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SAVING SOCIAL SECURITY:

By Steve Preston

There is a story about a Vietnamese family who is too poor to afford anything for dinner except a bowl of rice. On their wall is hung a picture of a fat fish, and to the left of it is a picture of a roast chicken, and to the right is a picture of a juicy steak. The family stares at these pictures as they eat, imagining. One night, the younger child sees that his brother has stopped eating and is just staring at the pictures, so he complains to his parents, "No fair! He's just eating his meat and not his rice!"

The American public sometimes seems to operate this way. They will accept corporate welfare for downsizing corporations, while dreaming of "new jobs" for the unemployed. They will applaud a war in Iraq to save the royalty of Kuwait, while visions of "democracy" dance in their heads. And now, as the government prepares to use Social Security surpluses to buoy the stock market, the people are presented with the fantasy that this will "save Social Security!" But is the government ready to destroy Social Security in order to save it?

How Social Security Works

Social Security was created in 1935, during the Great Depression, in part to encourage older people to retire in order to ease unemployment, and primarily because of the problem of poverty among the elderly. Social Security taxes are collected from all workers, even low-income workers, at a constant percentage (7.5%) of the first \$68,400 of income annually. Thus it is a regressive tax, meaning the poor have a higher percentage burden than the wealthy. Social Security is the largest tax most low-income workers pay, since other taxes are generally refunded.

However, Social Security benefits are progressive, in the sense that the poor will generally get a higher percentage of their contributions back than the wealthy. Although lower-income people are less likely to have regular employment during their lifetime, resulting in smaller contributions to the system, and although lower-income people have shorter life expectancies, the progressive formula used for Social Security benefits outweighs most of these factors, resulting in a small redistributive effect.

Social Security is a pay-as-you-go system, which means that the money you pay in taxes is not saved for you when you retire, but rather is used to pay benefits for current retirees. Although Social Security is now building a "trust fund" using each year's surplus, this trust fund covers only a small percentage of total Social Security payments, so that the system is still largely pay-as-you-go.

What's the Problem with Social Security?

Since working people always pay the current benefits to older people, as "baby boomers" retire, there will be less workers to pay for the benefits of more retirees. The Social Security Trustees

have projected that new revenues will fall short of scheduled payments in the year 2032, under a set of fairly conservative assumptions and assuming that no changes are made to the system. After this time, Social Security will only be able to meet 75% of scheduled payments to retirees.

The Trustees actually have three projections: the most pessimistic of them states that Social Security payments will exceed taxes far earlier than 2032, and the most optimistic says that Social Security will never have any trouble. The question, assuming the pessimistic projections are valid, is how to ensure that payments will be available, without raising payroll taxes or cutting benefits.

Saving Social Security

By some estimates, there really is no need to worry about saving Social Security. Some say that the Trustees have estimated too conservatively: They have assumed that over the next 75 years, the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) will grow at an average of only 1.5% per year. In the past 75 years,

Social Security, but, as investors like Warren Buffett have argued, it would decrease a lot of the speculation and volatility in the stock market.

Partial Privatization

The plan that President Clinton has proposed involves investing some portion of the Trust Fund in the stock market. The Trust Fund is currently invested in Treasury bonds, and the idea is that since the stock market pays, on average, a

...the idea that the stock market will cure our ills rests on faulty assumptions.

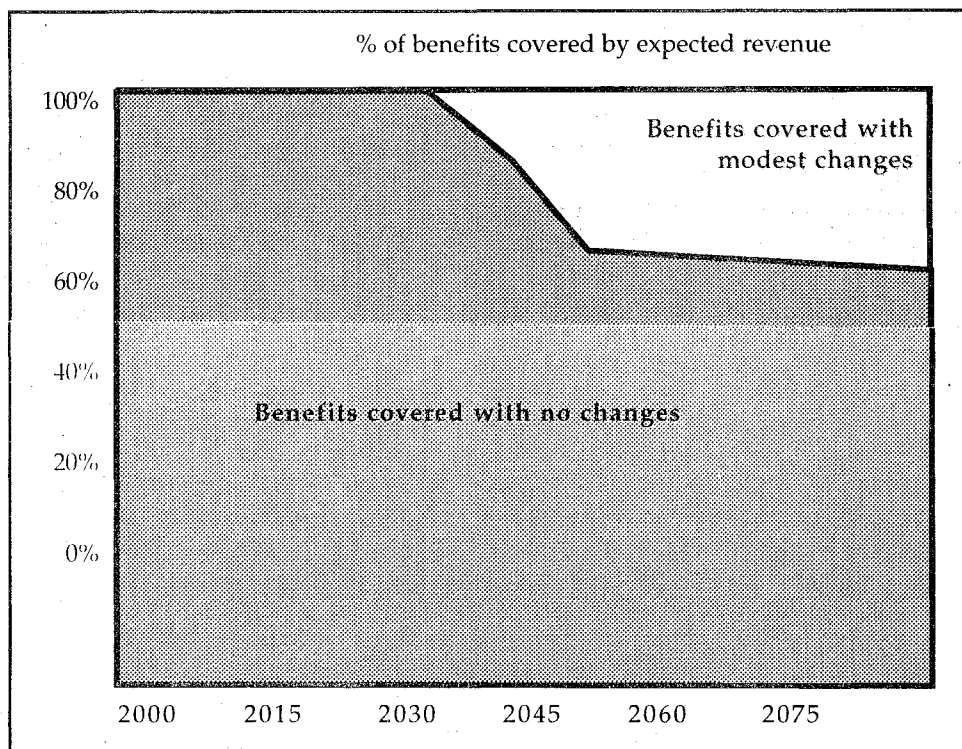
higher rate than Treasury bonds, it will generate more revenue for Social Security without any sacrifices. Clinton's plan is presented as the "liberal" plan, as in the Wall Street Journal's editorial calling it "a desperate effort by an irrelevant president to regain support from the only group that's remained loyal to him, the far left wing" (2/1/99).

Then, of course, there is the "conservative" plan, which is to slowly phase out all or part of Social Security, replacing it with mandatory savings accounts, which would be invested in much the same way that 401k plans and IRAs are currently invested. Some variation on this plan is favored by many Republicans in Congress. The most radical formulation of the proposal is to simply follow the example of countries like Chile, Argentina, El Salvador, Peru, and Colombia (which are all countries notorious for military governments, government crack-downs on poor dissidents, death squads, and dirty guerrilla wars, though economists insist that the same reforms could *probably* be done in a democracy too), and make the system completely private.

As often happens in public debates nowadays, most of the media presents the Clinton option and the Republican option as the only two ideas, and offers some superficial debate about

them. The argument is currently not over whether Social Security funds should be invested in the stock market, but rather whether some government commission would control these investments, or whether some investment firms such as Merrill Lynch et. al. would control them.

This debate has all the relevance of a debate between Medieval Christians about angels dancing on the heads of pins. Like most of the political debates since Clinton's election, the sub-



the GDP has actually grown at an average of about 3.5% per year. If a growth rate similar to this were to continue, Social Security would never reach a deficit.

Even if the Trustees' forecast is correct, there are many minor changes that could be made now to prevent the collapse of the system. The current payroll cap could be raised from \$68,400 to \$100,000. Very slight tax increases would also eliminate any possible problem. The retirement

The Social Security Trustees have projected that new revenues will fall short of scheduled payments in the year 2032...

age could be raised. Social Security benefits could be means-tested, or benefits above a certain subsistence level could be taxed.

Or, if the government would really like to see the stock market subsidize Social Security, it could implement a tax on stock transactions or a tax on profits from short-term investment; this would not only provide a new source of revenue to

stance of the plan is already agreed upon, and the arguments are only over style. Recall that Clinton has essentially agreed with the Republicans on NAFTA, welfare/workfare programs, the MAI treaty, every single military action, Pentagon funding, environmental treaties, Internet censorship and surveillance, and every facet of foreign policy since 1992. In fact, except for abortion, it's quite

THE STOCK MARKET SCAM

difficult to find issues where they *don't* agree.

Even if the debate over government control of Social Security assets in the stock market had any substance, the issue would be moot. Walter Burien has estimated that about 53% of common stock in this country is currently controlled directly by federal, state and local governments, through pensions and other investment funds (see http://www.buildfreedom.com/cevi/cevi_2.htm for more on this). So if government control over a portion of the stock market is socialism, then we

jected, then the stock market will do poorly; but if the GDP is high, then wages will be high and there will be no crisis. Aaron Bernstein makes this point clearly in *Business Week* (2/8/99).

The Stock Market as Pyramid Scheme

It is generally believed among economists that stocks represent holdings in a company, and have some intrinsic value. How, then, to explain the fact that annual turnover is over 100%; that is, on average, every stock is sold at least once every

policies, such as tax deferments, which induced many people to contribute to such accounts, and thus to the market.

Now that there is not much more money to be gained from private investment, the market has embarked on an audacious plan: to require people, through Social Security taxation, to donate to the stock market. The possibility of this boosting stock prices for current investors is generally not discussed in public view, but in some places, one can see a veiled jubilation at the potential windfall. From the *New York Daily News* (1/21/99):

"Anyone with a sharp pencil will calculate how much new

"As of December 30, the average stock on the New York Stock Exchange was down 7 percent, and half of all stocks on the big board had fallen by more than 10 percent.."

certainly have already achieved that.

Why Privatization Is a Scam

Privatization, in whole or in part, has been proposed by Clinton, the investment firms, our own Senator Moynihan, several lesser-known Republicans, and much of the major media, with essentially one rationale: to "save Social Security." One who points out problems with this plan is refuted with, "What, you don't want to save Social Security?"

But the idea that the stock market will cure our ills rests on faulty assumptions. For example, a common argument in favor of investing in the stock market goes something like this: "If one computes the total amount of money the average citizen gets after retirement, it is equivalent to what, on average, an individual would get with an investment earning a certain interest (between 4% for high-income workers and 6% for low-income workers, according to the Cato Institute's webpage at www.socialsecurity.org/studies/ssp10.html). However, the stock market historically returns about 7.5% to 8.5% (depending on how much risk is assumed), so it would be better for all individuals to invest their money privately, rather than in Social Security."

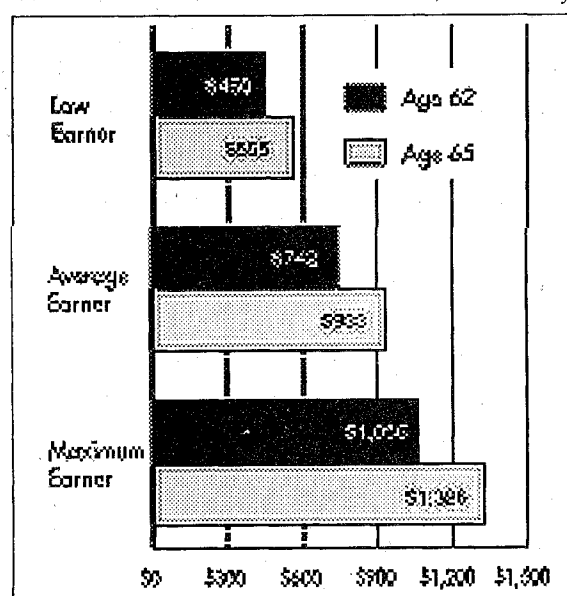
However, the problem with this argument is that actual returns from the market will probably not be this high. According to Dean Baker (http://www.socsec.org/facts/stocks_intro.htm), the rate of return could be lower for at least two reasons:

1. In estimating Social Security funds in the future, the Social Security Trustees assumed that the GDP will increase far more slowly over the next 75 years than it has over the previous 75 years. Since stock market prices are correlated with GDP growth, this would imply a corresponding reduction in the rate of stock return, to probably less than 5% per year.

2. Private account managers would likely charge maintenance fees of between 1.5% and 2.5% per year, if fees for current IRAs, mutual funds, and 401k plans are any indication. In contrast, Social Security currently uses less than 1% of funds

year? If people were actually investing in companies, it would hardly make sense to sell stocks so often. In fact, as Louis Lowenstein has written in "What's Wrong with Wall Street?", most money managers' pursuit of short-term gains in the market has resulted in an institution built primarily on speculation, "in which the whole enterprise begins to resemble nothing so much as it does gambling, except that the stakes are much larger."

It is well-known among economists that the ratio between the prices of stock and the earnings of the companies are higher than they have ever been. It is also well-known that, historically,



such overinflation of stock prices has led to collapse (this was the problem both in 1929 and in 1987), and thus some people quite reasonably suspect that the current wave of stock market success cannot last much longer, without some outside influence.

This is where you come in. The market always seeks new sources of income; in the 1920s, the explosion in stock prices was fueled by reports of the stock market being a sure thing, luring many middle-class people to invest their savings there instead of more traditional, less risky investments. Eventually, of course, the bubble burst. Later, there

buying power [Clinton's] proposal will bring to the stock market: \$3.6 billion a month. This amount, when compared with \$11 billion a month from individual investors, is a significant positive force in the stock market. It can serve as buying support in difficult market conditions, as well as an opportunity for even better performance in rising markets. In effect, it is the ultimate case of what the mutual fund industry calls dollar-cost averaging. This is to say that, over time, a regular program of investment yields the best result."

In fact, it may be that the stock market is not doing as well as is generally believed. For example, what is meant by the phrase "the stock market has performed well"? Generally this means a certain index, such as the S&P 500 or the Dow Jones Industrial Average, has increased. But since these indexes only cover a small number of companies, 500 in the former and 30 in the latter, one might reasonably ask what happens to the others. The answer is surprising: According to *U.S. News* (1/11/99), "these traditional indexes disguise huge losses in the overall market. As of December 30, the average stock on the New York Stock Exchange was down 7 percent, and half of all stocks on the big board had fallen by more than 10 percent for the year."

So the real question might be why these indexes are doing so well in spite of everything else. The answer lies in index funds, a very popular form of investment in which a company just buys shares in all the S&P 500 companies. Then, when the S&P 500 does well, more managers copy their behavior by investing in the same 500 companies. In fact, one of the current arguments that Clinton and his supporters make is that when the government invests the Social Security money, it will avoid potential conflicts of interest by only investing in index funds. Is there really any difference between all this follow-the-leader investing and more traditional pyramid schemes?

Failing to address this question could lead us to dire consequences. Will we end up in the same situation as Albania, where the government officially sanctioned pyramid schemes, people invested their life savings, and then everything came crashing down? Perhaps we are already going even further, by making it *mandatory* to invest in the schemes. This is the real danger in starting, even with small steps, down the road to putting Social Security into the stock market. What happens when the bubble bursts? Who will we have to blame when it happens? When will we notice that we've been deceived? Will we just keep staring at fish, after our rice is gone?

In fact, analysis of the GDP projection just mentioned shows a fundamental contradiction...

for administrative expenses. So the advantage of investing in the private market disappears when the probable maintenance fees are taken into account.

In fact, analysis of the GDP projection just mentioned shows a fundamental contradiction in the crisis projections: According to standard economic theory, if the GDP growth is as low as pro-

was the impetus to get new money from foreign countries, which was part of the reason that trade between nations has been liberalized so extensively in the past 20 years. But foreign money could only provide so much growth. Eventually, the market started the pension funds held by many companies, as well as relying on 401k plans and IRA accounts. This was helped by friendly government

MURDER IN GIULIANI LAND

It was cold last Thursday morning when Amadou Diallo died. Having lived all but his last two and a half years in West Africa, he was probably not yet used to early February nights in New York. Maybe the chill bothered him as he fiddled with his keys to the vestibule.

It's unlikely that he was thinking about how New York has changed under Mayor Rudy Giuliani. When you are an immigrant working for a place in America, you don't have the time to spend digesting politics. You work. Diallo worked 12 hours a day selling socks and videotapes and gloves.

At any rate, Giuliani's New York was the only New York the 22-year-old Guinean knew. He had never seen it any other way. He didn't know that New York wasn't for him anymore. He didn't know that the police hunted black men in the night. What was he thinking as the bullets ripped into and through him? What did he think of America before he died?

The four cops who killed him didn't explain their actions for days. They finally said they might have mistaken his beeper for a gun. They said this with sincerity, as if to say he earned it. It isn't yet clear if he was ignoring or misunderstood their shouted commands. They haven't explained why they began firing. They haven't explained the number 41. It's a number that sticks in the head and repeats itself over and over. Like the phrase, "56 times in 81 seconds."

The police commissioner said that he was confident their actions were justified. Giuliani asked people not to judge their actions until the justice system reveals the truth in the case. He said he doesn't believe the incident says anything about larger problems with his police force.

He didn't believe Amnesty International

when they condemned the NYPD as one of the most brutal departments in this brutal country. He doesn't take criticism well.

But everyone involved agrees that it is a tragedy that this black man was killed unarmed and without a criminal record. Giuliani promised to get to the bottom of it all, and to sprinkle some justice. The city will not tolerate the murder of black men in the city when they don't have criminal records, he promises.

Will Sean Carroll, 35, and Edward McMellon, 26, and Kenneth Boss, 27, and Richard Murphy, 26, be tried like murderers? Will they be tried aggressively and without prejudice and will they be punished in an unbiased manner? Did you know that the police are trained to shoot to kill and to keep shooting to kill until the target is stopped or dead? Did you know that many New York City policemen see their workplace as a jungle, and the people they police as animals?

How early in the fusillade did Diallo go down? Giuliani has left too many questions unanswered. Police murder indiscriminately in the streets like wild boar and no one watches them. They are never punished effectively for their actions. The current Citizen's Complaint Review Board, which reviews claims of police brutality, has no ability to easily investigate such complaints, and few ever make it to court, or end in sanctions for offending officers. The cops know this, so they have no fear to act and treat New Yorkers like the animals they imagine them to be. Those four cops pulled the trigger, but Giuliani gave them the ammunition and Kevlar accountability armor. Giuliani, more than all the savages employed by the New York City Police Department, has blood on his hands.

STOP THE CENSORSHIP

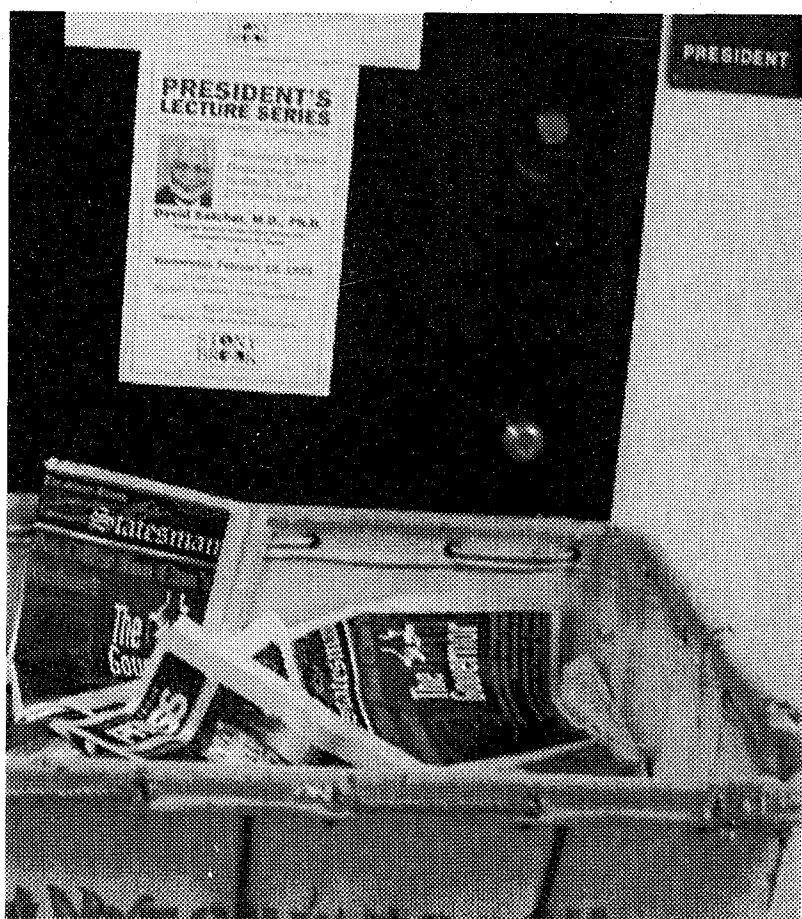
We have suspected for years that custodians in the Melville Library had been ordered to throw out copies of the *Press* in order to stifle dissenting student opinions. Last week, our suspicions were confirmed when editors of both the *Press* and the *Statesman* found this bin stuffed with entire stacks of newspapers that were set out only hours earlier.

Student security guards claimed that Dean of Libraries Joseph Branin ordered them to trash the papers because they "block the view" of those sitting behind the security table. But apparently, the large stacks of *Happenings* (the administration's public relations rag), summer session course announcements, and pamphlets about contraception that lined the table didn't bother them.

The message was clear: Student publications that question the actions of administrators are not welcome.

If administrators are truly concerned with improving undergraduate education, they should begin by building trust with a well-informed student body. Every attempt to block out information is an insult to the campus community.

With all due respect Shirl, stop playing your silly monkey games.



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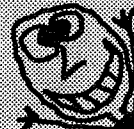
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To The Editor:

There is a glaring, but almost totally unmentioned, double standard in the way the United States conducts bombing campaigns. Iraq invades Kuwait and is subsequently bombed by the United States. Indonesia invades East-Timor and not only is not bombed by the U.S., but is supplied with weapons. Turkey attacks Kurdish villages, and instead of condemnation, economic sanctions, or bombing, Turkey receives helicopter gunships and F-16s from the United States and permission to invade northern Iraq in pursuit of Kurds. Apartheid in South Africa invades Angola, and the U.S. government does nothing. Only Cuba comes to the aid of the Angolan government. Israel invades Lebanon, and there is little protest from the U.S. government. Incidentally, both Israel and South Africa have weapons of mass destruction.

Is this double standard due to oversights, mistakes, stupidity, or are people with so much wealth and power simply sleepwalkers? I think there is a very logical explanation. Third World countries which open up their land, labor, and resources for the exploitation and control of foreign investors are deemed not bombable. Socialist countries like Cuba, which have nationalized foreign property, are very bombable. Countries with nationalistic governments which act independently, erect tariffs, fail to comply with IMF austerity measures, etc. are also bombable. Nations which promote a more egalitarian distribution of wealth are bombable. Countries like Iraq sitting on immense oil reserves had better follow orders.

In this global capitalist system, those Third World countries which don't act as good little puppets are likely to be bombed, have economic sanctions imposed on them, or receive and

unfriendly visit by the CIA.

P.S. It is a useful exercise in noticing the propaganda role of the U.S. media to imagine the degree of coverage and depth of outrage that would occur if Cuba or some other socialist country were strafing and bombing part of its population, as Turkey is doing to the Kurds. It would probably surpass the O.J. Simpson trial and President Clinton's sex life as one of the hottest news items in history!

Sincerely,
Gary Sudborough

Dear Sir or Madam:

Let me first begin by saying that as a former employee of Campus Dining Services, I understand that at times it can be difficult to do what is most pleasing to the students. However, as a student (customer), I think that it should be top priority.

The state of campus dining this semester is disturbing to me. The first issue is the change in the meal plan. It is my understanding that all Residence Points and Meals left from last semester have been converted to Campus Points this semester. I also understand that the semester was begun with \$400 in Residence Points and \$700 in Campus Points. I became aware of this entirely by accident, overhearing someone in line ahead of me. The issue is this: it is my money, and I believe I have a right to be informed of such changes before their institution.

Following this change, certain dining locations had their hours changed. The Bleacher Club is now open from 11am to 4pm Monday to Friday, while H-Quad is open until 10pm.

Therefore, as I understand it, our Campus Points were increased while campus location hours were cut, and the inverse for Residence Points and locations. I fail to see the logic. I also would like to add that two buildings in G-Quad have been closed this semester, thus there are fewer students living on that side of campus.

Since you [President Kenny and the Faculty Student Association] do not have to wait on line to get food at any location, perhaps you are not aware of the lines at places like the SAC. Yesterday, I waited twenty minutes before I even got to place my order. I assume you are aware that this only floats because you have a monopoly.

Then there is the insanity of your Price and Portion Guide. I went into the Deli last week, and was told that they could not sell me cheese, because they did not have the price. Yet, they were selling sandwiches with cheese on them. It seems to me that it would make more sense to sell what you have at a price that may be too low, taking a minimal profit loss, rather than not selling anything at all. This would keep your customers happy and returning. This is not the only problem with the Deli—you can barely walk and there is no counter at the cash register to place your purchases on.

I am sure that this letter will probably be disregarded as mindless rambling of a laundry list of complaints. However, I urge you to take note of the complaints that I have made. I am not the only student who has these complaints, and I know you certainly want to do what the customers want, because you "appreciate" us.

Sincerely,
Christina Napolitan

Pataki's Budget to include Massive Higher Ed Cuts

By Joanna Wegielnik and Hilary Vidair

It's that time of year again; our fearless governor unravels his budget for the upcoming fiscal year. Since 1998-99 was not a gubernatorial election cycle, we feared the worst. And sure enough, that's what Governor Pataki delivered: the annual budget, complete with huge cuts to Medicare, drastic cutbacks in financial aid and more prisons. Ladies and gentlemen, presenting the 2000 budget! Signed, sealed, delivered, it's ours!

In the state of New York, budget is synonymous with cuts. Even during surplus years, much like this year's expected 3 billion dollar excess, our governor *still* proposes drastic cutbacks. And who does he target? Society's most vulnerable, of course: the poor, the elderly, students—basically, anyone who doesn't have an army of lobbyists and money backing them up. Besides, it's all perfectly justifiable because, after all, our governor has great, big, national aspirations. He's goin' for distance; he's goin' for speed; he's goin' for the presidency! Pataki *has* to appear fiscally conservative, and what wouldn't appeal to middle America more than a governor who "made New York a better place to live"?

Last year's budget, proposed during an election year, contained large spending hikes to appeal to voters. It worked like a charm; Pataki won by a landslide, blowing his competition clear out of the water. This year, with his butt firmly planted in the governor's seat, he can do as he chooses, and Pataki chooses to fuck with the disenfranchised over and over again.

A quick look at some of the questionable and SUNY-relevant provisions of the proposed 2000 budget: 1) The \$72.7 billion state budget proposal would increase spending by less than the rate of inflation, with the rate of inflation at 2% and the proposed spending rate at 1.8%; 2) State Medicaid payments to hospitals and other providers would be reduced by \$266 million. (Experts say the actual amount would be about \$850 million once federal and local contributions are factored in.); 3) \$114 million cut to TAP, a financial aid program many SUNY students rely on, with promises of reimbursements upon a four-year graduation record; 4) School aid essentially frozen with proposed increases too small to keep up with inflation. 5) \$180 million for the construction of two new prison complexes; 6) Elimination of parole by requiring convicts to complete 86% of their sentences.

Under the Medicaid proposal, the governor is calling for a \$266 million reduction in state spending. However, once Federal and local contributions are factored in, experts say there would be at least \$727 million less for the program than this year and payments to hospitals would be cut by \$374 million—\$239 for nursing homes and \$114 for home-care providers.

Under the new TAP proposal, payments would now cover 75% of tuition (instead of the usual 90%) and require a minimum of 15 credits for TAP eligibility (up from 12 credits); it would set a four semester assistance maximum for Associate's Degrees, as well as offer to reimburse tuition not covered under TAP if studies are completed in four years.

NYPIRG (New York Public Interest Research Group) estimated that the proposed changes to TAP will cut the program by at least \$133,000,000. "Cuts to financial aid penalize exactly those students that can least afford increased costs," said Todd Stebbins, Stony Brook's NYPIRG coordinator. "Tuition at public colleges has more than doubled over the last 10 years. The Governor's proposal does nothing to address this pressing problem, and instead squeezes students and their families for hard-earned dollars. Funding for higher education in New York State has been significantly reduced in recent years. Reducing funding further, or not proposing an increase to at least match inflation, places an intolerable burden on colleges and universities to cut costs."

The governor's proposal for reimbursing tuition not covered under TAP for students who graduate in four years drew particular criticism and praise from students. Many don't see the point of a reimbursement after graduation when they need the money more while in school; others see it as an incentive to graduate on time.

Education is arguably New York's most valuable asset. Investment in education is one of the safest ways to battle complex social dilemmas such as unemployment, crime and poverty. Building prisons is not. Taking care of the indigent and elderly is part of the governor's responsibility. Turning his back on them while shamelessly pursuing national presidential aspirations is not unacceptable.

WHEN EPIDEMICS BREED ATROCITIES

By D.J. O'Dell

When faced with a national epidemic, it is absolutely necessary to find the most effective means of combat and control. This process includes a close scrutiny of all available data concerning the epidemic, and an objective approach towards choosing a method that would best fit what the data suggest. In December, a new proposal for preventing the spread of HIV was proposed by the Federal Centers for Disease Control. This draft, known as *Guidelines for National HIV Case Surveillance, Including Monitoring for HIV Infection and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS)*, "clearly supports" a controversial program that includes name-based reporting on HIV testing.

As it implies, name-based surveillance would require a physician to report the name of any individual who tests positive to public health officials. Thereafter, any medically-related information deemed necessary by state or federal HIV control agencies in connection with that individual would be made freely accessible to those agencies. This is one of the greatest faults of the system: the loss of privacy and confidentiality.

Although the CDC recognizes the importance of maintaining an individual's confidentiality, they fail to offer a secure way of maintaining that confidentiality in the guidelines, which state, "The receipt of Federal surveillance funding is dependent on the recipient's ability to ensure the physical security and confidentiality of case reports." Though the CDC has formed a model state public health privacy act, the model does not specify under what conditions information may be given outside of the more normal instances of exchange. As the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) claims, "The draft model act falls far short of the goal of focusing solely on how a state may collect and track—but otherwise hold secure—identifiable public health information, and avoid disclosing such information to anyone except under the most narrow and clearly defined circumstances."

This issue revolves around an individual's right to privacy when it comes to their illness. Regardless of how effectively their confidentiality is secured, being forced to rescind control over their medical records would discourage many from getting tested. In one study, 60% of individuals who were tested anonymously for HIV said they would not have gotten tested under a name-based program. In South Carolina, homosexual testing dropped by 51% among men after anonymous testing was eliminated. Other than homosexuals, other groups sharing the greatest need for testing would be deterred from doing so. These groups include people of color, sex workers, and intravenous drug users. Of those who do test under the name-based reporting system, a greater delay of time is experienced between the time of deciding to be tested and actually having the test

done. Individuals testing positive under this system held a CD4 count of 225, whereas those who tested positive under a confidential system held a CD4 count of 304. (The CD4 count is a way of measuring the progress of HIV in a person's body; the lower the count drops, the closer that person comes to experiencing the onslaught of AIDS). Consequently, those who tested anonymously experienced an average 1,246 days before being diagnosed with AIDS, whereas those who tested confidentially experienced 718. This shows that people will wait longer, endangering their health, rather than be tested under a name-based program. The CDC, after a six-state study, acknowl-

edge that test rates were adversely affected among "racial/ethnic subgroups and HIV-risk exposure categories," and yet continue to propose this system over the systems which are already in place.

Even more detrimental to the goal of HIV monitoring, anonymous testing is often eliminated in states which adopt a name-based reporting surveillance system. The guidelines themselves clearly show that fewer people would be tested under a name-based system than under an anonymous one (61% would test under a names program while

72% would test under an anonymous program). These data, however, are unreliable. In an effort to marginalize the difference between the systems, the CDC has chosen to ignore the more recent and favorable data made available to them on behalf of anonymous testing. Instead, older data are documented in an effort to make the name-based reporting system appear less detrimental. Furthermore, the CDC refuses to support systems which report cases by an alpha-

numeric code or unique identifier with federal funding, while at the same time funding name-based systems in various states. In this manner, the data used by the CDC are shown, once again, to be unreliable.

The data would have displayed much different results if the CDC had funded both systems, rather than favoring one. The CDC also failed to compare their data, gleaned from six name-reporting states, with non-name-reporting states. Regardless of their attempt to marginalize the difference, even their data show that 11% of the population would refrain from testing under a name-based surveillance system.

Undoubtedly, a name-based surveillance system would adversely affect the overall goal of

HIV monitoring and prevention. Other adverse consequences of this system include testees not returning for their results, and a significant drop in the number of sex workers, intravenous drug users, and people of color getting tested. In North Carolina, 30.3% of people tested confidentially did not return for their results whereas those who tested anonymously only experienced an 8.2% no-return rate. Sex workers and intravenous drug users experienced a dramatic increase in the num-

"...the CDC refuses to support systems which report cases by an alpha-numeric code or unique identifier, while... funding name-based systems... In this manner, the data used by the CDC is shown, once again, to be unreliable."

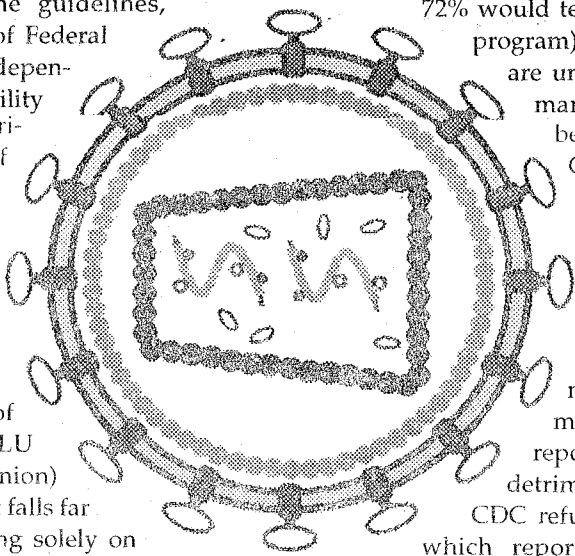
ber of people getting tested in areas where anonymous testing is introduced (56% and 17% respectively). As stated by the ACLU, "Given this country's history of race discrimination in the guise of public health initiatives, minority communities often distrust coercive public health programs. Mandatory names reporting would only exacerbate this distrust." The New York City Department of Health concluded that 22% of the people in African-American and Hispanic communities would not be tested if their names were reported to public health officials.

In light of the numerous studies conducted on this subject, it is amazing that the CDC still proposes this plan as the most effective plan available. Legislation of this sort is reminiscent of other HIV statutes like coercive partner notification. It is becoming increasingly more apparent that HIV has become a public rather than private matter, as individuals continue to lose the personal rights of anonymity and confidentiality. I believe that the evidence given is enough to show that the CDC is running this particular system as part of a personal agenda, and that this prevents them from objectively approaching this problem. Perhaps if the CDC tried funding the systems already in place, they would discover that not only do these systems encourage people to get tested, they help maintain the anonymity of those who test positive.

HIV is one of the few illnesses that

"As it implies, a name-based surveillance system would require a physician to report the name of any individuals who test positive... This introduces one of the greatest faults of the system: the loss of privacy and confidentiality."

remain stigmatized, and it is necessary to protect those who already suffer from infection from the scorn of society. A name-based program would betray an individual's right to privacy, and as a cure is still forthcoming, this privacy is one of the few things those who test positively can hold on to.



GEETCH'S WEB PICKS: AIDS INFORMATION

By Donald "Geetch" Toner

www.nlm.nih.gov

www.unaids.org

In this issue we shall attempt to cover the broad subject of AIDS (Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome). These sites should help to disprove any myths your peers may have told you and put you more in the reality of the situation. AIDS and HIV are very real things effecting more and more of the population due to the miseducation of the masses.

www.liaac.org

This site, put up by the Long Island Association for AIDS Care, states in bold letters as you first load it up that Nassau and Suffolk counties have more people infected with HIV than any other suburb in the country. Now, I know many people are thinking that Nassau and Suffolk county also have a higher population than most other suburbs, and even some states, but is this an excuse? The site contains a series of short summaries and statements about what LIAAC does and how you can help out. If you want to "do your part," they have a section in which you can contact them directly to join in the fight.

As many medical students know, this is the address for the National Library of Medicine. This page has some of the most comprehensive information on the subject of AIDS anywhere on the net, including specific case studies, but you have to know what you are looking for. They do give you an outline of the site, but after that you are on your own. Those people with a good grounding in medicine or that are familiar with the AIDS epidemic should check out this site.

www.who.int/asd/home.htm

This is the home site of the World Health Organization, another place with a large amount of information about AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. The site holds extensive statistical information on more STDs than you can wave a stick at. You can also check out how STDs are growing in other countries as well as treatments for them. This is one of the most detailed sites covering the topic of AIDS on a global scale.

This site is chock full of press releases on AIDS from across the globe. The site has been put up by the United Nations to link the newspaper articles they have gathered about AIDS. This site is also multilingual with articles in Russian, French and Spanish. Although the site contains no information of its own, the articles hold a treasure trove about AIDS.

www.cdc.gov/nchstp/hiv_aids/dhap.htm

The Centers for Disease Control has one of the most resourceful sites I have ever been to for any subject. The site is set up as a complex of outlines, one leading into the next. It takes you from the broadest subject, giving you new choices and narrowing down the topics, to the most specific data you could ever need in a matter of seconds. Just 3-5 clicks away and you can have any information about AIDS you want, ranging from a question you want answered about how it is transferred to the chemical structure. The site also has national survey analysis giving percentages on every little detail you ever wanted to know. By far, the most useful site of them all.

THE LOSS OF KING HUSSEIN OF JORDAN:

A Personal and Political Reflection on the King

By DH Campbell

The Middle East and the politics of that region have never been able to be categorized into one distinct catch phrase that would sum up the whole area and sources of its tension. It is an extremely diverse region (more diverse than most Americans think) and this fact often represents a challenge for any policy agent who wishes to create the best possible policy for that region. The diversity also creates a difficult place for peace to be reached after years of violent conflict. Religious differences, cultural differences, and age-old sources of tensions make many people within region unable to put their pride away in order to live in a peaceful manner. However, at times there has appeared a leader who has the courage and faith to try to work for peace. This week, the Middle East, and for that matter the world, lost one of the greatest leaders for change and for peace, Jordan's King Hussein.

On Thursday, the 63-year-old king returned to his homeland of Jordan to die. After battling non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and enduring harsh chemotherapy treatment in the U.S. for the last nine months, the king reportedly wanted to leave so that he could die in his homeland with his people. After serving for almost five decades, Hussein is the longest serving monarch in the world today. To many Jordanians he is the only ruler they have ever known, and his popularity

amongst his people is nothing short of amazing.

However, King Hussein was more than just a benevolent king, or a crafty statesman who has managed to survive coups and assassination attempts. Hussein was a man who, over the course of his life, came to realize that armed conflict over disagreements solves nothing and in the end causes more damage than good. He also came to realize that no side wins in war, no matter who declares victory at the end. Hussein was one of the first



Arab leaders to begin negotiations with Israel to have a peace settlement and was also one of the first Arab leaders to advocate a peace policy for that region.

I find myself saddened by the loss of Hussein while trying to figure whether the Middle East's future holds peace. I was always impressed with the passion and conviction with which he spoke when talking of the importance of communication and understanding. I was also always impressed with the personal feelings that he let show in the course of his public duties. I remember listening to the speech that he gave at Itzach Rabin's funeral and being able to hear the cracking of his voice as he spoke about the loss of his friend, his peace partner and of a man that he admired, no matter how great their differences. I also remember admiring him for leaving his hospital bed and flying to Washington to keep peace negotiations going when they looked as if they were going to stall.

As for the future of peace in the Middle

East, I hope it both continues to advance and that its advancement begins to move away from the slow pace that it has been taking over the last few months. However, I am not sure how much my hopes will be realized without the help of Hussein. His effort to keep the talks going is something that I do not see from either Israel's Netanyahu or Palestine's Arafat. Perhaps they will both absorb some of his desire for peace and keep trying to come to a settlement. However, neither of them, so far, has really come to see what peace and communication about differences means to the future of that region. And until they do, I am not sure how much further they will advance the issue.

I am not pro-Israel. I am not anti-Israel either. I am also neither pro-Arab nation or Anti-Arab nation. What I am is a person who feels that violence for rights and lack of communication about difference in the end brings nothing but destruction. The late King Hussein of Jordan, I believe, felt much the same. Perhaps that is why his death has so depressed me. In an era where statesmen care more about themselves or their parties than the people they serve, or issues that are crucial to their peoples' survival, it was always impressive to see Hussein's dedication to his people and to their peace. He wasn't a perfect leader and he made mistakes. But unlike his contemporaries (and this is what made him such a great leader and man), Hussein was able and willing to admit his mistakes, learn from them, and move on. The peace process, the future of children, and their safety (and right) to live in a peaceful world were always behind his plans and efforts for peace. The game was never about him winning, but was rather about others enduring—a lesson, perhaps, that other politicians and statesmen should learn.

STRAIGHT FROM MY HEART

By Chris Sorochin

An outfit called the Clinton Legal Expense Trust had the poor judgement to send me a letter asking me to kick in to save the Commander-in-Chief's bacon from the flame. At first I thought it had to be like those fake charities that prey upon the clueless, but to my surprise they seemed to be legit: the saps had included a post-paid envelope, allowing me not only the pleasure of unloading my acerbic response on them with both barrels, but of sending it back at their expense. I strongly suggest this as therapy when any evil/stupid organization sends you such an opportunity to "go postal." Happy Valentine's Day!

"At first it was kind of hard to kill Iraqis. Then it got a lot easier."

—Timothy McViegh, in a letter he sent to his aunt

The really nauseating thing about Bill's Christmas Bombing was not that it happened or that it was done for such a transparently bogus and self-serving reason. What has me profoundly worried and sickened is that all but the most cement-headed know that Clinton ordered the four-day saturation-bombing of a country whose people have already undergone tremendous suffering, a country totally unable to defend itself from attack, solely to postpone his impeachment hearing (for a day, it turns out) and nobody really gets too upset about it. Oh, a few professional peaceniks protested, but the majority of what could laughingly be called leadership either ignored it, or, actually came out in support!

There is much discussion of the inaction of the great majority of the German people as crimes of ghastly and inhuman cruelty were taking place in their name during the Third Reich. "How much did they know about the death camps and the atrocities being committed on the Eastern Front? Why did they do nothing?" And there is much clucking of tongues and self-righteous pronouncement that surely the German nation must bear the mark of Cain for generations for their silent complicity during that dark era. I know people who say, "I'll never go to that country."

Well, at least they have

the excuse that had they opened their mouths they'd have packed off to the camps, too. What, exactly, is our excuse for sitting by as other human beings—mostly children—are mass-destroyed with our tax money, and in our name? The Nazis killed children, too. They killed them by starvation and lack of care, just like the sanctions. They killed them because they considered them somewhat less than human, just as many in the U.S. consider Arabs subhuman. I wonder if they killed 6,000 a month, as the

Dear Clinton Legal Expense Trust:

I have just received your appeal asking me to contribute a sum of my hard-earned and scarce monetary resources to the legal defense of one William Jefferson Clinton, a.k.a. "Slick Willie" and "Schmucko."

I have to wonder, is this some kind of especially sick and tasteless joke, or are you actually naïve enough to believe that that cynical, two-faced, mass-murdering, opportunistic, morally bankrupt, fake-liberal dweeb in the White House is deserving of anything more merciful than life imprisonment for the diverse and heinous offenses he and his accomplices have committed against the Office of the Presidency, the nation, countless innocent lives in Iraq and Sudan, and common decency, and the saccharine-drooling, complacency with which he's committed them?

Wait, don't tell me: His enemies, all those rabid, unevolved Republican ayatollahs manque, are worse than smooth old Billy Boy. You think because he invites Maya Angelou to the White House and makes noises about gay rights and health care and a "dialogue on race," he really is some kind of closet progressive. When are you guys going to finally wake up and smell the bullshit? That's all a big con game, worthy of P.T. Barnum.

Bubba's presided over growing disparities in income, huge giveaways of public resources (like national parklands and wilderness areas), and a steady, frightening erosion of civil rights. He's accelerated the growth of corporate power, pushed the poor into enforced servitude (and made them poorer to boot) and continues to feed the bloated Pentagon budget.

And do you know how he managed to do all this? He made some insignificant, insincere kissy noises to the tinpot liberal hierarchy, invited them to lounge on the silken pillows of his Beltway boudoir, and enticed them to give up their dignity and honor with promises of true love and fidelity. Then, when he was finished satisfying his porcine appetites, he booted them out with a hearty, "Come again, y'all!"

In short, he treated them the way he treated the harem of silly, gullible, desperate women who now constitute the centerpiece of CNN reporting and the nocturnal emissions of Kenneth Starr and his prurient disciples. Like Jennifer, Monica, and yes, Hillary too,

U.S.-led sanctions against Iraq do?

In related sliminess, the U.S. government is conducting a persecution of Voices in the Wilderness, the Chicago-based group that has made many numerous trips to Iraq to bring medicine and the message that many in the U.S. don't support our leaders' genocidal policies, to help ease some of the suffering there. The Office of Foreign Assets Control is threatening Voices with fines of up to \$160,000 for bringing back such innocuous items as an Iraqi postage stamp or a label from a bottle of water. One item was fairly dangerous: a videotape taken of the children dying because they don't have adequate food or medicine. If enough people here saw it and thought about it, our spiritually dead political and economic bosses wouldn't be able to continue doing it.

Don't forget that February 18th is the first annual Dissent Day, in commemoration of the

cracking of the facade of phony public support the Administration tried to sell at a CNN "town meeting" in Columbus, Ohio. Some

obscure but dedicated activists made sure that the true voice of the people was heard, and this was witnessed by the whole world. It did a great deal toward getting the warmongers to shelve their plans for

and God only knows who else, those lamebrain lefties still defending Clinton were hoping against all hope and the evidence of long experience that, here at long last, was someone who understands and would treat us right. Here was Mr. Right.

And he is Mr. Right, too. The reason the clenofascist wing of the Republican Party hates him so much is that he's stolen all the issues that keep the money rolling into their campaign coffers, leaving them with nothing but unpopular Old Testament takes on social issues. Now that Clinton is Wall St.'s faithful rent boy, they're left with railing against abortion rights, working mothers, and internet porn.

Anyone who thinks we're saving ourselves from a return to a social Stone Age by choosing the lesser of evils, should remember the German elections of 1933. Contrary to popular belief, the electorate did not turn out in Wagnerian force for Hitler, but elected by a narrow margin a Count von Hindenburg (for whom the exploding zeppelin was named) in the erroneous belief that anything was better than Adolf. But the Nazis were too fanatical to accept a mere electoral defeat and made considerable trouble, up to and including staging incidents of terrorism (like the Reichstag fire) that showed how much der Fuhrer's brand of law and order was needed. Von Hindenburg made Hitler Chancellor, and Germany got him anyway.

Isn't it about time we all faced up to the fact that the present system is incorrigibly corrupt and no matter who is sitting up there as figurehead, they're going to do the bidding of the powerful unless the rest of us act?

Mr. Clinton has been outrageously Machiavellian in abusing his power. When I turned on my radio on December 16 and heard what he was doing, I lost any and all respect or sympathy I might have had for him.

I'd have to be out of my fucking mind to send you one red cent. If he's so goddamned desperate, let him get Lockheed-Martin or some other weapons contractor to dip into their ill-gotten profits to pick up the tab for defending him.

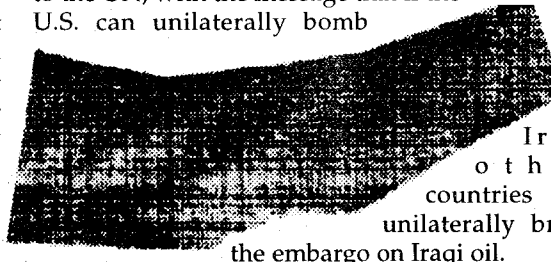
Yours most derisively,

Chris Sorochin

an attack. Celebrate the day in any way you enjoy, but make sure you cast at least one stone at the gross edifice of hypocrisy and violence with which we now find ourselves surrounded.

And gird thy loins for further battles. Now we know that the Satanists in control of the Empire won't bother to try to manufacture public support, or even the support of Congress or the United Nations. They'll just go ahead and bomb away.

One additional casualty of the December Blitz was that Russia had refused to ratify the SALT II treaty to reduce nuclear arms, on the grounds that the U.S. is clearly not to be trusted and is contemptuous of international law. I also hear that the Russians are going to start dealing with Iraq, maybe buying their oil. Voices in the Wilderness sponsored a march from the Pentagon to the UN, with the message that if the U.S. can unilaterally bomb



Iraq, other countries can unilaterally break the embargo on Iraqi oil.

And wouldn't the warlords just love a new Cold War with big, bad Russia as an enemy again? Before I forget, Clinton is giving the Pentagon billions more yet again, in a spending frenzy approaching Cold War levels. More ominously, they are trying to appoint a "Commander-in-Chief for the continental U.S." in case of "terrorist attack," and there have even been "urban landing" exercises in San Francisco, just in case the natives of the continental U.S. should get out of hand.

How To LEGALIZE DRUGS

By Chris Sorochin

Two weeks late and a couple of guilders short, here's my contribution to the *Press*' stupor inducing "Potfest '99" issue. It's a review of "How to Legalize Drugs", edited by Jefferson M. Fish, Ph.D., of the Department of Psychology at St. John's University (published by Jason Aronson, Inc.). Disclosure: Dr. Fish is a personal acquaintance of mine and got me a free copy of the book. The driving force behind this 700 page opus was, according to Fish, anger and frustration at the almost complete lack of any open and rational debate about drug policy in the United States. Fish says he's published other works on controversial topics, but never in his experience have prospective contributors begged off for fear of professional reprisals. Fish himself confessed some uneasiness over how his largely conservative colleagues would respond.

Not surprisingly, there has been a total media blackout of the book, even with its deliberately provocative title. Given the work's breadth and scope, it's hard to set this down to mere coincidence. So, gentle readers, in yet another groundbreaking, earthshaking, *Press* exclusive, you're reading the very first review of "How to Legalize Drugs" anywhere. I was a little nervous about undertaking an analysis of a friend's work. Jeff was clearly enthusiastic and I knew he'd worked hard on it. But what if I personally found it tedious and overacademic, laden with graphs and professional jargon and thus inaccessible to the average reader? "Conflict of interest" kept flashing through my head.

Once into the book, though, these misgivings evaporated as I reveled in the music of drug war clichés being merrily shattered, for the most part in language easily understood by any undergrad. The thesis is simply that the "War on Drugs" hasn't worked and has actually hurt in ways as diverse as providing greater profits for dealers, driving users to use stronger, more concentrated preparations, diverting resources that could be better used elsewhere and, most importantly, eroding civil rights and giving the state and its agents almost total impunity in violating the dignity of citizens in the name of fighting drugs. This also extends to the US government using drugs as a pretext for meddling in the internal affairs of other countries.

Clearly, some more humane approach must be tried.

Other countries, most notably the Netherlands, have had great success with such experiments. As with healthcare, transportation, education and many other areas of civilization, we lag behind. There are 24 chapters, a few written by Fish himself, the others from a smorgasbord of scholarly and public policy sources. The first part is devoted to background (something too little discussed in most drug debates) and includes history (Jerry Mandel's fascinating account of "The Opening

Shots in the War on Drugs", the persecution of Chinese opium smokers in late nineteenth century California), personal sociological narratives (Luis Barrios and Richard Curtis' account of several generations of a Puerto Rican family and their relationship with the drug subculture and, consequently, the criminal justice system, and a series of chilling, yet nonjudgemental, vignettes of heroin users on the Lower East Side by Michael C. Clatts et al.)

My personal favorite in "On the Reconstruction of Drug Education in the United States," by Rodney Skager and Joel H. Brown, which echoes my own sentiments and even makes the totally heretical suggestion that drug experimentation by teens be viewed as normal and to be the target of realistic, non-Sunday school education (Just like sexual experimentation...whoops, we're running into trouble already, as we're still fighting an uphill battle for rational sex education). Skager and Brown even cite an explosive study which indicates that high school students who experiment casually with marijuana are psychologically healthier and better adjusted socially than either heavy pot smokers or total abstainers.

As might be expected, there's a detailed history and outline of the famous and much-envied Dutch Model by Bart Majoor, a psychologist from the Netherlands, who came face to ugly face with a particularly rude form of culture shock when he was arrested for trying to apply Dutch philosophy in Giulianiland—he was arrested in an attempted needle exchange. I won't summarize the chapter here, as this was done most brilliantly by my esteemed colleague Joanna Wegielnik in these very pages (January 27). One additional fact that really tickled my tulip bulbs was that when the Dutch government set up a commission to reform drug policy, drug users themselves were invited to take part! Who can imagine this happening in the US, where anyone who admits to use of substances deemed illegal is automatically branded a spiral-eyed addict and therefore beyond the pale of rational discussion.

Drug law reformers fall into two frequently overlapping categories. Those who subscribe to the Harm Reduction Model still believe drug use is inherently pathological, but seek ways to minimize the pain and suffering and other associated problems. As criminalization adds to this, harm reductionists want to treat drug abusers as people in need of help, not as felons to be locked up.

A further revelation is that drug prohibition only reduces the number of casual users, in other words those whose use doesn't cause or result from problems. The hard-core dependents don't care if it's illegal or their lives are in the toilet, they're going to get high. That's why prohibition doesn't work.

The other faction centers its arguments around civil rights. Many basic rights are currently under siege by the drug warriors. Among these are the rights to privacy, equal protection and even speech—those who advocate legalization or criticize drug laws or their enforcement frequently find themselves the targets of harassment by the state and its agents.

Many advocated in this group even go so far as to post a right to make informed decisions

about what they'll take into their bodies without state interference or coercion. Foremost among them is Thomas Szasz, a pioneer in decrying the various hypocrisies of prohibitionist laws, policies and education. Unfortunately, the chapter dealing with him, "Moral and Constitutional Considerations" by Robert W. Sweet and Edward A. Harris, is often sullied by language that borders on the sort of philosophy-text gobbledygook that tends to make eyes glaze over.

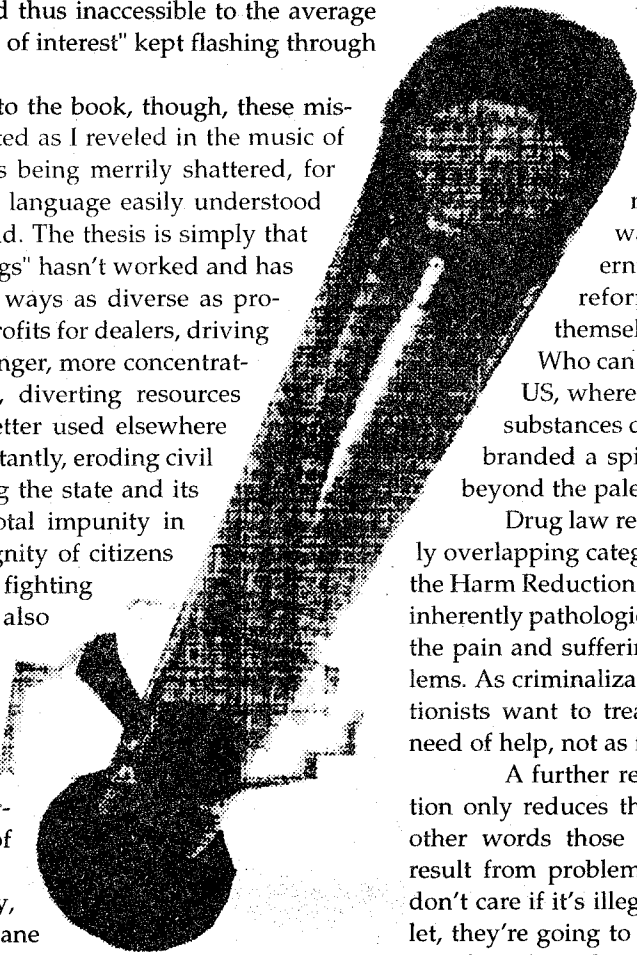
The second section of "How to Legalize Drugs" does drag a bit; as the saying goes, "the Devil's in the details." Once the policy wonks start to play with the idea, one begins to suspect that another of my cohorts, Mr. Glenn Given, is right, and the best thing would be some sort of decriminalization which would stop people from getting busted but still keep the grimy little paws of the government out the whole affair. I was dismayed to read that many of these folks admire the current restrictions governing alcohol and tobacco and many go on about the importance of keeping all these goodies out of the hands of "minors." Eric E. Sterling (who gets my "Putzhead of the Week" award) would like to see refrigerators built with lockable compartments for beer and wine and calls the growing efforts at age prohibition as "a step in the right direction." There is also somewhere in the book a proposal that juveniles using forbidden substances be jailed to find out how they're getting the stuff and arresting those concerned.

Hello?!? One of the largest groups using these so-called illicit drugs are those designated as minors (which very likely also includes you if you're reading this). I don't really see the point of a 21-and-over legal status unless its paired with the sort of Gentleperson's Agreement that existed for years in regard to tobacco and alcohol. I smoked my first cigarette at 13, drank my first beer at 15, and was initiated into the giggly rites of marijuana shortly thereafter. My experience is not uncommon and I often wonder why other "responsible adults" don't have the balls to stand up and state that adolescence is the average age of introduction to these matters.

I might add that we didn't commit real crimes (outside of some minor theft and vandalism) or indulge in violent or antisocial behavior. And as long as we behaved ourselves, the adults, including the cops, were mostly cool with it. So maybe the much-touted problems lie not so much in the "Teenage Wasteland" as in the values (sorry!) that are imparted from the society at large.

At the other end of the spectrum, hyper-libertarian Mark Thornton calls for an end to all prohibitions, which I sort of warmed up to, but he, disappointingly, places all his trust in the questionable wisdom of the "free market". I happen not to trust entities driven solely by the profit motive, so I'm afraid I can't gush with too much enthusiasm. In addition, he refers to prohibitionists as being "anticapitalist". Whoa, there, pardner. While many on the left do do-si-do with the Lifestyle Nazis, there are (I hope) more than a few of us who are gonna wanna party after the Beast is slain. As Emma Goldman once said, "If I can't dance to your revolution, I don't want to be part of it."

But I digress. Dr. Fish and all his learned co-conspirators have done a great service by presenting ideas and arguments that may hold sway in a good many classrooms, living rooms, and even board rooms, but seem to be banned from the chambers of government and, more importantly, newsrooms.



VIVA TIMOR LESTE!

By Joanna Wegielnik

In a sharp reversal of a staunch 24 year-old hard-line policy, the Indonesian government is considering full autonomy for the annexed territory of East Timor, something the former Portuguese colony has been seeking for over two decades.

Indonesian and Portuguese officials are currently meeting with UN representatives, including Secretary General Kofi Annan, in New York to iron out the technical details for East Timor autonomy. While Portugal argues that autonomy is a transitional stage until the East Timorese vote on independence, Indonesia says that UN autonomy proposals should be final. The Timorese have been demanding a UN-sponsored referendum on self-autonomy since 1976. In order to fully comprehend the significance and complexity of what is currently unfolding, a brief history of East Timor, Indonesia, and U.S. involvement is necessary.

Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975 in a naked act of aggression never recognized by the UN. The following year, East Timor was formally "integrated" into the Indonesian archipelago as the "27th province." According to numerous human rights groups, including Amnesty International and the Catholic Church in East Timor, more than 270,000 people—approximately 1/3 of the pre-invasion population—have been killed by the Indonesian military (ABRI). The United States historically has been an ardent supporter of the Indonesian regime (the U.S. supplied more than 90% of the weapons during the invasion period) and bears special responsibility for what happened in East Timor.

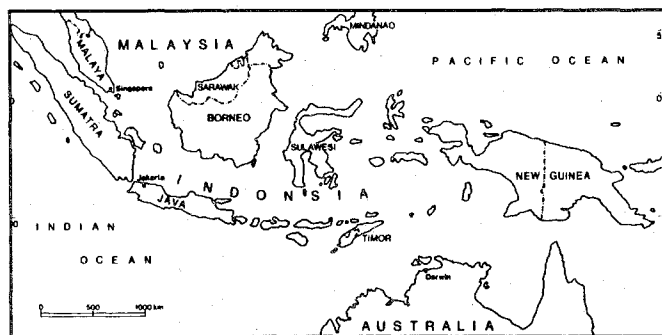
Timor's southern coast sits atop huge oil and gas reserves and deep-water sea lanes (read: submarines). Naturally, the rights to exploit these strategic and economically viable resources would be much more easily obtained from Indonesia than from an independent Timor. On December 6, 1975, then President Ford and Henry Kissinger arrived in Jakarta toasting Suharto (Indonesia's former dictator, who was recently forced to step down amidst widespread economic and social upheaval) on the eve of the invasion. "Our relationship involves a common concern for every nation to pursue its own destiny on its own independent sovereign course. On behalf of Mrs. Ford and myself, I raise my glass and propose a toast...." Within hours of this meeting, Indonesia invaded East Timor.

"Suharto was given the green light by Kissinger to do what he did. There was a discussion in the [U.S.] embassy and in traffic with the State Department about problems that would be created if the public and Congress became aware of the type of [American] military assistance that was going into Indonesia at the time. Rifles, ammunition, mortars, grenades, helicopters...you name it...was going straight into Timor," said a for-

mer senior CIA operations officer, Philip Liechty, who was based in Jakarta in 1975, during an interview in *Death of a Nation*, a documentary about East Timor.

"It was covered under the justification that it was for 'training purposes only' but without heavy U.S. logistical support, the Indonesians might not have been able to pull it off. [Instead] they were able to stay there at no real cost to them; it didn't put any pressure on their economy and on their military forces because American taxpayers were footing the bill for the killing of all those people and for the acquisition of that territory, to which they had no rights whatsoever," said Liechty.

Even to the present day, U.S. involvement in East Timor has never come to full light. Most Americans have no idea where Indonesia, let alone



East Timor, is. To a large extent, this is the direct fault of the major American print and broadcast media, who virtually installed a

blackout during the invasion years and kept the public wholly ignorant of what their own country was doing. Interestingly enough, around this same time, the Khmer Rouge (read: Cambodia: communists; Indonesia: client-state) seized power in Cambodia, and this conflict was played up to the nth degree. Noam Chomsky, an authority on this subject, has done an interesting comparison of the two conflicts and how much press coverage each

death. In 1994, the two received the R.E.K. and Alfred du Pont journalism awards for their coverage of the Santa Cruz massacre. Here's what Nairn said to the American journalistic elite as he and Goodman received their silver batons.

"During the fifteen-year, eleven month period starting from the announcement of the '75 invasion and running up to the massacre we sur-

"Big countries with powerful military machines should not be permitted to invade, occupy, and brutalize their peaceful neighbors."

-Former Secretary of State James Baker explaining why the U.S. was going to war with Iraq

vived, the ABC, NBC and CBS evening news shows did not run a single story on East Timor. Nightline, McNeil & Lehrer have never mentioned it. U.S. radio and print, though occasionally mentioning the killings, have inaccurately omitted the U.S. role.

"If you want to understand what the United States is doing, think of this baton as an M-16 [takes baton award and points to his head]. It is pointed at the head of an innocent East Timorese who has dared to stand up and ask for the end of the occupation. Washington pauses, considers, says, 'Don't forget human rights,' and then hands the troops new ammo and says, 'Go ahead, open fire.' Repeat this scenario 200,000 times and you'll begin to grasp the enormity of crime."

A few years back, I took a trip to Washington DC with ETAN (East Timor Action Network), an activist group, to lobby Congress against U.S. military aid to Indonesia. Nairn and Goodman accompanied us on the trip. Aside from the actual lobbying process (which gives one a fascinating peek into the way the American system of government works; I found myself standing in Congressmen's offices next to professional lobbyists representing General Electric and Philip Morris), the thing that struck me the most was

Alan's account of the massacre he and Amy survived. After confiscating all of their recording and photo equipment, the Indonesian soldier had him and Amy kneel on the ground with their hands behind their heads and pointed an American M-16 to Alan's temple. The only thing that kept him from executing them was the fact that they kept shouting "We're Americans! We're Americans!" He let them go, but only after checking their passports and delivering a couple of swift blows to the head. Alan still sports a very visible scar on his forehead from

being hit repeatedly with the M-16.

In 1996, two East Timorese leaders, Bishop Carlos Belo and Jose Ramos-Horta, were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their tireless efforts to bring justice to their homeland. The Nobel briefly put the media spotlight on this obscure region of the world and the countries (notably the U.S., Great Britain and Australia) who continue to sell military hardware to Indonesia despite its horrific



received. The number of column inches written by the *New York Times* on Cambodia and East Timor was approximately 20 to one.

Alan Nairn, an investigative reporter for the *Nation*, along with another American reporter, Amy Goodman of Pacifica Radio, were in East Timor in 1991 when the ABRI opened fire on a funeral procession in Dili, the capital of East Timor, killing 271 people. They were nearly beaten to

human rights record in East Timor (as well as Indonesia). Once the hype died down, however, hopes for East Timor's autonomy aspirations dwindled.

During last year's global economic upheaval, Indonesia was again propelled into the media spotlight as it experienced the worst riots since Suharto's overthrow of the Sukarno government in the 1960s. Thousands of people were beaten and detained. Suharto, who ranks right up there with the 20th century's most ruthless dictators, stepped down from power amidst rumors of massive corruption and failing health. He appointed a successor, General B.J. Habibie. In essence, nothing really changed with Suharto's departure. Indonesia is still ruled with an iron fist by the military. (Incidentally, the CIA helped put Suharto in power. Sukarno's platform was a populist one, with distinct communist overtones, not palatable to the world order. The Firm was busy constructing.)

The Indonesian hard-liners have admitted openly for years that East Timor is their number one public relations nightmare. Two weeks ago, Indonesia announced that it was considering granting East Timor independence. Negotiations have been taking place at the United Nations between Timorese, Portuguese and Indonesian officials all last week.

While this latest development is very promising indeed, especially given that Indonesia has staunchly opposed East Timorese independence for 24 years, the real proof of Indonesia's intentions will be the actions it takes in the coming weeks. According to East Timor Action Network activists, the situation in the province has seriously deteriorated since Indonesia announced its plans.

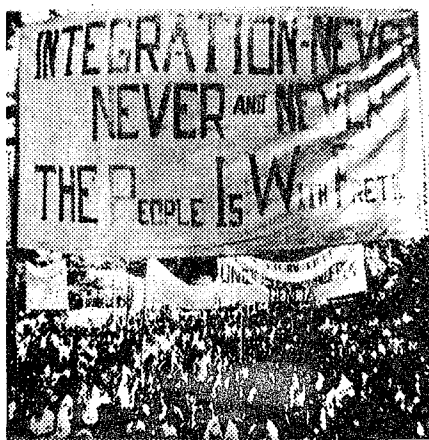
According to a January 27 statement released by ETAN, "While government officials deliberate over East Timor's status, the situation in the territory remains dire. Recent events, especially the arming of paramilitary vigilante groups, seem designed to exacerbate conflict which would make the holding of a referendum or a peaceful political transition impossible. In a recent example, the East Timor Human Rights Center reported the killing of four and disappearance of six others when members of the Indonesian military and armed civilian militia groups launched an assault on the village of Galitas on January 25, 1999. Such attacks in remote areas of East Timor have resulted in a flood of internal refugees into Dili and elsewhere in East Timor."

I share the skepticism expressed by many East Timorese leaders; anything Habibie and his henchmen promise should be taken with a big grain of salt. On the other hand, Indonesia has *never* made statements about granting East Timor *any* kind of independence. In any case, the Timorese refuse to accept anything short of a UN-supervised referendum on self-determination, release of all political prisoners, including Xanana Gusmao (a Nelson Mandela-like figure in Timor), and a permanent United Nations presence to monitor human rights abuses. Not much to ask if you've lived under fear and persecution from a neighboring country that has

done nothing but terrorize you for the past twenty-four years.

The Timorese deserve our outmost support especially, because we live in a country that is responsible for much of their misery. They risk their lives each time they speak up for their

rights. What do you risk? Fear of boring your classmates, friends and family? Nobody will *ever* point an M-16 at your head if you speak up for them. They live with that fear and reality every single day.



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(516) 632-5000 music@wusb.org

- 1: "Post Punk Chronicles" -(Rhino)
- 2: April March - "Lessons of April March" -(Ideal)
- 3: Lisa Germano - "On the Way Down From the Moon Patrol" -(Koch)
- 4: Sean Lennon - "Half monkey, Half Musician" -(Grand Royale)
- 5: "Tommy Boy's Greatest Beats" -(Tommy Boy)
- 6: Ani DiFranco - "Up Up Up Up Up Up" -(Righteous Babe)
- 7: Dan Caballero - "Singles Breaking Up" -(Touch and Go)
- 8: Art Ensemble of Chicago - "Fanfare for the Warriors" -(Koch)
- 9: Poole - "Among Whom we Shine" -(Spin Art)
- 10: Von Zipper - "Bad Generation" -(Estrus)
- 11: Fela Kuti - "Music is the Weapon of the Future Vol. 2" -(Exworks)
- 12: Baluchi Ensemble of Karachi - "Love Songs and Trance Hymns" -(Shanchie)
- 13: Sleater-Kinney - "Get Down" -(Kill Rock Stars)
- 14: Adrian Belew - "Salad Days" -(Thirsty Ear)
- 15: "Forward till Death" -(Lookout!)
- 16: Jennifer Kimball - "Veering From the Wave: -(Imaginary)
- 17: Long Hind Legs - Feb 4th-14th 1998 -(Kill Rock Stars)
- 18: Mankind Liberation Front - s/t -(Sol 3)
- 19: John Lee Hooker - "The Best of Friends" -(Point Blank)
- 20: KMFDM - "Agogo" -(Wax Trax)
- 21: William Parker - "The Peach Orchard" -(Aum)
- 22: Leon Russell - "Face in the Crowd" -(Navarre)
- 23: "Estrus Sizzles" -(Estrus)
- 24: Tarot Bolero - "Vaudeville Rising" -(Ace Fu)
- 25: The Residents - "Wormwood" -(East Side Digital)
- 26: Beta Band - "The Three E.P.'s" -(Astralwerks)
- 27: "Songs for the Jet Set" -(Jet Set)
- 28: Surf Teens - "Surf Mania" -(Dionysus)
- 29: Bonaduces - "The Democracy of Sleep" -(Endearing)
- 30: Rush - "Different Stages-Live" -(Atlantic)

REFLECTIONS ON FIDEL'S CUBA

By Daniel Yohannes

Decompression

It started early. I realized that the Revolution was a lie. It was a tower erected by a madman to protect himself and control a diverse population.

My plane arrived at about 11:00 PM. As I walked toward the immigration control booth, I noticed a tourist slipping the army-fatigue wearing Ministry of the Interior officer a bill, dollars. There were a few people ahead of me so I had time to contemplate the horrors of the customs search process. When my turn came, I had all my papers ready. Foolishly, I asked "por favor, no marcas a mi pasaporte", please don't stamp my passport. He looked at me strangely. Shit, was my Spanish that rusty? What did I say? I started to panic. The process dragged on too long. There was only so much to see on a passport and a driver's license. He got up and left the booth, came round, asked me to sit by the side and walked off with my passport. I had a cigarette and pulled my stuff together. I watched as all the pink people slowly made their way through and waited. Waiting is part of life in Cuba and I would become quite accustomed. After everyone had gone through, and a few minutes had passed, I got up to look for my passport. The guy walked up to me and asked me where I was staying. I had made up a reservation at a Havana hotel but he wasn't buying it. He said, I can help you get a cab into Havana and a hotel. If you help me out, I can help you out. I understood. We went back to the booth, he handed me my passport, and I handed him a \$10. I can't really get you a cab, but you'll find one outside. No big deal, I was in.

I tried to get a foreigner to share a cab into Havana with me but they were very xenophobic. Finally, I patted the \$1200 I had dangling around my neck and got the cab solo. We took the long way in and didn't arrive at the hotel till after midnight. The room was ok, but was windowless, as were all the rooms in the hotel according to the receptionist. I was tired. I tried to crash.

The intermittent screams and my neighbors steady snoring delayed my plans. Finally, I went to sleep.

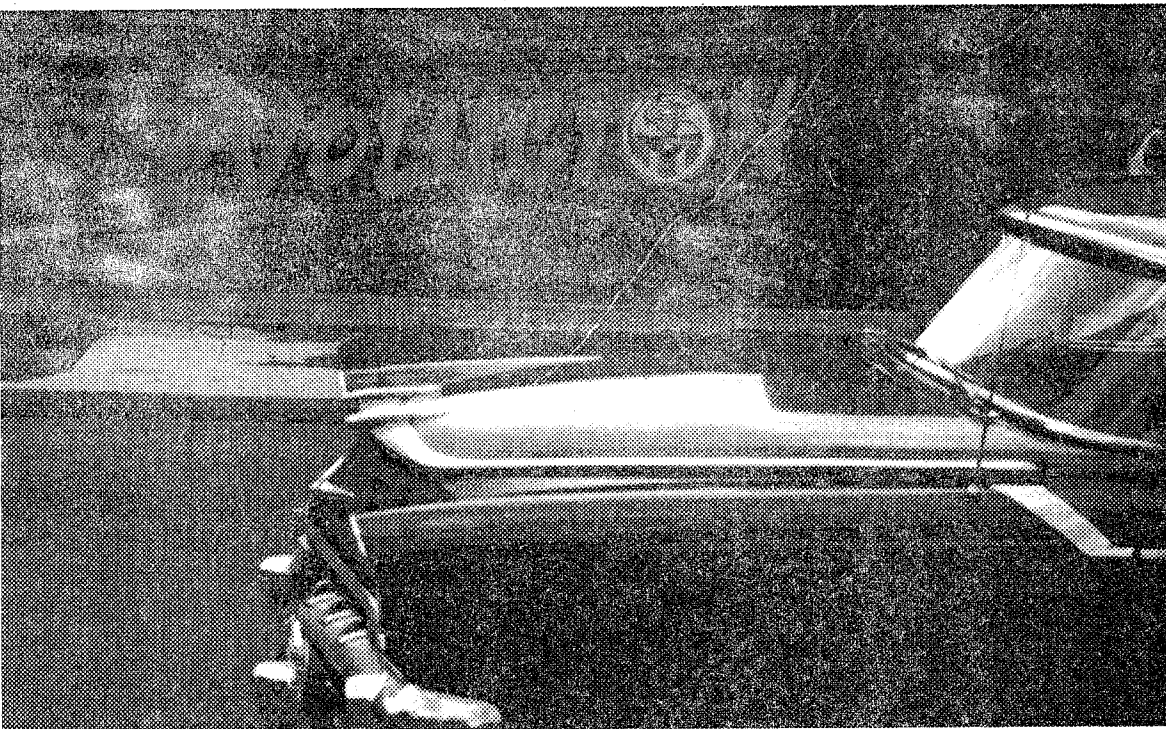
The next day, I got up and found a new place to stay.

The following is a stream of consciousness recollection of a two-week voyage to Cuba.

If y'all didn't know, it's illegal for US citizens to visit Cuba. For once, I was thankful for my emigrant status "een thees" country.

What I saw in Cuba left me saddened

would continue to work until he was physically unable. Thanks to Fidel, he could see. There are many hospitals in Havana and throughout Cuba. They are the pride of Cuba. Pharmacies have



and all the more certain that the best way to improve the condition of the Cuban people is to end the artificial pseudoisolation of Cuba. In the absence of a credible threat to the US mainland, people should be put before politics.

the good

In Cuba, there is universal health care and education. Homelessness is closer to eradication than in most western countries. Racism as we know it in America, does not exist.



In central Havana, a Cuban complained that beer, at nearly \$1 per, was too expensive to afford. "But, because of Fidel, I can see." Two years ago, he had had laser surgery to replace the corneas in his eyes. The man was not wealthy. He had worked hard all his life, and

poor variety, but most essentials can be bought.

All children must attend school. Schools are in every town and all children must wear little revolutionary uniforms. Cuba has a literacy rate that rivals that of the US. Higher education is merit based, and those who deserve it, get free education. The cruelty of all this free education is that Cuba has a highly educated population with no jobs that correspond to their level of education. Doctors and other professionals earn little more than less educated people. This leads them to take jobs as taxi drivers and lounge singers in order to make a livable wage. Cuba is one of the only countries in the world where the people are educated enough to contemplate the intricacies of their own oppression.

A billboard in Trinidad announces, "There are 200 million homeless children in the world and none of them are Cubans". While this claim is difficult to corroborate, there weren't the "street urchins" that are common in many other countries. Popular rumor says that all orphaned children are sent to live communally in the country.

Racism as we know it does not exist in Cuba. While skin color is sometimes used to describe someone, there is no negative or positive connotation associated with skin color. When the entire population is oppressed, micro-managing that oppression to include distinctions among skin colors is useless. The Cuban people run the entire range of the racial spectrum. After centuries of intermingling of the races in Cuba, few are purely white or black.

the bad

The Police

Fidel rules Cuba, but it is the police who control the Cuban people. Much like the police-

ing evident in the NYC dictator Giuliani's quality of life initiative, police in Cuba have wide liberty to stop Cubans, demand identification, and detain them if they lack it.

Tourists are never stopped by the police unless they happen to be with Cubans. If a tourist convinces the police that the interaction didn't involve an exchange of money, the Cuban may go free. Otherwise, the penalty for a Cuban interacting with tourists is 1,500 Cuban pesos (\$75), nearly 4 months wage for most.

This fine is mostly levied against the numerous local taxis that aren't licensed to carry tourists. State-sanctioned tourist taxis are late model vehicles that often charge double the local taxi fare. This money goes to the state tourism monopoly. The fine could also be levied against the numerous illegal room renters in Cuba. Smaller fines are levied for offenses that don't involve foreigners. Presumably, the logic is that Cubans with tourists have an illegal income that will pay for the fine.

On a Friday or Saturday night, one cannot walk two blocks without passing a police officer. This writer was walking with friends and stopped several times because he appeared Cuban. I explained to my friends in Spanish why we were stopped, "The police harass Cubans who are interacting with tourists, and they think I'm a Cuban." Upon showing a foreign license, we were allowed to continue with an apology for having been bothered. A Cuban in that same situation would have been arrested.

Along with the police, each neighborhood has a branch of the Committee for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR). This organization has branches all over Cuba, and is charged with ensuring that a counter-revolution does not begin. Neighborhoods are watched by the elderly and the bored; those who act suspicious can be, and often are, reported to the police for further investigation. On the street, one must be on one's best behavior.

Tourism

The Havana police force has just started using the 500 Peugeot sub-compact police cars that Fidel Castro bought for them. How, in a country of people living a third world lifestyle, can he afford such an expenditure? The one word answer is tourism. Tourism is the bread and butter of Cuba. While there are exports from Cuba, nothing rivals the volume of dollars that arrive in the pockets and purses of the foreign tourists. The police ensure that nothing happens to the tourists that would prejudice them against Cuba.

They come for the cigars, the beaches, the lifestyle, and the hookers. They come from around the world to taste the last gasps of a Cuba made famous by Hemingway, Sinatra, and Fidel.

Alone and in partnership with European and Canadian hotel chains, Fidel has a near monopoly on tourism. The foreign investors are used mainly for money and expertise on the latest luxury hotel fads.

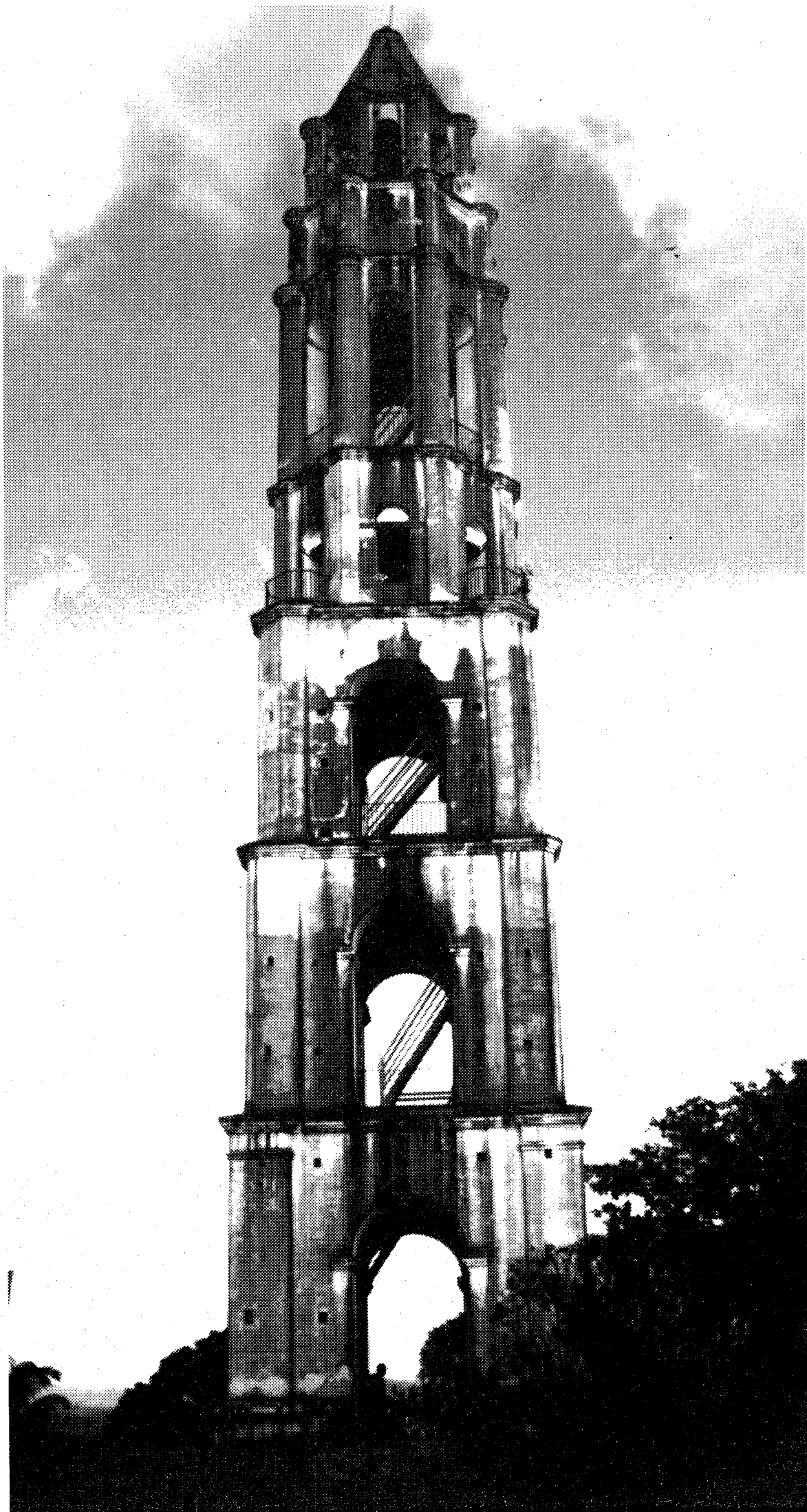
The Cuban people can earn a good wage working in these hotels, if they speak English. If they wanted to enjoy the amenities on their free time, they couldn't. They are Cuban and Cubans are barred from interacting with foreigners and enjoying tourist facilities regardless of ability to pay, unless they have

special permission.

But most Cubans are smart. They all supplement their wage with the dollars they earn from tourists. A Cuban who brings a foreigner to a black market dealer or illegal renter will often receive a commission. Some offer an extra room in their house for short-term rentals. Some have entire houses and apartments that they offer for this purpose.

Fidel licenses some of these Casa Particulars at a cost of \$100-150 a month per room. With the going rate for a room closer to fifteen dollars, a household must have a renter for more than ten days before they see a profit. Duenas often offer to cook their guest a meal (\$5-6) to increase their bottom line.

If a family is renting (illegally as is often the case in Havana), they have what few others



TRAVEL

do: a steady, dollar income. Legal renters probably see a large surplus in tourist season which is whittled away by Fidel's cut in the dry months.

Nonetheless, the tourism industry supports a class of people with far greater purchasing power and more western lifestyle than the average Cuban. Fidel's dream of equality for the masses wafts away like the smoke disappearing

paying more than that to take a girl out on a date, and then there are no guarantees," he said. Back home in San Diego, half of his "dates" could have him arrested for statutory rape.

In the town of Trinidad, a tall, handsome Dutch man consorted with a group of male prostitutes at 4 PM, a pre-teen girl at 6pm and a teenage boy at 9pm. Trinidad is a small town. The high-fashion clothing of the children

to interrupt this circus. Foreigners go there to meet Cubans and there, Cubans are free to be gay.

The Old And the Young

Oppression of the youth (18-30) is the norm. The older generation has lived through the revolution and the relatively fat years of Soviet patronage. They remember the hardship, racism, and oppression of the pre-Fidel/Soviet years. They acknowledge the hardships that have befallen them in the years since the collapse of the Soviet Union, but see them as temporary with respect to their personal experience.

The youth have lived most of their adult lives in the post-Soviet era. They have forgotten the years when necessities were given to all by the government. They see the lifestyle of the foreigners visiting, and envy it. They are the hustlers working the tourists, the pimps selling their sisters, and the sisters selling themselves. The lucky few have good jobs working legitimately in the tourism industry. The western lifestyle is a part of their everyday lives, but they are stuck in Cuba. They have little hope of living that lifestyle.

It is the youth that pose the greatest threat to the status quo in Cuba. But, they have no financial power. They are poor and they will stay poor as long as Fidel can blame all of the country's ills on the US embargo. Even the youth believe that some of the hardship in their lives is due to the embargo.

The Embargo

But the truth is that Fidel is doing business with many European and Latin American



from the burning ash of a Cuban cigar.

the ugly

prostitution

The oldest profession is alive and well in Fidel's Cuba. In the words of a Norwegian man, "Child prostitution is officially sanctioned by the government of Cuba."

The truth of that statement is relative. If a police state has rampant street prostitution, and there are police on every other street corner, and prostitution is illegal, is the government sanctioning prostitution? Yes. Does child prostitution exist in Cuba? Yes. Is it widespread? Yes.

A Finn named Johan had no shame about his reason for visiting Cuba. The women are beautiful, bountiful and cheap. "\$15 for a pretty girl. \$10 if she likes you, or is old. \$20 for a really young girl."

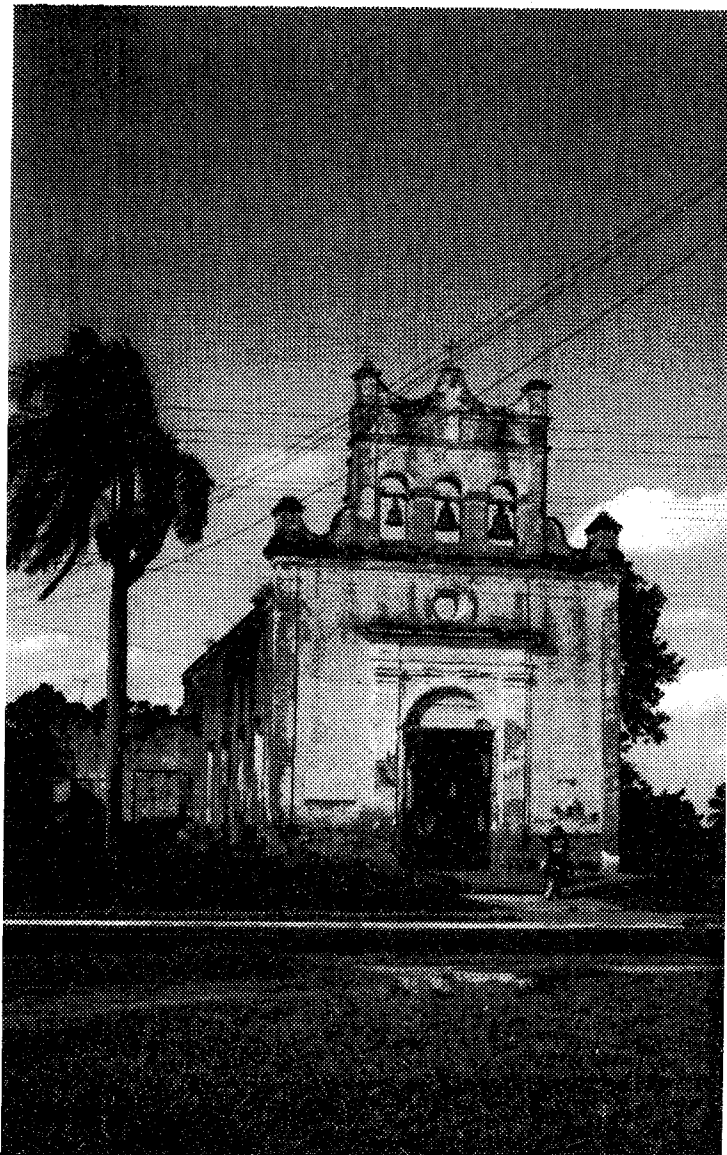
An American in Havana on his third visit had an apartment in the center of town. He and the 23-year-old man he rented it from would go out every night in search of a more beautiful or younger girl. His host would make the contact and introduce the American. He would have the final vote, up or down. Money didn't matter. The youngest and most beautiful girls cost little over \$25. "Back home, I would be

immediately distinguishes them as prostitutes. Whatever clothing isn't counterfeit, was given to them by tourists as bonus pay.

In the Playas Del Este in the province of Havana, an Australian man of late middle age was accompanied by a muscular 18 year-old young man. In his own defense, he said, "Inevitably, when the first-world meets the third world, the first world pays."

It isn't strange to see the most average looking man in a disco dancing with two or three young ladies of the night. A bottle of rum costs as little as three dollars. Drugs are cheap. At \$20 per girl, some can afford two or three.

There are no gay bars in Cuba. At one time there were, but the police have since forced their closure. Instead, young gay men congregate next to the Habana Libre, the old Havana Hilton. There is a cinema there, and under the bright lights of that cinema, they congregate. One cannot imagine a more conspicuous scene: 150 young gay men congregating under the lights of a theater, next to the most famous hotel in Havana. Yet, the police stationed in the area do little



countries and Canada. The embargo doesn't affect Cuba. They have Coca-Cola, and rap music and Mercedes Benz's. The embargo only serves to shield for Fidel; any social and economic hardship can be tied to it. It exists as a monster, from which Fidel protects the Cuban people. Any gains and luxuries are touted as having been obtained in spite of the embargo and against the wishes of the American imperialists.

40 years of the embargo have only served to make Fidel one of the longest ruling absolute dictators. When the embargo is ended and free trade reigns in Cuba, the money earned by the Cuban people will empower them. The American dollar is already the de facto currency in Cuba.

Time will bring an end to the Castro regime, but who will replace him? It is in the interest of US foreign policy and the interest of expatriate Cubans living in the US to have a hand in shaping the future of Cuba. The current iron-fisted approach will only lead to the torch being passed to Fidel's younger brother Raul and it is in no one's best interest for this madman to assume power.

Fidel has redistributed the wealth of Cuba into his own hands. But not even he can take it with him. America and Cubans living here should be prepared for the chance to reenter Cuba and return her to her former glory. Lost property may or may not be regained, but the importance of the future of a country overshadows the claims or losses of any individual. Lives and people should be more important than property and possessions.



Top Ten Things to Send to that Special Ex on Valentine's Day

- 10) One puppy, dead (preferably theirs).
- 9) Your illegitimate children.
- 8) Ebola.
- 7) Used condom.
- 6) Bill for services rendered.
- 5) One hamster, declawed and slightly soiled.
- 4) Nix.
- 3) Copy of the videotape you swore you'd erased.
- 2) NAMBLA newsletter subscription.
- 1) Squirrel.



Sometimes
I touch myself

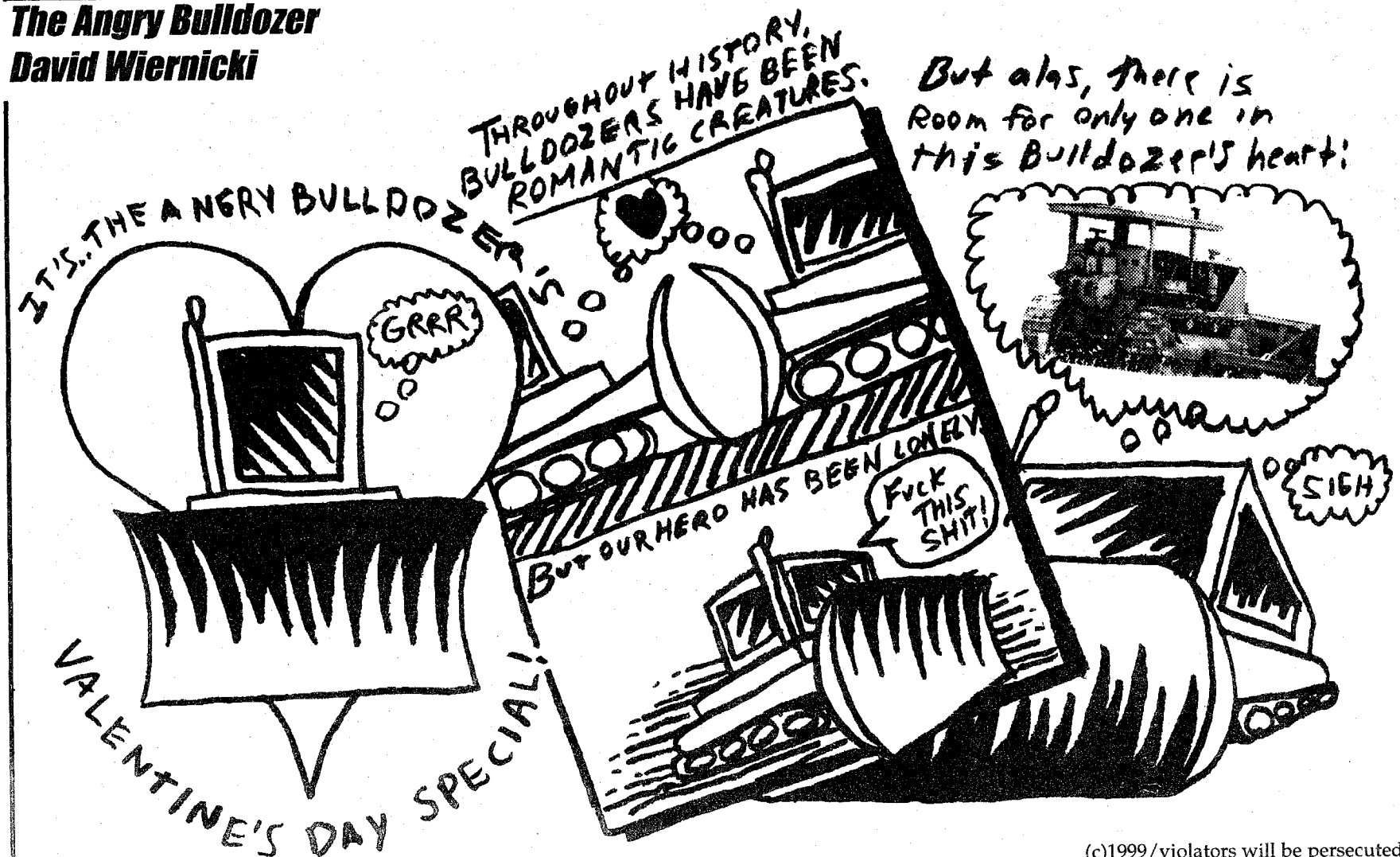
Join The Press;
you can touch him
too!

Touching possible only on Wed. at 1pm room 060 of the Union

Cartoon by
Debbie



The Angry Bulldozer David Wiernicki



(c)1999 / violators will be persecuted

Being a Single Woman on Valentine's Day is Not a Crime!

By Rhianna Bianco

Since Valentine's Day is creeping up on us, I have no choice but to face the cruel beast head on. I was painfully reminded of this distasteful event while purchasing postage stamps. The clerk, a woman, handed the stamps to me and squealed, "Aren't they just gorgeous?" I thought to myself, what a peculiar way to describe postage stamps, but to my horror, I looked down and there they were. There was no denying that the stamps were sickeningly cute. They were pink flowery hearts, truly the epitome of femininity. How disheartening! Normally, none of the events I just described would faze me in the slightest, however, this year I'm without a significant other.

Before all you proud single women string me up by some genital organ, I am fully aware of how utterly pathetic I am. I have prided myself on the fact that I am a strong, independent woman, but when the hell did wanting the company of a man become a crime? Does it make me any less strong? Am I no longer independent? Strong or not, a woman can only help herself for so long. (You know what I mean.) I work two jobs, go to school full time, and drive a brand new car. I certainly do not want (or need) a man for the same reason our mothers did. No man will ever have to support me. I am not afraid of sweating or breaking a nail.

Honestly, though, you can't tell me that it doesn't suck. I am sick of going to bars night after

night hoping some guy will find me attractive enough through his beer goggles to approach me. And imagine that he realizes, "My God, this one is cute and she has more than one brain cell in her head."

Granted most of us women don't help either. Ladies, get off your bar stools and approach him. Since when is this a crime? I thought those macho men liked aggressive women? Even I know this and I have been out of the loop for over three years. I am just getting my feet wet again after all these years. Somebody forgot to tell me that while I was blissfully gazing into the eyes of my ex, the rules of dating changed. And so have the men.

Anyway, let's explore this whole weak woman theory again. I get mad at myself when I cry at night over being alone, that if this was the 18th century, I would be flogging myself with a belt at the feet of some saint in a chapel. Why aren't men interested in me? Am I so revolting to the opposite sex that no man will approach me, unless of course he is otherwise involved, too drunk to see straight, or certifiably insane.

One guy, who I'll call 'Hank', actually did

ask me out around Christmas. For a while, he had been coming into the bagel store where I work on weekends, trying to find the words. I couldn't help it; I became that frail little waif in the dime store romance novels, the ones with Fabio on the cover. It was so bad that my friends said birds were flying around my head. Birds! How disgusting! I became the girl I want to puke on in the movies. We won't even talk about how my voice seemed to be three octaves higher when I spoke to him. All of this is irrelevant except for the fact that I hated myself for my foolish behavior. So nothing good came out of 'Hank'. He dumped me on New Year's Eve by telling me that he still had

feelings for his ex. I tried to be the strong woman but dammed it bit me right in the ass. He said he'd call me. He lied.

From this I have come to two conclusions: I find no shame in being single and at the same time I will stop punishing myself for wanting a boyfriend. My game plan is to stop waiting around on my bar stool for some anonymous Mr. Right. By George, I'm going to actively partake in the search and hope for Mr. Mediocre. I'm a '90s woman, and I can pick up a guy. Right? So ladies, if you are single, keep looking, and for Valentine's Day, go out with your friends.

"Ladies, get off your bar stools and approach him. Since when is this a crime?"

Harmful or Fatal if Swallowed

By Russell Heller

This semester, many of you may have noticed the racks of trail mix which dispense exotic blends of dried fruit and nuts.

Earthly Delights™, the sole provider of trail mix for the campus, also has a darker, more sinister agenda. On the shelf with slightly more benign trail products, one may find a bag of Earthly Delights™ Pumpkin Seeds. An innocent bag of pumpkin seeds. Or so it would seem...

My experience with these abominable seeds happened at the beginning of the semester when, hungry, I stopped by the Union Deli and picked up a bag. I brought them back to my room and started eating them. My initial thoughts were that they tasted remarkably like sea water, salty almost to the point of being inedible. Naturally, I turned the bag over to peruse the nutrition facts.

To my surprise, the product was revealed to be a significantly low source of sodium. In a 1/3 cup serving, there were only 17mg of sodium—less than 2% of the daily value! With that concern somewhat diminished, I cautiously resumed eating (did I mention being rather hungry?). When I reached the point where I could no longer swallow the briny pulp I was chewing, it dawned on me that something must be amiss. I returned my attention to the nutrition facts and scoured them for an explanation. What I uncovered was shocking.

In fine print, at the bottom of the bag, there is a message which informs the reader that the above information pertains only if one eats the inside of the pumpkin seed. Consumption of the entire seed would raise the sodium total to 9,290mg, equivalent to 387% of the daily value! 1/3 cup of these pumpkin seeds contains almost enough sodium for FOUR DAYS!

Of course, we must consider that different people eat their pumpkin seeds differently and this EXTREME amount of sodium might not be a concern for everyone. In addition, there are obviously people who read a "Nutrition Facts" label much more thoroughly than I do. With this in mind, I took it upon myself to survey 150 members of the Stony Brook campus as to their preferred method of pumpkin seed enjoyment.

75% of those I asked said that they would simply eat the entire seed. Also, approximately half of those I asked said that they do not, in fact, read a nutrition label every time before eating something.

These results place a considerable number of people at risk of unrealized, and probably unwanted, sodium consumption. I felt some internet research was called for.

On a web page generated by Dr. Alec N. Salt (I swear I am not making this name up), Ph.D. of The Cochlear Fluids Research Laboratory at Washington University, St. Louis, I was able to come up with some statistics regarding high sodium intake.

Excessive sodium has a variety of deleterious effects on the human body, notably:

- 1) The retention of water; causing bloating, particularly in women. (Yikes!)
- 2) A precursor to high blood-pressure, which can be aggravated by other poor dietary habits and smoking.
- 3) In the presence of high blood pressure, high sodium intake is deadly and is the first thing someone with hypertension should staying alive. (Yikes, again.)

Dr. Salt's page also gives a breakdown of various sodium intake levels which gives all this a little perspective. A normal salt diet (based on a 2000 calorie daily intake) has from 1100-3300 mg of sodium daily. A diet considered high (read: dan-

On a web page generated by Dr. Alec N. Salt, Ph.D. ... I was able to come up with some statistics regarding high sodium intake.

gerous) in sodium has from 4000-6000 mg/day. One third of a cup, the suggested serving size, of Earthly Delights™ pumpkin seeds contains 9290 mg of sodium all by itself. Quite a bit considering that this snack food item is probably not the only food containing sodium you plan to eat for almost four days.

It has also occurred to me that suggested serving sizes are usually grossly inaccurate e.g. "serving size: 3 cookies." Yeah right. We are a gluttonous people and we like to pig out sometimes. So what happens if you were to disregard the serving suggestion and wolf down an entire bag of those scrumptious, if somewhat brackish pumpkin seeds? Your sodium level would climb up to 46,400 mg!—1,935% of the daily value! To put it another way: One bag of these seeds has enough sodium for almost three weeks.

So what if it is already too late and you have already foolishly gorged yourself on these saline seeds? Well, Dr. Salt says, "Sweating, vomiting, and diarrhea can all provide significant sodium loss." So I would have to recommend that you try some combination of those activities. Extra points if you can do all three at once.

Who Needs Valentine's Day?

By Terry McLaren

"I hate Valentine's Day, yadda, yadda, yadda." If I have to hear that one more time between now and the friggin' 14th, I'll scream. Seems like almost everyone bears a grudge against the Hallmark holiday, and they have every right to.

But instead of letting one measly holiday that centers around people getting laid make you grumble for the whole month, why not get off your duff and enjoy one of the other special days February has to offer? And, since Stony Brook is such a smorgasbord of diversity, we're not limited to just American holidays. If there's nothing on the U.S. calendar, we can always borrow a cause for celebration from our international brothers and sisters. Here are a couple of suggestions:

Groundhog Day- February 2nd

This will have to be a belated celebration, but since losing the groundhog day spirit isn't an issue, it can be done. Groundhog Day is celebrated every 2nd of February. Although some may prefer a good old fashioned groundhog BBQ, this holiday's roots actually stem from Germany, Austria, and England where the people predicted the length of winter by the behavior of hibernating animals.

If a groundhog comes out of its hole and see his or her shadow, there will supposedly be six more weeks of winter. If the groundhog doesn't spot his shadow, you guessed it: early spring. There's extra cause for celebration this year, because the groundhog everyone watches, "Punxsutawney Phil" of Pennsylvania, didn't see his shadow.

A friend of mine was actually years ahead of me in this whole Groundhog Day thing. She's been throwing a rather kick-ass G-Day bash for years, and it always seems to lessen everyone's mid-winter blahs. Attempts to capture and cook groundhog remain unsuccessful.

Mardi Gras - ends February 16 this year

Mardi Gras is Louisiana's most famous festival. The phrase "Mardi Gras" means "Fat Tuesday" in French. It refers to the final day of merry-making before Ash Wednesday dawns and Lent begins for Catholics. Many other countries have similar celebrations, and it's known in Latin countries as *Carnaval* (which means "farewell to meat" in Latin).

Throughout this two week celebration, there are parades involving marching bands and colorful floats. These parades are held nightly until Fat Tuesday itself. Then the parade is held in the daytime. Spectators dress up in unique costumes, and each float usually throws out some sort of treat, such as beads, Mardi Gras coins, or even little stuffed animals. There are also many wonderful balls and parties to attend.

Mardi Gras colors are purple, green and gold. Purple stands for justice, green stands for faith, and gold stands for power.



New Orleans is a fabulous town, but since it is a bit distant, I'd recommend bringing the party on over here. Have a no-holds-barred sinfest and live it up. If you're worried about your immortal soul, you can always spend Ash Wednesday and Lent atoning for your merry-making. Make sure those forty days of repentance are well deserved.

Chinese New Year- February 16 this year

One of the greatest holidays during February is the Chinese (lunar) New Year. On this day, people visit relatives and anticipate a prosperous new year. They wear new clothes, and young people receive money inside red envelopes (called *lai see*) for luck. Lion and dragon dances are also performed for luck. There are lots of fireworks and parties too, not to mention some very good food.

So, if this particular holiday isn't already on your social calendar, try it out. New clothes, money, food, what could be bad? "Kung Hay Fat

Choy" to everybody.

Tet - February 16 this year

This Vietnamese New Year is similar to the Chinese New Year, but with some variation. Ladies wear red and yellow because those are the colors of the Vietnamese flag. Men wear all black. People go to church and eat earth cake, a square cake made with rice, beans and pork. They also eat fried rice. After that, the passing out of red "lucky money" envelopes begins. After that, dragon dances are performed and firecrackers are set off, especially red ones. Once again, there is lots of good food.

My Vietnamese foster sister is the one who first turned me on to Tet. I quickly embraced the holiday as my own and am currently waiting for my parents to hand over some new clothes and lucky money. I could sure use them.

Setsubun- February 3

This Japanese ceremony, called "mame-maki" ("bean-scattering"), is performed at temples and shrines, and in people's homes on "Setsubun," the last day of winter on the lunar calendar.

Roasted soybeans are scattered in and around buildings, with cries of "Oni wa soto, fuku wa uchi!" ("Devils out, good fortune in!"). The doors are then closed quickly to keep the devils out. After the throwing ceremony, people eat the same number of beans as their age, in order to guarantee themselves a year of good health.

Large shrines and temples sometimes invite sumo wrestlers or other popular personalities to perform the bean-throwing ceremony, choosing "toshiotoko" (those whose birth sign on the Chinese Zodiac is the same sign of the current year on the Chinese calendar) for good luck.

My brother e-mailed me from Japan about this one last year, and it seemed kind of interesting. There's no inherent carousing involved, but you can always get creative. This is another holiday that occurred before the *Press'* deadline, but you can have fun driving devils out any day of the year.

So to all you anti-Valentines, don't let one silly day spoil the whole month. The non-romantically inclined deserve their fun too. Enjoy this variety of holidays. Celebrate, and party to the fullest.

Putzhead of the Week

Rep. Matt Salmon (R-Ariz.)

By Elvis Duke

Conservative hero-worship got a lot more pathetic last week when our putzhead of the week, Rep. Matt Salmon of Arizona, introduced a particularly idiotic new bill into Congress.

He presented a resolution to the house to carve the face of former president Ronald Reagan into Mount Rushmore, the huge memorial in North Dakota. Reagan's face would join the legendary figures of Jefferson, Washington, Lincoln, and Teddy Roosevelt.

Salmon contends that Reagan, the man who brought us the invasion of Grenada, Iran-Contra and a record national

debt, clearly deserves to be lumped in with those who brought us the Emancipation Proclamation and the Declaration of Independence. Ah, *duh!*

Salmon's legislative gift has been demonstrated with previous gems like the "No Second Chances" bill, which would require that violent criminals receive mandatory life sentences, without parole, on the first offense. So much for "correction" and "reform," huh?

Matt Salmon can be reached via email at matt.salmon@mail.house.gov, or by phone at 202-225-2635. Give him a call and tell him what a putzhead he is!



Love and Marriage

Gay and Lesbian Freedom to Marry Day

By Marlo Allison Del Toro

St. Valentine's Day is a popular day for people to declare their love for one another, and to get married. So last February, when students at SUNY at Stony Brook saw a couple dressed in wedding attire, many assumed they'd just gotten married.

"A lot of young guys would walk by and say, 'Congratulations,'" says Melanie Clemans, the bride. She says they said it almost as an automatic response, "like saying, 'Bless you,' when somebody sneezes." But not female students. "The women always knew something was up," when they saw a bride on campus. They realized campus isn't where most newlyweds would choose to go on their special day.

Clemans and her partner, Alana Samuels, dressed as a bride and groom to bring attention to the first annual national Freedom to Marry Day, supporting the right for gays and lesbians to marry. The National Freedom to Marry Coalition chose February 12 because of the notion of equality related to Lincoln's birthday and the proximity to St. Valentine's Day.

To prepare for Freedom to Marry Day, Clemans used about \$15, some clothes she already had and a sewing needle to create a wedding dress for herself. She topped her outfit off with a flowered headpiece and veil, and sewed a cummerbund for Samuels' suit. Then she and Samuels put up fliers and posters, which they'd made, the night before.

On the morning of Freedom to Marry Day, they returned to the north parking lot on campus to put up the last poster. As the white-clad Clemans was hanging it, a young man walked up behind her and started to read the poster.

"This guy was standing shoulder-to-shoulder with me," Clemans says. She was nervous about a potential confrontation, was afraid to get hit, and began trying to remember what she'd learned in self-defense class.

"He turned to me and said, 'You mean you can't get married?'" Clemans recalls.

"I was so relieved, and so excited," she says, that she could begin the day by educating someone about it.

Throughout the day, Samuels and Clemans took visible action by "tying the knot"—

by tying ribbons with the six rainbow colors that have come to signify gay and lesbian rights—around bus stops and in front of the infirmary. They also gave bits of the ribbon to people they met, so that they could tie it around their left-hand ring-fingers or pin it to their lapels.

"Tying the knot" was part of the national campaign to gain recognition for the importance of gay and lesbian "family ties," organized by Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund. Kevin M. Cathcart, executive director of Lambda, has said the knot "represents support for the freedom to marry, equality for lesbians and gay men, and love."

"If a man and a woman meet in a bar and decide to marry the next morning, they have more legal protections and rights than a same-sex couple that has been together for 25 years."

Samuels and Clemans visited several offices on campus that day to inform others about Freedom to Marry Day, beginning with Student Activities and Polity, where they knew they'd be "fairly well received."

While walking around campus, they met a student in Overview of Gay and Lesbian Issues, a health sciences course that was meeting that day, so they made their way over to east campus and gave an impromptu speech on Freedom to Marry Day.

Samuels and Clemans say they went from one end of the campus to the other, twice, and tried to go "where the people would be during lunch."

Even when they took a break to get lunch for themselves, they were still answering looks and questions.

"A lot of people thought we really got married," says Samuels. "It was funny because we're not even engaged yet." Even some of their friends thought they'd gotten married and just hadn't invited anyone to the ceremony.

There are 1,038 things that Samuels says she is denied because she and Clemans are not married. Because only family members are allowed into a hospital's intensive care unit, she says, "If Melanie went into ICU, I wouldn't be able to see her."

"If I was in a coma," Clemans says, "she can't make decisions for me. And who would know better than her?"

Clemans is also concerned with inheritance in cases where wills are not made, and custody of children a gay couple has raised together, which is often relinquished to the absent parent or the birth parent's family when the birth parent dies. Even with the "domestic partnerships" claus-

es offered by many employers and legal contracts that gays can sign to try to attain the same legal rights and responsibilities that marriage grants straight couples, "you will always miss something," says Clemans.

Several times Samuels quotes an article she read recently about gay marriage. Originally printed in *NY Blade*, Patricia Penalosa's "No Greater Moment" details how the writer's partner, Linda, was not allowed to go into the emergency room with her as she miscarried.

The article states, "Because the law does not recognize our committed relationship...hospitals and other institutions do not have to respect our basic human rights....By contrast, if a man and a woman meet in a bar and decide to marry the next morning, they have more legal protections and rights than a same-sex couple that has been together for 25 years."

Samuels also has personal reasons for wanting the right to marry. "For me, it's about declaring your love...and asking everyone present to support you on it."

Clemans echoes those remarks, adding that the commitment that gays should be able to make to each other is also a commitment they will make to raise together any children that they have.

This semester, Clemans is a teacher's assistant for In the Gay '90s, a class that covers gay and lesbian issues. On the first day of class, she asked students to answer a questionnaire that began by asking if gay marriage was legal. About 80% of the class believed that it was legal in Hawaii.

In a class where Clemans says the average student is already pretty aware of gay and lesbian issues, a large majority of the students didn't know that it still is not legal for gays to marry anywhere in the U.S.—and that, according to Lambda, 29 states have adopted measures that would discriminate against married gay and lesbian people. Samuels and Clemans hope to change that.

"We hope to have a couple—not a couple couple, but a couple—of people dressed up" this year for Freedom to Marry Day, says Clemans. She doesn't know if she will be able to participate yet—she hasn't gotten off of work—but a friend of hers will most-likely wear the dress if she doesn't.

Samuels says she thinks what they did last year went over well because it was non-threatening, and she says she will definitely be doing leafleting this year.

They continue to fight for the right to marry, because, as Samuels says, "Letting us be is not the same as equal rights."

"...whithersoever thou shalt go, I will go: and where thou shalt dwell, I also will dwell. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

"The land that shall receive thee dying, in the same will I die: and there will I be buried. The Lord do so and so to me, and add more also, if aught but death part me and thee."

You may have heard these words spoken at a wedding—spoken in dedication of one person to another. Often this quote, from the Book of Ruth in the Old Testament, or the Hebrew Bible, is one of the readings at a wedding attesting to the love of God for human beings and the love of one for another. Sometimes the bride, or groom or both will use these words to declare her or his love for the person she or he is marrying, and to declare her or his love for God at the same time.

These words form one of the most memorable and beautiful dedications in the Bible. They are the words of Ruth—the Ruth who the Book of Ruth is named for—whose faithfulness has been likened to that of Odysseus' (Ulysses) Penelope. They are the words that Ruth spoke to her mother-in-law, Noemi.

After Noemi's husband and two sons, who Ruth and Orpha were

married to, die, Noemi decides to leave Moab and return to her own country. At Moab's border, she tells her daughters-in-law, who were bound by the customs of the day to stay with Noemi and the family of their husbands, to go back to their mothers, their families and their gods.

Both Ruth and Orpha say that they will stay with Noemi, but at her further urging Orpha decides to return to her people. Ruth, on the other hand, makes this dedication.

Ruth goes to Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, with Noemi, and becomes widely known for her devotion. Orpha is never heard of again.

Ruth's dedication to Noemi includes the "til death do us part" of traditional wedding vows—of the traditional promises of a man and a woman to stay together, forever, after marrying each other and promising unending loyalty to one another before God and their friends and family.

But these traditional wedding vows, and traditional promises, are not extended to homosexual couples who wish to promise unending loyalty to one another. And neither is Ruth's dedication, the dedication of one woman to another, "til death do us part," allowed to be used in a court of law or in a church to seal the love between a man and a man or a woman and a woman. Not in the United States of America—not in the land of the free.

BATTLE OF THE CENTURY PRESIDENCY

Dr. Shirley

VS

Dr. Evil

PRO

Triple Chin— Triple Threat; Patented left hook known as the "Sweet Southern Bell";

Years of cameos on 'Baywatch', Doesn't mind when *The Press* resorts to vicious name calling (ya fat bitch!); Can belch the alphabet. . . .**BACKWARDS!**; won't expel students based on scurrilous remarks made against her; Has student media right where she wants them; Successfully tricked, trapped and executed Agents 001-006; Can't be fooled by that Commie Pinko Chris Sorochin; Miss June AND Miss July; Often seen on the covers of *Newsweek*, *The New York Post* and *DogFancy*; Her adidas windmill can stun a Bull Elephant from 50 yards away; Close personal relation with Mayor McCheese; Has brought new meaning and motivation to this humble little paper; Part of the World controlling Pentaverse; If there's a ghost in your house she's who YOUR'E gonna' call!; knows the pain that every student feels when they're forced to wait 15 minutes for their Breakfast Burrito to reheat; Can watch "Hee-Haw" for 72 hours straight without breaking down and crying; Knows that Weight Watchers is a lie, **A BIG FAT LIE, THEY USED HER, SHE LOST NO WEIGHT, THEY LAUGHED**, soon she will have her revenge.



"Fe-Fi-Fo-Funk me smell the blood of double chocolate chunk!"

CON

Never learned that when someone touches you in a funny way to say "NO!", and then run and

tell someone you trust; Every full moon her evil side comes out and ruins the Seawolves chances of scoring that crucial clutch game field goal; Midnight Satanic mass may interfere with administrative duties; takes responsibility for her actions as well as Abigail from *The Crucible*; her house is infested with wayward Mormons; Secret shame of only achieving the bronze in the 50 metre high hurdles; other than that she's a pretty good President. . .

Ohh yeah I almost forgot that she has singlehandedly taken a college once know as the "Berkely of the east" and run it into the ground through a steady regime of:

- Media Sychophanthy,
- Redefinition of the University as a place of higher learning to one of higher profit,
- Rolling over at the slightest of Pataki's whims,
- Duplicitous Relations with the student body,
- The Perpetual whoring of the University to the highest bidder.

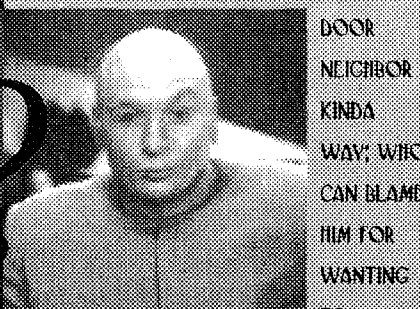
We hate you Shirl.



PRO

LOVES ANIMALS; DOESN'T BEAT AROUND THE BUSH; SIX YEARS OF EVIL MEDICAL SCHOOL PUTS HIM WELL IN TOUCH WITH OUR

PHYSICAL THERAPY PROGRAM; If HE WAS PRESIDENT, MECHANICAL ENGINEERING MAJORS WOULD HAVE HIGH PAYING JOBS RIGHT AFTER GRADUATION, PROVIDED THEY HAVE EXPERIENCE WITH BIG UNDERGROUND DRILLS; IS HIP TO THE GROOVE OF THE NINETIES GENERATION, AND THAT SPELLS CONCERTS BABY! WHO DOESN'T LIKE SHARKS WITH LASERS AFFIXED TO THEIR HEADS! HE'S EVIL, BUT IN THAT NICE NEXT



DOOR NEIGHBOR KINDA WAY; WHO CAN BLAME HIM FOR WANTING TO DESTROY THE WORLD, If YOUR FATHER WAS A RELENTLESSLY SELF IMPROVING BOULANGERIE OWNER FROM BELGIUM WITH LOW GRADE NARCOLEPSY AND A PENCHANT FOR BUGGERY, YOU WOULD TOO! WOULD INSTANTLY LIQUIDATE THE STUDENT POLITY ASSOCIATION FOR INSOLENCE; COULD PUT THE BROOK HAVEN NATIONAL LABS TO GOOD USE; KNOWS EXACTLY WHAT A SEAWOLF IS, IN FACT HE HELPED GENETICALLY ENGINEER THE SEAWOLF, WHICH WAS A SPlicing OF THE NORTH AMERICAN GREY WOLF AND A PUFFER FISH, IN AN ATTEMPT TO FINALLY ELIMINATE THOSE PESKY SECRET AGENTS THAT DOG HIS EVERY MOVE; INSTALLATION OF NEW GRADING POLICY, PASS OR BEATEN WITH REEDS; TOUGH LOVE; WON'T TOLERATE HIPPIES.

CON

WELL TO PUT IT BLUNTLY HE'S EVIL, WHICH MIGHT BE CONSTRUED AS A CON; TENDENCY TO INCINERATE THOSE WHO DISAPPOINT HIM; WEARS NEHRU; IS THIRTY



"When Mr. Bigglesworth gets angry. . . People DIE!"

YEARS OUT OF TOUCH WITH THE AMERICAN CULTURE, OHH WAIT THAT WAS FOR SHIRLY; LISTENS TO ENYA DAY AND NIGHT, NIGHT AND DAY; MANDATORY TESTICLE SHAVING AT FRESHMAN ORIENTATION; HIS NUMEROUS PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTURBANCES MAKE HIM A LIKELY CANDIDATE FOR TKE;

I CAN'T THINK OF MANY MORE CONS FOR DR. EVIL. FOR ONCE WE'RE SEEING A CLEAR VICTOR IN THE BATTLE OF THE CENTURY. DR. EVIL SEEMS TO BE THE RIGHTFUL AND FIT CANDIDATE TO LEAD OUR UNIVERSITY INTO THE NEXT CENTURY.

I FOR ONE WELCOME THE ARRIVAL OF OUR NEW DIABOLICAL MASTER WITH OPEN ARMS, AND WISH TO POINT OUT THAT MY POSITION OF STUDENT MEDIA LEADERSHIP MAKES ME AN INVALUABLE FUTURE MEMBER OF DR. EVIL'S INNER CIRCLE OF HENCHMEN.

I PLEDGE MY ALLEGIANCE TO MY NEW OVERLORD IN HOPES THAT HIS REIGN BE MORE BENEVOLENT THAN THAT OF SHIRLY STRUM KENNEY.

THE REST OF YOU MONKEYS WOULD BE WISE TO FOLLOW IN MY FOOTSTEPS.

Stony Brook

Loves Dr.

Evil!