And the Reagan policy, now admitted by the Bush Administration to have failed, did not come cheap. "We have spent nearly $12 billion between 1979 and 1987 on all aspects of the U.S. policy in Central America, mostly on direct and indirect military aid," said Dr. Michael Conroy, associate director of the University of Texas Institute for Latin American Studies, at a recent symposium. "If we had spent the same amount of money on direct economic assistance, we could have substantially raised the quality of life, improved social services and provided greater stability throughout the region. Instead we have significantly reduced the standard of living and have brought about a worsening situation."

Economic strain in Nicaragua is easy to spot: Long lines for buses whose bodies sag under the overload weight of people clinging to the sides and, in some cases, to the roof. Long, bare gaps on market shelves that hold few products and no selection. Long lines outside the few telephone *casetas* that handle public calls between points outside the city. (Few Nicaraguans have private phones.) Taxis wired together, shaking with such noise that conversation inside is impossible. Pot holes deep enough in the streets to tilt over the incautious vehicle. Incomplete housing projects begun with such hope just a few years ago.

The scars of contra activities are also easily visible in Nicaragua. But they are nowhere more impressive than in the faces of children. In the stark rooms of Managua's pediatric hospital, for instance, lie quiet toddlers with bewildered eyes. Their worried parents fan them with scraps of cardboard or wipe their foreheads with tattered bits of cloth. Nursing help is short. There are no toys to relieve interminable waiting. La Mascota Children's Hospital searches continually for foreign assistants with training, experience, low income needs — and grit.

Much needed medicine is unavailable in Nicaragua because of the U.S. economic boycott. Under the "new day" policy Bush advocates, the United States will continue the comforts of mercenaries while intensifying the pain of children.

Last August a dysentery epidemic raged through Nicaragua's tiniest citizens. In a conversation with Dr. Fernando Silva, director of La Mascota, I noted that while collecting my luggage at the airport in Managua, I had to maneuver past scores of cartons full of medical supplies from Canada and other U.S. allies.

"They have been such a help in providing vital medicine," he said. "Sometimes we have not had anesthesia. Doctors and plastic surgeons, including American experts, sometimes come here to help. Right now, in addition to war casualties, we are fighting this epidemic. Fortunately, there is a network of people-to-people assistance. Just last week, after a series of emergency phone calls to doctors who have visited here, I went out to the airport to replenish critical medicine. A relay system routed it through several countries to get it to us."

U.S. policymakers justify their position with claims that certain actions are necessary in the face of Sandinista repression. Over the years, these charges have often seemed unfounded, excessive, or distorted. Consider the matter of censorship which the Administration raises so often. It points to *La Prensa*, one of the three major newspapers in Nicaragua, as a victim of repression. Freedom of speech issues can be expected to elicit the interest of the press. History, like yesterday's news, is considered stale.

But *La Prensa*'s battle with the government is only partially a free-speech issue. Under that banner, in a nation in a declared state of military emergency and without U.S. journalism ethics, *La Prensa* claimed the right to publish without restraint. In the past, this has included deliberate misinformation and calls for the violent overthrow of the Sandinista government. How many U.S. papers would support now — or supported during World War II, when the United States faced a foreign enemy — a similar call against its government?

Too often these details have been swept

To Countless Heroes
(*A los heroes sin nombre*, Salvador Dĭaz Mirón, Mexico, 1853-1928)

A los Heroes sin Nombre

Milicias que en las épicas fatigas
caĭsteis, indistintas e ignoradas,
cual por la hoz del rústico segadas
en tiempo de cosecha las espigas;

que moristeis a manos enemigas
fulgentes de entusiasmo las miradas,
tintas hasta los puños las espadas
y rotas por delante las lorigas.

¡Oscuros Alejandros y Espartacos!
La ingratitud de vuestro sino aterra
la musa de los himnos elegiacos.

En las cruentas labores de la guerra,
sembradora de lauros, fuisteis sacos
de estiércol, ay, para abondar la tierra.

—Salvador Díaz Mirón (Mexico, 1853-1928)

To Countless Heroes
(*A los heroes sin nombre*, Salvador Dĭaz Mirón, Mexico, 1853-1928)

Soldiers — you who fell unsung,
unnoticed in the great battles,
who with peasants' sickles
harvested the corn on time,

who died by enemy hands,
your eyes wild with fire,
your swords red to their hilts
and your breastplates ripped.

Unknown Alexanders and Spartans!
Your thankless fate appals
the mue of elegiac hymns.

In the bloody labors of war,
the glory-maker, you were just
shit-sacks to fertilize the earth.

—translated by James Hoggard

James Hoggard is a poet living in Wichita Falls.

aside. And *La Prensa* is allowed to coast along on its old reputation as the opposition press headed by Pedro Joaquin Chamorro until he was ambushed by Somoza supporters. But that identity no longer fits because 95 percent of Chamorro's staff left in protest and joined his brother Xavier Chamorro to start *El Nuevo Diario* when *La Prensa* took up its anti-Sandinista line.

A drive through northern Nicaragua last summer threw other half-truths once more into sharp relief. Although Reagan, Bush, and the press attribute foreign aid received by the Sandinistas to the Soviets and Cuba, throughout the country one finds evidence of other international support — from heavy equipment and technical advisers to volunteer reconstruction workers from France, West Germany, Belgium, Canada, and other nations.

All along the one road northwest from the capital of Managua to the Honduran border, people line up hoping for rides from the fortunate few who have transportation and gas. Most of these hitchhikers tell of long walks and even longer waits to reach their destinations. A good many complain loudly and openly about conditions — without any apparent fear of reprisal.

Nor can people easily call between points. A few telephones scattered at communication centers across the country handle most callers' needs on a first-come-maybe-first-served basis. The U.S. system put in decades ago was badly maintained under former strongman Anastasio Somoza and cannot be repaired now because the U.S. economic embargo denies Nicaragua parts — assuming they could afford such purchases.

Once off the major highway, roads are mostly illusion. Only the use of a heavy-duty jeep makes it possible to drive over their remnants, gutted by severe tropical storms, flooding, and wear. Maintenance is not budgeted.

But the eight-hour, 200-mile trip to Jalapa, a small triangular area jutting north, bordered on two sides by Honduras, provides perhaps the most impressive argument against U.S. claims of severe repression. The farther north one travels, the more frequent and vicious were contra attacks before the cease fire agreement.

Jalapa itself suffered repeated incursions. On its small, unpaved main street, six European volunteers work on a new child-care center. Nearby, Sandinista soldiers repair the elementary school wall, damaged in a fire fight. Joaquin Martinez, a Catholic priest, pointed to an underground schoolyard shelter. Protection dug out against U.S. policy.

Yet at no point along the way were we asked to identify ourselves, — two women driving alone — until, having taken a wrong turn, we drew close to the Honduran border. There, three Sandinista soldiers pulled a single strand of barbed wire across the road, scant challenge to a four-wheel drive vehicle. We pulled to a halt, discovered we were lost, and began to turn around.

A young soldier, balancing five, stacked, green plastic plates with lids over the standard fare of black beans, rice, cheese, and cabbage salad stepped forward. As long as we were so close to the border, he asked, would we drop him at the line so he could deliver lunch to his buddies? He scrambled aboard along with six soldiers, some sitting on the laps of others. There was much giggling and whispering. Seated, most were shorter than the weapons clutched between their knees. (Boys by appearance, men by demand.)

Camping out that night near Jalapa, after the visiting carnival with its rickety merry-go-round had packed up its generator to move on and families had carried their reluctant youngsters off to bed, tropic noises filled the silence. Washington seemed irrelevant.

But that is never long the case in Central America. Bush's message last month brought Washington's power once more into focus. And it widened further the historic gap between Latin American and U.S. perception of autonomy.

Funding the contras now undercuts the Central American Peace Initiative stipulation that all informal armed forces disperse. It also trivializes the participating presidents' February 14 agreement to write (within 90 days) a plan that disbands the contra army and allows them to return to their homeland or to resettle.

The State Department, however, maintains that the absence of a deadline in the agreement for disbanding the contras allows them to continue business as usual — which Baker describes as applying pressure to the Sandinista government to insure that it undertakes internal reforms.

No doubt policy pronouncements will continue in the new Administration. But they will only be measured by the people of Nicaragua in ratios of suffering. □

Pipedreams

Cecil Owens Dreamed of a Pipeline From Los Angeles to Midland — And Made a Believer Out of Jim Wright

BY TERESA SIMONS

Los Angeles

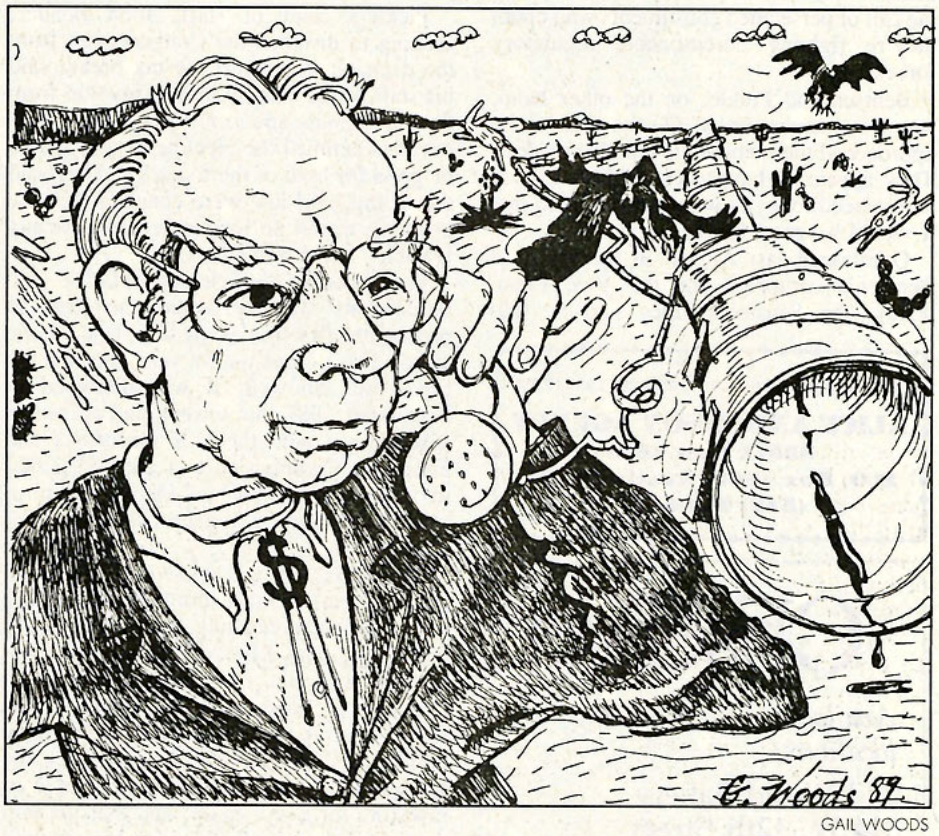
THE LOCKED DOORS and disconnected phones at Pacific Texas Pipeline Co.'s Midland and Los Angeles Harbor offices represent more than the story of another failed Texas oil business. The offices' abrupt closure in March is the end of a $1.6 billion pipeline plan that had won the backing of several influential Texas politicians, including House Speaker Jim Wright and Senator Lloyd Bentsen.

The company that now has left creditors wondering where to send their bills — and earlier was the subject of a U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission investigation — once passed the dubious scrutiny of politicians and bureaucrats from Texas to California who guaranteed it, among other things, a multi-million dollar federal tax break in the Tax Reform Act of 1986.

Cecil R. Owens, a Texas native and former Grand Prairie city councilmember with limited background in the oil business but a fair amount of practice in building shopping centers, drew up the plan for the pipeline eight years ago. The plan, which Owens insisted was no ordinary pipedream, was to build a $1.6 billion, 1,031-mile line to carry Alaskan crude oil from Los Angeles Harbor to Midland, where it would empty into existing pipeline systems. Even though oil companies expressed more doubt than enthusiasm about the project, Owens maintained it would save them money by reducing month-long tanker transfers through the Panama Canal to three-day transfers through his pipeline.

Owens picked up $2.1 million in support from a band of enthusiastic investors, many who now say, in court documents and interviews, that they regret giving Owens their money. With that initial funding, Owens rapidly secured the necessary environmental permits for his project — permits that Standard of Ohio had failed to win for a similar project just a few years earlier.

"I've known all along that if anyone could do it, it would be Cecil Owens," House Speaker Jim Wright wrote Owens in a November 1983 "Dear Cecil" letter. Owens thanked Wright the following year with a $1,000 campaign contribution.



GAIL WOODS

Wright's exact involvement in the pipeline project isn't clear. Neither Owens nor Wright would comment for this article.

In March 1981, Wright wrote that he had known Owens "for 25 or 30 years" and that "there is no question in my mind that Mr. Owens is a man of the highest character and integrity." Wright wrote that in a letter to Richard Perry, then a high-ranking official of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, as banking regulators were checking out Owens's credentials to see if he should be allowed to take over the now-defunct Civic Savings and Loan in Irving. Despite Wright's assurances, the bank board turned down Owens's proposal, determining that he merely intended to sell off Civic assets to finance his pipeline project and that he had no intention of providing the $3 million in new capital needed to keep the institution solvent.

Also connecting Wright to the pipeline project is a sworn statement by J. Collier "Buddy" Adams, a former Texas legislator, longtime Owens confidant, and fellow pipeline company director. Adams told Securities and Exchange Commission investigators looking into Pacific Texas in 1986 that Owens had "spent time in Washington with Jim Wright" concerning the pipeline project. That was about the time that Owens was seeking a multi-million dollar tax break for his pipeline.

Owens eventually found the support he needed for the tax break in Senator Lloyd Bentsen of Texas and, in the House, with Rep. J. J. "Jake" Pickle of Texas and Rep. Robert Matsui of California.

Pacific Texas never used the huge tax credit because the company didn't get financing to begin construction. But Owens did promote his project by bragging that it had received what was one of the largest tax breaks offered in the 1986 tax law. While Congress officially stated the tax

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break to be worth $187 million, the *Philadelpia Inquirer* asserted in a series of articles that cited the law's hundreds of special-interest exemptions that it could be worth as much as $500 million.

WRIGHT'S ASSISTANCE to his long-time friend Cecil Owens is colored by the Speaker's questionable business associations now being examined by the House ethics committee. The Pacific Texas story appears to be another example of the old-style pork-barrel pol's legendary service to his Texas constituents — and of how he has often answered the call of persecuted constituents who claim they're fighting unreasonable regulatory forces.

Bentsen and Pickle, on the other hand, say they never knew Owens before he approached them about his pipeline project. They appear to have been sold on it by a well-placed lobbyist who assured them that it would be good for Texas.

Questioned last August in the midst of Bentsen's campaign for the Vice Presidency, the Senator's aides said he was surprised that the pipeline had not been built and regretted sponsoring the legislation that gave Pacific Texas its tax break. Bentsen spokesperson Jack DeVore said the Senator did not know Owens and that Bentsen had acted on representations from pipeline company lobbyists, including John "Buck" Chapoton, a former assistant secretary of the Treasury for Tax Policy who now is a partner in the large Houston firm of Vinson and Elkins. Chapoton reportedly sold Bentsen on the pipeline project by telling him that it would use Texas steel and Texas workers and bring oil to be refined in Texas.

Pickle's chief of staff, John Bender, seeking to distance the Congressman from the decision to support the tax break, said his staff relied heavily on information from the other House sponsor, Matsui of California, that claimed the pipeline project would be good for both of their states. "They said that if the [tax] law were changed then the program would no longer be economically feasible," said Bender.

For most of the elected officials and bureaucrats who furthered the pipeline project, the first hint of any trouble at Pacific Texas didn't come until a year after the tax break was allowed. It was disclosed in September 1987 that Owens had agreed in a settlement with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission to forfeit $413,020 in back pay he said the company owed him. Owens also agreed to keep better financial records.

The SEC, in a lawsuit, had accused Pacific Texas of misleading and defrauding its investors and violating securities registration laws. The SEC complaint said that Owens and his company engaged in "courses of business which operated and would operate as a fraud and deceit upon purchasers"; that Owens bought stock for himself for $1 a share while he sold it to investors for $10 a share; and that, to help win over potential pipeline investors, Owens and his associates promised some people they "would receive returns of at least 500 percent per annum beginning as early as March 1985." To date the return has been zero.

The SEC said it also found that from the spring of 1981 to the fall of 1985, Pacific Texas spent about $469,000 on Owens's behalf for travel, living expenses, lobbying and entertainment, political contributions, and various business expenses. In 1985, the company's directors fixed Owens's salary at $500,000 a year, retroactive to 1982. In 1987, the last year for which company financial records are available, Owens reported taking $292,000 in cash, deferring payment on $208,000.

Now Pacific Texas is embroiled in nearly a dozen lawsuits seeking almost $2.5 million in unpaid bills and in additional multi-million dollar disputes with companies that say they have done work for Pacific Texas but have not been paid. The U.S. Bureau of Land Management in January revoked the company's right-of-way permit to build the interstate pipeline after Owens repeatedly refused to pay some $100,000 owed to the taxpayers in rent.

When an advertising salesman for the *Odessa American* recently demanded that Pacific Texas vice president Mike Owens, Cecil Owens's son, pay a $1,200 bill, the younger Owens handed him a $10,000 Rolex watch as collateral, the newspaper reported. The newspaper then found that Pacific Texas had closed its Midland and Los Angeles Harbor offices and reported that the Midland office was padlocked by a landlord after Pacific Texas had fallen behind in rent payments. But the younger Owens attributed the situation to the company's "growing pains" and maintained that the pipeline still would be built.

The Pacific Texas experience is not unlike many of Owens's other business ventures. Had the elected officials and bureaucrats who furthered his pipeline project checked court records in Texas and Arizona, they would have found that a series of Owens-run insurance, real estate, development, and banking ventures have collapsed amid bankruptcy, lawsuits, and unpaid claims.

The tall, burly son of a Sherman, Texas, truck driver, Owens was a self-made millionaire by the time he was 31. But business associates of this colorful and persuasive entrepreneur during the past two decades have gone to court accusing him of fraud, misrepresentation, securities law violations, racketeering, and breach of contract. Court documents show they have sued Owens personally 67 times for a total $1.2 million and have won judgments against him 23 of those times. Some cases were settled out of court, and others are still pending. One outstanding judgment in Harris County for $1,400 owed on a gasoline credit card is more than 18 years old.

Byron Queen, a Scottsdale process server, said his company's records show it was hired at least a dozen times in one six-year period to track down Owens and serve him with lawsuits or subpoenas. When the First National Bank of Arizona tried to force Owens in 1980 to pay a $7,400 BankAmericard bill, it took 17 tries before he could be served with a subpoena. Owens reportedly slammed the door on one process server's face and was "very hostile," a court affidavit said.

If anything, the Pacific Texas Pipeline Co. story should answer the question posed by Jim Wright's press secretary, who defended the House Speaker's assistance to Owens by asking, "Does a Congressman's office have an obligation to do a background check on everybody before writing a letter of support for him?

"The Speaker wrote a letter for a friend," spokesperson Mark Johnson said. "That is something done five or ten thousand times a day on Capitol Hill." □

Robert Mosbacher's Grand Scheme

BY JOE CONASON

All politics is local.
—former Speaker of the House
Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr.

FRIENDLY, neatly attired, and modest, Virgil Knox doesn't seem like a troublemaking activist. A graying, middle-aged man of average size, Knox looks more like an ordained minister or an insurance agent — both of which he is. Since 1984, he has lived with his wife and three children in a small house in Spring, a suburban town outside Houston's city limits. He spent his weekdays building an independent insurance business and his weekends fixing up his house, fishing for bass, and attending the local Church of Christ, where he substituted in the pulpit when the pastor was absent.

Virgil Knox is a registered Republican, a religious and hard-working man who always believed that the system worked. He felt that way until one day in 1984, when he found out he was about to get an unexpected county tax bill for a little piece of land he owned near his home. Levied for a special road assessment, the tax charges could, he estimated, have reached $80,000 on the property, which he had purchased for $9800. Paying it would have bankrupted the Knox family.

So Virgil Knox set out to organize other small homeowners against this unfair tax, not knowing he was about to learn things that would change his life. What he stumbled upon was a Byzantine scheme designed to further enrich a few of Houston's most powerful men.

Their method was a slick bid — in the name of civic progress — to seize control of the state highway department. Their plan was to build a six-lane "Grand Parkway," a 150-mile asphalt loop around Houston, at a cost to taxpayers of a billion dollars. Their purpose was to inflate the price of their own properties — because the new highway would suddenly make their thousands of undeveloped acres commercially viable.

It was as if a screenwriter had decided to remake the movie *Chinatown* and set it in the southeast Texas of the 1980s. Except that this tale actually happened, and the character who walked away with the most money was Robert A. Mosbacher, George Bush's new secretary of commerce.

THERE ARE FEW MEMBERS of Houston's elite who will say a bad word about Bob Mosbacher. A director of the city's biggest bank, a member of the most exclusive clubs, a friend of presidents, Mosbacher is not only prominent — he is beyond reproach. Tall, charming, and often described in fawning profiles as "movie star handsome," he was certainly, between marriages in the early '80s, Houston's most eligible bachelor. But while Mosbacher Energy is one of Texas' largest privately held independent oil companies, its founder has never been one of those rich Texans — like Clint Murchison or H. L. Hunt — haunted by personal and professional scandal. Successful and unimpeachably respectable, Mosbacher seems, in short, an unlikely target for investigation.

George Bush, a fellow member of that Houston elite, certainly trusts Bob Mosbacher. For more than 30 years Mosbacher's political and business associate, Bush had appointed Mosbacher to the sensitive, critically important position of his campaign's national finance chairman. After the election, Bush naturally turned to Mosbacher in choosing his cabinet. When the new president named his old friend to serve as secretary of commerce, he must have felt confident that Bob Mosbacher would live up to the high ethical standards Bush said he intended to establish for his administration.

Those standards, however, have not precluded the new secretary and his third wife, the flashy and considerably younger Georgette, from spending some of their estimated $200 million holdings on a highly visible lifestyle. The Mosbachers' imitation Texas barbecue at the Cadillac Bar was the place to be for New York's trendiest Republicans on election night; at the inauguration in January, Georgette stole the show from the First Family. According to the society columnists who now mention Washington's hottest new couple almost as often as the Trumps, the Mosbachers traverse the country by private jet, touching down between parties at luxurious homes in Manhattan, Washington, D.C., and the exclusive River Oaks section of Houston.

BUT THE PASSION Bob Mosbacher has pursued most implacably over the past 30 years — aside from his oil business — is Republican politics. His talent does not lie in the formulation of ideology or strategy, nor has he ever sought elective office for himself. Bob Mosbacher possesses a gift far more essential to the functioning of an American political party. What he does exceptionally well, perhaps better than anyone else, is raise money.

Out of his deep loyalty to Bush, he has worked hard for all of the President's former patrons, from Ronald Reagan all the way back to Richard Nixon. This has not always been a pleasantly arduous matter of glad-handing and party-giving; when Bush unsuccessfully ran for the Senate in 1970, Mosbacher's duties included the handling of over $100,000 in undeclared cash steered to Texas by the Nixon White House. Last year, Mosbacher directed the raising of $60 million for the Bush campaign and another $25 million for the Republican National Committee. Exploiting a loophole in campaign financing laws, he formed a "club" of some 250 millionaires who gave $100,000 or more to the Republican National Committee.

(So potent has Mosbacher become in the Texas GOP that, in 1984, his 32-year-old son Rob Jr. ran a strong race — with no noticeable qualifications — for the Senate seat vacated by John Tower. Rob Jr. — who is also the finance chairman of the state GOP — lost the Republican primary, but he expects to run for lieutenant governor next year, alongside his good friend and gubernatorial candidate George W. Bush, the President's son.)

When the Senate unanimously confirmed Mosbacher last month, the newest cabinet member waited only a few weeks before complaining that the members of his $100,000 club were not receiving the ambassadorships and other prestigious appointments their generosity had earned. His complaint that "quite a high percentage of those who have been helpful haven't gotten anything" was not cynicism or chutzpah, but an honest expression of the political customs that have long been traditional back in Houston.

For more than a century in Bush and Mosbacher's adopted hometown, the corporate elite has considered its own self-interest to be identical with civic virtue.

Joe Conason is a writer for the Village Voice *where a version of this article first appeared. Research assistance by Jesse Drucker.*

Until quite recently, local government (whether county or city) was more or less an adjunct to small cliques of bankers, lawyers, builders, and oilmen who guided policy, informally but firmly. *Public Policy in Texas*, the standard text used by political science students at Houston Community College, includes a section on the "Suite 8F Crowd," a group that met over whisky and cards in a downtown hotel to run the city's postwar affairs. Much of the city has been built in the years since those men reigned, but their memory abides in the reverent naming of streets, office buildings, and the new opera house. The same textbook bluntly characterizes Houston as "the City of Business Oligarchy."

The Suite 8F Crowd is now the stuff of history and legend, but its imperatives survive in the city's chambers of commerce, business associations, and the Petroleum Club. As an oilman and former director (along with Secretary of State James Baker III) of the Texas Commerce Bank, Bob Mosbacher was a leading figure in those potent councils. And although the Mosbacher Energy Corporation's oil ventures have spanned the globe from the Middle East to the Philippines, it also has interests much closer to home.

Exploring for oil means acquiring land, or at least mineral rights, and local real estate has long been a natural sideline for Houston's oilmen. In the tradition of the company town, the region's largest development firm is a subsidiary of Exxon Corporation. Like so many of his competitors in oil, Mosbacher, too, wagered on the continuing growth of Houston by investing in land. The problem with this strategy, of course, is that when the oil industry enters a cyclical decline, so does the price of local real estate.

As long ago as 1970, Mosbacher speculated that the city would expand far beyond what was then its western limit when he purchased, for less than five million dollars, half of a property called Cinco Ranch. The other half was owned by Josephine Abercrombie, widow of an oilman.

Barring the discovery of oil beneath its flat, flood-prone surface, Cinco Ranch — even at only a few hundred dollars per acre — didn't seem like much of a bargain. But the new owners had big plans. With Abercrombie as his partner, Mosbacher looked forward to construction of a massive new residential and commercial development on Cinco's scrubby, barren 5400 acres.

Like boosters everywhere, the land barons of Houston tended to believe their own propaganda about the rapid future growth of their region, and such predictions must have encouraged the Cinco Ranch partners. But they faced at least one overwhelming problem shared by other developers in the area: There was, as the saying goes, no way to get there from here.

Served by a few farm-to-market roads built during the Depression, the sprawling Cinco Ranch lacked adequate highway access to the center of Houston, some 30 miles away. There were two freeways that ran to the north and south of the ranch, but they were too far from the city for convenient commuting. The only road that could make Cinco's transformation feasible was still just a dotted line etched on a map: a proposed highway called the Grand Parkway.

In 1978, while Mosbacher and Abercrombie pondered the future shape of Cinco Ranch, the Texas highway department suddenly erased the Grand Parkway from its project list; in planning talk, it was "demapped." The officials in charge realized then that the parkway wouldn't be necessary for decades to come, if ever. As Houston's growth slowed during the recession of the late '70s and early '80s, the Cinco partners were forced to sit on their investment.

BY 1984, when Virgil Knox began to pay close attention to the wheeling and dealing behind Houston's political economy, the city's outlying precincts were again sweltering in a fever of land speculation. Recession seemed like a distant, bad dream as developers laid out ambitious plans for bulldozing cow pastures and rice fields into housing tracts, shopping malls, and office parks. Thousands of commuters would stream between the countryside and the central business district in thousands of automobiles. To keep building the new Houston — and turn the developers' drawings into dollars — there would have to be new roads.

This need was understood by the officials of Harris County, which encompasses not only Houston proper but hundreds of rural and suburban square miles around it. Their first proposal was the special road assessment tax that Knox and his neighbors simply could not afford.

Soon after Knox started asking questions about the new road tax, he discovered that at least one important county figure was cutting himself in on the land speculation. The official in question — who happened to own land along the first new road to be built by Harris County — was County Commissioner Robert Y. Eckels, also known as "Big Bob." Eckels was no smalltime rural politician, but, rather, one of the most powerful Republicans in the state. His unstinting efforts to weld GOP county officials around the nation into an electoral machine had earned him the personal friendship (and private office telephone number) of then vice-president George Bush.

"We didn't set out to get Eckels," says Knox, explaining that, in the beginning, he and his friends had merely hoped to repeal the road assessment tax through such mundane means as citizen organizing and legislative lobbying. To that end they incorporated themselves as Individual Landowners and Homeowners, a nonprofit public interest group. But it soon became clear that the imperious Bob Eckels, who tolerated no opposition in his county, would have to go first. To get at the truth about Eckels and his dealings, the group hired a private detective.

As his watchdog outfit grew larger and more aggressive, Knox admits that he "became addicted to it." Consumed with research and meetings, he gave up his insurance business and took a night job with the Postal Service. And as the Eckels case proceeded, Knox spent hours assisting the hired investigator, fascinated with unraveling the mysteries of public corruption.

In January 1986, Eckels was finally indicted — not once but four times — for looting the county treasury, and was subsequently removed from office. A few months later, the road assessment tax was repealed. But in winning these victories, Virgil Knox had gotten his glimpse of Houston's political underside and, as one friend explains, "he was shocked." Finding out that the system worked for people with money and influence, while the little folks paid, outraged him. Long before the denouement of the Eckels affair, Knox decided to keep an eye on the government. A new road-building scheme soon emerged.

After Bob Eckels, the politician Knox watched most carefully was a young Republican from Houston named Ed Emmett, who had introduced the road assessment law and fought to uphold it in the state legislature. Emmett held an influential position on the House Transportation Committee, and in June 1984 Knox noticed that he was promoting a new idea for financing state highways. Called the Texas Transportation Corporation Act, it was more colorfully described by the media as the "build-your-own-road bill," a designation that evoked the frontier myth of the Lone Star state.

In simple terms, the bill gave local landowners the power to control highway development throughout Texas. The landowners would be empowered to form a "transportation corporation" subject to approval by the state. This outfit would then solicit donations of land for the roads' right-of-way and private funds for engineering and planning. All the state highway department would have to do is approve the corporation's plans and pay for the actual road construction.

The bill was a prime example of "privatization," the conservative program — fervently endorsed by George Bush — of turning government functions over to private interests, on the assumption that the private sector can provide any product or service more efficiently, and less corruptly, than the state. In the case of Ed Emmett's

bill, privatization promised to build needed roads faster and cheaper. All its sponsors asked in return was that the highway system be turned over to (presumably) civic-minded groups of private citizens.

What Virgil Knox first noticed about Emmett's bill was how swiftly it cruised through the Texas legislature's special session. At the time, Emmett admitted to statehouse reporters that he had barely read the draft — which was actually written by Vinson & Elkins, a major law firm representing Houston developers — before introducing it for passage. "In all these bills, you try to look for something that will jump up and bite you," he said, "and I can't see anything in this."

During the preceding months, rising oil prices and Reagan's economic policies had revived the state's economy — and, consequently, the assumptions of eternal growth that feed land speculation. Although Robert Mosbacher and his partner Abercrombie had since abandoned the notion of developing Cinco Ranch themselves, they had, instead, found a potential buyer for the huge property.

The interested party was Houston's best-known businessman, a developer, banker, and celebrated powerbroker named Walter Mischer, Sr., who is also the last surviving member of the old Suite 8F Crowd. Negotiations over the sale of the ranch, which began late in 1983, dragged on into the spring of 1984.

Perhaps both buyer and seller were waiting to see what would become of the state's ambitious new highway program. Governor Mark White — a recipient of generous campaign support from Walt Mischer — had appointed a new Highway Commission chairman, retired financier Robert Lanier, who strongly advocated a new program of road construction. The first map Lanier pulled out from the dusty archives of the Texas Highway Department was the old plan for the Grand Parkway project.

As early as November 1983, the state highway department had quietly designated a 31-mile stretch of the old Grand Parkway route "a proposed state freeway." The department had acted, according to the *Houston Chronicle*, at the request of "a group of real estate developers in the west Houston area . . . led by owners of the Cinco Ranch."

Simultaneously, a large firm of consulting engineers began to contact landowners along the proposed parkway, asking whether they would be willing to donate rights-of-way through their property. And a lawyer for Vinson & Elkins began to draft the legislation that would enable such donations to be used for the Grand Parkway.

Around the middle of May, local reporters heard rumors that the Cinco Ranch might be sold for a record price, making it the largest land sale in Houston's history. Mosbacher's son, Rob Jr., confirmed to the *Houston Post* that a deal was in the works, and predicted that it might be completed by late June. But, he warned, there were certain unnamed issues to be resolved. "It's iffy," warned the younger Mosbacher, "until it is closed."

On June 27, 1984, the deal was completed for a recordbreaking $84 million. Half of that amount accrued to Robert Mosbacher and his family.

That same day, Ed Emmett's Texas Transportation Corporation Act began its lightning passage through the legislature's special session.

Three months later, the formation of Texas's first private transportation corporation was formally announced. Known as the Grand Parkway Association, it was named, with characteristic understatement, after the billion-dollar beltway it proposed to build in a 150-mile loop around the outskirts of Houston. (Prior to the formal announcement, the Grand Parkway Association's consultants had already prepared what the local media called "mind-boggling" traffic studies. Their reports argued that the Grand Parkway was the only way to prevent disastrous congestion in the next decade; the GPA had already hired a large engineering firm to start drawing up a route.)

All this scrambling roused the suspicions of Virgil Knox, especially when he learned that Ed Emmett was serving as the president of the Grand Parkway Association's board of directors. Even more provocative was the presence of another suspect figure, Walt Mischer, Jr., on the association's five-member board. Knox believed that Mischer and his father had been among the landowners expecting to benefit from the road assessment tax pushed through by Emmett and Bob Eckels.

"My gut instinct told me it was a bad deal for the taxpayer," he remembers. "These two characters were enough to send up a red flag. I was confident that if Mischer and Emmett were involved [with Grand Parkway], then something bad was coming down. I just didn't know what. I decided to do a preliminary investigation of the other three board members and sit back and wait for it to develop. What I didn't realize then was that it already had developed."

At the time, Knox hardly noticed that one of the remaining three directors of the Grand Parkway Association was an official of the Mosbacher Energy Corporation. Not until last December — when Knox learned that Mosbacher had been chosen for commerce secretary — did he realize that he had been keeping a file on one of the closest friends of the President of the United States.

Also obscured at the time was the fact that the Grand Parkway Association had already decided where its highway ought to begin. Its members had given first priority to a seven-mile segment that connected two freeways — and ran straight through the Cinco Ranch.

THE WAY VIGIL Knox tells it, his formal self-education as a citizen detective began one day in the summer of 1984 while he was listening to a radio talk show. The show's guest was Louis Rose, author of the enticingly titled *How to Investigate Your Friends and Enemies*. Although Knox had already learned a few forensic techniques from federal law enforcement agents during the Eckels investigation, he felt the need for a more orderly course of instruction, and bought Rose's book.

One day in July, Knox visited a federal government bookstore out on the Gulf Freeway, where a shelf of Justice Department volumes caught his eye. The titles, which might seem dry to most book browsers, excited the studious Virgil: *The Investigation of White-Collar Crime: A Manual for Law Enforcement Agencies*; *Reports of the Task Force on Organized Crime*; *Prevention, Detection, and Correction of Corruption in Local Government*; and *An Anticorruption Strategy for Local Governments*. Soon thereafter, he injured his back while on vacation, and spent the next eight weeks in bed at his mother-in-law's Nashville home, reading.

"By the time I got back to Houston and on my feet again," he recalls with a laugh, "I started applying the principles I had learned. And it was surprisingly easy, because no one tried to cover up. They did their thing and didn't worry about who was watching them, I suppose."

It took a while for Knox to piece together the puzzle of the Grand Parkway. "Weeks later, I still couldn't figure it out, so I decided to backtrack and see if I had missed anything. I knew that Mischer was the key, so I began browsing through a mountain of newspaper clippings that were waiting to be filed. I was looking for anything connected to Mischer or the Grand Parkway that might point me in the right direction. Then it happened. Bingo!"

The clue retrieved from the mounds of newsprint in his office was a *Houston Post* story about the sale of a property adjacent to Cinco Ranch. It included a little map showing the proposed alignment of the Grand Parkway through the ranch, purchased by Mischer four months earlier from Josephine Abercrombie and Robert Mosbacher.

"The missing pieces," says Knox, "finally fit together." Slowly, over the following months, he and other members of Individual Landowners and Homeowners "began to use the state Open Records Act to obtain all the information we could — incorporation papers, land titles, minutes of the highway commission."

The "big picture" confirmed what he had already surmised. The Grand Parkway Association, the Texas Transportation Corporation Act, Mosbacher, Mischer, and the highway department were all part, he explains, of "a good ol' boy system" that

could only hurt the taxpayers. His files bulged with details:

• The Grand Parkway Association's board of directors, who would determine the parkway's alignment and design, was dominated by representatives of the Cinco Ranch. In addition to Walt Mischer, Jr., other directors included Charles Pence, who ran the real estate division of Mosbacher Energy Corporation, and Jack Hooper, who performed the same job for the Abercrombie interests. Mosbacher and Abercrombie had reserved some of the choicest ranch property — right next to the parkway route — for future sale or development.

• The Grand Parkway Association's president was Representative Ed Emmett, sponsor of the bill under which the association was organized. It turned out that Emmett, at the time his bill was passed, was also employed as the $50,000-a-year executive director of the North Houston Association, whose members included both the Mischer Corporation and Vinson & Elkins. The North Houston Association, a developer group that says it is devoted to the "orderly growth" of the region, had been lobbying for the Grand Parkway for several months; it was, in fact, the moving force behind Emmett's bill.

• Vinson & Elkins's Robert Randolph, the attorney who wrote the bill, went on to represent the Grand Parkway Association as legal counsel. His firm also counted among its major clients the Mosbacher Energy Corporation and Robert Mosbacher himself, as well as the Mischers.

While Virgil Knox drew the lines connecting the landowners to the parkway, the Grand Parkway Association was proceeding rapidly with its work. The new association swiftly engaged one of Houston's biggest engineering firms — Turner, Collie & Braden, a member of the North Houston Association and a major contractor for Cinco Ranch development — to start drawing maps. This burst of activity was rewarded within weeks when the Texas highway department officially approved the parkway's first segment. Scheduled to begin construction by 1986, it would run south six miles from Interstate 10, directly through the Cinco Ranch, thus creating 2.23 miles of valuable highway frontage.

News of the revived parkway sparked a fever of land speculation in the rice-growing counties north and west of Houston. While property along the parkway route had risen sharply in value, both the Mosbachers and Mischers were still selling Cinco Ranch holdings. In December 1984, only six months after buying the ranch from Mosbacher and Abercrombies, the Mischers turned around and sold about 800 acres of the most valuable acreage for $70 million to another developer. For their part, the Mosbachers had held onto a few hundred acres of the choicest land along the edge of the ranch nearest the parkway route, which they sold in 1985 for an additional $12.9 million.

Not surprisingly, the Mosbachers and the Mischers were satisfied with Ed Emmett's record as state legislator, North Houston Association director, and Grand Parkway Association president. So when the smooth young legislator decided in 1985 to run for statewide office, one of his first supporters was Robert Mosbacher, Sr., who loaned him a private plane and pilot to fly around Texas while campaigning. Rob Mosbacher, Jr., gave his friend Ed $1,000, and an energy company in which the Mosbachers were major stockholders donated another $1,000. Walter Mischer, Jr., contributed $500.

In the summer of 1985, when Knox thought he had finally disentangled the whole Grand Parkway plot, he took his evidence to reporters at the *Houston Post*. He felt, he says, that "exposure of the situation was crucial," and grew "very frustrated when the *Post* sat on it for months." Finally, on February 1, 1986, he wrote to Texas attorney general Jim Mattox.

In his letter, accompanied by selected documents, Knox requested an investigation of the myriad conflicts of interest surrounding the Grand Parkway. "Is it legal," he asked, "for directors of the Grand Parkway Association to individually reap windfall profits from their private investments because of their position as board members of a nonprofit corporation sanctioned by the Highway Commission? . . . Is it legal for the Texas Highway Commission to delegate its responsibilities to special interest groups with obvious conflicts of interest? . . . Is it legal for developers to [be] . . . supporting Mr. Emmett indirectly through the North Houston Association while he is promoting their legislation and lobbying for its passage? Does this constitute illegal lobbying or bribery?"

A few closing words expressed his outrage: "One is compelled to question: Are these men benevolent citizens lending their talents and sacrificing their time to solve Harris County's traffic woes, or greedy businessmen devising clever schemes to enhance their own investments and enrich themselves with taxpayer funds?"

Attorney General Mattox — who, despite his populist learnings, is also an admirer of Walter Mischer, Sr. (and a man who aspires to be governor) — never responded to Knox's letter or phone calls.

A few weeks later, the *Houston Post* published a long, page one article by investigative reporter John Mecklin and his colleague Mary Flood that elaborated some of the conflicts Knox had discovered in the Grand Parkway deal. While the *Houston Post* investigation focused on the Mischers and Texas Highway Commission chair Robert Lanier (who, the *Post* discovered, also owned 1700 acres of land along the proposed highway route), it missed the connection between the association and the Mosbacher-Abercrombie interests.

But the story, which ran on February 26 illustrated by a map of the parkway route showing each parcel of land owned by the GPA directors, was embarrassing to the highway commission. In response, Lanier immediately set about instituting new rules regarding conflict-of-interest for transportation corporations like the Grand Parkway Association.

As a result, by the end of April 1986, Walter Mischer, Jr., and Ed Emmett had been forced to resign their positions on the Grand Parkway board. Bob Lanier, who had been cleared of any wrongdoing by Attorney General Mattox, promised to abstain from any decisions that might affect his holdings. But Lanier told the *Houston Post* that he still thought privatization was a good way to get a highway built. He always knew, he said, that "what would motivate this project is avarice and greed."

Mischer's comments on resigning were more circumspect. "We think the policy changes are healthy and good," he said at the time. "I favor anything that helps eliminate controversy." Mischer, Rob Mosbacher, Jr., and Ed Emmett all later denied that the sale of the Cinco Ranch was connected to the Grand Parkway scheme or the Texas Transportation Corporation Act. Mosbacher, Jr., insisted that, busy with his 1984 campaign for the Senate, he had never paid any attention to the Grand Parkway; the decision to sell the Cinco Ranch had simply been, he said, "a smart move."

As far as Virgil Knox is concerned, the resignations of Mischer and Emmett and the adoption of new ethical rules by the highway department were "cosmetic." He points out that the Cinco Ranch deal had already been completed, and the parkway's alignment already approved. "They've made their millions off of it."

The Grand Parkway "has nothing to do with transportation," he explains with a laugh. "There are no traffic jams at the Cinco Ranch. Even the cows have trouble finding each other out there. In fact, I seriously doubt the whole parkway will ever be built. It will be built if it benefits the right people. And it's a terrible injustice to the taxpayers of Texas. We have a multibillion-dollar highway fund that certain people in high places have special access to. So even in bad times, when everybody's going broke, they just put a highway through that land. Nobody can compete with that."

IF GROUND IS broken to begin the first section of the Grand Parkway as scheduled this May, the taxpayers of Texas will discover that it is less of a bargain than originally advertised. Once the land boom northwest of Houston went bust in 1986, the property owners along the parkway route lost interest in donating rights-of-way and paying for the parkway's design and engineering costs.

The total project costs for the highway's

first section, according to a 1988 *Houston Business Journal* study, will amount to at least $76 million and could rise to more than $100 million. Contributions from the private sponsors of the parkway will probably account for less than $5 million. And because of rising costs, the plan to build a six-lane divided highway has been abandoned in favor of a more modest four-lane road.

Determining who made money, and how much, from the Grand Parkway and the Cinco Ranch is difficult. The sudden downturn in Houston's economy soured many of the land deals along the parkway route, and those deals helped send several of the state's ailing savings and loan institutions into insolvency.

Where are the participants in the Grand Parkway scheme today?

• Walt Mischer, Jr., says his company was forced to abandon its interest in the Cinco Ranch, although he won't reveal whether it lost the $70 million it made in reselling some of the property.

• Bob Lanier has left the Texas Highway Commission, and is now serving as chairman of Houston's mass transit agency — which is proposing to build new roads.

• Ed Emmett ran twice for the Texas Railroad Commission, and lost both times. Since his last defeat in 1988, Emmett has worked in Austin as a lobbyist for shipping interests. President Bush is now considering appointing him to a prestigious post on the Interstate Commerce Commission, which regulates the freight industry.

• Bob Mosbacher has, of course, moved on to greater things under the gaze of his friend, President Bush, having made an estimated $40 to $50 million off the sale of the Cinco Ranch.

As for Virgil Knox, he is continuing to fight for repeal of the Texas Transportation Corporation Act. He is, he says, still determined to reform Texas politics and protect the interests of small taxpayers from big business. And he still considers himself a conservative Republican — or, as he puts it, "a patriot with an old-fashioned set of values."

Like many Americans, he wants to believe George Bush's promise of a higher ethical standard in the federal government. He listened when, last January 23, Bush talked about the importance of "avoiding conflicts of interest, bending over backwards to see that there's not even a perception of conflict of interest." A week later, he watched the Senate's quick confirmation of Robert Mosbacher with mixed feelings.

"I don't want to embarrass George Bush. I like Bush. I voted for Bush. We should give him a chance," Knox says, then pauses and frowns. "But I'm concerned about his selection of Robert Mosbacher for secretary of commerce. Because I just don't know if he can resist the temptation to involve himself in self-dealing."

Unlike most Americans, Virgil Knox is all too familiar with the ethics of the Texas political economy. And he worries that the new standards supposedly being promulgated in Washington are no better than the old ones that Bush, Mosbacher, and their entourage first learned in Houston. □

POLITICAL INTELLIGENCE

✓ **IF SAN ANTONIO** Rep. Ciro Rodriguez succeeds in his tentative plan to run for state Senate 1990 he might change the political landscape of the Senate and shake up a San Antonio political machine. House talk has Rodriguez running against San Antonio Senator Frank Tejeda whose political machine was turned against Rodriguez in the 1988 primary. Tejeda, along with San Antonio Councilman Frank Wing and San Antonio Rep. Frank Madla, together known as the Panchos, have muddied up the waters of San Antonio politics for several years. (Recently, they staged a hostile takeover of the Harlandale school district.) Frankly, Rodriguez in the Senate might be an improvement.

✓ **HARRIS COUNTY** Treasurer Nikki Van Hightower's recent campaign against a county commissioners court vote to grant themselves and other elected county officials substantial raises has some speculating that she is gearing up for a race against Republican County Judge John Lindsay. Van Hightower, a first-term Democrat who has gone to court in an effort to reclaim authority that she claims was improperly shifted to the office of the county auditor, told *Houston Chronicle* political writer Nene Foxhall that taking on Lindsay in 1990 is "something on my mind as a possibility for the future." Van Hightower added that she is more likely to run for state treasurer in 1990.

✓ **FRED HOFHEINZ'S** announcement that he will challenge Houston Mayor Kathy Whitmire will shake up Houston politics between spring and the November 6 election date. Hofheinz was the first and probably the only progressive mayor to ever hold office in Houston when he defeated Chamber of Commerce incumbent Louie Welch in 1973. Welch left an undertaxed and underserved city in which a number of communities had no potable water or sewer services. Hofheinz increased taxes, constructed municipal infrastructure, and managed to stay in office for two terms. He ran by putting together a strong coalition of labor, minorities, and liberals.

Organized labor is already itching to have a go at Whitmire and one firefighters union and a police union came out with Hofheinz endorsements almost before Hofheinz announced his intentions. Whitmire has traditionally been elected by progressive constituencies but more and more has served only the city's business interests. Richard Shaw, who represents the Association of Federal, State, County and Municipal Employees at city hall in Houston said that AFSCME doesn't make endorsements until summer. "But I'll bet my next paycheck that Whitmire will not be endorsed," Shaw said. According to Shaw, Whitmire has alienated organized labor with her consistent "anti-labor policy." Hofheinz also is expected to draw strong support from the city's black community.

✓ **REPORTER** James Pinkerton of the *Austin American-Statesman* might have delivered the formulaic Gringo Doctors/Grateful Peasant story that his editors can't get enough of but readers had to persevere if they were to learn who picked up the tab for the doctors who traveled to Honduras. Twenty-three paragraphs into his Honduran dateline article that featured Centerville State Representative/physician Mike McKinney, Pinkerton served up a quote from former Houston banker Alan Danforth who directs the Little Rock, Arkansas-based World Gospel Outreach. Danforth implied that he favored the formation of right-wing death squads in Honduras to eliminate subversives.

"If a country has been infiltrated by communists, they [government agents] should work to identify them and eliminate them. It's as simple as that. . . Why take them to a trial, because the judicial system here will be just like a kangaroo court. It's going to be one-sided against the terrorist, and they're going to be sentenced to death anyway."

Austin lobbyist Brad Shields, who paid for McKinney's trip to Honduras, said that he objected to World Gospel's using the medical team to advance its agenda, according to the *American-Statesman* story. World Gospel Outreach operates seven clinics in Honduras and has been granted a tax-exempt status by Congress.

✓ **HOUSTON** Rep. Weldon Betts died in Methodist Hospital in Houston after a long bout with cancer. Betts had served in the Legislature since 1986. He was a former employee of Southwestern Bell and had served as vice president of the Communications Workers of America.

✓ **A 50-YEAR-OLD** Austin salesman reported another LBJ sighting, this one at midnight outside the Austin Amtrak Station. The former President was standing on the track just after midnight when the salesman, according to *Astrology and Psychic News* guided him back to the station. When the salesman, James Denniston, asked if he could be of any further help, he said, Johnson "turned and looked directly into my eyes and gave me the coldest stare. He said, 'Do you know who you are talking to?' " According to Denniston, it didn't occur to him until later that the man was the former President. □

Grilling the Farm Bureau

✓ **DALLAS REP.** Al Granoff, an admitted member of the Texas Farm Bureau, recently questioned TFB State Affairs Director Joe Maley at a House committee meeting. Topics included TFB membership, profits, and bureau positions on pesticides, English First, and Ag Commissioner Jim Hightower. The Farm Bureau is one of several organizations advocating changing from an elected to a non-elected comissioner of agriculture. Excerpts from the hearing follow:

Granoff: Your organization, in fact, takes a whole range of policy positions in terms of how you think government should be run. Isn't that correct?
Maley: That's correct.
Granoff: Included in those are statements in favor of English Only, special warning laws to prohibit laborers from gathering on the producers' properties, and a whole variety of positions. Isn't that correct?
Maley: That's correct.
Granoff: Let me ask you — on one position, because I think it's very important on how we perceive your attitude toward pesticides and therefore toward the Department of Agriculture. And this goes back six or seven years. And I want to quote, the most striking legislative goal that you had at that time was the complete dismantling of the Environmental Protection Agency. And the quote given by the Bureau was: "I'm concerned that some day, that we someday won't be able to use any herbicides or pesticides. Scientifically, there's nothing wrong with DDT. We live in a risk society. Somewhere along the line we're going to have measure the risks of pesticides and herbicides against our ability to feed ourselves." And although the federation never endorses political candidates, he added "the automobile at Chappaquiddick killed more people than DDT." When we hear positions like that, and numerous positions taken, uh, by the Bureau, I'm concerned now whether that is still a position. Whether the bureau still believes that DDT should come back. And what your position is in terms of the use of pesticides that have been declared unsafe by the Environmental Protection Agency and whether you're still in favor of dismantling the Environmental Protection Agency?
Maley: Representative Granoff, I'm sorry, I did not hear what you were quoting from on that last.
Granoff: I think it is the president of the national Farm Bureau.
Maley: O.K., in regard to agricultural chemicals that are being used today, as far as our position, we ask that regulations be made on sound scientific basis. Number one, we use the chemicals ourself. Most of our members, our producer members, are actively involved in their own farming and ranching operations. They use these chemicals. As well as our family members. We live and work on those ranches. We drink the ground water under those farms and ranches. So, we're not in favor of using any chemical that is going to be detrimental to our land or to our health. But it goes a step further than that. We're not interested in using any chemical that is going to be harmful to our producers, also. So I don't know where to go from there on your question.
Granoff: The bureau, then, has a different position regarding DDT today than it used to have?
Maley: I'm going to have to plead ignorance on that because that's a national issue and I do not know at this moment.
Granoff: The position taken, and I think not dissimilar to what you just said, that the restriction or bans on the use of agricultural chemicals must be based on sound — this is out of your policy notes — on sound scientific research or facts, as you have just stated, rather than on emotion or unreliable tests with small animals. When you say that you don't want to make decisions . . . regarding what would go in our food based on unreliable tests with small animals, what is it that you mean?
Maley: Well, many times when you find a problem has been determined as a carcinogen, and of course not being a scientist I can't speak in detail on this, but when you look at the dosage that is required in this case to create cancer in a rat, for example, the total amount, we're talking about pound after pound of active ingredient to create that result or that effect. All of this, if you translate it over into the dosages or the amount that are used in actual agricultural operations are minute compared to those quantities. And, we're also talking about a very small animal, compared to a human being, also as far as total size.
Granoff: So, basic scientific tests involving animals, you think, should not be used to determine — we should go ahead and allow them to use them until it's proven that human beings are negatively impacted. Then, after the fact, perhaps we should repeal them from the market. But not until the time that we see that humans have suffered. Is that the position?
Maley: No, sir I don't think that's necessarily the position. No, sir.
Granoff: I'm having a hard time discerning if the scientific tests involving animals are not adequate in order to remove something from the marketplace, what would be — outside of proof that people are getting sick.
Maley: O.K., I think, Representative Granoff, when you get into, again using the term sound scientific experimentation -- of course I'm getting into an area that I'm not an expert on anyway — but I think the reliability of the test in some instances can be questioned. And a previous speaker mentioned the apple scare, the Alar scare that took place within the last month-and-a-half. [Neither] the Environmental Protection Agency nor the National Academy of Science, nor any of our nationally recognized research institutes had indicated that Alar was a problem. Yet a private group came out with a study and suddenly apples were pulled off the market. Those are the kind of things that concern us. If an agriculture chemical is proven to be detrimental, either after release for our use or before, we do not support using that chemical.
Granoff: I suppose the basic difference in attitude on this is ultimately a question of whether a chemical should be released based on whether it's proven dangerous, it should be taken back, or whether it's not to be released until it's proven safe. . . I would dare say the vast majority of the public, member or non-member of the Farm Bureau, would want things to be safe. I certainly understand the frustration of the farmer who is trying to get in his crop. □

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Of Poetry, Politics, and Populism

BY TOM McCLELLAN

But it was a handy little bomb to throw.
—George Orwell

IN BRIEF: the literary left began to form when literary patronage moved from the aristocracy to the rising, reading middle class, during the last half of the Eighteenth Century. The bourgeois tend at once to romanticize artists and to view them as marginal citizens of dubious worth. Poverty and ambivalent status move one leftward. Then modern war politicized poetry — in a sense Walt Whitman's medical service during our Civil War set an example for W. H. Auden and Ernest Hemingway in Spain six decades later, when the literary left took much the form it has now.

This is the question we are asking you: Are you for, or against, the legal Government and the People of Republican Spain? Are you for, or against, Franco and Facism? From Paris, writers and poets who had been in Spain asked this of their brethren in the U.K. and the U.S. Predictably, the responses wore no uniform:

"!UPTHEREPUBLIC!" (Samuel Beckett)

"Spain is an emotional luxury to a gang of . . . dilettantes." (Ezra Pound)

"My sympathies . . . are with the Government side, especially the Anarchists." (Aldous Huxley)

"Sure I am against all of the damn Fascists . . ." (Sherwood Anderson)

"I would . . . give my right hand to prevent the agony; I would not give a flick of my finger to help either side win." (Robinson Jeffers)

One poet who signed the questionnaire letter subsequently regretted his radicalism: British citizen Wystan Hugh Auden. Another signer, Pablo Neruda, was later recalled from his position as Chilean consul to Madrid because of his radical anti-Fascism. To set them side by side is to see two disparate approaches to the problem of a writer's responsibility in political matters.

Wystan Hugh Auden was not so gauche as Percy Shelly, who from his hotel window rained revolutionary pamphlets down upon the Irish poor who could not read them, but his high-toned socialism falls into much the same category; his democratic sentiments allowed him to seduce the mechanic from the local gas station as cheerfully as he did fellow British poet Louis MacNiece.

Following his involvement in the Spanish Civil War, Auden moved away from Marx and into the Anglican communion. When he dealt seriously with the matter of poetry and politics in his elegy for W. B. Yeats (1939), he said that politics are the throwaway part of a poet's vita; seen through the ancient eyes of Time, Yeats' Irish nationalism, like the British chauvinism of Rudyard Kipling, proves ephemeral: She

Worships language and forgives,
Everyone by whom it lives.
Time, who with this rich excuse
Pardoned Kipling and his views,
And shall pardon Paul Claudel,
Pardons [Yeats] for writing well . . .

Nationalism obstructs socialism, so Yeats' politics opposed Auden's. But good writing, so speak these lines, transcends an ephemeral cause.

For Auden, the main disadvantage to being a poet was that the means to one's goal was the common lingo, when one's metier was precise and uncommon as mathematics, and caviar to the general. His was an intellectual's populism. When a journalist asked his opinion on Vietnam, 30 years after the Paris questionnaire, he replied: "Why writers should be canvassed for their opinions on controversial political issues, I cannot imagine. Their views have no more authority than that of any reasonably well-educated citizen." He was of course widely quoted and requoted.

Neruda's populism was born of spirit conjugating the flesh of experience: *The human crowd has been the lesson of my life. I can come to it with the born timidity of the poet . . . but once I am in its midst, I feel transfigured. I am part of the essential majority, I am one more leaf on the great human tree.* Auden's option, to find the roots of one's humanism in a branch of the Catholic faith, was denied Neruda, whose church excommunicated him. For a Catholic, unqualified materialism, even with the help of de Chardin, is not possible; the church most oppose Marx on theological grounds, whatever political motives may be attributed to it for doing so. Auden backed away from Marxism; Neruda transformed his art into a religion; the lowercase Word became his Eucharist:

I drink to the word lifting
the word, the crystalline cup,
in her I drink
the wine of idiom
and living water from
all words' maternal source.

Neruda has the greater force because he is Neruda, while Auden is merely a genius. Still, both men spoke with integrity, and for both the poet must serve two sacred causes, the human and his language.

First this:

In the deserts of the heart
Let the healing fountain start,
In the prison of his days
Teach the Free man how to praise.

Then this:

To one who cannot hear the sea this Friday morning, one who is cooped up in any house, office, factory, or woman
or street or mine or dry calaboose,
to that one I come, dumb and blind,
I'm here to open that prison door.

You know who wrote which already. □

Tom McClellan, who lives in Dallas, writes a regular column for the Observer.

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BY BRYCE MILLIGAN

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ALTHOUGH THIS *is* the time, and most certainly the place, this is in fact not the Great Texas essay that will debunk Larry McMurtry's infamous-grown-merely-famous "Ever a Bridegroom: Reflections on the Failure of Texas Literature," published in these pages on October 23, 1981. Fact of the matter is, Larry's lambasting of the state of Texas letters has been low-balled, high-balled, and just balled a few dozen times already. If ever a single essay could be called a literary father of sorts, McMurtry's qualifies. His "Bridegroom" engendered a bevy of raconteurish pieces of literary criticism. Writers toting academic and/or journalistic credentials instead of six-guns — most of whom were actually older than McMurtry — scribbled away at the *enfant terrible* turned Godfather. The spectacle was at once Oedipal and Atrean, a thing which could perhaps only be carried off in the land of *e pluribus unum* with no kings but commodities, cotton, cattle, and oil. (Whether *Lonesome Dove* has defined its author as an *enfant prodigue* or a returning conqueror is still debatable.) But I digress. It takes two to tango, even among Texas egos, and the bride in this case was A. C. Greene's "Fifty Best Texas Books" essay, which appeared on the scene two months prior to the bridegroom and on the other side of the literary fence, so to speak, in *Texas Monthly*.

But as I said, or was going to say, this is not the essay to assay McMurtry's critical nuggets. The doggies in this writer's drove are book reviews, not essays, some 400 at last count — but who the hell's counting; it's a long damn way to Dodge. I'll leave the essaying to somebody with silver spurs. Or golden. On the other hand, some might find this a ghostly task at hand: it is the souls absent rather than the bodies present that generally cause the biggest fracases in Texas criticism, the present volume being no exception.

Craig Clifford's and Tom Pilkington's aptly titled *Range Wars: Heated Debates, Sober Reflections, and Other Assessments of Texas Writing*, let out of the chute this month by SMU Press, opens with the aforementioned bride and groom, then ushers in the more notable children: "Horseman, Hang On: The Reality of Myth in Texas Letters," by Craig Clifford (1982); "A 'Southern Renaissance' for Texas Letters," by José E. Limón (1983); "What Does It Take to Be a Texas Writer?" by Clay Reynolds (1986); "Requiem for a Texas Lady," by Celia Morris (1986); "Palefaces vs. Redskins: A Literary Skirmish," by Don Graham (1984); "Arbiters of Texas Literary Taste," by James Ward Lee (1984); "The Republic of Texas Letters," by Marshall Terry (1988); and "Herding Words: Texas Literature as Trail Drive," by Tom Pilkington (1984, rev. 1986).

The battlefield is littered with the missing: women, minorities, poets and playwrights

As usual, the battlefield is littered with the missing: Women, Blacks, Chicanos, Native Americans, Poets, Playwrights, Small Press Advocates.

Celia Morris's essay in part explains the absence of more women by making it abundantly clear that if Texas is hell on women and horses, the Texas Letters Range War is doubly hell on women — the horses do just fine. But one wonders why, for instance, Betsy Colquitt's excellent essay "The Landed Heritage of Texas Writing" was omitted. Or why, if Marshall Terry could write a piece exclusively for this volume, the editors could not have sought out something closer to equal representation among the critics. I can just imagine what Molly Ivins might have to say on the subject (though even Ivins would be hard pressed to beat Morris's opening sentence for pitch and vinegar), but did anyone ask for contributions from Kaye Northcott, or Shelby Hearon, or Naomi Nye, or Pat Ellis Taylor, or Judith Rigler?

José Limón obliquely approaches what should have been his main topic (that some of the best writing in Texas of late has come from the Chicano/Chicana/Mexican-American quarter) by comparing the cultural conditions preceding the "Southern Renaissance" to the state of Texas Letters. After spending half his essay in sideling up to the skittish beat, he (tentatively) mounts his thesis: "It *seems* to me that there is at least a *possibility* for such a Texas literary/intellectual culture of the 'here,' one which *to some degree might resemble* that of the Southern Renaissance." (Italics mine.) Limón then mentions the presence (but does not discuss the work) of Rolando Hinojosa, Tomás Rivera, Carmen Tafolla, Gloria Anzaldúa, Ramón Saldívar, Juan Rodriguez, and a few others. Limón's strong suit, needless to say, is not *la retorica del movimiento*.

Not to beat a dead horse here, but a few years ago I asked Tom Pilkington to speak at the second Annual Texas Small Press Bookfair on the topic of "The Influence of Chicano Writing on Texas Letters." Tom duly delivered the paper, focusing on the fact that the first European writer to say much about Texas was Cabeza de Vaca, and pointing out that a certain old story-telling vaquero was partially responsible for turning Frank Dobie from cow punching to pen pushing. Now, I'd be first in line to give the old conquistador posthumous membership in the Texas Institute of Letters — he spent more time in Texas than have

Bryce Milligan founded the Annual Texas Small Press Bookfair (now the San Antonio Inter-American Bookfair). He is currently the book critic for the San Antonio Light *and editor of* Vortex: A Critical Review.

some current T.I.L. members — but he hardly qualifies as a Chicano writer, influential or otherwise, and Dobie was not so much "influenced" by his vaquero friend as he was provided a bow-legged book that only needed its transfiguration to paper. Pilkington delivered his paper three years after Limón delivered his, reinforcing the notion that the writers and critics of the dominant culture, as they say, were still deaf to the rising *canto al pueblo*. The more contemporary essays in *Range Wars* do little to dispel that notion.

As to the remaining minorities disenfranchised by *Range War*'s recounting of the Great Debate over the Republic of Texas Letters, as Marshall Terry names it, they are relegated to isolated mentions or simply ignored altogether. Terry, to his credit, is the only critic in the book to mention poets Rosemary Catacalos, Naomi Shihab Nye, Pat Mora, and Harryette Mullen. But alas, it is little more than a mention. No one in the book mentions Angela de Hoyos, a poet whose work has been the subject of two books and a dozen or so articles around the globe. Ask an Italian or an Australian to name a Texas poet and they are more than likely to name de Hoyos.

But then maybe I am missing the point of the book. Maybe *Range Wars* is not supposed to actually assess contemporary Texas writing — maybe the editors really are so myopic as to believe this little range war scenario sufficient unto itself to be representative of contemporary Texas writing at large. The preface to *Range Wars* promises us "highly spirited and highly opinionated essays about Texas writing, sure to prove stimulating and even eye-opening for readers with an interest in contemporary Texas books and writers." This critic has no quibbles with the "spirited" and "opinionated" part; I'll go further and say that *Range Wars* reprints for us some of the most well-crafted criticism of Texas literature ever written. Stimulating? Well, I suppose the tone of this review backs that one up. Eye-opening? Only to the blind, and then only in that the omissions are so overwhelming. Not that I am suggesting we need something akin to affirmative action in our literary criticism. Equality and quality are truly unusual bedfellows in the literary world; but an open acknowledgment of the contemporary realities of writing and publishing in Texas might take some of the gunsmoke out of the air.

While my '38 Smith Corona sits smoking, let me take a look at the Texas books on my own shelves to back up my assertion about omissions. Yes, I have a copy of almost every book mentioned in *Range Wars* — good books every one, well worth keeping. But hang on just a dag-blamed minute; there's another 85, 86, 87 books on this shelf — fiction, poetry, and criticism — that aren't mentioned at all. Hmm. Yes, indeedee, all of them were written by Texans since 1979; and all of them were published by independent presses, mostly operating within the borders of the state. And these are only the books this writer felt were substantial enough to warrant hanging on to, even under the harsh realities imposed upon impecunious writers by a decade of Reaganomics — meaning that these books have survived many weedings when a trip to the used book store equalled supper.

The point here being, not one of these books is mentioned by title by any of the critics in *Range Wars*. A very few of their authors receive single mentions, but most are entirely absent. This would seem to indicate a substantial bias, if an ironic one, on the part of these critics against fiction and poetry published by any but the major houses. Meaning mostly those hailing from New York. Pardon my French, but *quelle merde est-ce*? And not only are the works coming from independent Texas publishers generally ignored, so too are those few critics who *do* pay attention to them. Why is Dave Oliphant, for one, not represented in this "collections of highly spirited and highly opinionated essays" about Texas writing? I dare say Oliphant has written as much about Texas literature as has any of the authors in *Range Wars*, much more, in fact, than several of them combined. And why is Paul Christensen not included? Academics are happy to cite Christensen on the subject of Charles Olsen, but when it comes to the subject of Texas small press literature, his work is too often dismissed as being that of a zealot. Perhaps such a tag comes with being prophetic. Don Graham, whose "Palefaces vs. Redskins" is included in *Range Wars*, is generally credited with defining the apparent struggle between native writers and Yankee imports. His essay originally appeared in the *Texas Humanist* in 1984. Christensen covered the topic eloquently two years prior to that in one of those "small press magazines nobody reads," *The Pawn Review*. What makes that so terribly ironic is that any scholar researching Texas writing during the late '70s and early '80s ought first go about finding a complete set of the *Pawn*, which published literally hundreds of reviews of books by Texas authors.

Just a final note on the matter of Texas' small and independent literary presses. Both McMurtry's 1968 *In a Narrow Grave* and the book version of Greene's 1981 *The 50 Best Books on Texas* were published, you guessed it, by independent Texas presses, the former by Encino Press of Austin, the latter by Pressworks of Dallas. Now, as to why anyone would prefer to publish with a New York house rather than one in, say, Mansfield, the answer is simple: money. New York has a lot more of it to pay authors. As to why the critics of *Range Wars* ignore the fiction and poetry which has come from, say, Mansfield or Bryan or Slayton or Denton or San Antonio or even Austin, the answer seems to lie in something A. C. Greene himself said: ". . . Texas has an inferiority complex about its art. Behind that mask of bigness, Texas can't believe there is the ability to bring forth, in and of itself, something worthy of mankind's recognition. Texas has relied too long and too completely on the opinions of others." Good words; now if someone would just practice what they preach. . . .

Although few of the critics in *Range Wars* evince an animosity towards the old Dobie-Webb-Bedichek triumvirate to a McMurtryish degree, all are apparently happy to be rid of the reputation for cronyism that dates back to those good old boys. *Range Wars* itself, however, presents a pretty convincing case that all that has actually occurred is that we have a new, if less parochial, bunch of good old boys in the wheelhouse of the Republic of Texas Letters' ship of state. The concluding essay of *Range Wars* is Tom Pilkington's insightful "Herding Words: Texas Literature as Trail Drive" in which he writes: "Time is required for a literary tradition to develop. Even more time is needed for just appreciation and critical understanding of the tradition to evolve." Right. But that process is going to take an eon if the critics whose words work themselves into collections like *Range Wars* — which will no doubt be seminal reading on this topic in a very short time — do not themselves stop unconsciously judging Texas writing by whether or not it has a New York imprint on the title page, or, if it does have a Texas imprint, whether or not the work is worth considering based upon whether the press in question has had the good luck to be mentioned by the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*. Incestuous regional chauvinism coupled with an inbred inferiority complex can be a tricky ailment to live with, but the cure is fairly simple. It starts by opening your eyes. □

PART TWO

Defense Dependence, Industrial Competitiveness, and the Economic Prospects of Texas and the Nation

BY LLOYD J. DUMAS

These remarks by Lloyd J. Dumas, Professor of Economics and Political Economy at the University of Texas at Dallas, continued from the April 7, 1989, issue of the Texas Observer, *are based on a draft discussion paper presented at the "Dallas 2000 and Beyond: Critical Issues for the Next Generation" conference held in Dallas on March 3, 1989.*

—Bernard Rapoport

Any serious attempt to revitalize the competitiveness of American industry must attack this problem of inefficiency. This can only be done by an infusion of capital and technical talent. There is virtually no prospect of achieving this without redirecting a significant fraction of these critical resources from military to civilian research and production. Thus, the growing pressure for solving America's competitiveness problems is likely to add to pressures for substantial cutbacks in military expenditure.

Furthermore, the remarkable changes that have taken place in the Soviet Union under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev offer greater promise of substantial arms reduction agreements than we have seen in a very long time. The combination of sharply improving U.S.-Soviet relations, and powerful pressures for balancing the federal budget and rebuilding America's competitiveness, has made substantial nuclear and conventional arms reduction a real possibility. It is therefore only prudent to consider what such progress will mean for the state's defense dependent communities.

There are a number of obstacles to transition that must be confronted to protect any defense dependent community against what will otherwise be an exceedingly painful and disruptive shift. The world of military industry is very different from the world of civilian commercial industry. People and facilities that are specialized to the former are not able to operate efficiently in the latter without going through a fairly involved and time-consuming process of restraining, reorientation, and restructuring. That process is known as economic conversion.

Advanced, contingency plans for moving into alternative civilian-oriented activity has a critical role to play. To be done properly, the conversion of a facility and its workforce must be planned locally, by those who know them best — not by distant "experts." If conversion plans were prepared at every military-serving facility in the state, they would constitute an effective insurance policy against yet another source of short-term economic trouble. And they would build a critical element of flexibility into the economy that would more easily enable us to take advantage of developing opportunities and meet the challenges of the 1990s.

The collapse of oil prices in the 1980s should already have given Texans living in defense dependent areas all the proof they need that it is dangerous to concentrate on one type of product, no matter how secure the future of that product looks. The first and most basic rule of prudent investing is and has always been, "Diversify."

The "Defense Economic Adjustment Act," recently introduced into the Congress (HR 101), would institutionalize a nationwide system of highly *decentralized*, local advanced contingency planning for economic conversion at every military facility in the U.S. It would require the establishment of Alternative Use Committees at every military facility empowered to draw up detailed plans for shifting to viable alternative civilian activity there. It would provide income support, continued health insurance, pension benefits, etc., during any actual transition triggered by military cutbacks. This bill, or something like it, is critical to lubricating the flow of presently inflexible resources that a shift in federal spending priorities may soon trigger.

By moving into more long-term viable areas of profitable civilian activity, the defense department communities of Texas could reduce their own economic vulnerability while helping the state to build a stronger and more secure economic base. And at the same time, they would be playing a key role in making American industry as a whole more efficient. Without such a revitalization of U.S.-based production, it is difficult to see how the nation can climb out of the deep hole of deficit and debt it has dug for itself in the 1980s and reverse the deterioration of its competitive position in the new reality of the global marketplace. □

SOCIAL CAUSE CALENDAR

AIDS QUILT PROJECT IN AUSTIN

Cleve Jones, the San Francisco gay rights activist who conceived of the idea of a quilt to remember AIDS victims, will lead an opening ceremony when the Names Project, recently nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize, is unfurled in Palmer Auditorium in Austin on **April 29**. The opening ceremony, and a reading of names of AIDS victims in Texas, will begin at 6 p.m. on the 29th and last for about three hours. On Sunday, **April 30**, the quilt can be viewed from 9 a.m. through a closing ceremony at 8 p.m. Any funds raised by the Names Project in Austin will be used to fund local AIDS-related activism and projects. The Austin event is the only stop for the Names Project in Texas. For more information, call (512) 478-1083.

LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS

A March on Austin for Lesbian and Gay Equal Rights will be held on Friday, **April 29** and continue through a Legislative Lobby day and an AIDS Action Demonstration scheduled for Monday, **May 1**. Activities will include concerts, workshops, religious services, a citizens' tribunal, and a banquet which will feature Harry Pruitt of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. The march will be followed by a lobby day, **May 1**. March headquarters at Driskill Hotel on Sixth St. will open at 4 p.m. on Friday to allow participants to pick up schedules and sign in as volunteers. Assistance and access for the physically handicapped and interpreting services for the deaf will be provided at all major events scheduled for the weekend. Call (512) 441-7524 in Austin.

OBSERVANCES

April 21, 1921 • Police fire on striking miners in Butte, Montana.
April 24, 1971 • 500,000 demonstrate in Washington, D.C. against the war in Vietnam.
April 30, 1977 • 1,415 arrested in occupation of Seabrook Nuclear power plant.
May 1, 1830 • Mary Harris "Mother" Jones born.
May 2, 1911 • First workmen's compensation law enacted, in Wisconsin.
May 3, 1971 • 14,000 arrested in protest against the Vietnam war.
May 3, 1981 • 100,000 demonstrate against U.S. intervention in El Salvador.

DALLAS CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION

Houston civil rights activist Jew Don Boney will discuss the Clarence Brandley case at Holy Trinity Catholic Church, 3811 Oak Lawn, in Dallas on **April 27**. The 7:30 p.m. talk is sponsored by the Dallas Civil Liberties Union Foundation. Brandley has been on death row in Huntsville, convicted of murdering a student at the Conroe High School where Brandley worked as a janitor. Evidence missing at the trial and other evidence that has emerged while Brandley awaited execution suggest that he may be innocent. For more information, call Dr. Larry Egbert at (214) 590-8536 or Barbara Boltz at (314) 528-5654.

PRAYER VIGIL AND PEOPLE'S THEATER

The Comanche Peak-Paluxy River Alliance is sponsoring an afternoon of poetry, music, food, and conversation, Saturday, **April 29** at 4 p.m. at the main entrance of the Comanche Peak Nuclear Power Plant on State Highway 144, five miles north of Glen Rose. There will be no breaking of laws, blocking entrances, or harassment of employees. The gathering will begin with a prayer vigil, followed by people's theater, then moves to the Paluxy tabernacle for a barbecue and entertainment. Call Betty Brink at (817) 478-6372.

PEACEFUL PERSON/PLANET WORKSHOP

A workshop on nonviolence theory and conflict resolution will be held Saturday, **April 22**, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Friends Meeting House in Austin. For registration information, call Anna at (512) 444-0832.

Continued from page 2

lesbians and homosexuals with PETA. Let Mr. Ryan be advised that PETA was the force that pushed Dornan to pressure the government to release the Silver Spring Monkeys and that PETA or the animal rights movement is not responsible for Dornan's or his staff's behavior outside that effort. How can they be expected to? However, I am forwarding a copy of the article to PETA, so that they may have the opportunity to answer him, if they so desire.

Mr. Ryan also makes reference to the movement being a fringe element in the broader ecological one and other judgmental and disparaging comments, calling us simplistic idealists, patronizingly stating that he and other "pragmatic progressives" are willing to talk about long-term solutions to animal abuse. Still there is nothing in the article that reflects any intelligent compassion for animal life. He's too busy chasing our tails with self righteousness.

There is a consensus to stop the destruction of all life on the planet. Animals are a sentient and intelligent part of this life system, designed to live out their lives in their natural habitats, not for the use of people, to wear and eat and sport after with weapons to kill, as if we were still in caves play acting a minimal survival.

Mr. Ryan appears to believe that there is some correct political way of solving these problems that he and his pragmatic colleagues have a handle on. However, each of us chooses whatever action is appropriate for us. We risk judgement and attack on an unpopular issue that is just beginning to surface and we will be hit hardest by reactionary segments of society, those most threatened. We are questioning life styles and challenging belief systems. The animal movement is about a greater moral issue that humanity has been avoiding for centuries, its time has come because it is directly related to the issues that are confronting us now, the quality of our lives, individually and collectively. These are the times that people are reevaluating their position on survival and what are its priorities. It is absolutely perfect that the animal rights movement has surfaced. We are so eager to save the planet, the seas, the air, the forests, yet still unwilling to share it with other species and if we do only on our own terms. Factory animals, laboratory animals, animals as prey, in point, animals in agony, for our benefit. We are not willing to let go of the behavior that brought about the conditions that are destroying us, although we want to change them, we give lots of lip service.

I ask Richard Ryan and people who think like him, if you are willing to make a difference, what are you willing to give back? Why that question? Because what we have now we took out of greed and acquired behavior.

There is no fringe movement. There is one movement to save the planet. We need to ask ourselves how are we going to participate, share in a common good. How are we to understand that we are not Gods we are part of the life system. We are equal to them (animals) created by the same force to live out our lives with them in peace and harmony. How distorted are we now that we can't feel or know that as a truth? How long is our journey to that understanding? The questions are unending and so the hope.

Michelle Llauger
Queens, NY

The Last of the Just

BY LOUIS DUBOSE

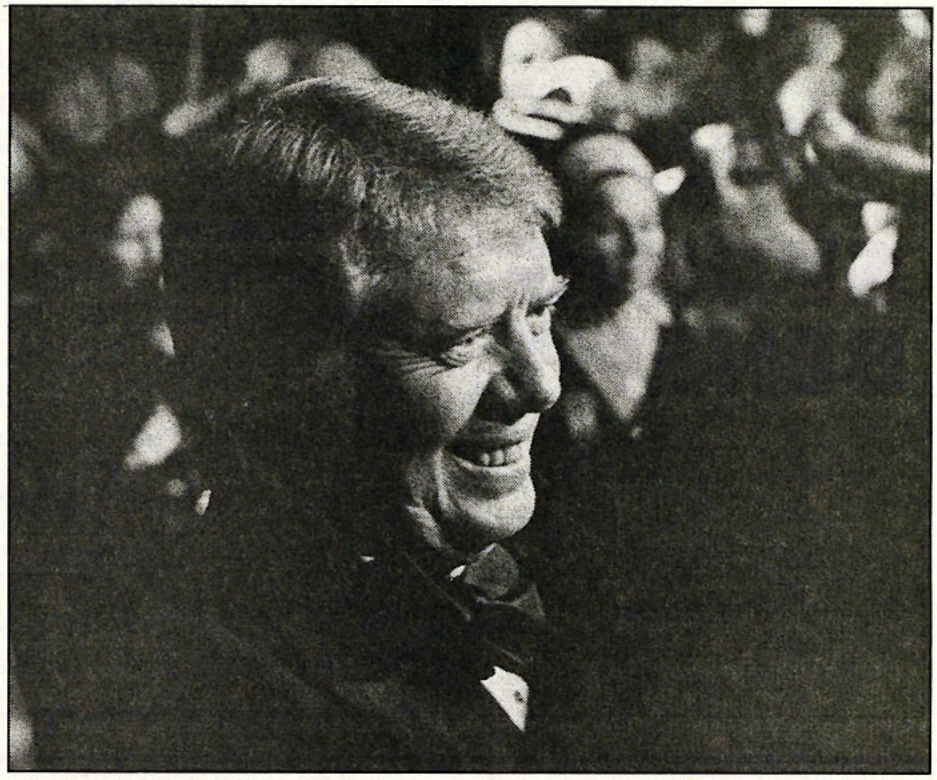
ON THE FOURTEENTH floor of the Earl Cabell Federal building in Dallas are two rooms filled with the detritus of the Age of Reagan. If, 100 years from now, some anthropologist would understand what sort of society we made, it is here that she might begin to look. The story is painstakingly documented in the files of federal court and federal bankruptcy court clerks. Here, picking my way through the minutiae of a white-collar crime large enough that it is said to have brought down a big-city bank, I at last understood a Maury Maverick account of his walking from the floor of the Texas House after one particular vote on a civil rights issue and, on the sidewalk outside, "vomiting specks of blood."

It was, perhaps, the several afternoons spent in the court clerks' offices, working my way through the litigated histories of a cabal of men who might have hatched their scheme in the basement of a central Texas Methodist church — such were their stations in life in their community — that left me with an almost palpable nostalgia for decency in public office. So somewhere, I think between Eddy and Austin, I decided that I would stake out the River Bend Baptist Church's Habitat for Humanity reception at the Austin Hyatt Hotel and shake the hand of Jimmy Carter.

And why not take with me my son? Consider his circumstance. Born in 1977, by the time he had learned to read and acquired language sufficient to understand the National Public Radio news — beamed into our corner of East Texas by Lamar University's KBLU radio — it was morning in America for the first time. Hopeful, but skeptical, he has asked me of late if I think that George Bush will be "maybe a little better than President Reagan?"

And my daughter, whose eighth birthday falls one day after the cover date of our second issue in May, is a child of the Age of Reagan — midway through her second year in public school and inclined, I suspect, to believe in the promise of a kinder, gentler, etc., etc.

"What I want for this country above all else is that it may always be a place where a man can get rich," Ronald Reagan has said. "That's a tremendous bit of aspiration for us as a public, isn't it," Jim Hightower answered. "That the number one goal in America is to be able to get rich."



ALAN POGUE

Jimmy Carter at his inauguration

Yet everybody knows whose ethic has prevailed and not even by the rationalization of the most doctrinaire monetarist can theft on the scale documented in last year's federal court records result in anything but a zero-sum gain. To understand the other half of the zero-sum equation that begins in the Dallas federal building, go to the public transit stop two blocks west on Commerce St., where at 5:30 p.m. decent, minimum-wage workingfolk queue up for the first of several buses that will get them home before dark — if they make their connections just right.

So in Austin, like a parent who might have lived in an age where at least the illusion of public morality existed, I took my children out to let them catch a glimpse of the President.

And there was Jimmy Carter, explaining how he and Rosalynn had come to dedicate so much of their time to the funding and building of homes for the homeless. It is, Mr. Carter said, an opportunity that allows him to apply his Christian principles. Walking recently through one of the poorest neighborhoods in New York, Mr. Carter said, he realized that the tired gray face of a woman lying at rest on a street might have been that of his mother. He knew then that he was doing the right thing. "The Bible says when you lend money to a poor person, you don't charge any interest," Mr. Carter said.

My children listened.

"Americans are going to have to learn to live with less," Mr. Carter had said from the Rose Garden nine years ago. Hardly the soundbite to win an election at that particular moment in history when a generation of swine was coming of age.

"I don't think we knew how good we had it," an Austin labor lawyer told me, as we discussed what we recalled of the Carter Administration.

Had we forgotten Bert Lance's free-wheeling banking, Ham Jordan's special investigation, and the President's brother's alleged lobbying for Libya? No.

Would I, given the chance, vote again for this good and decent man? Early and often. □

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