THE TEXAS Observer

A JOURNAL OF FREE VOICES

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WHO LOST THE MEXICAN ELECTION?
Pg. 12

Breaking La Conexion

Sprint Long Distance Pulls the Plug on Its Latino Employees

BY BILL ADLER

San Francisco

MURPHY BROWN, meet Maria Valle.

Murphy Brown, of course, is the social conscience of prime-time television. Portrayed by Candice Bergen, Murphy is a working single mother with a journalistic passion for righting wrongs. Maria Valle, a 22-year-old native of El Salvador, is also a working single mother. Until recently both Bergen and Valle worked for Sprint, the long-distance telephone company. Bergen is the company's celebrity hawker, presumably earning millions of dollars. Valle was a $7-an-hour hawker for Sprint's Latino telemarketing subsidiary here, called La Conexion Familiar. La Conexion, a start-up company Sprint acquired in 1992, sells long-distance service primarily to "newly arrived immigrants." Its operators answer all calls in Spanish and much of its workforce, including Maria Valle, speaks limited English.

Bergen still pitches for Sprint. In July, though, the company fired Valle, along with all 234 of her coworkers at La Conexion Familiar, rerouting the calls they handled through Sprint's Dallas customer service center. Maria was among the 70 percent of La Conexion employees who had petitioned the National Labor Relations Board for a union election. The election campaign, organized by the Communications Workers of America, likely would have been the first successful union organizing effort at Sprint Long Distance, the nation's third largest long-distance carrier. (Some of the holding company's local telephone companies are unionized.) Rather than face a unionized workforce, and the dangerous precedent thereof, Sprint Long Distance sent a loud and fiber-optically clear message to its 20,000 employees nationwide—it would shut down La Conexion Familiar. "Your position will cease as of this date," management said over a loudspeaker and in a letter hand-delivered to employees on Thursday, July 14. The union election had been scheduled for eight days later.



Working conditions were ripe for a union victory. Employee complaints ranged from being denied earned commissions to abusive and humiliating personnel policies. "It's a stressful business to begin with," said Myra Arriaga, a 22-year-old telemarketer. "And they made it worse the way they controlled us." Arriaga said employees were discouraged from using the bathroom. "People were afraid to log off [the computer] to go," she said. "They told us to wait until the last possible moment and then to put our hand up, like we were all children. And they told us to cut down on fluids so we wouldn't need to go so much. But you talk on the phone for eight hours every day, you need water."

You need protections too, like a grievance procedure and a discrimination-free workplace, which is why most of the workers were ready to vote for union representation. "There was strong support," said Marie Malliett, president of CWA Local 9410. "Workers were wearing T-shirts, pro-union buttons, and were openly declaring their intentions to vote 'yes' on July 22."

The precedent La Conexion workers would have set was apparently too disturbing for Sprint Long Distance, a company apparently hellbent on preserving its nonunion status nationwide. In its "Union-Free Management Guide," Sprint counsels its executives that of the company's many challenges, "one of the most serious we face is the threat of union intervention in our business." The guide allows that Sprint "recognizes the right of our employees to join and belong to a union. More importantly, it recognizes the rights of our employees to *not* join or belong to a union."

The abrupt closing sent some workers into shock. At least one woman fainted and required hospitalization, many burst into tears, and some seemed "very confused,"

Continued on pg. 6

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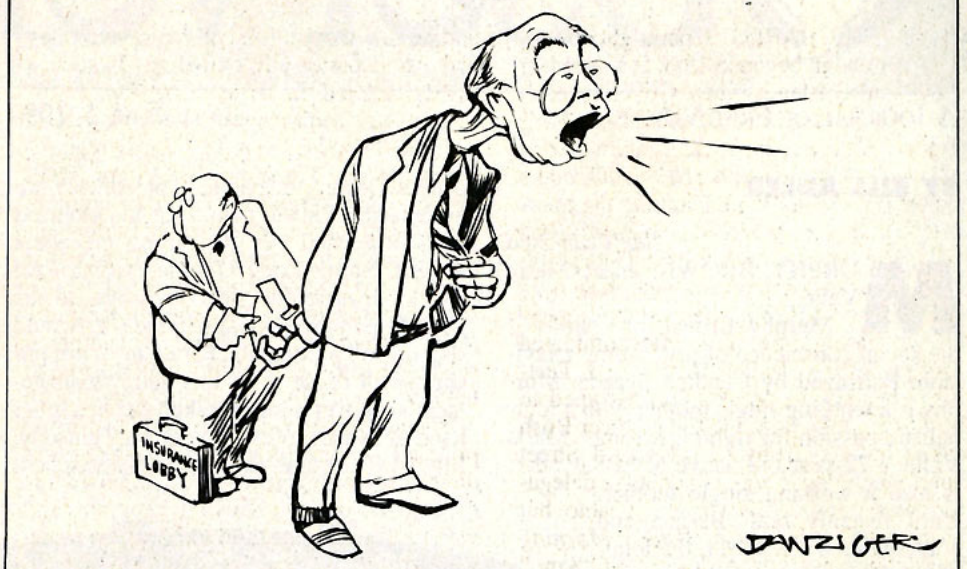

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FEATURES

Sprint Breaks La Conexion
By Bill Adler 1

Big Bucks Behind Bars
By Robert Bryce 8

DEPARTMENTS

Editorial
The Governor Moves Right 3
Balancing Nuclear Waste 5

Molly Ivins
Crime and Rascality 10

Jim Hightower
Milquetoast Health Care; Icky Air; Big Brother On-Line; 11

Las Americas
Mexico's Political Hangover
By Barbara Belejack in Mexico City 12
Patronage and PRI-dominance
By Alison Gardy in Nezahualcóyotl 13
The People Watched
By Louis Dubose in Monterrey 16

Books and the Culture
Claytie & The Lady
Book review by James Cullen 20
Red Rock West
Movie review by Steven G. Kellman 21

Afterword
Wet Dreams in San Antonio
By Char Miller 23

Political Intelligence 24

EDITORIALS

Texas Two Step

IF ANN RICHARDS' second gubernatorial campaign began in 1992 at a retreat at South Padre Island, when Governor-elect Richards decided that she would run for a second term, which would require her to measure every decision she would make against how it would play among the moderate suburban Republican women who had swung the election for her, then George W. Bush's gubernatorial campaign began in New Orleans in 1988. There, at the Republican national convention that nominated George Herbert Walker Bush and J. Danforth Quayle, George W. was assigned to the Texas press pack and the younger Bush staked out the lobby of the Canal Street Hotel where the Texas convention delegation was housed. To the personable but never ingratiating Bush, *Dallas Morning News* columnist Sam Attlesey was "Sam," *Austin American-Statesman* columnist Dave McNeely was "Dave," and if Hunter Thompson had been filing stories for a Texas daily, rather than writing his "Generation of Swine" article for *Rolling Stone,* I suppose he would have been "Doc."

Eight years ago George W. Bush was a man on the make and as he held forth in the hotel lobby and bar it did seem like he had more than his father's reelection in mind. His political ambition, and Ann Richards' determination to use her first term to secure a second one, changed the course of the first Richards Administration and recently the Governor has begun to steer her campaign even further to the right. And that is probably the direction in which it will proceed until the November election. Which should not be surprising. As labor lobbyist Don Dee Simpson is wont to remind us, "She is governor of a state that's about as progressive as Mississippi."

NEITHER RICHARDS NOR BUSH held their fire until Labor Day, which traditionally marks the beginning of fall political campaigns, but it was George W. who seemed most eager to get started and perhaps it was a premature start that had Bush doing his own version of the Texas Two Step, taking one step forward and two steps back, holding press conferences on issues before they were thought out, then doing damage control after reporters began to ask their first round of follow-up questions.

It was Bush, after all, who said that if elected he would house prisoners in tents and double them up in cells to save money and ease county jail crowding. If such a policy violated the terms of the *Ruiz v. Estelle* lawsuit settlement, by which a federal judge had imposed certain housing requirements on the Texas prison system, well, then, the *Ruiz* agreement should be ignored. Bush was forced to reconsider after reporters began to look at a fine schedule that would have cost the state hundreds of millions per year in fines for violations of the *Ruiz* agreement; Richards' campaign spokespersons were more than happy to help the press tally up potential fines.

Bush followed with a proposal to fingerprint all welfare recipients in order to cut down on welfare fraud. But he based his scheme on a Los Angeles program and when asked, said he didn't know how much was lost in welfare fraud in Texas each year. The program, nonetheless, would pay for itself within two years, he said. (Figure that out.) The Governor said she prefers a program promoted by Texas State Comptroller John Sharp: a welfare recipients' ID card similar to a credit card, which she contends has a "tremendous track record for cutting out cheats."

With a series of false starts, it began to look like the Bush campaign was headed for trouble. Unless, that is, Republican consultant Karl Rove was not concerned about content of news stories but was instead depending on the day's headlines and the symbolic value they created. Democrats, it was implied, want to coddle criminals while Republicans are eager to double-bunk them or house them in tents. Democrats want to hand credit cards to welfare recipients while Republicans stand ready to fingerprint those on the dole. This, combined with so much background noise about crime and punishment, could only serve to define Bush as a conservative ready to take on criminals and welfare mothers.

Perhaps Richards' campaign consultants began to worry about the Governor being unfairly compared to Bush, because in July and August the campaign seemed to turn reactive. The Governor's TV spot on teen curfews is not so bad. Filmed at St. Edwards University, with adolescents seated in a classroom, listening to the Governor tell them they need a curfew because the streets are unsafe at night, it depicts the Governor as a caring mother. And even the response ad on prisons, produced by Democratic consultant Bob Squier, in which Richards responds to the rhetorical question, "Well, Ann, what does it say about Texas that we've got the largest prison system in the world when you get through building?" is bad but not that bad. ("It says that if you commit a crime in Texas, we've got a place to lock you up," Richards responds.)

But amid all of this posturing on crime and punishment, in early August, this Governor, who was once a civil libertarian, seemed to have lost her moral compass when she called for legislation setting time limits on death row appeals.

"I am not proposing that we remove the legal options currently available to Texans sentenced to death," Richards said, "but I

do believe that we should carry out the laws of the state in a more timely fashion." The Governor's call for measures that would allow the Court of Criminal Appeals to expedite the first automatic direct appeal of a death sentence, which now takes as long as three to four years to decide, combined with her request for limits on habeas corpus petitions filed by death row inmates, would not be so bad (in a state where 70 percent of the population embraces the state execution of criminals) if there were adequate safeguards against the execution of innocent people. In Texas, it is clear that there are not.

Speaking from the bench last year, several Democratic justices on the Court of Criminal Appeals, the state's highest court on criminal matters, expressed concern about the possibility of executing an innocent person. The Texas criminal justice system depends far too much on court-appointed lawyers to defend accused capital murderers and the attorneys often lack the time and resources to adequately defend their clients. The state's 30-day rule, which excludes from the appeals process any exculpatory evidence introduced more than 30 days after the appeals process begins, increases the risk that an innocent person will be executed.

Texas does not provide public defenders for death row convicts as many other states do, and since 1982, when executions resumed in Texas, 79 inmates have been executed, more than in any other state. With 388 convicts on death row, Texas also has the highest number of inmates awaiting execution. Considering all of these variables, it seems like a just and prudent course would be to encourage a careful examination of capital convictions rather than accelerate the pace of execution. The Governor was aware of the rate of execution before the campaign began, yet she waited until the campaign to raise an issue that should have been raised during the legislative session.

This is not to suggest that George W. Bush's approach to capital punishment is any more enlightened. Bush proposes the combining of habeas corpus and direct appeals, a move the defense bar contends would put death row inmates on a "rocket docket." A rocket-docket bill backed by prosecutors and carried by Alpine Democratic Representative Pete Gallego died in the House last session. The Bush campaign has given the bill's proponents a reprieve; look for it to be on someone's agenda during the next session.

Bush, according the *Houston Chronicle*, resorted to a baseball metaphor when responding to the Governor's position on state executions, suggesting Richards is "all wind up and no delivery." He, we are left to conclude, would deliver.

The Bush campaign, as the *Chronicle* reports, is advised by Don Sipple, who also is a campaign consultant for Gov. Pete Wilson of California, where only immigrants get less sympathy than criminals. Sipple also advises Illinois Gov. Jim Edgar who, like Wilson in California, is a pro-capital-punishment candidate facing a challenge from a woman opposed to the death penalty. Richards supports it.

The *Chronicle* cites a Sipple interview with *Washington Post* columnist David Broder, in which Sipple said that polls and focus groups find that women candidates enjoy some advantages over men on issues like education, the environment and health care. Sipple continues to advise Bush and Bush will continue to bait the Governor and Bob Squier will respond. So this can only get uglier. Bush is already calling for the courts to try 14- and 15-year-olds as adults. And Labor Day has only just arrived. **—L.D.**

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Nuclear Balancing Act

WHEN THEY WERE looking for a place to dump low-level radioactive waste, Sierra Blanca must have seemed like a dandy site in the eyes of the nuclear industry and its acolytes in Austin and Washington, D.C. Located 90 miles southeast of El Paso, Sierra Blanca is in rural Hudspeth County, which had a 1990 population of 2,915, of which two-thirds are Hispanic, and a per-capita income of $13,029. Industry and state officials reckoned that impoverished Hudspeth County residents would welcome the promised economic benefits of becoming a nuclear waste dump. They reckoned wrong.

Despite local opposition, aggravated by the state approval of a venture to import New York City sewage waste for disposal in Hudspeth County, despite a treaty with Mexico that prohibits placement of any hazardous waste dumps within 60 miles of the Rio Grande, despite the presence of fault lines that pose a threat of earthquakes and underground aquifers that are vital to Mexico, Texas officials have gone full speed ahead with plans for the radioactive waste dump 16 miles from the Rio Grande. The Texas Legislature, which in 1991 ordered the dump placed in Hudspeth County, last year passed SB 1206, which authorized the state's participation in a low-level radioactive waste disposal compact commission with Maine and Vermont to operate the dump.

In mid-August, seeking to allay the public's fears about nuclear waste while the compact wends its way through Congress, state and federal officials put on a seminar in Austin designed to correct journalists' views on radiation. Although the U.S. Department of Energy anted up $20,000 to bring in speakers, private Health Physics Society chapters were allowed to charge participants $20 each to cover other costs of the seminar. As might have been forecast by anyone familiar with newsroom operations, very few reporters were willing to pay $20 to spend four hours listening to shills for the nuclear industry tell them that radioactive waste is not dangerous.

Jack Krohmer, chairman of the Texas Radiation Advisory Board, set the tone of "Radiation: The Public Depends on You," when he objected to the use of the word "dump" for what was planned in Sierra Blanca. He told the audience he preferred the term "disposal site." In Sierra Blanca, "the encapsulation will be immaculate," although he undermined that assurance with his later statement that "this country has got to stop spending billions of dollars solving nonproblems."

All the scientists on the panels were defenders of the nuclear industry, and other speakers included Max Boot, a writer for the right-wing editorial page of the *Wall Street Journal*, and Reed Irvine, right-wing editor of *Accuracy in Media*, both of whom teed off on the absent Eileen Welsome, who won the Pulitzer Prize for her series last year in the *Albuquerque Tribune* on plutonium experiments done without patients' consent in the late 1940s.

Kenneth Mossman, president of the National Health Physics Society and professor of Health Physics at Arizona State University, also weighed in on Welsome's Pulitzer: "I thought it was a bunch of chicken poop." He complained, "You don't read about the nuclear plants that operate correctly."

Bernard Cohen, professor of physics at the University of Pittsburg, said the press grossly exaggerates the dangers of radiation. "You shouldn't worry so much about low-level radioactive waste," he said, suggesting that riding bicycles and eating grilled steaks both are more dangerous than living next to a nuclear plant.

Still, asked why radioactive wastes are not stored at the places where they are generated, Cohen said low-level radioactive wastes should be disposed in rural areas because "the risks are lower in low-population areas."

Cohen blithely dismissed estimates of Jay Gould and Benjamin Goldman, in *Deadly Deceit*, that radiation has contributed to millions of deaths in the nuclear era. Cohen also denied that thousands of Soviets died from radiation at Chernobyl.

When Sherry Meddick of Greenpeace, who was diagnosed with cancer six years ago after growing up near a nuclear plant in Southern California, asked how the panelists could dismiss radiation risks, Krohmer, a radiation scientist, noted that he has had six different malignancies but he didn't blame his career. "Nobody can prove to you that radiation or any other environmental things caused your cancer," he replied. "There's so little data on low levels of radiation that we have nothing to base it on."

I half-expected Montgomery Burns of the Springfield Nuclear Power Plant from *The Simpsons* TV show to saunter by. Luckily for balanced reporting, a Border Coalition Against Radiation Dumping, made up of citizen and environmental groups from Mexico and Texas, brought in scientists with alternative views on nuclear waste disposal to a counter-seminar across the hall.

Meddick of Greenpeace noted that the Sierra Blanca site, if built, could end up as the only such radioactive waste dump in the United States, yet a week before the seminar Texas' two senators "didn't raise a finger to stop what would happen—the dumping of Maine and Vermont's radioactive waste near Sierra Blanca." Instead a bill to authorize the interstate waste disposal compact was approved by the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee without debate.

Marvin Resnikoff, a physicist who has been involved in efforts to fight radioactive waste dumps, said that despite assurances, the shallow land burial of waste containers planned for Sierra Blanca is a primitive technology whose main advantage is the low cost for the private dump operator.

Hugh Kaufman, assistant to the EPA's director of hazardous site control and an adversary of hazardous waste dumps, said the issue boils down to "welfare for very well-to-do companies both in this state and outside this state and...environmental racism."

He added that, when the Governor said the compact with Maine and Vermont protects Texas from being forced to take other states' waste, "The Governor lied." The compact, as approved by the Legislature last year and proposed in Congress now, would allow an unelected compact commission appointed by governors of the three states to agree to take waste from any source, including foreign corporations, and transfers liability from the producer to the taxpayer for the disposal of that waste.

"There may be some money in it for the state of Texas—a few million dollars—but that's chump change compared with the hundreds of billions of dollars of liability that will be shared by all the taxpayers," he said.

Roger Mulder, an adviser to Governor Richards on environmental issues, said she still believes the compact protects the state's interests while taking responsibility for nuclear waste the state produces. The compact limits nuclear waste imports to 20 percent of the volume disposed by the host state. "That is an absolute, ironclad guarantee to protect Texas," he said, adding that if a loophole allows dumping from outside the three states in the compact, the next Legislature can close it.

Richards cannot expect much support from Hudspeth County in her re-election bid. Said Bill Addington, president of Save Sierra Blanca, "I'm not promoting George Bush, but we have to hold each governor accountable for his or her actions."

After the seminar, Mulder told nuclear dump critics it is not as simple as "holding Richards accountable." He noted that one of George W. Bush's supporters is Mike Toomey, a lobbyist for Connecticut, which has offered hundreds of millions of dollars to buy its way into the compact. **—J.C.**

Breaking La Conexion

Continued from Cover

a paramedic called to the scene told the *San Francisco Examiner*. Management offered little comfort, barring employees from using the phones and ordering them to collect their belongings and leave the facility, but not before submitting to a search by rent-a-cops.

After the offices were cleared, Sprint executives briefed CWA officials. According to several CWA staffers present, the meeting served only to add insult to injury. Carl Doerr, Sprint's vice president for employee relations, reportedly referred to La Conexion's employees as mainly "illegal immigrants" who spoke "Hispanic" and who by using bribes had "bought" their $7-an-hour jobs.

In a telephone interview, Doerr said his remarks were not directed toward the current workforce but to the employees of the company at the time Sprint purchased the business nearly two years ago. "We tried to get out of the deal because we found out that over 60 percent of the workforce was undocumented aliens and we had to let them go," Doerr said. "And we had heard that a lot of them had to pay to get their jobs."

Sprint said the closure had nothing to do with the impending union election. "They told us that the reason they're closing is they were losing money," Argelia Ardon told the *Examiner*. "But that's a lie. They closed because we were organizing."

In fact, Sprint's explanation is in conflict with statements made by its own representatives. As recently as March, the general manager of La Conexion crowed to the *San Francisco Chronicle* that the company had been growing as much as 20 percent a month over the 15 months Sprint had owned the firm. He also projected that annual revenue would triple by 1996. In an April filing with the Federal Communications Commission, a Sprint attorney described La Conexion as a "viable competitor" seeking to "expand its operations." And a national in-house newsletter published in June—just weeks before Sprint pulled the plug on La Conexion—depicted the niche-market subsidiary as fairly thriving. "La Conexion Familiar is different than other carriers and very successful because they are the only long distance company that exclusively targets customers who use Spanish as their only or primary language." The newsletter went on to say that La Conexion "has grown at an astounding rate in the last three years."



Maria Valle COURTESY CWA

Despite the cheery testimonials, Sprint gamely insists that La Conexion was perennially losing money. "The decision [to close] was solely based on the ongoing poor financial performance of the company," said Robin Pence, the Sprint publicist assigned to La Conexion damage control. "It was losing money from the day we bought it and the losses were mounting." As to CWA's charges that Sprint closed the company to avoid the union, Pence said: "That's completely false. The one thing had absolutely nothing to do with the other."

Well, maybe. In response to an unfair labor practice charge CWA brought, the National Labor Relations Board is investigating that very issue. The charge alleges that the company illegally closed the subsidiary precisely to prevent the union vote. The union asked the labor board for an injunction to reopen La Conexion and to proceed with the representation election. The regional office of the NLRB is expected to rule on the complaint in early September.

The workers also took their grievance to City Hall. The San Francisco Board of Supervisors, the city's governing body, had granted La Conexion tax breaks and other incentives to locate in one of the city's forsaken neighbor-hoods, a so-called enterprise zone. Trailed by a Spanish-language TV crew, some 60 of the fired employees disrupted the supervisors' July 18 meeting. Holding banners and placards and chanting "*Justicia, justicia, justicia*," the workers demanded that the board conduct hearings on the shutdown. Board President Angela Alioto, who has mayoral aspirations, agreed quickly to the workers' request. A hearing is set for September 7.

La Conexion's customers saw no interruption in service, according to Sprint's Robin Pence, as calls were rerouted through the Dallas national customer service center. The telemarketing operation was transferred to Sprint's existing Latino division. As for La Conexion employees, Pence said, "We're doing all we can to help them find new jobs." She said the company established a "career center" to offer counseling, resume-writing help, and job leads. Asked how many of the 235 La Conexion workers have found new jobs, Pence said she was unsure. "I'll have to get back to you." Maria Valle, the single mother of a 2-year-old daughter, is enrolled in computer school. Her 60-day severance pay runs out on September 12. □

Author's note: On this Labor Day, as on those of the past 15 or so years, American workers once again find themselves in a state of siege. Each week, it seems, the papers deliver more news of plant closings and mass layoffs. The dismal legacy of Reagan/Bush-era labor relations hangs around like a smoker's cough. The striker replace-

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Bill Adler is a freelance writer and member of the National Writers Union/UAW Local 1981.

ment bill was thwacked in the U.S. Senate this summer; labor law reform and OSHA reform bills have stalled in committee; NAFTA-fueled manufacturers giddily declare their American workers obsolete while shipping production to semi-slave laborers in Mexico and overseas. Organizing the unorganized, in the face of hostile law, free trade, and emboldened anti-union employers, remains, as this dispatch from the telecommunications frontier makes plain, a great uphill battle.

But there are glimmers of hope. Union membership, which shrunk steadily for 14 years, actually increased nationally last year to 16.6 million, from 16.4 million in 1992. And unions in Texas, of all places, are swelling the ranks with innovative and aggressive organizing. "We concluded that the old way of doing things wasn't moving us forward," said Rick Levy, staff counsel for the Texas AFL-CIO. "Leaders as well as rank-and-filers have realized that the very survival of the labor movement depends on a renewed commitment to organizing, a commitment that must be shared by each and every member."

The commitment has resulted in some dramatic gains. From major victories by the United Rubber Workers in east Texas and building-trades locals throughout the state, to rapid growth in the public-employee and service-worker ranks, to expanded alliances between American and Mexican unions, to sophisticated corporate campaigns and enhanced coalition-building with community organizations, labor is stirring for the first time since Ronald Reagan planted his boot-heel on the throat of the nation's air-traffic controllers. **—B.A.**

Talking Non-Union

ON THE BACK COVER of a recent issue of *The Nation* is a full-page ad for Working Assets, the San Francisco-based progressive financial services company. In 1991, Working Assets started a long-distance phone company. "Be socially responsible," the ad exhorts. "Talk on the phone." The copy continues: "What if you could help build a better world just by talking on the phone? And what if you could *save money* at the same time?"

The ad goes on to state that 1 percent of the company's revenues are doled out to nonprofit good guys like Amnesty International, Planned Parenthood, Greenpeace. What it doesn't say is that Working Assets leases lines from Sprint. Why does a firm that purports to be "socially responsible" do business with a notoriously antiunion company?

"We have been watching the whole Sprint-La Conexion Familiar thing," says Peter West, a Working Assets manager. "We've had a lot of customers calling to express their concerns. And yes, it's put us in a tough situation."

Laura Scher, the company's chief executive officer, downplayed the matter of doing business with Sprint. "We have nothing to do with La Conexion," she said. "We want to be in the phone industry because we think that what we're doing has a positive impact on the world around us. We're well aware that none of the big carriers are ideal. But we feel the benefit we provide outweighs the evil of doing business with them."

Would Working Assets consider switching to a union carrier? "We might," says Scher. "We certainly listen to our customers." To be heard, call Working Assets at 800-788-8588. If you call during a busy period, you will get a recorded message that bills the firm as "the only phone company that helps you build a better world with every call you make." When you reach an operator, you might remind him or her that Working Assets itself could start by disconnecting its line to Sprint.

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Big Bucks Behind Bars

BY ROBERT BRYCE

BY NEXT YEAR TEXAS will have enough prison space to hold 145,000 prisoners behind bars and as the state proceeds with the largest prison-building boom in the history of the United States, some analysts continue to argue that even more prison beds will be needed. For private prison companies like Wackenhut and Corrections Corporation of America, virtually unknown 10 years ago, more prisons mean more business. And business has never been better. Prison contractors in Texas have won some of the most important jail projects in the state and more appear to be on the way.

A simple market survey helps explain why the state is so appealing to private jailers. With a population of 16 million, Texas incarcerates more of its residents than does Great Britain, where the population is approximately 57 million people. And $2 billion per year is currently spent to house prisoners in Texas. Because of these factors, and a Legislature that has been won over by the private-prison lobby, almost 50 percent of the private prison beds in use or under construction in the United States are in the state of Texas, which now has four times as many privately operated prison facilities as any other state. California, with 7 percent of its prisoners in private facilities, remains a distant second. Thirty-five prison facilities in the state are either under construction or operated by private contractors and two of the state's highest profile prisons are run by a private corporation. The New Vision facility in Kyle (south of Austin) and the Lockhart Work Program Facility in Lockhart are operated by Wackenhut Corrections Corporation (WCC), a subsidiary of Wackenhut, the huge Florida-based international private investigation and security services firm. (See Wackenhut World).

WCC is the second-largest prison company in the world, operating 6,900 prison beds worldwide. Its 500-bed Kyle facility, open since May 1992, is the first of 12,000 beds the Legislature has designated for drug treatment. U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno toured the New Vision prison with Gov. Ann Richards last year and the facility has received extensive media coverage. The 500-bed Lockhart facility was designed to teach inmates employment skills and it provides cheap, ready labor to industries that contract for inmate labor. At the Lockhart prison, three companies currently employ about 100 inmates, who produce air conditioning controls, eye glasses and electronic circuit boards. (Organized labor doesn't like this arrangement at all, and it might offend Congress members who protest the use of prison labor in China, but that's another story). Jeff Spoon, vice president for project development at Wackenhut, describes the Lockhart prison as the first privately run facility of its kind in the United States. "We want to train these prisoners with high-tech and computer skills so they can compete in the job market," Spoon said.

Wackenhut recently won the Texas prison sweepstakes again, when it was awarded a $30-million contract to build and operate a new 1,000-bed state jail at the site of the Travis State School in Austin. The Austin jail will be one of the first to use the community-justice concept, which means inmates who normally would go to state prisons will instead do their time in Travis County, where they will receive social services and educational programs while in jail, then be released in Travis County, where county entities will provide "aftercare programs." Dinah Dinwiddie, a criminal justice planner for Travis County, says Wackenhut won the contract for the new jail because the company "had the best proposal. They had the best mix of programs and best design of facility with space for family visits and office space for programs."

While the overall prison population in the United States is growing at 8 percent a year, the number of private prison beds is growing at some 30 percent a year, according to Charles Thomas, director of the Private Prisons Project at the University of Florida. "Internationally, if you include contract awards on facilities under construction and the facilities now open, about 30,000 beds are being run by 21 private contractors," Thomas said.

Private prisons are gaining in popularity as states look for cheaper ways to finance, build and operate their prisons, and with costs 10 to 15 percent lower than state-operated prisons, private companies are currently doing business in 16 states. But the move toward privatization has some critics wondering if the trend is healthy. After all, prison companies make money by keeping prisoners. Thus, their interest is not necessarily in rehabilitation, but in keeping prisons full. The "three strikes, you're out" concept could mean huge profits for private prison companies.

In addition, some critics within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice complain, private operators only take the "easy prisoners." According to one official at the finance department at TDCJ, "They don't have to deal with the psychos or the hard criminals." However, John Bonner, who worked for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice for 17 years and for WCC for five years (he was the warden at the Kyle facility) and is now working as a consultant to the industry, thinks that because private prisons are required by law to cost 10 percent less than state-run prisons, they make the state system look bad.

A former opponent of privatization, Bonner now believes that if private operators can provide the service for less money, "it's crazy not to use them." Bonner said if he were an inmate he would prefer to go to a privately run prison. "Most of them are new, they have good programs and well-trained staff. They [private contractors] have an incentive to make a difference, people are looking at them harder than at the state system. And they should be held to a higher standard."

While more private prisons appear to be coming, the state's rush toward privatization has not been completely smooth. Ray Hutchison, husband of U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, is a defendant in a $70 million lawsuit that alleges he and others were part of a conspiracy to defraud bondholders when bonds were issued in 1989 to build private prisons in six Texas counties. The state refused to use the prisons, which state officials held did not meet TDCJ standards, and the bond debt went unpaid. Most of the facilities were acquired by the state at a bargain price and some have already been brought up to state standards or are used for other purposes than the companies that developed them intended.

At present, 2,000 new beds are under construction by private operators in Texas. Operating those beds for the next two decades will cost state taxpayers at least half a billion dollars. Obviously, there's money to be made in the corrections business. Nationally, less than 2 percent of all prison beds are operated by private firms but officials believe that private contractors

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Robert Bryce is a freelance writer in Austin.

could ultimately run 10 percent of America's prisons, a figure Spoon of Wackenhut, believes is "conservative." Thirteen years ago, private prisons were an unknown commodity. Today, 25 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have enacted legislation that allows contractors to run correctional facilities. "That means that since 1980, the number of areas where prison contracting is legal has grown from zero to half the nation," says Thomas. "I don't think anybody knows how big this industry can get.

It's a Wackenhut World

With 43,000 employees and operations in 48 countries, the Wackenhut Corporation is an empire and security state unto itself. Offering protection services to everyone from kings to sports figures, Wackenhut is one of the largest and most profitable private security firms in the world. And the growth in the private prison business is just a small part of the company's $700 million annual revenue stream. Wackenhut's security-related businesses are broad and include several corporate divisions. Wackenhut International Inc., operates worldwide and closer to home does business in every country in Latin America except Cuba and Nicaragua. Wackenhut Corrections Corp. and Wackenhut Services Inc. provide security services for the security combine's largest client, the Department of Energy, at nuclear weapons facilities including Savannah River, Georgia, the Nevada Test Site and Rocky Flats, Colorado. Wackenhut Services also provides security for the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve. The company's Domestic Operations Group provides security at 100 airports and 14 nuclear plants.

Founded in 1954 by George Wackenhut, a former FBI agent, the company also has become a pre-retirement haven for former FBI and CIA agents as well as police officers and other law enforcement types. George Moore, an assistant warden at the new Lockhart Work Program Facility is a typical Wackenhut employee. Straitlaced and no-nonsense, Moore went to work for Wackenhut after spending nearly three decades with a small-town police force. His first job with the company was at their Bridgeport, Connecticut, facility.

The company's main competitor in the prison business is Nashville-based Corrections Corporation of America (CCA). Founded in 1983, CCA now oversees more than 9,000 beds in six U.S. states, Great Britain and Australia. Company revenues have tripled since 1988 and are now growing at about 30 percent per year. Wall Street analysts are bullish on Wackenhut and CCA.

While its financial picture looks good, Wackenhut's image was damaged by stories about the company being willing to bend or go around the law to get the job done. In a highly critical report that aired on CBS's "60 Minutes," Wackenhut employees were caught secretly videotaping and recorded conversations with Charlie Hamel, a former oil company executive conducting a private investigation of mismanagement and unsafe practices on the Alaska Pipeline. Wackenhut was hired by Alyeska, which operates the pipeline, to discredit Hamel and find out who his sources were. One Wackenhut ploy revealed by CBS included the hiring of an attractive young woman who was used by the security company to lead Hamel into a phony environmental group that tried to persuade him to reveal his sources. The company also stole Hamel's garbage, illegally obtained his phone records, and started an investigation of U.S. Congressman George Miller of California, who was at the time leading a Congressional investigation of Alyeska.

Miller was quoted in the report saying that Wackenhut had "decided they were a little police department unto themselves." Wackenhut and Alyeska were themselves investigated by the a House subcommittee.

Wackenhut also provides security at the South Texas Project, the trouble-plagued 2,500-megawatt nuclear power facility in Bay City that was forced to shut down for most of 1993 by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Last year, independent security experts were brought in to assess Wackenhut's program at the plant. Jim Morris of the *Houston Chronicle* reported last December that security analysts found "a 50 percent turnover of the guard force since January of 1991 and found that 59 percent of the guards had been formally disciplined between April 1992 and May 1993."

Ninety percent of the Wackenhut security personnel who were interviewed by the security team described the morale of the force at STNP as "unfavorable." □

Facts on Prisons

• It would be cheaper to send an inmate to the University of Texas at Austin year round, pay full tuition, books, provide a dorm room, a full meal plan and $300 a month for pizza, beer and condoms than to keep that inmate locked up. All told, a full ride at UT-Austin costs about $12,230/year. A year at Huntsville costs about $15,600.

• In 1982, one of every 58 adults in Texas was on probation, parole, or in jail. By the year 2000, one of every 21 Texans will be in that situation. One of every 18 Texas men already are.

• In 1993, 351 of every 100,000 Americans was behind bars, outdistancing second-place South Africa's 311 per 100,000. Texas already has an incarceration rate of 553 per 100,000 and by the year 2000, 1,428 of every 100,000 Texans will be behind bars.

• Twenty percent of Texas inmates are serving time for drug offenses and one-third of new convictions are for drug offenses.

• In 1992, 48 percent of the Texas prison population was black, 29 percent was white, 23 percent was Hispanic. For comparison, blacks make up 12 percent of the state's general population, Anglos 61 percent and Hispanics 26 percent.

• If present trends continue, by the year 2000, one of nine African-Americans males in Texas will be incarcerated.

• It costs $45.70 to keep one inmate behind bars in Texas for one day. That's not bad when you compare it to New York City, where it costs about $135 per day.

• Texas' prison crowding problem is so acute that 600 state prisoners are now being housed in tents set up on state land originally set aside as wildlife refuges.

• In Tarrant County, 5,100 inmates are jammed into the county jail; 3,200 of them are awaiting transfer to state prisons.

• At the Central Booking Facility in Travis County, up to 250 prisoners are regularly crammed into spaces designed to hold 58.

• In Dallas County there are 9,700 prisoners locked into space designed for 7,600. Five thousand of those prisoners are "paper ready" to be transfered to state prison facilities where there is no space to accommodate them.

• The county jail with the worst crowding problem is in Chambers County, where 124 inmates are locked in a space designed for 51.

• The annual budget for the Travis County jail system increased from $1.8 million in 1982 to nearly $26 million in 1993.

• This year, TDCJ has a budget of $1.84 billion. If TDCJ were a private corporation, it would be the 19th largest in the state. By the year 2000, according to the Texas Comptroller, the prison budget should increase by more than half, to $3 billion, which would make it comparable to the 12th largest corporation in the state.

—R.B.

Sources: Austin Chronicle, *Texas Criminal Justice Policy Council, Texas Department of Criminal Justice, U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Institute of Corrections, Texas Comptroller.*

MOLLY IVINS

Crime and Rascality

I raise the philosophical question: Are politicians actually capable of talking rationally about crime without petty, partisan politics intruding? The question occurred Aug. 15, as I listened to Karl Rove, Republican political consultant and adviser to George W. Bush's campaign, say: "That crime rates are down doesn't matter. Crime rates are not as important as the actual number of crimes committed." Hello, do you have a banana in your ear? Am I too drunk to fish? Or is it just that this man assumes we're all morons?

What's going on is more partisan posturing than any of us should have to put up with—especially those of us who have been victims of crime.

George W.'s campaign has started running an ad that says Texas is the third most dangerous state in the nation (based on a study by some outfit that chose some set of 16 indicators and ranked the states). This in defiance of the nauseating news from the Republican point of view that the crime rate in Texas is down across the board, according to the Department of Public Safety. Politics being politics, Gov. Ann Richards is now entitled to claim credit for this phenomenon, and we're all supposed to believe that the billions we're spending on more prisons has something to do with it. Try looking at the employment rate over the last three years, and you'll see a more useful correlation.

One of the many reasons politicians can be rational about crime is that they have to prove to all of us how much they hate crime. They are angry about crime. They feel rage. Consequently, we shouldn't support midnight basketball leagues, even though they cut crime rates (see above for Rove's immortal explanation of why crime rates are unimportant) because midnight basketball leagues do not make politicians look angry about crime. They just work.

Nothing like a report from the front line to give us some perspective on what this is really about. Dr. David Hilfikers new book, *Not All of Us Are Saints*, is about the 11 years he has practiced poverty medicine in the ghetto in Washington, D.C. One of his patients—Maggie Walker, a 33-year-old heroin addict—came to him desperate to get straight. She faced both jail time and having her children taken away from her. But there is no in-patient drug treatment available for those who have no health insurance and no money. At the public methadone clinic, there was a five-week waiting list. Putting money into a treatment program for Maggie Walker is both cheaper and more effective than putting Maggie Walker in prison (about $20K a year) and supporting her children. This is not being "soft on crime." This is not "pork-barrel spending" or "some social program." This is what works to cut crime, and it is less expensive than building more prisons.

Nor is supporting drug-treatment programs and midnight basketball an either/or proposition—as in, let's spend money only on drug treatment and basketball, and none on more cops or more prisons. The original crime bill was advertised as both "tough and smart." One hundred thousand more cops is tough and smart. Midnight basketball is cheap and smart. Why don't the politicians quit trying to divide us into either law 'n' order or bleeding hearts and do what works?

The Next Casualty

If I listened to all the spin coming out of Washington right now, I'd be as dizzy as a bullbat. Now that the crime bill is born again, the only real question is: "Who will get credit for the resurrection?" Our elected leaders seem to have heard from the American people, who don't give a damn who gets the blame or the credit. They just want a crime bill—preferably an effective one.

Some quick focus-group polling, of which I hear tell, says that folks are concluding that it's time for President Ciinton to git mad. Which he did for a couple of days, and now he's ready, apparently, to work with Newt Gingrich and the R's to get a crime bill through. The R's, who killed the bill in the first place, now want credit for passing a compromise.

It would be kind of satisfying to see Clinton git too mad to spit straight, but you can't be angry and reasonable at the same time any more than—as we say in our quaint Texas fashion—a horse can buck and eat hay at the same time.

Even if Clinton gets a decent crime bill out of this, the R's are still the winners as the official anti-government party. All many people understand is that Congress killed the crime bill, then passed the crime bill, thus proving once again they don't have the sense to pull in their heads when they pull down the window. And do we want these people reforming our health-care system? Of course not. Ergo, dead health-care reform. Anything that makes Washington look incompetent helps those who oppose government initiatives—such as health-care reform.

But you must admit the system at least provides first-class comedy. How glorious a moment, when Senator Bob Dole stood before the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and professed to be shocked—shocked!—that the Republicans were accused of stalling—stalling!—on the health-care bill. Surely some academic who studies the effect of movies on real life (otherwise known as the Reagan Phenomenon) will collect that clip,

Lest we start taking all this partisan persiflage seriously, let us consider once more the real motivations of our players. Citizen Action, the ol' Ralph Nader outfit, has done some totin' up and discovered, lo, that the Numero Uno recipient of money from the health-care industry is Texas' own Phil Gramm. During his years in office, Gramm has collected $1,235,520 from political action committees representing hospitals, pharmaceutical companies and health insurance companies, making him first among the 100 senators in this category.

But don't bust your buttons 'til you hear about our junior senator, a mere two years in office. Kay Bailey Hutchison has raked in $611,009 from the same sources, placing her 21st in the Senate. In fewer than 24 months! We're looking at a future great here. □

Molly Ivins, a former Observer *editor, is now a* Fort Worth Star-Telegram *columnist.*

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JIM HIGHTOWER

Milquetoast Health Care

Bill Clinton once boasted that health care reform was *the* program that would "define his presidency." And there it is: A Monument to Milquetoast.

When he first rallied the public for health care reform, Clinton outlined a bold vision: Everyone must be covered, Clinton said, rip-off prices and skyrocketing costs would be controlled, and America would pay for the plan equitably. Where did that guy go? Having caved in again and again to the giant insurance companies, the HMO executives, the drug industry lobbyists and special-interest-butt-kissing members of Congress in both parties, the president finally was forced to abandon his own health care bill—and is now reduced to embracing the sham of reform recently put forward by Sen. George Mitchell.

Mitchell's bill is plucked clean of every one of Clinton's golden principles of reform. Everyone covered? Mitchell now only proposes a "goal" of 95 percent of Americans covered by the 2002. Even if he makes his goal, that's still about 15 million families without health protection. Price and cost controls? None. As for paying for it equitably, employers are not required to contribute anything to the coverage of employees, leaving working-class folks pretty much on their own.

And this is the *good* bill. The Republican plan essentially amounts to requiring everyone to go buy an insurance policy, and handing out a jar of leeches to those who can't afford it.

Mitchell and Clinton both sigh that their bill is the best they can get from Congress. But instead of playing the *inside* game of trying to craft a bill with the special interests, they should have offered a simple, straightforward plan from the start that embodied Clinton's principles, then built a prairie fire of support for it *outside* Washington.

People's victories never come from inside Washington—and that's why we outsiders have to keep kicking for real reform.

Icky Air

My knowledge of physics and all things technological rivals that of a turnip, so I'm always amazed when I look out an airplane window and find that the wings aren't flapping. Yes, I've read the scientific explanations, but I still think the only thing keeping the plane in the air is that I hold my breath the entire way. So don't expect me to say anything to you if you sit next to me on a flight—we'll fall out of the sky if I do.

One thing I do know, though, is that the air *inside* the plane is as important as that outside. I only mention this obvious point because those wacky practical jokers who run America's airlines have been funning with us again. In the happy-go-lucky deregulation days of Reagan-Bush, these pranksters quietly cut the amount of fresh air in the passenger cabins from 100 percent fresh outside air to half-fresh/half-recirculated air. "Recirculated" air, for those not familiar with airline jargon, means "already used" air, including sneezed into and belched-up. The technical term is "icky air."

Flight attendants and we frequent fliers are complaining that "icky air" causes headaches, nausea and other health problems, especially on long flights of more than, say, nine minutes. Airline execs say it's just our imagination—as they hop aboard Amtrak.

Well, "icky air" is better than being sprayed with insecticide, I guess. *I am not making this up.* Several foreign governments require that all airlines arriving in their countries must 1) turn off the plane's ventilation system 30 minutes before arriving, then 2) have flight attendants walk down the aisle spraying "aerosol d-phenothrin" in the cabin to kill pests—like us passengers, I guess. This is the very same spray sold here as Black Knight Roach Killer, which warns on its label: "Avoid breathing vapors."

Airline executives say they don't like spraying us, but they can't make the foreign countries mad, and—as one put it—the spray has been "approved by the EPA."

Great, I'll put that on my tombstone.

Big Brother On-line

It amazes me to hear anyone say: "There's more than one way to skin a cat."

I mean, what kind of sicko wants to skin a cat in the first place?

Well, watch out, here come the cat skinners after *us*. It's a group of liberals and conservatives, Republicans and Democrats who are talking seriously in Washington about passing a law to require every American to carry a National Identification Card. Your personally encoded card would be electronically tied into a national computer with a data base that could include your voting patterns, tax information, any police record, credit reports, medical history, etc., etc.

Admittedly, in this electronic age, our private affairs are already digitalized, analyzed and compartmentalized, cross-referenced and distributed wholesale through an intricate web of computer snoopers working for Big Business and Big Government.

But the idea of a National ID is the granddaddy of all privacy invasion schemes. Proponents are claiming it's not really a National ID Card—it's a "counterfeit-resistant, work-welfare eligibility document." Right, just as Orwellian doublespeak artists never admit to "lying"—they call it "perception management."

Let's at least admit what it is—a National ID Card. It's actually being pushed in the name of a worthy goal: stopping illegal immigration. But I can take you to street corners in Austin, Texas, where a thousand bucks will buy you a fake social security card, birth certificate, driver's license or about any other document you need; and I assure you, these "free-lance craftsmen of instantaneous citizenship" will quickly master the production of fake National ID Cards.

Why should we shell out an estimated $6 billion to build a National ID system that illegals will have the ingenuity to undermine, even as it further undermines our basic rights of privacy? To keep your private business from going on-line with Big Brother, contact the Electronic Privacy Information Center at (202) 544-9240. □

Jim Hightower, a former Observer *editor and Texas agriculture commissioner, does daily radio commentary and a weekend call-in talk show on the ABC Radio Network. If your local station doesn't carry him, ask them why not.*

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Mexico's Political Hangover

BY BARBARA BELEJACK

Mexico City

THE MORNING AFTER the election of the century, the cafe at Atoyac, Guerrero, was still. Everyone simply drank their coffee and stared at the television set, listening to Diego, Cuauhtémoc and Zedillo (throughout the campaign it was always "Zedillo," never Ernesto). Nobody said a word. If they did, it might have been, "The King is dead! Long live the King!"

I was never any good at predicting jury verdicts in Cameron County, Texas, so I don't know why I should be any better at predicting the results of a Mexican election. We always assumed Zedillo would win, but with about 40 percent of the vote, changing the dynamics of *presidencialismo* in Mexico. The morning after the elections we woke up to figures reminiscent of 1988—a major defeat for the opposition. People walked about slightly dazed, as if coming off a major hangover. But Mexico had just finished two days of *ley seca* , the election"dry law".

I have always considered Mexico City taxi drivers to be some of the most informed sources in the world. This summer I have met taxi drivers who talked about Mexican politics in terms of *surrealismo* and Dali paintings. I met taxi drivers who kept their own polls of passengers, who sported Zedillo stickers on their cars and later explained, "but taxis don't vote." Perhaps the most enlightened one of all was taxi driver who proclaimed, "I don't know who's going to win the election but I know who's going to lose: *el pueblo mexicano*."

The story of the August 21 elections is uniquely Mexican, the result of a 65-year-old political institution, a particularly tumultuous year and the overwhelming presence of mass media—Televisa in particular, but the same could be said for most of the electronic and print media that functions as the publicist for the ruling party. But it is also a universal story. This is where we are at the end of the 20th century. Stuck with creaky 18th-century institutions such as one "man," one vote that are almost irrelevant in the age of computers and marketing. If the Mexico City taxi driver knew who would lose the election, we all should have known who would win: the *Bolsa* would win, the Stock Market would win, the global economy would win, everyone prepared to write off rural Mexico with the same cavalier attitude used to write off America's inner cities, would win on August 21.

I spent election day along the Costa Grande of Guerrero, just up the coast from Acapulco but a million light years away from the plush hotels and swank discos. It's a place where campesinos come to town toting machetes and where modernity exists in the form of a satellite dish or a pirated version of the latest Juan Gabriel cassette. It's a place where poverty, partisan politics and contested elections are all in the natural order of things.

In 1988, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas' supporters took over the town hall at Coyuca de Benítez, an hour's drive north of Acapulco, in the wake of the Salinas victory, which was propped up by lost, stolen, disappeared and altered ballots. After municipal elections last fall, the town hall again was occupied. In recent weeks, the Costa Grande, along with the mountains of Guerrero, has been linked to guerrilla activity. Just before the elections, *La Jornada* published a series of interviews with purported teachers-turned-guerrillas. The parish priest in Coyuca has been repeatedly mentioned as the suspected leader of the movement, and on election day the Costa Grande was teeming with Mexico City reporters, a crew from Miami-based Telemundo and other foreign media, all looking for the next revolution.

What they found instead was the usual clash between the legalistic minds of the Federal Election Institute (IFE) and the agrarian world of the Costa Grande. In Mexico City, subway stations are filled with IFE posters that quote 18th-century French philosophers on liberty, democracy and plurality. In Coyuca de Benítez, signs posted on the town hall indicate where campesinos were to line up for their PROCAMPO (government program) checks days before the election. In Coyuca de Benítez, the citizens have become accustomed to police in black shirts, black pants and black boots, lounging around the town hall.

At Tecpan, a regional vote-counting center further up the coast, dozens of police blocked off the streets near the IFE. Throughout the night, crowds gathered to watch the votes come in. From time to time, a pickup truck would roll in from the sierra and there would be some dispute about the legality of the ballots it was carrying. The crowd would shout, the count would stop and the entire delegation would move outside to deliberate with the crowd. The atmosphere was tense, but nothing happened; the crowd was penned in, always under the watchful eyes of the Guerrero police and a woman sporting IFE credentials, dressed in jeans and carrying a notebook and cellular phone.

Not long after the July 6, 1988, presidential elections in Mexico, Chileans voted a resounding No! to the continuation of the Pinochet regime. Political analysts here generated endless articles, wondering aloud what it was about Chile that allowed its citizens to oust a military dictator while a supposedly democratic country was having problems running a supposedly democratic election. Since then, Mexicans have watched the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union. They've watched a black man freed after nearly three decades in a South African prison elected president of that country. And they've watched another supposedly democratic election in which Mexicans voted a resounding No! to change in their own country.

The jury on this election won't be in for a long time. (We still don't understand what happened in 1988.) But the best explanation I have found, so far, is one advanced by Fatima Fernández Cristlieb, an expert on Mexican media. "There's a whole range of reasons for those who voted 'no,' and from here on in we have to try to untangle them, to analyze them, to understand the enormous array of reasons why they said 'no' to change. Among those I see most clearly, there is a 'no' cast out of fear; a 'no' that can be explained by submission; a 'no' that can be explained by a threat; a 'no' that comes from inertia; a 'no' that comes from satisfaction; and a 'no' expressed as a matter of convenience."

The optimists here (their numbers are shrinking, except in financial circles) see the next *sexenio* as the buffer stage, an interim leading up to the creation of another political system. I don't. I wonder about all those "no's" that Fernández listed. And I don't see how they can be changed. □

Barbara Belejack is a freelance writer based in Mexico City.

Patronage and PRI-dominance

BY ALISON GARDY

Nezahualcóyotl, Mexico

IN THE MONTHS before the August 21 national elections, Mexico's Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) had reason to worry about places like Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl. Located on the eastern outskirts of Mexico City, Nezahualcóyotl (which takes its name—in the Nahuatl, "hungry coyote"—from the pre-Cortesian poet-King of Tezcoco) is home to somewhere between four million and six million people. A former squatters' settlement that has burgeoned over three decades of massive rural migration, "Neza" is one of Mexico's largest urban zones. It has a large working class, a small middle class and a huge concentration of young, rebellious rockers.

Though the PRI has always controlled Neza's local government, using pork barrel and Mafia-style tactics of intimidation and exclusion, Neza residents nevertheless voted overwhelmingly for opposition candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas in the presidential elections of 1988. That is why the PRI had reason to worry about Neza in 1994.

The 1988 protest vote represented mistrust and disgust toward a government that seemed more a burden than a help, more a danger than a defender for ordinary citizens. Many Neza residents, for example those who struggled with PRI government officials to get the most basic services of drinking water, a sewage system and paved streets, take personal credit for their city's growth and improvement and contend that the huge street-paving program begun by President Carlos Salinas de Gortari was an attempt to keep Neza voting for the PRI. Yet many choose not to criticize the PRI openly, for fear of reprisals.

Neza's curious demographic mix and its political ambivalence make it a sort of small-scale model of the Mexican republic. During the recent elections, it became a place where new democratic ideas met old political ploys, where political tolerance faced pressure to vote for the PRI, and where a nascent democracy quietly took root amid a tangled web of cronyism. Voters went to the polls to select a president, senators and local representatives. All nine parties plastered propaganda on Neza's walls, telephone poles and bridges. They strung up plastic flyers across avenues and streets, which gave the city the appearance of a confusing carnival or, as one Neza resident put it, "a place to dry your laundry." Never before had so much propaganda from so many different political parties covered the area. The PRI, however, erected enormous billboards and had more plastic banners than any other party. PRI advertisements occupied the most visible places, and television and radio promoted the PRI more than any other party.

And the PRI went one step further. "Because the people are so disillusioned with the PRI, it is asking for votes in exchange for services people have been demanding for years," said Eva, a Neza resident who refused to give her last name, "But the PRI does this each time there is an election," she added. "Then we never hear from them again."

Eva, who raises chickens in her home, told the same thing to a local PRI candidate who campaigned door-to-door for this year's elections. He shook residents' hands and asked if he could put his campaign stickers with the PRI logo on their doors. Eva asked the candidate, Luis Alberto Contreras, why the government still had not paved her street. Eva had been elected treasurer of a neighbors' committee six years ago after her Neza neighbors had come together in a nonpolitical fashion to organize and pressure the local government for street pavement. Eva collected the equivalent of $1,000 from her neighbors and paid it in deposits over the last six years to the local government. But the street was never paved. One government fraud after another gobbled up the neighborhood money. Each new local administration blamed the previous one and asked the residents to pay again. Worse, the enraged neighbors began to suspect that Eva had stolen the money. Anxious to clear her name of suspicion, Eva, a soft-spoken woman, challenged the PRI candidate when he came to her door three weeks ago.

"You're here for first and last time," she told him. "Now you want my vote. Now you shake my hand and hug me. But when you've won and go to your office, you won't let me pass through the door."

Contreras promised Eva that her street would be paved if the neighbors supported him. "Trust us," he said. "We won't deceive you."

"We don't believe in the PRI anymore," Eva said. As she spoke, she began to draw a crowd. The neighbors agreed.

SHORTLY AFTER the encounter, Eva received a letter in the mail. It was from the local PRI office. They had named her as a party block leader for her neighborhood. She even received a diploma with her name and official title. In the letter, Contreras thanked her for her membership in the PRI.

Eva was baffled. She had never enrolled in the party. On the contrary, she had voted for the opposition in 1988. "Shouldn't the neighbors vote for their block leader?" she asked Contreras' campaign manager. "No," came the reply. "You're the block leader. We have faith in you." Other letters arrived on PRI stationery. One thanked Eva, for her campaign efforts on behalf of Contreras. Another invited her to a lunch for PRI supporters. Another invited her to a breakfast for PRI supporters. Eva went to neither. Then she received a certificate in the mail that named her PRI representative at a voting booth on election day. Angry that the PRI was coercing her but flattered that it was courting her, Eva decided to accept both positions, as PRI block leader and polling-place monitor.

Another Neza resident who insisted on anonymity "not because I'm afraid," he said, "but because they look for you later," recently watched local and state workers pave his street in one week. He and his neighbors had been pleading with the government for pavement for years and never got a response. When asked if he thought the quick pavement job had to do with the PRI's trying to win votes, he replied, "Of course!"

In the weeks before the August 21 election, Neza residents collected little gifts or *obsequios*, as they are called, from the PRI. T-shirts, hats, jackets, aprons, water buckets, pens, pencils, erasers, notebooks, all with the PRI logo and the name of a PRI candidate emblazoned on them. And in still-abandoned sections of Neza or in other settlements on the outskirts, such as La Virgen, Escondida and Puente Rojo, the government rushed in at the last minute to meet citizens' demands. Tractors plowed gravel into streets that had become muddy pools and in one day, workers erected street lamps.

The party even courted Neza's rebellious rockers by luring them to political speeches with the promise of a concert with the best known bands playing the latest popular music fad, *la quebradita*. Hundreds of disaffected teenagers flocked to the concerts, stomped and swirled for hours and then lis-

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tened sometime in the middle of the event to a local PRI candidate who said that the police should stop beating up young people and that young people should vote for the PRI.

The PRI's courtship, however, had a shadier side. Santos Ramirez, a Neza resident and longtime member of the PRI, was asked by his PRI-affiliated union to attend the closing rally of PRI presidential candidate Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon. "There were many, many people at Zedillo's final campaign rally," said Ramirez, "but that's because they bused us all to the Zócalo (Mexico City's main plaza) and checked our names off on a list. There were also many, many people at the closing rallies of the opposition candidates, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and Diego Fernández de Cevallos. But they wanted to go and made the effort themselves to get to the Zócalo, because they felt inspired."

Other Neza residents, who asked for anonymity, said their PRI-affiliated union leaders threatened to dock two or three days' pay if workers failed to attend PRI campaign rallies. Several merchants who sell in the moveable markets known as *tianguises* said they were told by the PRI-affiliated organization that rents them spaces that if they did not attend PRI rallies they would lose their places in the markets.

Where courtship and outright threats failed, the PRI employed trickery to convince people to attend party rallies. Just over Neza's border in Mexico City, a group of neighbors laughed about a recent attempt by the PRI to lure them to a party campaign function. A man with a megaphone arrived on the block and announced, "Cuauhtémoc has invited you all to attend his final campaign rally." The neighbors thought it was Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas who had invited them. They flooded out of their houses and gathered in the street only to discover that the candidate was Cuauhtémoc Gutierrez, a PRIista. "Cuauhtémoc is not too common a name," said one of the. neighbors, "so all of us thought it was Cárdenas. When we found out it was the PRI, we went back home."

On the day of the vote, a number of residents spoke of PRIistas who tried their best to pressure voters, while working within the new electoral process meant to protect against fraud. The new electoral system selected citizens at random, on the basis of birthdays in November or December, to serve as voting booth officials. Those selected took a two-hour training course, received a guide to study and were assigned positions at the voting booths on the basis of age, level of education and how well they understood the material covered in the course.

In theory, no members of political parties could serve as voting booth officials. Instead, two members of each party could serve as "party representatives." But the party representatives of the PRI seemed unable to hand the reins of the electoral process over to the neutral authorities. Several Neza residents said PRI representatives at the voting booths accosted voters as they entered the private booths to mark "X"s on their ballots. One resident said the PRI representative told voters. "Put your mark here," and pointed to the PRI logo on the ballot.

"The vote is *libre y secreto* (free and secret) as it's supposed to be," said a representative of the opposition Democratic Revolution Party (PRD) on the day of the vote. "But people are not sure what they believe. They're not firm in their ideas. They're easily pressured if an authority tells them to vote a certain way. We need more education," he said. "We're babies in this process of a democratic vote."

In Neza's 23rd voting district, at voting booth 3303, PRI representative Miguel Angel Ibarra Regil found it difficult to watch in silence as political representatives were required to do unless they had a reason to challenge the officials. He directed voters to the ballot boxes and, according to two opposition party representatives, from the PRD and the Partido Autentico de la Revolución Mexicana (PARM), told people to vote for the PRI. The two representatives also accused him of entering booths where people were voting. The PRD representative asked that his name not be used. "It could cause us problems," he said. But it seemed that the very fact that they had complained in public had already invited problems. Two old-style PRIistas in guayabera shirts and dark glasses pointed out the complainers until the two young opposition representatives grew nervous.

Two representatives from the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) also came by voting booth 3303. Both wore special ID tags that identified them as objective observers. But instead of taking note of the PRI's illegal pressure tactics, they took down all the data on this and another journalists' press passes. Later in the day, the PRI representative who acted chummy with Ibarra hugged the observer from the IFE, Esther Curiel Reyna, as if they were old friends. The episode raised doubts about how separate the government was from the PRI during the electoral process.

In District 28 at voting booth 3606, for yet another example, a local PRI candidate, Jose Luis Salcedo, sent invitations to poll workers to a sit-down lunch at a nearby marketplace. When the two PRI representatives at the voting booth, Juliana Tello Bucio and her daughter Piedad, realized that reporters were present, they signaled the man who had come to invite election officials to lunch. The man, Agustín Ugarte, explained in private that Salcedo had asked him to distribute lunch vouchers, but he had run out of them because there were more workers than they had expected. The vouchers were good for lunch at a nearby marketplace, far more appealing than the skimpy sandwiches the IFE had distributed to voting booth officials.

When Juanita Tello was asked if the PRI candidate had invited everyone to lunch, she said, "We always give each other things to eat, we're like a big family." In other words, she did not deny that the PRI invited even the neutral officials to lunch.

Back at voting booth 3303 during the vote count at the end of the day, PRI representative Ibarra seemed to think he was running the show. "Put the ballots here," he said. "Count these first." Some officials followed his directions. During the vote count, he chided them with "Hurry up!" and as an official counted votes for the PRI one by one, Ibarra counted out loud by twos and then laughed, "See, I'm not cheating!" One of the officials finally asked him to show some respect, but that did little to deter Ibarra. In the end, 80 percent of the voters assigned to voting booth 3303 cast their ballots. About 45 percent favored the PRI, 20 percent the Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN) and about 15 percent for the PRD. The results fit the profile of a national tally of 70 percent of all the votes cast in the country.

Most polling place officials seemed to perform their duties without personal or political interest, although a few minor mechanical problems in the voting procedure should be mentioned. In one case, an official had separated ballots from numbered folio pads. When she was told to separate the ballots one by one for each voter she corrected her mistake. At many voting booths only one official instead of two checked voters' electoral cards. And in a few cases where voters refused to let officials mark their thumbs with indelible ink (another means to guard against fraud), they were allowed to vote anyway. In the 25th electoral district at voting booth 2076, just over Neza's border in Mexico City, the indelible ink seemed to vary in strength. In two cases, when it was wiped off voters' thumbs immediately, it left no mark. If wiped off 10 seconds or more after application, however, it did leave an indelible stain.

These problems are minor, however, compared to a glaring and inexplicable oversight in the voting procedure that raises serious doubts about the entire procedure on a national level. The Mexican government announced that all ballots delivered to polls would be attached to numbered folios, which would remain attached to the voting pad at the end of the day. This precaution presumably would prevent the possibility of ballot box stuffing. But the ballots themselves did not have numbers. If voting fraud did occur, perhaps not at the voting booth but later in the process after the ballots had arrived at the district electoral centers or at the IFE itself, then it would be impossible

for authorities to trace the contested ballots back to the folio strips to which they were once attached. In other words, the Mexican electoral process still lacks a mechanism to ensure accountability for each vote cast. In turn, then, anyone who might want to corrupt the electoral procedure would enjoy virtual immunity if only because fraudulent voters could never be traced back to specific voting booths or ballot pads.

All this is not to say, however, that a great number of Mexican citizens did not take great pains to make sure the electoral procedure went as it should. The stamina and commitment of thousands of Mexican polling place officials who worked from as early as 7 a.m. to as late as midnight, without pay and with only a sandwich for lunch, was impressive. The elections of August 21 did not usher in a new regime as Mexicans had both hoped and feared with increasing intensity in the last few months. Instead, the vote granted the PRI another six-year lease on its 65-year reign, which makes it the longest-ruling single party in the world today.

And aside from rumors that a cybernetic fraud on the level of an undetectable microchip would ultimately determine the outcome of the election, the mechanical voting process itself marked a profound change, though one that fails to appear in the voting results. A foundation for an authentic democracy is quietly being laid, despite the PRI's old habits of courtship and threats. Thousands of Mexicans spent their day of rest performing an exhausting civic duty as election officials, for which they were not paid. And voter participation reached 80 percent on the national average, a level we in the United States have not achieved for quite some time. For all that went wrong in the elections, something also finally went right. □

The People Watched

BY LOUIS DUBOSE

Monterrey, Mexico

FORTY INTERNATIONAL election observers were scheduled to arrive at the observation-and-press center set up in the Salon Ancira, behind the Hotel Ancira in downtown Monterrey. Only 10 observers had arrived and been processed by the time our contingent of eight dragged in late on the afternoon before the August 21 election. Before the protracted documentation of our group even began, a couple from Austin and two professors and two students from the St. Mary's School of Law in San Antonio had arrived. All the latest arrivals would be detained for hours before they could begin their drive back to the election observation locations they had selected on the border.

Like the registration process—which included several changes in required paperwork and procedure, as well as a mid-course change in Mexican sites where observers could pick up credentials—the election observation itself was controlled by the Federal Election Institute (IFE), the agency responsible for conducting state and federal elections in Mexico. The IFE's Monterrey center included four computers with huge data banks that election observers could use; nine fax machines; some 30 manual typewriters, each provided with paper and pencils; a slide projector and sound system for an audio-visual orientation program; a labyrinthine convention-floor-style display that used huge color photos and items such as ballots, copies of the revised election code, and a new transparent ballot box, to guide visitors through Mexico's revised election process; and a visitors' lounge equipped with two televisions, one for constant playing of videocassettes on the election process and another on which observers could watch the local news, which included interviews conducted in the same room where observers sat waiting. A dozen IFE employees, mostly young women, served as the election-center staff and on the morning of the election a full-sized, air-conditioned bus was provided for a tour of "15 distinct polling places in Monterrey."

According to a letter received by some of our party several days before we departed for Mexico, and by some several days after we returned to Texas, the other election observation centers were located in Mexico City, Cancún (an odd place to observe an election), Ciudad Juárez, Guadalajara, Tijuana and Tuxtla Gutierrez, the capital of Chiapas. (A package of material that would have been helpful—party office addresses and phone numbers, polling place procedures, names of candidates and election officials—was placed in our hands by a courier at our Monterrey address midday on the Monday after the election.)

The federal government had spent a huge sum of money on this project and so complete was the center where we were detained for four hours on the evening before the election, waiting for final approval from Mexico City, that it seemed the entire process could have been observed without leaving the building. And that might have been what the election commission preferred. Yet no one took advantage of that opportunity. So the data base, which included a wealth of demographic information but no numbers from the controversial 1988 presidential election, went unused. No one watched the slide show. And when the all-day bus trip got underway at 8:30 on the morning of the election, only one of the passenger seats was occupied, by a reporter writing about the foreign monitors, who said he had to see how the tour worked. But he only rode to the first stop, then set out on his own to cover the election independently, at the polls. "If they wanted people to monitor elections, it seems like they would have provided maps of polls in Monterrey," said a young San Antonio schoolteacher who had ridden an overnight bus from the border and arrived at 3 a.m. on election day.

FORTY KILOMETERS EAST of Monterrey, Villa de García is a town once known for the *Grutas de García*, the cool limestone caverns that made the town a regional tourist attraction. But over the past 15 years, foreign industry, like the Mercedes Benz plant, and huge poultry hatcheries and "grow-out" facilities, began to locate in García. The recent arrival of big industry altered the character and demography of the region, making the town's structure exactly opposite of what one would find in an American city. High-population-density workers' colonias encircle Villa de García, while large, older, single-family homes in the town sprawl across plots of land that could accommodate a dozen of the cramped cinder-block-and-tin houses occupied by workers' families on the edge of town. "This town has changed," explained a downtown restaurant owner, "the center of power in elections now is in the *periférico*."

It was in this *periférico*—the periphery of the city where García's new working class lives—that the municipal election would be won or lost; the town itself could only provide the swing vote. In Colonia Zapata, a working-class neighborhood on the edge of the town, voters turned out in large numbers for the 1988 presidential election to vote for Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and the coalition of progressive-left candidates that by this election had become the Democratic Party of the Revolution (PRD). But those

votes, according to PRD officials and an American reporter who has covered several elections here, were never counted. The election, from Carlos Salinas de Gortari for national president at the top of the ballot to Jesus Garza Garza for municipal president at the bottom, was stolen and the candidates of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) prevailed as they had in every election since 1929. Members of the left coalition protested the election fraud and occupied the city hall for 70 days. When they left, they vowed they would never have an election stolen from them again.

On Sunday, voting in Colonia Zapata's primary school and run-down one-room civic activity center seemed routine, except for the huge number of voters (somewhere between 85 and 90 percent of those registered) who turned out. Most queued up and waited for hours to vote early in the morning. If anything was out of the ordinary it was the constant presence of the local, unofficial poll watchers. Visible "*anomalías*," as irregularities such as names left off voting lists and the outright theft of ballot boxes are called, were few and minor. Voters picked up five ballots for five positions and, while standing behind plastic curtains, marked their ballots, then dropped them one by one into five small boxes with plastic windows on their fronts—the transparent ballot boxes Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas demanded and the government denied for the last presidential election, which allow poll watchers to verify that no pri-stuffed boxes are delivered to polling places.

There were scattered complaints from voters who showed up at the polls to find that although they had their photo-credentials in hand, their names did not appear on the authorized list of voters. And at polling places in the town and in the workers' colonias, the huge election banners of the conservative National Action Party (PAN) were hanging outside polls, where election propaganda was prohibited, according to an IFE official who pointed out the banners.

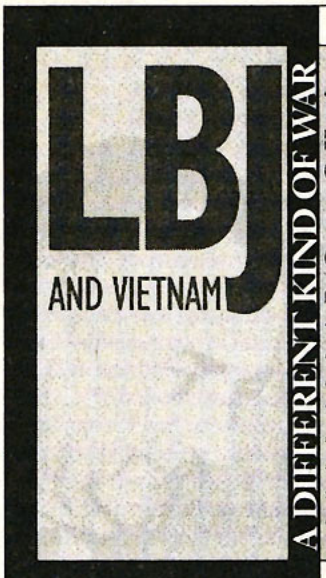
Fuerte es el Silencio is the title of one collection of Elena Poniatowska's essays, which comprise part of her biography of Mexico City. The title transliterates into *Strong is the Silence*, but is deserving of a more idiomatic translation. In Colonia Zapata, the people—*la raza*—stood strong and in silence. And they watched. They voted—then watched the long lines in the morning, and watched the dueling videocameras that also watched, and watched as the government notary arrived to investigate election anomalies. And when no one was left to vote, the people still watched, standing in the sun, some under parasols, some leaning against walls and some standing, arms folded and silent, under the hot Mexican sun.

After the polls closed and as the count dragged on, the people resolutely stood by and continued to watch, moving closer to the windows of the polling place while more people arrived to stand and sit on walls, cars, roofs, curbs and sidewalks—and watch. At the small civic center in Colonia Zapata, where 1,143 were registered to vote, we counted approximately 500 women, men and children surrounding the building two hours after the polls closed, and as we walked in a circle, counting, more people continued to arrive behind us. *"No nos van a robar."* (They are not going to steal from us), said an adolescent who, with 10 companions, spent four hours atop a six-foot-high cinderblock wall.

"In the last election, this town voted for Cárdenas and they stole the election," said Juan Pablo Treviño, an old man who lives on an *ejido,* a communal farm, within the municipality of García. "We have worked six years and planted seeds. Now, we're going to harvest the seeds." He would not go home until he saw the posting of the final tally and watched the ballot boxes loaded into the election officials' car. *"Aquí me quedo hasta que se salgan con los resultados."* I'm staying here until they come out with the results, he said.

And with hundreds of others, he did, waiting hours, even after the tally was leaked and still no ballot boxes emerged, because, the *Alianza Cívica* observer inside said, there was a discrepancy of several votes between the number of votes cast and the final tallies divided among the five columns. Finally, five hours after the polls closed, and after several false starts, the doors opened and the crowd, as if to ensure that no sleight of hand would occur within the 12 feet between the doors of the polling place and the private station wagon leased for one day by the federal election committee, closed in on officials carrying the ballot boxes. And in an instant as quick as the day was long, they were gone, jumping curbs and pushing through the crowd—a police escort in a pickup truck, the leased station wagon and a Ford F-100 carrying several PRD escorts.

Results were posted, and as Juan Manuel Treviño predicted, PRD presidential candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas carried the precinct, but not by nearly as large a margin as did Eduardo Arguijo, the PRD candidate for municipal president. It would be midday Monday before the votes were in and Treviño would learn that Eduardo Arguijo had lost the election. On Monday night, members of the PRD who swore they would never stand by and watch as another election was stolen, marched on the municipal palace. Four days after the election, the results were still being contested. □



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The Superiority of Trade Unions Over Company "Unions"

By William Green

Address under the auspices
of the Trades and Labor Assembly,
Schenectady, New York, April 13, 1926

There is deep significance in a name and in the terms which people apply to movements and organizations composed of different groups and classes of society. A true name agrees with the object and purpose of an endeavor and in a brief way apprises the people of the value and meaning of the enterprise. Through all the ages men have realized reliance can be placed upon a name. They may not definitely know or understand the principles of an organization; they may not be familiar with all its details or the manner of its working, but they learn to know much about it through the constant use of its name and the association of its name with its activities, accomplishments and achievements.

We can find no more striking example of this thought than that found in a comparison of the title, "Trade Unions," with the title, "Company Unions." Each is understood to mean organization and association and they both explain the chief characteristic governing the form of organization.

The English language contains no word which conveys the idea of brotherhood, fraternity and solidarity with greater force than the word "Union." Through its long continued use it has come to imply strength and to suggest power. It is a word which makes a fascinating appeal to those who are inspired by a common purpose and a common ideal. It stirs the emotions and stimulates the imagination. No wonder the word "Union" was selected by pioneers and patriots in the furtherance of worthy projects and great social undertakings.

The term "Company Union" designates a form of organization among working men and women. It is of recent origin because this kind of organization had its beginning a few years ago, and seemed to have its inception in the minds of owners of manufacturing establishments and managers of great corporations. It is a true name and carries within it the history of the movement. Just as the movement is directly traceable to ownership sources so is the name of the movement. It is "company" in fact, "company" in name, "company" in control and "company" in purpose. It is an abuse of the word "Union" to use it in this instance. It is not given its true meaning but instead it receives a distorted and diverted application. It does not signify strength, for strength cannot be found in Company Unions. Company Unions are artificial in origin, growth and developments because they lack the elements of fraternity, brotherhood and mutuality of interest. They do not bear the stamp of sincerity or realism and there is no one who can place that stamp upon them. They are impermanent, transitory and experimental. The strength of union is belied when the word is incorporated in the title "Company Union."

The term "Trade Union" combines two words of equal force and equal intent. These words are simple, direct and understandable. They have been associated with the organization of working men and women for many years. The average person understands the true meaning of the words "Trade Union." There can be no distortion, equivocation or ambiguity in the use of the words "Trade Union." The trade union is composed of working people following a certain trade or calling. Such workers band themselves together in an organization for mutual helpfulness and for the achievement of a common purpose. Their action in this is voluntary and springs from an inherent desire to associate themselves with their fellow workers. They have embodied the principles of fraternity, brotherhood and mutuality of interest in their creed and they seek to foster and preserve the powerful human influence which inspire effort. A worker's trade is his pride and his life-interest. He gives to it his skill, his genius and his strength. It brings to him his food, his clothing and his shelter. It demands service of the brain, the heart and the hand and in return it bestows the comfort and contentment of the industrial age. The life of the worker is inseparably associated with his trade and there are many instances on record where families for generations have followed the same trade and calling.

Where could be found a stronger bond of fellowship? There is no stronger chain by which the lives and purposes of human beings can be linked and bound together. The word "Union" in this sense is glorified and its true meaning is revealed. Its strength is made manifold. Its power to thrill and inspire the worker is measured only by the confines of his heart. His breast swells with exaltation when he realizes that he has associated himself with his fellow men in an organized effort to advance their spiritual and material interests. That is what the term "Trade Union" means to a member of a trade union and to those who comprehend its true import.

This exposition of interesting facts would be incomplete if we failed to ascertain and examine the distinguishing differences which mark the line between company unions and trade unions. These differences are essential, emphatic and apparent. They are differences in origin, administration, character and functional processes.

First, let us consider the origin of company unions as compared with the origin of trade unions. It is a fact that employers originated and constructed company unions and presented to their employes a ready-made form of organization. Through the employment of so-called industrial experts they prepared and drafted the laws and rules which were to govern in the establishment of the company union. This phase of organization was all worked out, even to the slightest detail. The workers were given no opportunity to voice their sentiments or ideas regarding the matter but instead were given to understand that they must accept this form of organization without question. In direct contrast to this plan of operation the trade union was originated and formed by the workers themselves. Moved by feelings of discontent and actuated by a desire and a determination to correct the wrongs from which they suffered, they joined forces with each other and in a steady-going, consistent way began their task. They met with success and their success inspired those who had been indifferent to their own interests to unite with them. The trade union was made by the workers. The company union was made by the employers for the workers.

There has always been a marked difference between

that which is genuine and that which is false; between that which is real and that which is unreal. People are frequently told that substitutes are just as good as that which is real and true. I have never found in all my life's experiences where a substitute was as good as the original. A substitute in the form of a company union cannot compare or cannot take the place of bona fide trade unions.

Another outstanding difference is in administration. Company unions are autocratic while trade unions are democratic. The control of company unions naturally rests with those who build and govern them. Many employers not only demand and exercise automatic control over industry, but through company unions they exercise autocratic control over those employed in industry. This could not be accomplished if the workers organized into independent trade unions. In exercising control over company unions employers accomplish a double purpose. They satisfy the instinct of the workers to organize and they completely dominate and control the company union with which the workers are identified. These facts do not apply to the administration of trade unions. Democracy is practiced by the membership of trade unions and individual members participate in the establishment of the trade union, in the selection of its officers and in the formulation and adoption of its policies and forms of procedure. The affairs of a trade union are administered by those who compose its membership. The trade union takes an active interest in civic, educational, political and social affairs and in expressing its judgment and opinion upon matters of public interest it reflects the uninfluenced will of the majority of the membership.

Company unions are local in character whereas trade unions are national and international. Each employer who has set up a company union within his manufacturing plant, in his mines or on his transportation lines has his own personally controlled company union. There is no relationship or cooperation between company unions in different manufacturing plants. Each company union is a single company unit and stands alone, separate and apart from other company unions. This is not true of trade unions. Under the form of organization established by the American Federation of Labor a relationship, economic and fraternal, has been developed and perfected. All subordinate units of the trade union movement are directly associated and affiliated with all other units of the same craft and calling in what is commonly known as national and international unions. In turn these national and international unions with their subordinate units, are affiliated in one compact, cooperating movement called the American Federation of Labor. The most obscure and humble member of a trade union becomes a component part of the American Federation of Labor and, in accordance with its democratic policies and principles, has a voice and a vote upon all questions affecting the welfare and common interest of the organized labor movement.

Can anyone deny that the trade union, national and international in scope and influence, composed of thousands of powerful units which are made up of millions of members—all loyal to the cause, all striving together for a common goal, all seeking the same objective—is more effective, serviceable and powerful than a company union which is local in character and influence, controlled and directed by a corporation and limited in its activities by the prescribed rules set up by an industrial expert employed by the corporation? The answer to this question is found in the strength, power and influence of the American Federation of Labor.

Another distinguishing difference is shown in the limitations placed upon the members of company unions in the selection of their officers and advocates. They are restricted in their choice of officers and spokesmen to those who are employed by the corporation owning the industry. The trade unions, through affiliation with other trade unions of their craft and calling, have a wider field from which to select their officers and advocates, clothed with the responsibility of representing them in wage negotiations and before legislative assemblies. One of the primary aims of trade unions is to secure the passage of workmen's compensation legislation and other social justice measures which mean much to the happiness, welfare and prosperity of the workers. Because of this fact, it is highly important that laboring men and women be permitted to select able competent representatives. They claim the right to exercise the same authority in the selection of their officers as a client exercises in the selection of an attorney. Who dares deny to laboring men the exercise of such a fundamental American right? When workmen's compensation legislation and other measures of vital importance to labor and laboring men and women are pending before legislatures, who is it that speaks for labor and pleads the laborers' cause? Is it the representative of company unions? No! It is officers and spokesmen of the bona fide, independent, democratic trade unions, and they speak not only for the members of the organized labor movement but also for all who toil, whether they are in company unions or in the ranks of those unfortunate workers who have been denied the right to become organized into trade unions.

The record of the American Federation of Labor, in promoting the economic and industrial interests of the wage earners upon the American continent, is one of service and achievement. It has never failed the membership of organized labor nor has it faltered when confronted with tremendous difficulties and serious problems. It has been tested and tried in adversity and in prosperity. It has made steady and substantial progress ever since its formation more than fifty years ago. It is everlasting. It cannot be destroyed. It is the training school for working men and women who have been denied the opportunity to secure an academic education. The officers, advocates and spokesmen of organized labor are those who have worked at their trade, who from experience and service know the problems, the heartbeats and the hopes of the individual worker of their trade. They are selected by their fellow workers and no one who has not come from the ranks of organized labor is eligible to serve as an officer and representative of organized labor. All such representatives must be members of organized labor.

It is into this democratic, wholesome, efficient organization men and women who work for wages are invited. They are asked to become members of the great group of American working men and women. Organized labor extends a call to those who are unorganized and to those who have isolated themselves by joining company unions. Our calls ask you to come with us, to work with us and to share with us in the enjoyment and blessings which come through concentrated, constructive, organized effort. We want you as a part of the organized labor movement.

We earnestly desire the sympathy, the support and the goodwill of the liberty-loving, fair-minded, American citizens. Our work is difficult and our task is great. Our problems are many and complex but if in all our labors and in all our service we are inspired by the consciousness of your understanding and interest we cannot fail. We will succeed.

She Stoops to Conquer

BY JAMES CULLEN

CLAYTIE AND THE LADY*: *Ann Richards, Gender and Politics in Texas.
By Sue Tolleson-Rinehart and Jeanie R. Stanley.
190 pp. Austin: University of Texas Press. $25 cloth, $12.95 paper.

IT HARDLY SEEMS like four years since Clayton Williams, the colorful rancher-businessman and Republican governor-designate, was advising us to "relax and enjoy it" and sparking debates on who gets serviced by whom in international cultural exchanges and how to avoid tax liability on your millions.

As we all know, Ann Richards caught up with the cowboy in the last few days of the 1990 campaign to become a national symbol of the neoliberal New Democrats. Sue Tolleson-Rinehart, a professor of political science at Texas Tech University, and Jeanie R. Stanley, director of research and legal support in the office of the Texas Attorney General, have produced a volume on Richards, the 1990 race for governor and the effect that campaign has had on gender and politics in Texas and across the nation.

Claytie and the Lady is promoted as the first in-depth look at how gender affected the 1990 governor's race. It places the campaign in cultural and historical context and although the narrative at times is hard to follow, there is enough poll data, recapitulation of the campaign and interviews with campaign participants and observers to gladden the hearts of political junkies, and some valuable historical insights. The authors interviewed many of the principals on both sides, although, curiously, Williams was not heard from.

The book traces the state's feminist politics back to the women's suffrage movement in the early 1900s, an era that the authors pointedly note has gotten short shrift in some of the male-generated Texas history texts. It is useful to recall that after failing in attempts to get a two-thirds majority in the Legislature to propose a state Constitutional amendment, the suffragettes got their chance in 1917 with the impeachment of Jim Ferguson, who had been an "implacable foe" of women's suffrage. His successor, Lieut. Gov. Bill Hobby Sr., supported a bill to allow women to vote in the 1918 party primaries, which required only a simple majority to accomplish.

Women voters, organized as the Women's Joint Legislative Council but dubbed the "Petticoat Lobby" by patronizing legislators, not only contributed in 1918 to the election of Hobby as governor in his own right, but also elected feminist Annie Webb Blanton as State Superintendent of Public Instruction. The new Legislature in 1919 ratified the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which made women full, voting citizens at last (as long as they were white).

A confusing Democratic primary in 1924 produced a runoff between Miriam Ferguson, whom Jim Ferguson had put up to run in his stead, and Judge Felix Robertson, a Ku Klux Klan candidate. Progressive and women's forces held their noses and chose "Ma" as the lesser of two evils, but two years later the Petticoat Lobby contributed to the election of progressive Attorney General Dan Moody as governor in 1926 and saw a mass of progressive educational and social welfare policy through the Legislature during the next decade.

The years before World War II were marked by heady progressivism, highlighted in Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, but after the war Texas reverted to conservatism shaped by racism, oil and big money. Ann Richards, growing up in the 1950s, was influenced by the culture's demand for perfect wives and mothers. But she also was raised to take a broad citizenship role and she engaged the political system first on the question of racial and social justice.

With husband Dave Richards, a labor and civil rights lawyer, she ran a progressive house in the conservative bastion of Dallas, where she became active in progressive Democratic politics and with the United Farm Workers. In 1969, the Richardses moved to Austin, where in 1971 she was asked to manage Sarah Weddington's campaign for the Legislature. In 1976 she became a player, rather than a woman serving other players, when she ran for Travis County commissioner after Dave turned down the race.

Friends such as Jane Hickie note that Ann Richards showed her touch for practical politics in those races. She never shirked from negative campaigning, recognizing that she would have to identify and exploit her opponent's weakness if she were to unseat a well-known incumbent. And despite her commitment to social justice, she remained an extremely practical and goal-directed person. She won the Travis County race and became known in state politics. Hickie also recalled that Richards was uncomfortable with feminist organizations at first, but came to identify more with women's causes as her political career progressed.

Richards' recovery from alcoholism in the early 1980s encouraged her independence. She was asked to run for Treasurer in 1982 when Democratic incumbent, Warren Harding, was headed for indictment, and she won with 61.4 percent of the vote, to become the first woman elected statewide since Ma Ferguson's comeback in 1932. In 1984, Ann and Dave were divorced. "By the end of the 1980s, she was uniquely prepared to make the leap into a gubernatorial campaign," the authors state.

During the campaign for governor, Richards was faced with the challenge of balancing her feminine side with the toughness demanded of a chief executive. Richards showed she was tough, although she was unprepared for the animosity in the Democratic primary. Still, she gave as good as she got, accusing Mark White of profiting from his office when he was governor and finishing off Jim Mattox, the liberal attorney general, in an especially bitter runoff. Then she started the general election campaign 24 points behind Williams and she was still double digits behind at Labor Day. But Democratic campaign consultant George Shipley said Richards drew strength from the primary bashing and her campaign concentrated on pulling Williams out from behind his commercials.

Richards was criticized by some for her reluctance to emphasize women's issues, but campaign strategists Kirk Adams and Mary Beth Rogers explained that was deliberate, as they did not want to preach to the choir at the expense of reaching out to other groups.

In mid-September the momentum in the campaign began to change. The Richards campaign picked up on insurance reform as Williams' ClayDesta National Bank began

to come under investigation for automobile insurance irregularities. Defending himself and his bank against charges of wrongdoing, he said of his opponent that he would "head and hoof her and drag her through the dirt." When Richards claimed she was closing the gap, he replied, "I hope she didn't go back to drinking again." And, with a TV crew in tow, he confronted Richards, called her a liar and made a point of refusing to shake hands with her. That episode offended many of his traditional supporters. Then, as the campaign wound to a close, he was unable to explain a constitutional amendment, on which he already had cast an early ballot, that would weaken the governor's appointive powers. When, after refusing to disclose his income tax returns, the multimillionaire finally admitted he had paid no taxes in 1986, Richards had pulled nearly even in the polls.

By election day, women in both parties had turned overwhelmingly to Richards while Williams' support among men had slipped and his support among women had seriously eroded. Still, Richards only won by 2.5 percentage points.

"There is almost universal agreement that if Williams had been a more modern figure, he could have won," the authors write. Perhaps, if he had been a more modern figure, he would have had a tougher time in the Republican primary. "The 'ranch foreman' image of leadership is gone now; it was unavailable to Williams, although he did not know it. Richards, on the other hand, managed to project 'frontierswoman' qualities of strength and a populism that, in their way, also drew on Texas myths, while appearing very modern indeed," the authors write. "Richards said she had told her children, 'You're not going to recognize your mother by the time they get through with me.' ... In the end, Richards was tough enough."

The authors, who appear to be admirers of Richards, note that many progressives, reformers and even feminists are disappointed with Richards because, "after all, an 'authentic liberal' had been elected at last, but the revolution did not come, and [they are] disappointed because she *does* compromise and 'deal,' and because she is highly skilled at using her power within the existing rules of the game." The authors suggest that old gender-role stereotypes, particularly in matters of ethics, clash with new political roles for women, as if ethics were the resort of those who are out of power. They conclude: "And 'real world' politics, for a Governor with comparatively weak formal powers, means that almost always, less will be accomplished than might have been."

That might as well be the New Democrats' credo, but it won't go down in history along with "Remember the Alamo!" and "Governor Williams? Think About It!" as a great battle cry. □

Life After Video

BY STEVEN G. KELLMAN

RED ROCK WEST
Directed by John Dahl

ALL IT TAKES to write a novel is pencil, paper and perseverance.

In order to make a movie, you also need money—huge wads of it. But completed books and films alike demand marketing and distribution, and those require capital. Because the budget to get a movie shown can sometimes equal the one to get it made, many movies never brighten the screen of any theater. Faced with a finished product that seems unlikely to recoup their investment through ticket sales, companies sometimes choose to cut their losses by immediately cutting a deal for video, cable and foreign rights. You do not get to see some of the most inventive movies by going to the movies.

Like *Repo Man*, another sleeper that was awakened from video slumber by the fairy's kiss of cash, *Red Rock West* is destined to become a legend of film distribution. Produced in 1993 for about $7.5 million, it was a favorite of viewers at last year's Toronto Film Festival. However, because it lacked a bankable star and was difficult to categorize except as "cowboy noir," *Red Rock West* languished for lack of domestic exhibition. It was shown, successfully, in Britain, Canada, France and Germany but was sold to HBO and video without any commercial screenings in the United States.

Bill Banning, a northern California theater owner, was extremely impressed by *Red Rock West* when he saw it in Toronto and determined to bring it to his Roxie Theater in San Francisco. After strenuous efforts to secure the rights, he did, and the film went on to set box office records for his theater. Word spread, and so did prints of the film, to New York, Los Angeles and points between. It is now, belatedly, coming to theaters almost everywhere. The fate of this splendid piece of work either vindicates the marketplace—excellence eventually prevails—or else it illustrates how utterly capricious is commercial success.

Michael Williams (Nicholas Cage) is not a victor of capitalist conflict. He has barely survived the martial kind; a game leg is the abiding souvenir of service in Beirut with the U.S. Marines. In the opening frames of *Red Rock West*, Michael awakens by the side of Highway 487 in Wyoming after spending the night inside his vintage Cadillac instead of a motel he cannot afford. Desperation has driven him 1,200 miles, from Odessa, Texas, where the wells no longer flow, to a lucrative gig at an oil rig in the Equality State. A leatherneck buddy had more or less promised Michael the roughneck work, but the foreman refuses to hire him when Michael admits to having a bad leg. His reply, "Maybe I'll rob a bank," when asked what he intends to do now seems mere flippancy, since Michael seems too decent and inept for a career in crime. Down on luck and cash, he drives to nearby Red Rock, population 1,523.

On the way, he stops at a dilapidated gas station that appears to be vacant. Before the owner abruptly appears, Michael is sorely tempted by a pile of unattended $20 bills. Impressed with his own virtue and shrewdness, Michael is vulnerable to the next, more compelling, temptation. Hoping to find work, he goes into a tavern in Red Rock, but the bartender, seeing his Texas license plates, mistakes him for someone else. "You're Lyle from Dallas?" asks Wayne Brown (J.T. Walsh). Thinking that the misunderstanding could lead to a job, Michael plays along, but Wayne is soon handing him a $5,000 down payment to murder his beautiful, adulterous wife.

AN ITINERANT TEXAN, Michael of course carries a gun, but he is no killer. He informs Suzanne (Lara Flynn Boyle) of her husband's homicidal scheme, and, when she offers him $10,000 to kill Wayne instead, Michael takes her money, too, and runs. Before he leaves Red Rock, Michael sends a conscientious letter to the local sheriff: "Wayne Brown may have hired a killer to murder his wife. She may have done the same. Please talk to them before someone gets hurt." But, in addition to being a bartender, Wayne Brown *is* the sheriff. And, in his haste to leave Red Rock, Michael gets into a traffic accident that obliges him to return. Will he ever get out of Red Rock, with the blood money or even just his life, especially after the real Lyle, played by Dennis Hopper with his patented manic intensity, arrives?

Red Rock West abounds with ingenious twists in its taut, sly plot. Like the desolate,

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rocky landscape in which it is set, the editing is flawlessly lapidary. Cage, Hopper, Boyle and Walsh dance a masterly quadrille of mutual deceit. Most recently, in the sweet cinematic fantasy *It Could Happen to You*, Cage starred as a saintly New York City cop whose bounty from the state lottery is commensurate with his heart of gold. But his hardluck oil roughneck in *Red Rock West* is a more ordinary character etched out through an extraordinary performance.

Michael is not exceptionally intelligent, courageous or virtuous, and much of the film confronts this West Texas Everyman with an obstacle course of ethical dilemmas and physical challenges. It is an eventful 48 hours, within which the viewer roots for him to high-tail it out of Red Rock, the town whose boundary sign, like Sisyphus's peak, keeps beckoning. Director John Dahl, who wrote the screenplay with his younger brother Rick, balances suspense with drollery, keeps the intensity from going over the top.

Red Rock West is John Dahl's second feature, following his 1988 *Kill Me Again* , which starred Val Kilmer, Joanne Whalley Kilmer and Michael Madsen and received limited release. His third feature, *The Last Seduction*, has already aired on HBO, while a fourth, *Meltdown* , about trouble at a nuclear power plant, is in production.

Red Rock West might recall *Blood Simple*, the debut feature of two other talented brothers, Joel and Ethan Coen, except that its vision of human malice and blunder is more severe, less leavened by caricature. After the gaudy pastels of the summer's mass entertainments, black is beautiful. Dahl's clever color production offers gritty homage to noir classics like *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and *Double Indemnity*. While it provides vivid proof that murder will out, it also offers hope that sometimes intricate art will, too. □

On Labor Day, Are You Traveling to the Davis Mountains, McDonald Observatory, or the Big Bend?

Stay overnight at beautiful Fort McKavett!

Planning a trip out west this summer? Take a break at beautiful, historic Fort McKavett, just 24 miles north of I-10 at exit 442 (on your official Texas Highway map, coordinates O-13). Bunk for a night in one of our historic buildings, or camp out and count stars 'til you fall asleep under crystal clear West Texas skies.

Fort McKavett, located at the headwaters of the San Saba River, is three hours from Austin, and three hours from San Antonio, and a perfect place to stop and rest (especially if you get away from home later than planned). With some advance notice we can even have a little supper ready for you!

During the day, take time to visit one of the best restored "Buffalo Soldier" era forts in the country. We have a great museum and bookstore, and lots of hiking options available on our 80-acre site. Prices start at $15.00 per person for overnight accommodations; families are welcome. For reservations, call 1/800 RURAL TX or 512/458-1016.

No smoking or alcoholic beverages allowed on the premises; however the Fort McKavett Trading Post is located 1/4 mile from the Fort and they permit both smoking and drinking. Fort McKavett Historic Site is operated under contract with Texas Parks and Wildlife by Texas Rural Communities, a non-profit corporation, through the "Partnership in Parks" program. The Fort accepts most major credit cards.

Continued from pg. 24

age heading into the elections) the GOP ignored the continued erosion of the First, the Fourth, the Fifth, the Sixth and the Eighth amendments. After the Democratic leaders, who are only a little more attentive to the Bill of Rights, agreed to trim some of the prevention programs, Congress finally approved a $30 billion crime bill that, in the words of the American Civil Liberties Union, "authorizes unparalleled, mammoth resources for increased prison construction, non-rehabilitative punishment and police," as well as "the largest expansion of the death penalty in modern times." The conference committee kicked out the Racial Justice Act but kept such provisions as mandatory life sentences for "three strikes"; trial of 13-year-olds as adults in federal court; enhanced penalties for gang members; limits on prisoners' appeals to federal courts to challenge the constitutionality of their conditions of confinement and elimination of Pell grants to offer higher education opportunities for prisoners. The ACLU noted that the federal prison population has more than tripled since 1980; the increase reflects not a rise in crime, the civil liberties group said, but more stringent sentencing policies and racial bias in the system where 48 percent of the prisoners are black—four times their proportion in the general population. "It will be impossible to build enough prisons to lock up the massive numbers of people slated for incarceration by the crime bill," the ACLU warned.

✔ **LAW & ORDERS.** In what was termed a victory for affirmative action, U.S. District Judge Sam Sparks ruled Aug. 19 that the University of Texas at Austin unconstitutionally discriminated against four white law school applicants but he upheld the remedial purpose of the school's affirmative action program. He found no injury was done to the applicants because they never showed they would have been admitted if the school had not considered minority applicants separately from white applicants. Sparks awarded each of the four plaintiffs $1 and said they are entitled to reapply for the 1995-96 school year. □

Wet Dreams

BY CHAR MILLER

San Antonio

THIS SUMMER, San Antonians have had water on the brain.

I don't mean in the deadly, physiological sense, nor, alas, in its more delightful meteorological context; we haven't, had a significant downpour in some time. Rather, the city once again has been fixated on the *politics* of water, a fixation that always bubbles forth during the annual dry season.

This year, however, the obsession reached new heights, as the River City faced a mid-August vote on the construction of the Applewhite Reservoir. On August 13, voters rejected the city-proposed reservoir by a substantial margin, 55 percent to 45 percent, a margin wider than in the contentious 1991 vote on the same project. As Applewhite's detractors chanted, "No means No!"

Or does it? Although the summer-long debate had been intense, and its outcome in doubt until the last minute, the final result was of little consequence. Neither Applewhite's supporters nor its opponents bothered to address the most significant issue that San Antonio's unquenchable thirst poses—how to control that thirst.

The Applewhite project offered little hope in this regard. First proposed in the 1960s, and fought over ever since, it was most recently designed to capture "gray water," the non-potable stuff that would then be exchanged with cities downstream for some of their rights to Canyon Lake's water harvest. This was supposed to ease San Antonio's hitherto exclusive reliance on the Edwards Aquifer and help address rulings in a lawsuit the Sierra Club has filed to defend threatened species such as the Fountain Darter and San Marcos Salamander that live within the Edwards' diminished springs. In South Texas, we're all dying for water.

Which is probably why the debate over Applewhite boiled over. Its most visible proponents were members of the civic, commercial and political elite, and they poured $900,000 into a media blitz to flog their case. Applewhite, a necessary supplement to dwindling supplies of "white gold," was an essential ingredient for an expanding economy. What was good for business was good for the commonweal. Without the reservoir, the city's future was decidedly bleak.

To accept that trickle-down argument, the reservoir's cash-poor opponents loudly asserted, was to capitulate to those whose narrow commitment to the community's future began and ended with the bottom line—theirs. Besides, they argued, the aquifer is probably limitless and the Sierra Club lawsuit could have been finessed by augmenting the springs. If San Antonians had bought into Applewhite, they would have been sold down the river.

THOSE WERE SOME of the highlights of the debate, but it was a long summer for those poor souls who tried faithfully to divine each permutation in argument and decipher each shift in tone and posture. There was some comic relief, such as the CEO of a local communications company, who was a firm supporter of the reservoir, and who went on air to skewer one of his station's popular talk show hosts for his unremitting hostility to the project. The boss then turned around and defended that employee's right to dissent. It was small pleasures such as this, like a welcome bit of shade, that enabled us to endure the scorching heat.

Yet the debate was cooked. Each side, for all their differences, in fact hawked visions that shared one critical value: San Antonio's salvation lay in the maintenance of an endless stream of inexpensive water. Those who appeared to have been at polar opposites were linked to a calculation that has determined the city's growth and development strategies for the past half-century.

That calculus is central to the city's sense of self, and the city has used it to market itself to itself—and to the outside world in an attempt to attract more jobs and new industry. At the heart of this packaging lies two commodities: a lower cost of living (read: cheap labor) and low-cost natural resources (read: cheap water). The two have had a symbiotic relationship in an economy driven largely by tourism and military spending. Beginning in the 1930s with the creation of the fabled Riverwalk, a tourist trap that snakes through the central core, San Antonio has been built upon the weave of work and water. This has been as true for the older downtown, where hotels line the river's banks, as it has been for the newer, intense development along the far-flung suburban frontier, a once-open landscape where one subdivision after another share space and city utilities with vast theme parks such as Fiesta Texas and Sea World, biotechnological and computer corporations and large air bases. Without low wages and ample water, none of these could have been constructed.

This construct of homes, work and entertainment, and its major contribution to the city's increasing water problems, never were discussed in the Applewhite debate. To have done so would have compelled each group to confront the issue of conservation. Anti-Applewhite forces saw little merit in mandated pumping limits, for example, believing instead that the development of recharge dams, designed to channel runoff back into the aquifer, was all that was necessary. Applewhite supporters avoided the use of the word "conservation." It appears but once in the text of the City of San Antonio's "2050 Water Plan," which was an attempt to meet the community's ever-expanding water needs without raising costs.

So neither group was willing to promote and mandate such effective innovations as low-flush toilets and reduced-flow shower heads, to demand restrictions in the number of building permits, or to advocate rigorous, compulsory controls on landscape maintenance in a city where more than 35 percent of all water pumped is sprayed onto unnaturally green lawns. It will be some time, then, before San Antonio's restaurants will display a sign such as I saw in a cafe in drought-stricken California, where customers were notified that dishwasher discharge was being used to flush the toilets, conserving more than two million gallons a year. We value cheap water too much.

It would be nice, now that Applewhite is dead, if the community would come to its senses, recognize the unavoidable clash between population growth and limited resources, and act with dispatch to control both. But that's not likely to happen when the two sides in this water fight offer no credible alternatives to the other's illusions. That leaves us right where we've always been—praying for rain. □

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POLITICAL INTELLIGENCE

✔ **ROBES RAP REPS.** Congressional districts with black and Hispanic majorities amount to "racial apartheid"? That's what three white federal judges in Houston—all Republican appointees—ruled in a lawsuit brought by Republicans. The judges compared the state's Congressional district maps to a Modigliani painting and invoked the memory of Martin Luther King Jr. as they ordered the state to come up with new districts that don't zig zag so much (and, as a practical matter, do not force white Republicans to be represented by minority Democrats). The judges acknowledged that white people consistently have demonstrated they would rather not vote for black or Hispanic candidates and in most parts of the state black and Hispanic Texans are so diluted they have no choice but to vote for white candidates. That is "unfortunate," the judges averred, but it makes no difference. The U.S. Supreme Court is expected to allow the Congressional districts to stand for this November's elections, as it did in a similar case in Louisiana, but unless Congress acts next year to uphold minority districts or allow for alternatives such as proportional representation [see "Shake up Congress," *TO* 7/22/94], black and Hispanic voters in Dallas and Houston once again may find themselves without representation.

✔ **GREEN POLLS.** Landowners seeking to protect private property rights are being misled by large industries that are trying to create the appearance of a grassroots movement to support their right to pollute, statewide environmental and consumer organizations warned: Seeking to counter the property rights movement, whose leaders seek to undermine pollution controls, spokesmen for the Environmental Defense Fund, the National Audubon Society, Public Citizen, the Sierra Club and the National Wildlife Federation noted in a press conference that polls show support for environmental protection and habitat preservation for endangered species. "To read many news media reports, you would think that people no longer care about the environment," said the Sierra Club's Ken Kramer, but a recent Roper poll showed 76 percent of Americans think that laws fighting water pollution have not gone far enough and 51 percent of Americans think that regulations have not gone far enough in protecting endangered species. Concern over a potential backlash by property owners recently caused Gov. Ann Richards to reverse her support for federal designation of five Texas waterways as outstanding natural resources.

✔ **WHO'S LAUGHING?** A joke about roughing up a superior escalated into the malicious prosecution of two government workers, U.S. District Judge Eldon B. Mahon ruled in Fort Worth. Mahon found that the barroom threat was made in jest but a federal investigator was so intent on prosecuting the two men, who also were officials with a government employees' union, that he ignored evidence and he lied under oath. The judge also found that the federal prosecutor did not properly check the investigator's claims, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* reported Aug. 23. Harry Dawson, a real estate specialist and president of the union local that represents General Services Administration employees, played along at a Fort Worth bar in 1989 when a fellow worker complained that "something ought to be done" about the personnel director. When the other employee informed on Dawson the next day, GSA investigator Brian Murphy pursued a theory that the threat was serious despite the informant's lack of credibility and the supervisor's view that the discussion was a joke. Murphy was unable to make a case based on the threat allegation, but he got Dawson and Derrell Chandler indicted on charges of perjury and obstruction of justice based on a selective reading of grand jury transcripts, the judge concluded. In 1990, after an 11-day trial, a jury took 10 minutes to acquit the two men of the charges. Mahon awarded the men $151,000.

✔ **CRIMINAL INTENT.** Republican senators tried to stop the federal anti-crime bill, albeit for all the wrong reasons. In their zeal to protect the Second Amendment right to carry assault weapons (and deny Democrats credit for a crime-fighting pack-

Continued on pg. 22

Death Sentence Enthusiasm

TEXAS AGAIN got considerable notice in Amnesty International's recently published annual report. The London-based organization devoted three pages to the United States out of its 352-page worldwide report on human rights concerns during the 1993 calendar year. Texas earned a prominent place because of its enthusiastic application of the death penalty. Among the 17 people Texas executed last year (nearly half the nation's total of 38), AI noted, were Curtis Harris and Ruben Cantu, both of whom were 17 years of age at the time of their crimes. AI noted that international standards prohibit execution of people under 18 at the time of the crime. It also noted that Cantu's attorney had never done a death penalty case and Harris, who was black, was tried before an all-white jury after the prosecutor used peremptory challenges to remove potential black jurors. Harris was killed just days after the U.S. Supreme Court rejected an appeal of a Texas law that did not allow a defendant's youth to be considered as a mitigating factor. The law was changed in 1991, after Curtis had been sentenced.

AI also expressed concern over evidence of racial disparities in the imposition of the death sentence in Texas, noting that seven of the eight juvenile offenders on the state's death row at year's end were black or Latino. Death-row inmate Leonel Herrera also was executed in May after the Supreme Court, on a 6-3 vote, found there was no constitutional right to appeal a conviction based on newly discovered evidence, as long as the original trial was free of procedural error. Herrera's lawyers had hoped to show that Herrera's brother committed the murder of a police officer. The court's dissenting opinion stated that "the execution of a person who can show that he is innocent comes perilously close to simple murder." The state's attorneys argued that, in effect, that was not their problem.

AI also mentioned the Branch Davidian disaster near Waco. AI complained to the U.S. Attorney General about the use of potentially lethal gas and insisted upon inquiries about the actions in light of the United Nations Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials. What might Texans have to look forward to next year? □