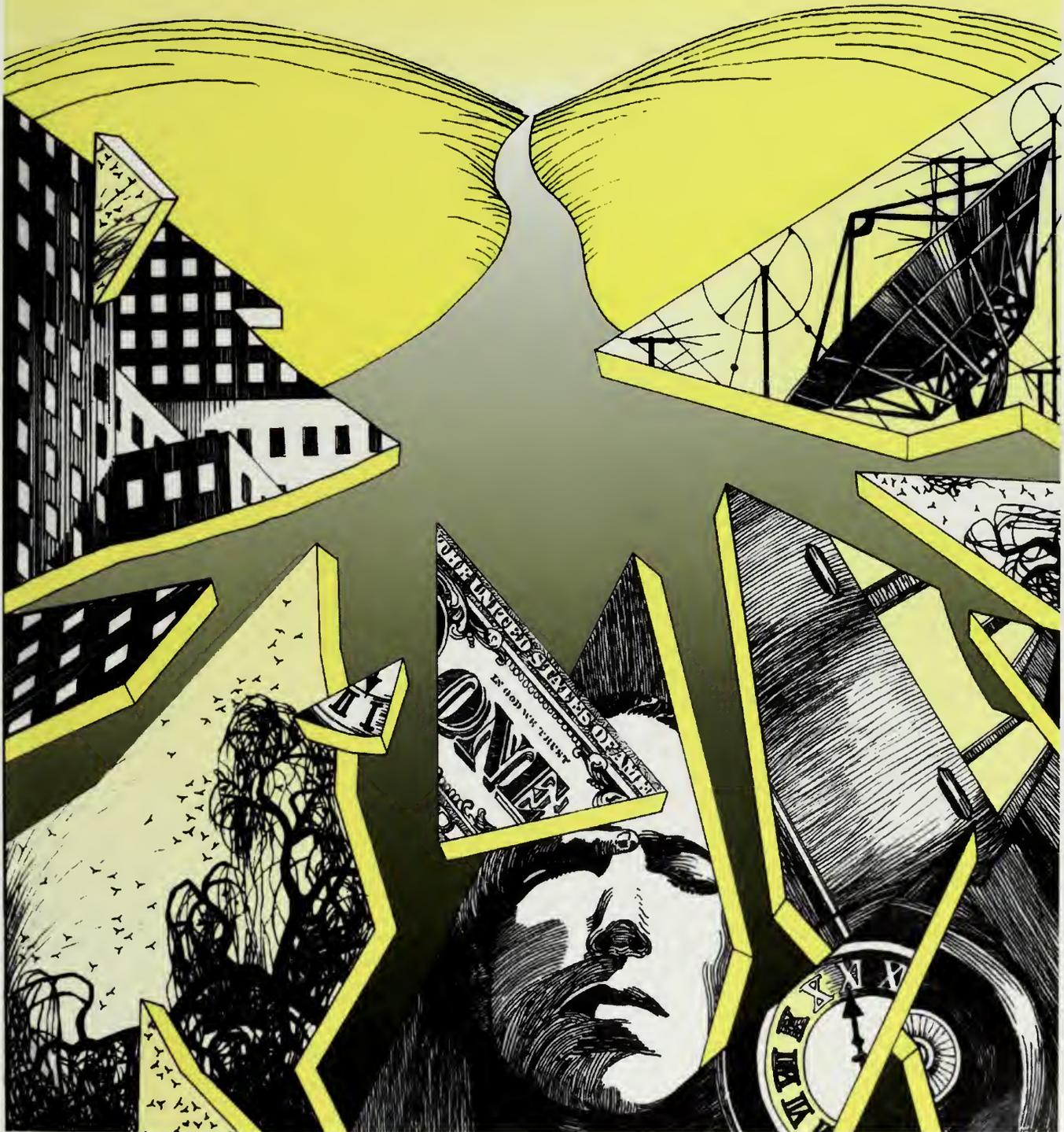


# PROCESSED WORLD 32





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# PROCESSED WORLD 32

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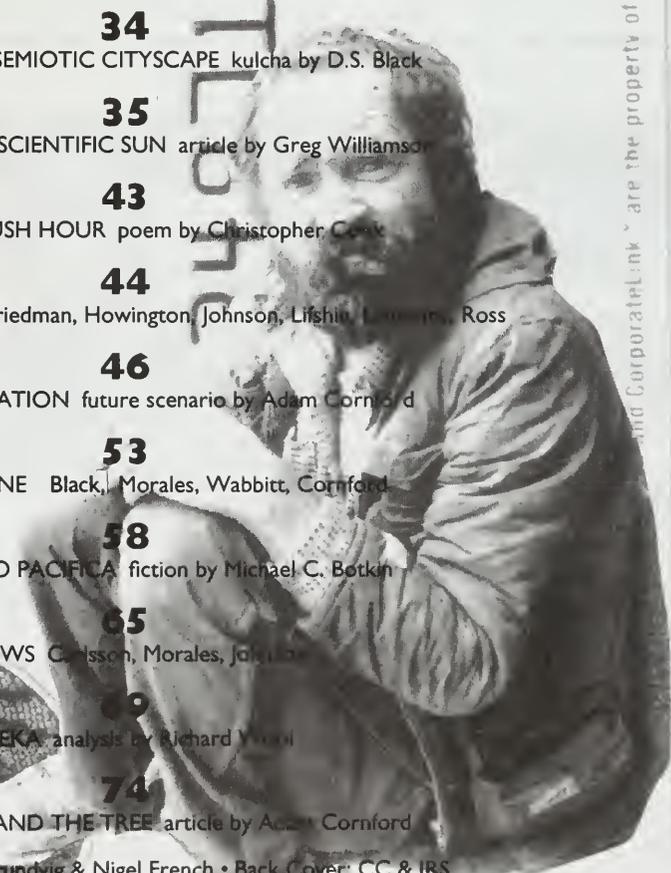
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# Utopyin' Heads

A century ago utopian literature was popular and people could speculate more freely about the golden future and the best-of-all-possible-worlds to come. The educated consensus was that technology would eliminate drudgery and want, and democracy and freedom would flourish in its wake as a result of prosperity and free market pluralism.

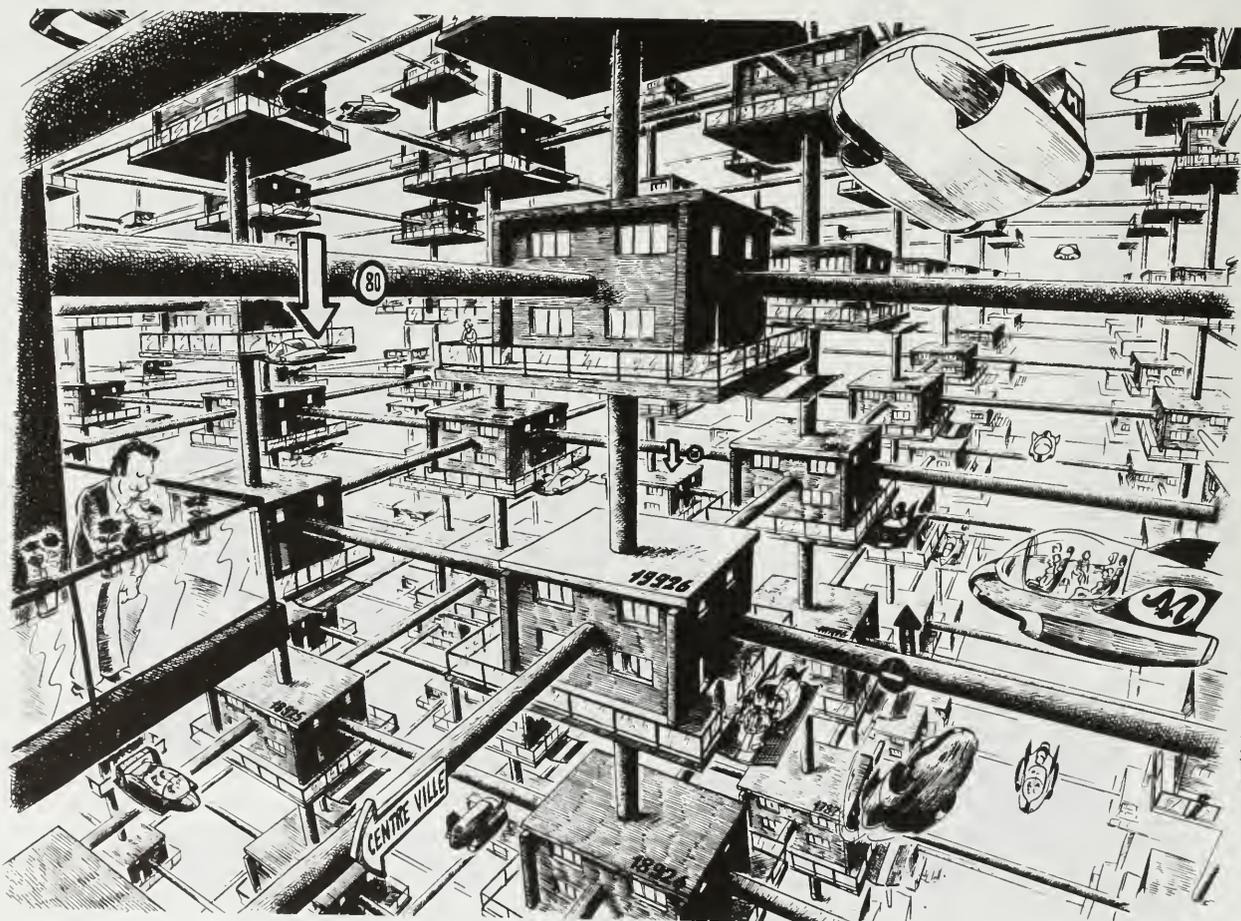
Alas, it didn't quite work out that way. While there was a moderate reduction of "full-time" work—the 40-hour week became the standard in the early 20th century—there have been no significant advances since. In fact we're losing ground. The transformation of work implied by the 19th-century utopians never occurred. Hopes have faded and nowadays utopias are hard to imagine. Today's future is typically portrayed as a dismal and dangerous post-apocalyptic hell. After a mere half-decade of mild reform (or "the end of history")—primarily the collapse of the Soviet Union, but also the fall of some of the

more corrupt Third World regimes—most people shy away from the future and are scrambling to turn back the clock.

This is especially true of the post-Soviet bloc. Politicos and masses both East and West expected (or at least hoped) that the end of the Cold War would unleash the best of free market capitalism and pluralism. It didn't. A few small fragments of the fallen empire—generally those with the closest ties to the West like Hungary, Slovenia and the Czech Republic—seem to be stumbling towards more liberal economic and social policies, but these are the exceptions. The satellite states in the Caucasus and Balkans have universally degenerated into "ethnic cleansing" and local imperialism. Most of the old Warsaw Pact nations and newly formed-Turkic republics—Poland, Romania, Kazakhstan, etc.—have just voted back in the old communists (now all renamed things like "New Left Alliance") after a brief flirtation with

"opposition" rule. In Russia, where capitalism seems to have taken the form of mafiosi in Mercedes and Big Macs at a week's wages, a coup masquerading as democracy was narrowly imposed by the troops of the KGB's elite Dzerzhinsky police division, whose efforts in the coup were fully supported by Clinton, the IMF, and the western media. Now there's a twist the pundits and futurists didn't foretell!

There were a number of popular revolutions in the late '70s and '80s which succeeded in overthrowing long-established and impossibly corrupt dictators and/or imperialist regimes: the Philippines, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Ethiopia/Eritrea, Angola, Nigeria, Haiti, Nicaragua, etc. Due to unresolved conflicts, deliberate external subversion (by the CIA and its clients) and impossible economic reforms demanded by the IMF, few of these revolutions have resulted in the hoped for peace or pros-



Graphic by J.F. Baellier

## FUTUROLOGIST LACKING IMAGINATION



perity. Some of these nations are in chaotic stasis, others have reverted to the control of the old oligarchies; in a few the new populist regimes cling to a limited and impoverished rule. Long-delayed plans to reduce apartheid in Israel and South Africa offer a future as frightening as it is promising, with former "revolutionaries" becoming the new gendarmes.

Even where the status quo is clearly unpalatable, like scandal-ridden Italy and Japan, the old regimes persist in only slightly altered form for lack of a viable alternative. China promises to be the next century's Top Dog, provided that it doesn't become the next basket-case of disintegration. Even worse, the Consumer China now under construction—full of TVs, microwaves, and cars—could well put the final nail in the planetary eco-sphere's coffin. The world's ossified oligarchies, veritable dinosaurs of social organization, retain control through sheer inertia, backed up by raw force.

The capitalist West, too, is intently trying to hold onto the present and shares the general fear of the future. European unity, another supposed bounty of the Cold War's end, seemed close for awhile but now has stalled in the face of a sudden resurgence of old-style nationalism. Officially, unity is narrowly passing its local referendums, but in fact its most significant aspects—like the common currency—have unraveled or been placed on the back-burner. After prolonged consideration, Europe isn't so sure it wants to abandon its old ways and embark upon its technocratic, rationalized future.

Here in the U.S. a limited future is dramatically promoted by a new administration, which promises (nearly) universal health care (while guaranteeing a long and profitable future for the insurance industry) and a North American free trade area. Even as marketing rhetoric this can't be sold as a massive leap forward, but it does embrace a popular notion of progress embodied in Technological Democracy (Democratic Technocracy?). The dreams of utopians are long forgotten. These moderate reforms are turning out to be a hard sell, anyway, with vested interests sabotaging health reform and everyone from Perot to the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the AFL-CIO protesting NAFTA in defense of the status quo. Either way, it's still worker against worker.

The future of national politics itself is even in doubt, as multinational technocrats continue to push aggressively for the latest

GATT (the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), an agreement which is designed to make the entire world a free zone for capitalist development. GATT tribunals will override local environmental and labor regulations if they conflict with "free trade" as defined by corporate lapdogs like Mickey Kantor (US Trade Rep). U.S. regulations protecting dolphins from predatory tuna fishing techniques were overruled in an earlier GATTaclysm. As we go to press, the heroic petty bourgeois small farmers of France are holding the entire GATT process hostage, but there's a great deal of pressure internationally to get a new GATT agreement. Once passed, national sovereignty will be a casualty (granted, nothing to cry over), as the needs of capital will be given legal standing above that of national (or local) laws.

Change frightens people. Staying the course to maintain the obviously inadequate present is preferred to risking an even more disastrous future. But the future needn't be so grim. It's true that widespread attempts at economic and social change and the fall of dictatorships didn't improve things much, and high technology doesn't automatically produce prosperity or freedom. Politics and toy/tools aside, what can transform the world is a revolution in how and why we work.

In this issue we glimpse some possible futures, some more hopeful than others. In *Death of a Nation*, Adam Cornford details a 30–50 year scenario leading to the breakup of the U.S. Cornford also philosophizes about how metaphors shape our lives in *The Pyramid & The Tree*. Michael Botkin takes us further into an imaginary future where a U.S. secret agent is dispatched to investigate and subvert the now

separate nation of Pacifica along North America's west coast. A more dystopic view is presented in Chris Carlsson's *Virtual Hell*, where some of the implications of the new interactive media future are played out; the same tendencies get a more serious look in his article *The Shape of Truth to Come: New Media & Knowledge*, in which the trajectory from oral to literate society is seen as the antecedent to the current move from *Spectacular society* to a possible self-managed interactive spectacle. Mickey D's *Trading Futures: The Abolition of the Economy* dismantles the blind acceptance of economic categories that regularly dominates discourse. Richard Wool rolls the dice with his analysis of gambling in *Eureka?!*, while Jon Christensen contributes a techno-nightmare story about water development in Nevada's desert. Kwazee Wabbitt checks in with our only *Tale of Toil* in this issue, *Boudoir & Bidet*, detailing his sordid experiences cleaning house and giving head. D.S. Black contributes many graffiti photos throughout the issue, and gives a look at some guerrilla art attacks in SF and Seattle. Greg Williamson re-examines his radioactive past in *Terror of the Scientific Sun*, looking at nuclear weapons past, present and future. Reviews, the *TransitZone*, letters and readers' survey responses, poetry and graphics round out this 32nd issue of *Processed World*. As always, we hope you like it, find it infuriating and informative, and will vent your responses in our direction:

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# Letters

## Anti-Utopians:

A few years ago I was feeling frustrated by the intellectual isolation that resulted from working a series of dreary clerical jobs. To alleviate the situation I overcame my usual aversion to the over-specialized, ivory tower world of academia and took a graduate level seminar at a local university on Marxist theory.

This was when I made a presentation on Marx's theory of alienation and used, in that context, the French writer Andre Gorz's work *Paths to Paradise: On the Liberation from Work*. Speaking from my section of the class circle (it was one of those classes in which the teacher decided we should be pseudo-democratic and so we all sat in a circle) I presented Gorz's Marxist-influenced vision of a future world in which there is a guaranteed "income for life" predicated on one's doing approximately 20 hours of work a week for 20 years in which one helps make, maintain and distribute the basic goods (everything from durable clothes, such as blue jeans, to refrigerators) produced by semi-automated factories of the type that have been coming on line in the last ten years.

How would people spend their free time if all were working part-time? Gorz's answer is: whatever so inclines them. Since only basic goods would be made in the factories individuals would have the time to make more artistic goods (e.g., a person with a taste for fashion might design and sew more fashionable clothes than the basic clothes mass-produced in the factories) in community workshops and barter their products for other luxuries of life made by others. People of a more intellectual nature, since most basic material needs have been met, might forego all luxuries and spend their time writing or reading; those with a more sensual nature might just have sex all the time, etc.

The class responded with anger and fury. All have accepted the consumerist paradigm to such an extent that these supposedly visionary thinkers of history (I refer especially to Marx but could, I suppose, include Jesus and John Locke on a good day) not only can't imagine there being more to life than television and Coca Cola, but are threatened by the very thought of something more.

—Greg Evans, Tucson, AZ

## Dear members of the *Processed World*:

Hi! I'm a technical writer. I and Ms. Gasako and Mr. Aki Okabe visited your meeting at last January. Do you remember us? We visited a small party of *Processed World*, and very enjoyed. All attendants are exciting people. While I'm not good at English conversation, I was enjoyed completely.

*Processed World* is a magazine criticizing computerized society and office work. It is clear that huge technology is dangerous to human being, though capitalists and government are driving to develop new curious technologies. We must be aware of the situation. *Processed World* warns.

Sorry for my terrible English. Can you understand? Please call me if there's a chance that a member of *Processed World* come to Japan!

—Yasuda, Yukihiro, Tokyo, Japan

## Dear Processed Editors:

I read with amazement and disgust the comments by LA-riot denizen "El Chavo." He feels the media somehow distorted the true meaning of the riot, and left out the "fun" and the "incredible spirit of celebration." Evidently, Reginald Denny and the 60 to 80 people slaughtered during this gala lovefest were also left out of the celebration. Or the hundreds of Korean businesses that were torched and destroyed.

This idiot "El Chavo" feels society makes him miserable, therefore he feels completely justified in destroying the stores and buildings in his neighborhood. Even feels he's somehow indulging in revolutionary action or something. And then one day when he goes to the store to buy his tamales he finds the stores are all boarded up, and when he looks for a place to sleep he finds the buildings have all been trashed. And he'll be the first to complain, and the last to see how his own behavior has contributed to this dismal state of affairs.

It brings up a point I raised in the past that, in my opinion, was never satisfactorily answered by the Processed braintrust, namely, this whole issue of "sabotage in the workplace." After we've all pissed in the soup, we—WE!—still have to drink from it.

"El Chavo," I too have contempt for this system, it makes me miserable too. The LA riots show how easy it is to trash it. But if you think that a better alternative is gonna somehow magically arise from the ashes, you and *Processed World* are indulging in the worst wishful thinking.

—Ace Backwards, Berkeley, CA

## P.W.:

I work for the New York Department of Tax and Finance here in Albany...Bldg. 8 at the state campus was a "sick building" for a time. \$1.5 million was paid to a politically connected engineering firm to "clean" the building just after dozens of women were laid off in other agencies...due to "budget constraints" lawsuits are rife because of contracting out of high paid "consultants." Nonunion bank employees are under mandatory overtime to do the keyboard scut work and are paid 40% less than state employees. We do have a good union...the state knows there is a large pool of cheap labor...so they go to the banks. Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is not dealt with by the friggng banks or by the state...Oh, you're injured? You're fired! (The banks)

Anyway, the few people that I know who would be receptive plan to order PW. In the years to come, your exemplary work will be most appreciated and talked about...heatedly!

T.F., Albany, NY

### Dear Processed Whine:

I don't know why I keep buying your tedious little rag. Certainly not for the flatfooted social theorizing (sophomoric), the cartoons (high-schoolish), or the poetry and fiction (unspeakable). It must be because I temped in San Francisco for 8 years and it's fun to read about other people's experiences in companies I worked for (BoFA, PacBell, etc.).

Instead of a technical skill, the secret knowledge you cherish is Marxism. Instead of falling through a space warp, you dream of revolution, of the day when you plow up Market Street for bike paths and exile the old men in suits to Fremont. The problem is that most of you couldn't organize a T-shirt shop, let alone a revolution. The bad attitude you cultivate on the job, like a beggar picking at scabs to keep the sympathy flowing, makes you unfit for the give and take of a commune or any cooperative endeavor. But you blither on, shoplifting CDs and copying your novel on the office xerox, imagining that these pathetic crimes make you Mao in the caves of Yenan, preparing to topple the Empire.

I find it odd that so many intelligent, sensitive, socially aware people (or so you say) who hate shit jobs nevertheless continue to do them year after year. If you're so smart, why can't you escape?

—G.H., Ridgewood, N.J.

### Dear Processed World:

I wrote internal PR—employee communications—for corporations for about ten years until escaping about three years ago, terribly afraid that I had redlined my own ethical meter so often that I would never find my own voice again. I hated almost every line of what I wrote and produced: "we have a commitment to excellence," "we're company people," "we have an open door policy for employee concerns," blah blah blah...I'm now preparing to do fieldwork for a thesis (social anthropology) on the "cult of self-expression"—hitting extra hard on all the management pundits who are saying that employee creativity is our most precious resource, that companies should encourage their employees to "express their creativity" on the job. Yeah, at \$5.50 an hour. I am very concerned that the intellect and imagination, long the only refuge from appropriation and colonization by corporations, is now being mapped, mined and exploited—until every wretched lowpaying job is defined in terms of its "empowerment."

—M.K., Berkeley, CA

### To Processed World peoples:

The wind from Germany has struck here too, and the scenario now is like this: Political parties have been destroyed from the various investigations called "cleaning hands." At the right wing the Christian Democrats are now changing name and have lost something more than 50 percent of their electoral share. At the left wing communists are broken in two parties and collectively they lost a little bit. There is a growing of Lombard's League, now the first party in the north, and of fascists in the south. Racism is their common point of view. For what once we called the Movement, what I can see is hopeless.

What remains from the 70s, you can name Toni Negri from Paris, the Paduan Collectives, the Roman intellectuals, seems to be agreed to launch a paper of social rights from which to open discussions with the administrations. There is a more and more strong connection between such initiatives and the parts of the communist party that yet call itself communist party (the stalinists).

The town was never so dead as now. There is a total absence of anything. The beginning of an alternative organization of workers, a.k.a. Unitary Confederation of Grass Roots, has slowed down its growing curve because the economical situation is so desperate that people accept the worst things as without alternatives. I think that, if no worse happens, in some years we will develop a culture of confrontation with long strikes, gathering of money for strikers, etc. At this moment the entire country is under shock. All political faces that you can think of are in jail or waiting to go in. For what I can see there is no hint of a solidaristic or oppositional culture. In that climate you can see growing attitude against "niggers and pushers and black prostitutes." The group I was collaborating with is semi-dissolved, one has chosen to become a publisher of situationist books, and the others are deeply discouraged.

I want that you read my poor english thinking of the better meaning of my words. It's so difficult to express myself in Italian, figure it in English.

—G.M., Milan, Italy

### Dear Processed World:

I picked up *Bad Attitude: The Processed World Anthology* at a half-priced bookstore in Chicago last month. It is comforting to know there are other like-minded people in the world, especially after a bad day at work.

I have been temping for the last fourteen months at the IBM Branch office in Kansas City, MO. Kansas City is an extremely conservative town and as you already know, IBM is equally conservative. When an IBM manager oinks his opinion (which is well received by most IBMers) about how the latest Rush Limbaugh broadcast was sooooo profound, no one complains. But if a temp complains about unfair treatment, expect the security guards to be called!

I am uncertain whether or not I will be employed tomorrow as the "Direct Mail Coordinator" at IBM. My manager, who thinks all temps are stupid (she's unaware that several of the temps have masters degrees, most have bachelors degrees—one even has an electrical engineering degree from Yale), felt the shading on a graphic box didn't match the other boxes on a document. The desktop publisher (who is also a temp) reassured her she used the same shade for all the boxes and nobody else except for the manager's suck-up sidekick could tell the difference. Since she had given me a particularly hard time today (when she finds fault with some minor detail, she blurts "Ooh!"), my uncontrolled reaction, peppered with expletives, was not considered exactly professional even though the Manpower manager agreed her comment was beyond normal pettiness.

However, if I am still employed at IBM tomorrow, I would like to utilize some of the creative ideas from your publication. Many of the temps have experienced discontent with the organization and this corporate environment is a perfect breeding ground for budding revolutionaries.

Joyce Bess worked for IBM for 25 years and took the buy-out option (i.e. paid layoff) last year and came back as a Manpower temp to work on the switchboard. Since all the clerical jobs and most technical jobs are now temporary at IBM, Manpower decided to give a \$100 bonus as an incentive for perfect attendance each quarter.

A month after the first quarter ended, the attendance bonus was still not awarded to the deserving temps. Several temps complained, but Manpower excused themselves by saying, "We don't know how to account for the bonus." One temp said, "How about debiting Accounts Payable!"

One Friday afternoon, Manpower visited IBM and doled out bags of stale popcorn, thinking this gesture would pacify the angry temps. After they left the switchboard area, Joyce Bess growled, "I don't want some fucking popcorn, all I want is my damn \$100!" Joyce forgot her intercom was on and her remark was heard by the entire company and the Manpower representatives. We got our bonus a week later and Joyce was lightly reprimanded (temps who were once IBM employees are treated a little better). Joyce found a job working at a daycare center for, get this, more pay and left a month later. So much for the Midwest work ethic!

—S.S., Kansas City, MO

# Reader Survey

We sent out one of our periodical (if irregular) surveys to our subscribers after our last issue. It asked seven questions. The first was "When, where and how did you first encounter PW?" The second asked how many people look at your copy, how many read it and what their reaction to it is. The third question asked "What do you like best about PW?" It offered an 8-point scale with 1 being "favorite" and 8 being "least liked" and asked respondents to evaluate the Poetry, Fiction, Graphics, Tales of Toil, Analyses/Essays, Reviews, Editorials and Letters from Readers.

Question number 4 asked "what would you like to see in PW in the future, and number 5 asked "Do you sell your time to buy your survival? How?" Number 6, "What language(s) do the police in your city speak? What do they say?" seemed to confuse a number of respondents, although others caught its drift.

The last question, for extra credit and with the "Future" theme of PW 32 in mind, asked respondents for their vision of the future: "What do you expect to happen? What would you like to have happen? What would you hope not to see?"

As one might expect from the PW readership, the responses were wide-ranging and not easily quantifiable. Many didn't bother with the multi-point scales offered in the first three questions and others used them **i D j o s y n c r a t i c A L L Y**, so attempts to generate "real" statistics from them are difficult. On the other hand, most people who bothered to answer at all (a total of 54 subscribers returned completed surveys) generally threw in at least some commentary. What follows is a brief and qualitative review of the responses and a generous sampling of the commentary.

Graphics and Tales of Toil were the clear favorites on the 8-point scale, with Poetry and Fiction the obvious least favorites. Essays and Letters garnered mild support, with positive ratings (1 to 3) outnumbering negative ones (5 to 8). Reviews and Editorials got about equal amounts of positive and negative evaluations.

Extracted commentary follows:

**(re: question #7 on "future")** I dare not venture a guess off-hand as to what the political future might be; I suppose overall the human project is technology, technology and more technology. How this jibes with the environment is anybody's guess.

**(re: q #5 "how do you sell your time")** Selling time is one thing I've grown reasonably adept at... and stealing it back as well. Last year I was a long-term temp for a state hospital billing department, where for forty hours a week I typed information onto forms, entered material into computers, you know the deal. Workers were divided into "billing teams" according to what portion of the alphabet they handled (I was in A - H). The managers overseeing these "teams" encouraged competition between them, spurring acrimony and fierce allegiance to one's team... we were supposed to loathe the other teams and make ours the very bestest. Since

**(re: q #4 "future issues)**

Quit being so grumpy. It's helpful at age 21 when just starting out in the "full time" work force (give or take a few years) but near age 30 it gets to be whiny and repetitive. Maybe more articles on rare good jobs or self-employment: life good and bad.

we were watched over very closely when at our desks I learned to run lots of "errands" for people (a trip to the supply room could be nicely stretched if I hid what I was "looking for" and had thus to fill out absurdly detailed requisitions, frequently for non-existent office supplies, like "four bottles typewriter ink"). But then I moved to where I now live and landed a part-time teaching job at a prep school.

Unfortunately, my wife lost her job (a one-year contract that ended) and now I'll be teaching part-time and also, most likely, doing more clerical work to fill in the formerly idle hours. I could live, barely, on my four-digit salary from school, but I'm going to have a baby in October who'll probably need lots of

money spent on its care. No matter what, though, I'm absolutely determined to live as cheaply as possible, and spend as much time out of my life living it rather than simply working to sustain it.

At least I'm not in debt. I have a credit card but refuse on principle to use it. Several of my family live profligate lives filled with restaurant eatin' and purposeless acquisition. They own more clothes than I could fit in my whole rented house and are so far in the hole I doubt they'll ever be clear. My wife and I are devoted to owning less and less. If, and it's unlikely, we can ever afford a house it will be the first time we'll ever owe anybody. Consumer debt scares the hell out of me: I'd rather not own than o<sub>w</sub>e.

**(re: q #5 work) I**

teach innumerable adults math. I try to inject political content—mathophobia is political. I give exercises like "figure out what the author is saying with the use of numbers here." Students come back outraged at the obfuscation and simplicity (and sometimes deceit) being covered up. Teaching is exciting and fulfilling, though it doesn't quite cover my expenses yet. It's also a dangerous power trip, a fact of which I am aware.

**(re: question #4 on what's liked for future issues) I** economic stories, with emphasis on jobs 2) stories on taxes and their impact on workers.

**(re: the future; from a prisoner)**

The future for the proletariat is grim, slim and subject to change without notice. I expect the herd to act accordingly, pretty much as is the present case with the uban/avant garde milieu consuming and paying dues to maintain the status quo. I hope not to see/learn of additional coopted addicts, institutionalized souls and emotional desperados.

**[30] Dear Pow-Wows:**

I'd like to add a few tips and caveats to Sal Acker's "How to **Scam Your Way Through College**" (PW 31). Like Acker I'm one of those "professional students" who provoke envy and/or disgust from folks who have to work for a living, fear and hatred from the bosses (who quite rightly see professional studenthood as an escape from wage slavery), and bemused tolerance from most liberal-minded academics. I've been a professional student for over 17 years studying filmmaking, shamanism, music, photography, French, Spanish, Italian, poli sci, tennis, basketball, history, you name it and accumulating degrees in French, English and Journalism while racking up around \$50,000 in student loan debt and almost completely avoiding paid work. As an undergraduate in the late '70s my philosophy was much like Acker's—I selected classes primarily on the basis of how little work I could get away with putting into them. But after stupidly graduating in only five years I asked myself what I'd learned from all those skipped classes and easy multiple-choice exams and wondered if there might be a better way.

So when I dived back into school shortly thereafter—community college film, photo & language courses, then various M.A. programs—I chose time-consuming bust-ass courses that helped me develop my talents in areas I enjoyed. I'm now fluent in three languages, working on two more, and know my way around cameras, dark-rooms, film and recording technologies, guitars, computers and literary history. I'm a scammer in the sense that I don't give a shit about grades, degrees or making a living in the conventional way. But I enjoy putting effort into the course I take—why else would I take them?—so professors don't mind me hanging around and the grade thing takes care of itself. If you're blatantly trying to get by with minimal effort—especially if you don't know much about the subject and obviously don't care to learn—your professors and classmates will consider you a dumb, annoying bore who shouldn't be there.

(The question "would you be there if you weren't getting paid for it?" applies to the classroom as well as the workplace.) The know-nothing brand of "bad attitude" won't do much for your long-term prospects as an academic scammer, nor as a well-rounded human being.

PS Logistical tips:

1) Put your first student loan into a large, livable vehicle step-van, cabover truck, or old motor home—school buses draw cops like flies to shit and little old ladies think you're dumping in the streets. Teach yourself auto mechanics, scam tools with your Sears and Wards student credit cards and you'll never have to pay rent again.

2) If you're a grad student your \$7,500-a-year loan will easily pay for a year in your favorite foreign country via an exchange program. I spent a year in Paris and could have not worked at all, but chose to teach a subversive version of U.S. history at a private language school for a few extra francs. If you choose a third-world country you can live fine on an undergraduate loan/aid package.

3) Get all the credit cards you can—if you're a student most card companies don't check your income. Then max 'em out and blow 'em off. Exception: keep your **American Express** card, which entitles students to three round-trip flights within the U.S. for under \$200 each on Continental. I've flown cheap so often I've accumulated enough frequent flier mileage for a free trip to Europe.

4) As the screw gradually tightens loan limits, red tape, tuition hikes—don't just scam,

**PROTEST.** In France every high school graduate has the right to a **FREE** college education all the way through grad school.

Every time the government tries to charge a nominal tuition the students riot, clogging traffic, trashing government buildings and generally raising hell. The government inevitably relents. California students would still be paying zero tuition (as in the '60s) if they just organized and  
t r a s h e d  
Sacramento a  
few times.

**(re: future)**  
Mass culture will continue to degenerate into

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stupidity and illiteracy. Almost nobody can read any more. My ambition is to **get married**, escape this city and forget about the world going to hell.

**(re: #3 things I like in PW)**

- a. true life stories of people's work experiences.
- b. Chris Carlsson's anti ecofascism piece.
- c. Kwazee Wabbitt. He's an incredibly good writer. Tell him to hang in there!
- d. Your awareness that social activist institutions, even those advocating good causes, can make particularly bad employers.

**(re: #4, future issues) MORE**

**DEPTH OF THOUGHT.** I can't stand the idea that all institutions are equally bad and the WesCiv should be destroyed without careful consideration of what comes next. This unilateral 'all work should be abolished' trip comes across as really shallow.

# Reader Survey

**(re: comments)** More Tom Tomorrow! More Ace Backwards! You create one of the most consistently interesting and provocative works of anarchy around.

**(re: future)** I expect more of the same. I would hope that the US economy collapses into chaos and that the Left revives and begins connecting people up with the Rainbow Coalition, Greens, etc. but I'm afraid Pat **Buchanan-style Nazism** is much more likely to develop as the paradigm of the future.

**(re: #7 future; from a German reader)** I hope that the visibly strong tendencies towards repressive security states (in Fortress Europe) can be **STOPPED.**

**(re: #7)** More layoffs, more unemployment, more minimum wage jobs and lower pay for non-minimum wage jobs; more right-wing political movements for white people to let off steam and express their fears. The Religious Right is the closest thing I've seen to the Nazis yet! Keep feeding **drugs** and **guns** to the minorities and build more **jails** for them if they bother the suburbanites. More entertainment/media options and better junk food to keep people **fat, dumb** and **happy**.

**(re: #6 on cops)** Although I live next door to an Irish cop, and have several more down the block from me, I don't say too much to them. I usually just wave and stay out of their way. The cop next door smokes a lot of cigarettes and fights with his wife. I can usually hear him clearing his throat of phlegm every morning. His teenage kids often hang out on our front porch at night, keep us up a lot and make asses of themselves.

**(re: #7)** I would like to see more work done to help rebuild cities, neighborhoods and communities torn by violence, drugs and street gangs. At the very least we could repair all the potholes in the streets. Housing redevelopment and sustainable communities are the key to a better life, not more shopping plazas, video arcades and Popeye's Chicken shacks or Subway sandwich shops. I would like to see our system work toward an economy of needs and not kinky projects and developments that benefit a few. Given the amount of technology we work with we could definitely **reduce the working week to 3 days** (for a start) and eventually bring that down to about **5 hours a week**. I don't foresee this happening in my lifetime, but one never knows.

**(re: future)** I hope to see vast geographical sections of the USA **secede from the union**. There's not much that an Easterner has in common with a Southerner or vice versa, except for McD's, phony baloney news shows and a willingness to believe anything the authority figures tell them. If this can't be done I'll make my own flag with beer bottles, butts and pizza on it, buy some land and welcome all comers.

The US of A, **not relevant** anymore; we should follow the example of the Soviet Union: let's break it up!

**(re: #4 more of in future)** Less whine, more spine.

Please publish all back issues as **CD-ROM** for fast reference!  
PS Hey! Where's the question about **HOUSEHOLD INCOME**? Don't you want to know what **DISH SOAP** I use? ("Cascade")

# Trading Futures:

## The Abolition of the Economy

**T**he Economy has penetrated our imaginations to the point that we identify its abstractions with society itself—even our own personalities. We engage in buying and selling when we negotiate intimacy; to accept is to “buy,” to improve is to “profit.” Professional advice-dispensers tell us to cultivate “friendships” that will advance our careers. Our communities are planned real-estate ventures. We increasingly confront one another as rivals; egotism is a virtue. Material success is salvation, while poverty is criminal. The bank balance from the ATM machine puts a numerical value on your human worth—maybe even whether you live or die.

What do we mean when we refer to the Economy? We instinctively link it to all our social evils—degrading jobs, clear-cut forests, wars, cancer, teenage suicides, soaring murder rates, and so on. But before any of these problems can even be addressed, the Economy must be placated by ever more sacrifice, a process which just compounds the problems. The index of social health at the end of the evening news is

the Dow Jones average, not the infant mortality rate. The Economy is our religion; its temples are the banks that tower over our shell-shocked cities. We can't imagine a world without the Economy any more than an ecclesiastic can imagine life without a supernatural God.

Obviously, all societies must organize the material means of life. But our society inverts the relationship of means to ends and makes what should be merely a precondition for life into the meaning of life. Our economic relations are not (in Karl Polanyi's word) “embedded” in our social relationships; instead, our social relationships are subservient to the Economy. A distinct and separate sphere above and beyond other social activities, the Economy makes everything dependent on the market. Ruled solely by prices, the market can allow no other values or considerations. Culture no longer subordinates the Economy (as it should), but has become utterly subordinated to it.

To “economize” is an everyday compulsion in a market-dominated society which exposes the underlying

ing false premise of economics: that whereas desires are unlimited, the means of satisfying them are not. The Economy depends on expanding dissatisfaction; as desires are fulfilled, new desires must be stimulated to keep people buying. Market economies assume that people do not have rational needs, but must be constantly dazzled by advertising—without which, the Economy would probably collapse.

Scarcity in our over-productive society is artifi-

**That the distribution of social wealth can be considered a strictly amoral enterprise (as in our market-controlled society) is the Big Lie of the economists.**

cial; one of the economists' great accomplishments is to mystify this with scientific pretensions about "laws of supply and demand," "price mechanisms," etc. Poverty is not the result of how much wealth is available, but how it is distributed. Between one-half and one-third of humanity goes hungry while food rots in warehouses because the market is the only mode of distribution that the rich will permit. As the Somali saying has it: "Scarcity and abundance are never far apart. The rich and the poor live in the

same house."

The unique autonomy of the Economy is a result of the rules of market exchange. The market divorces the Economy from society by making everyone's livelihood dependent on the precarious sale of labor. Profits become the overriding end of all human enterprise. It is catastrophic to make the fear of hunger and the quest for profits socially enforced incentives to participation in material life—a catastrophe that has acquired global dimensions. Based on the imperative

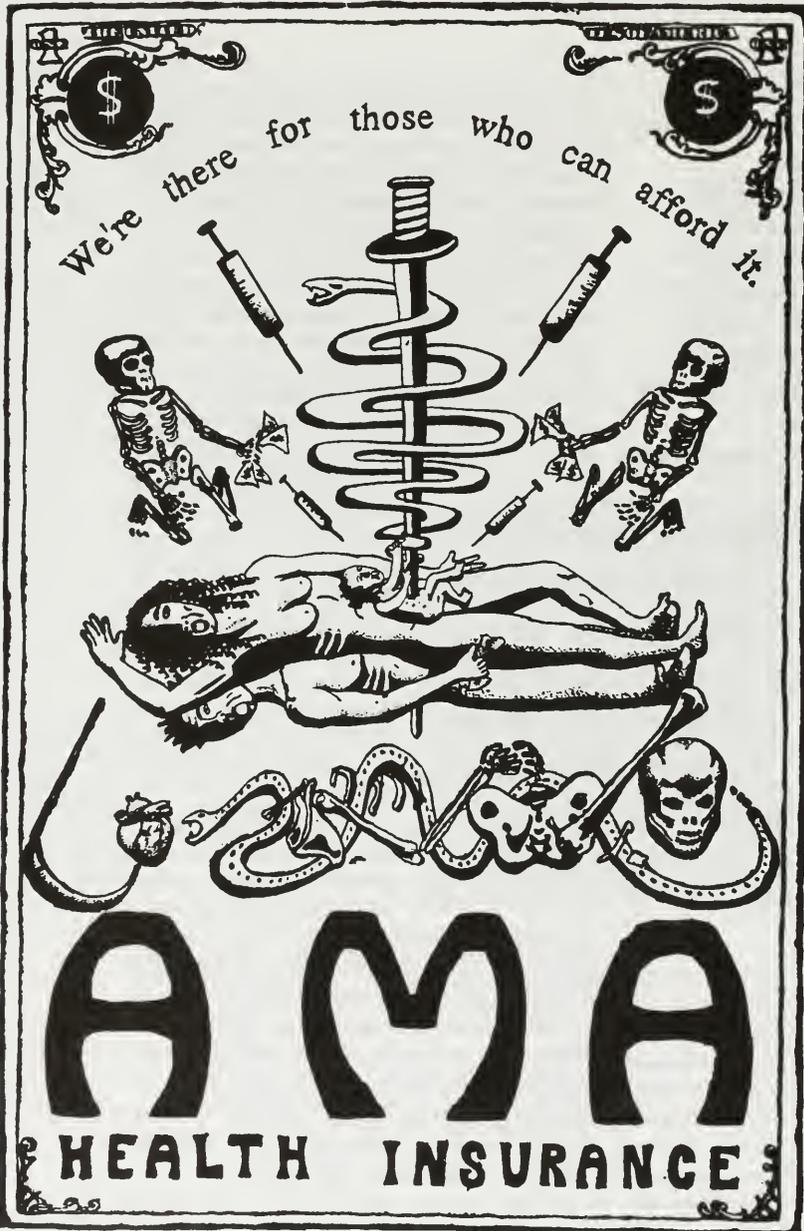
Grow or Die, competing economic entities such as corporations or nations must constantly expand in the search for new outlets, a parasitical process which will only be exhausted by the likely death of the biosphere.

## Origins of the Economy

Economics derives from the Greek word *oikonomia*: management of the household. The distance between the ancient and modern notions of economics can be perceived if one notes the utter irrationality of applying the character *homo oeconomicus* to domestic relationships, where it is still considered pathological for family members to act as self-interested competitors. For the ancient Greeks, "householding" was production for one's group's own use (autarky, or self-sufficiency)—not for gain or money-making, which was regarded as "not natural to man" (Aristotle) because of its purposeless and anti-social character.

Markets have a long history. However, before capitalism, markets were always accessory to social relations (kin, tribe, religion, etc.); they did not control and regulate them. During the European Middle Ages, markets were limited in time (Sundays) and place (usually outside the church). However much honored in the breach, sanctions against usury—profit-making off the material needs of others—expressed fears of the socially corrosive aspects of the market. Pre-modern marketplaces such as bazaars or agoras preserved ritual social observances, often beginning with gossip and talk, then tea, family matters, and eventually discussion about the wares on offer—produced by the seller, who took a pride in the quality of his craftsmanship—and haggling or barter. Contrast this with our experience at the Mall—the Panopticon surveillance, the anonymous, indifferent sales people, the electronic registers to calculate inflexible prices, the built-in obsolescence and often poisonous products.

The unregulated market economy took off in 19th-century Europe. Capitalism turned people (labor) and nature (land) into commodities—inanimate instruments to be bought and sold. Whereas earlier societies had preserved everyone's access to the "commons" to





graphic by J.F. Batelier

ensure survival and social cohesion, capitalism organized access to the means of life through production for sale, and prices determined by market allocation. The much-extolled “freedom” of the market requires the fragmentation of community bonds.

Economics as a science emerged as the analysis of this increasingly separate and autonomous market. The ideas of the neo-classical economists promoted allegedly permanent and universal truths about humanity and society. The pursuit of material gain compelled by the market was not seen as behavior forced on people as the only possible way to earn a living, but as prudent and rational behavior. To the economists, society is nonexistent except as a bunch of people without concern for each other; improvement in economic statistics is more important than whatever social disruptions result from it; human beings are utilitarian atoms possessed by an innate “propensity to truck, barter and exchange” (as Adam Smith claimed); and material maximization and the primacy of self-interest are constants of all societies. This cynical worldview became a self-fulfilling prophecy.

## Trade Without Profit

Formal economics presumes that its “value-free” scientific laws must be uni-

versally applicable. It sees non-market societies as underdeveloped versions of our own. While it might be accepted that other peoples have different religious, political, or kinship systems, economic relations are considered to be immutable. Economics sees all societies as supply-demand mechanisms—not expressions of living relationships. However, anthropology can show us the unimportance of economic relationships. “We must rid ourselves of the ingrained notion that the economy is a field of experience of which human beings have necessarily always been conscious,” the anthropologist Marcel Mauss said.

Anthropologists have observed among many societies the principle of usufruct—that is, the right of anyone to borrow another’s property (tools, land, etc.) if it is returned in the same condition. Because the use of this stuff benefits the entire community, the notion of individual property rights above and beyond those of the group is unknown. A glimmer of usufruct is evident in periods of social rebellion when the disenfranchised loot the granaries, temples, palaces or malls and redistribute the goods for the consumption of all. This is as old as written history—as recorded by the Sumerians during the riots in Lagash or the Egyptian peasants who rose against

the nobility of the Middle Kingdom (2500 B.C.)—and as recent as last year’s Los Angeles riots.

Gift economies further undermine the universality of our perverse economic notions of exchange. The American Indians of the Northwest coast stretching from Cape Mendocino in California up to Prince Williams Sound in Alaska practiced gift-giving ceremonies known as potlatch, a celebration for distributing wealth and sealing social relations. Similarly, the Massim peoples of the Trobriand Islands near New Guinea had lavish disaccumulation festivals known as kulas. In both these institutions, gift exchange functions as part of what Mauss calls a “total social phenomenon”—economic, juridical, moral, aesthetic, religious, mythological—whose meaning cannot be adequately described by reducing its function solely to an economic base.

The measure of wealth among the Trobrianders and the Northwest coast Indians is society itself—all those people who band together in a daily life in which material wealth is shared and distributed as gifts. Social prestige is inextricably linked to generosity. The purpose of the giving of gifts is to keep gifts in circulation, and give counter-gifts—not to become the venerated acquisitions of

individual owners. What comes around goes around. Unless shared, gifts are property that perish like food, from which the word “potlatch” derives. Similarly, in the kula, the gift not reused is considered lost, while the one that is passed along “feeds” over and over again, thus remaining abundant.

Although highly personalized, these ceremonies are not evidence of small-scale or primitive economics, but are in fact consciously elaborate. The kula shows that the wider and more varied the territory, the more exotic the produce and goods. Contrary to the economists’ universalization of scarcity as a permanent feature of human society, the kula is actually an exuberant display of affluence.

The kula and the potlatch were not motivated by the prospect of individual gain; nor was labor performed for remuneration. Despite their complexity, they thrived without administration or written records, much less money. They are examples of reciprocity and redistribution—principles not very esteemed by our culture’s Survival of the Fittest outlook. Economics can offer an analysis of the junk bond market, but it is a very limited tool for understanding the face-to-face relationships of gift-based societies. The individual players in these societies are personalized, not anonymous. It is absurd to view the kula as an investment yielding interest.

The pathology of our culture’s avaricious hoarding of social wealth was evident to the Indians who came into contact with Europeans. “Indian giver”—a term of abuse—was coined by New England Puritans to describe the activities of the Indians (shortly before they killed them), who often sought the return of items they had given the settlers because the purpose of the gift was to be kept in circulation among different users, not settled in the home of a private “owner.”

I don’t want to exalt the gift economy. The exchange of gifts can be onerous and burdensome; customs can be irrational. The commodity form is potentially incipient within symbolic exchange, honoring various types of hierarchy. My sketches of the kula and the potlatch are necessarily simplistic. However, I am less interested in what the anthropologists teach us about the Trobrianders and the Kwakiutl than what they tell us about our

own society which produces, among other things, anthropologists.

Gift-economics bespeak an ideal of value which is inextricable from the social relations in which the activity of gift-giving takes place. That the distribution of social wealth can be considered a strictly amoral enterprise (as in our market-controlled society) is the Big Lie of the economists. The banishment of conscience as a social principle is seen as progress; hence the mean spiritedness of

**Economics sees all societies as supply-demand mechanisms—not expressions of living relationships.**

all public discourse today. Gift-giving consolidates and enhances social bonds, while market exchange sunders them. This is still observed in our own neurotic gift-giving ceremonies, especially Christmas.

In *Minima Moralia*, Adorno succinctly described the fate of the gift in our Hallmark card culture:

*Real giving had its joy in imagining the joy of the receiver. It means choosing, expending time, going out of one’s way, thinking of the other as a subject: the opposite of distraction. Just this hardly anyone is now able to do. At the best they give what they would have liked themselves, only a few degrees worse. The decay of giving is measured in the distressing invention of gift-articles, based on the assumption that one does not know what to give because one does not want to. This merchandise is unrelated like its buyers. It was a drug in the market from the first day. Likewise, the right to exchange the article, which signifies to the recipient: take this, it’s all yours, do what you like with it; if you don’t want it, that’s all the same to me, get something else instead. Moreover, by comparison with the embarrassment caused by ordinary presents this pure fungibility represents the more human alternative, because it at least allows the receiver to give himself a present, which is admittedly in absolute contradiction to the gift.*

Human history is not a finite project:

we do not have to repeat everything that has happened before, even if the past can provide a rich guide for future social innovation. I believe that it will be essential for our future to recover the authentic spirit of gift-giving. Capitalism may have severed (for some) archaic obligations and duties, but it has chained everyone to a new master—an invisible one at that, which pits us against one another!

## The Left Embrace of the Economy

The utopian socialists called for a life which subordinates the Economy to our cultural relationships. Their legacy has been perverted by the traditional Left which protests the injustices of capitalism but has shown itself to be hopelessly mired in the economic mentality. The loss of the utopian ideal can be felt with painful clarity by a look at the Left today—giving new meaning to demoralization. Appeals are strictly to bread-and-butter issues, which no matter how important, ignore the fact that most people—even hungry people—are more than just stomachs. It’s no wonder that the Right has been in ascendancy for well over a decade given its focus on issues long ignored by leftists. In its dedication to a losing game of realpolitik, the Left can deliver nothing but windy exhortations for more jobs—even if that means putting police uniforms on the jobless and sending them to control the public.

Leftist planning shares the faith that social problems can be remedied by economic means, that the economic roles in our lives—as workers and consumers—are levers for renewal. Rather than questioning the categories of economic reason—based on abstraction, calculation and quantification—the Left enhances the Economy’s prestige by equating it with the liberatory project. “Economic democracy” reinforces the market concept of humans: we are consumers of rights (bequeathed from above), not social beings capable of autonomous activity.

Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel’s concept of participatory economics, published as *Looking Forward* (South End Press: 1991), makes an admirable attempt to envision a non-market organization of life, but falls into the trap of bookkeeper socialism. They divide social life into

Production and Consumption councils—a bogus and arbitrary dualism. Is food produced or consumed? No doubt when corn is grown by farmers, it is produced; when eaten by a steel worker, it is consumed. Yet isn't food necessary for the production of steel? Isn't food as much a tool of humanity as the tractor? Isn't the steel worker's dwelling as necessary for her to be productive as it is in some sense space that she "consumes"? And how do you quantify a piece of music? Is it a luxury or a necessity to a vital and active intelligence?

Another assumption guiding economic thought that the Left uncritically accepts is that one only gives in order to receive. Malthus, the miserable rightwing economist who invented the bogus theory of "overpopulation," wrote that we must "consider man as he really is, inert, sluggish, and averse from labour unless compelled by necessity"—a restatement, by the way, of Newton's first law of motion. Similarly, socialist economists have gone to all kinds of lengths to devise a system whereby goods are justly allocated on the basis of work contributed. Even after the abolition of the market and the socialization of property, the surplus will still be meted out according to a form of wages: namely, notes certifying quantities of labor time. This still preserves work as compulsive, alienated activity, subordinating people to things—what's called "idolatry" in some contexts.

How does one measure the contribution of an individual to society? As soon as the legitimacy of this question is granted, human society is insulted by subjecting the individual to a degrading and ultimately meaningless system of comparison. Feminists have pointed out the way our society systematically devalues occupations associated with women—i.e. housework, nursing, social work, teaching, cultural activities (not surprisingly, those that involve a degree of gift-giving)—while valorizing traditionally male-dominated professions such as banking and law. This invidious calculation is operative throughout the wage system. Is street-sweeping less essential to public health than the more prestigious and lucrative jobs of doctors? Where does one person's work lead off and another's

begin—i.e., the professor who relies on his graduate students for suggestions and research? How could an aerospace designer realize his plans without a welder? Giving in order to get: the same alienated labor that reduces social life to a series of bargains between negotiators rather than relationships among equals.

Examples of non-alienated labor abound, even in our crazed market society: the passion of the artist who endures obscurity and poverty because she is guided by a pursuit more compelling than fame or money; scientists who endure ostracism and years of painstaking research for the beauty of discovery itself. Blood and organs are donated as a gift of life, even if the U.S. medical industry markets them for profit. We have all had the experience of doing a person a favor, helping someone in distress, and knowing that the pleasure comes from the deed itself—not because we get some payment in return. In fact, it is an insult to be offered money for doing our good deed. I believe this gift-giving principle must be applied to everything we do in order to break the stranglehold of the Economy.

I'm not proposing that everybody work for free. Obviously, we are already overburdened by an excess of philanthropy—why else do we work for the enrichment

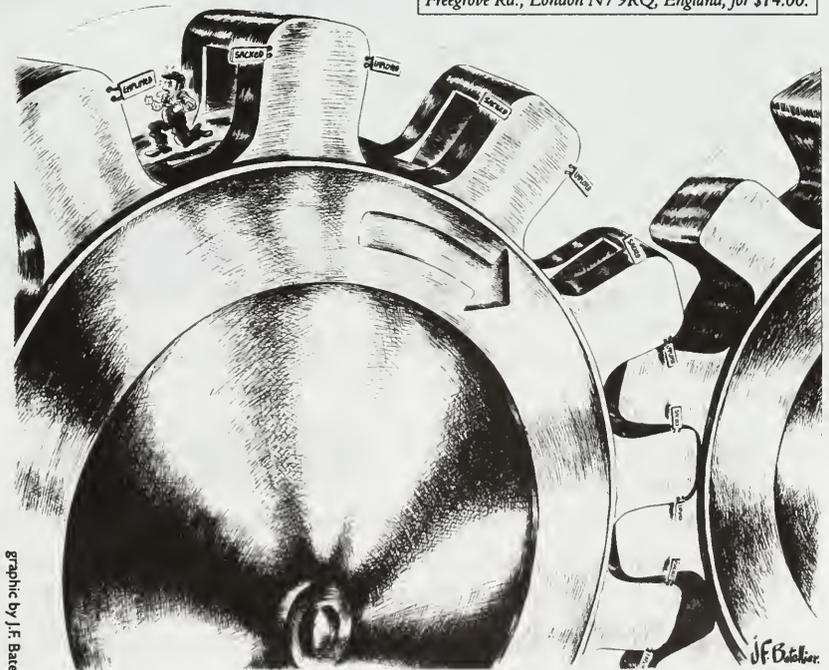
of others whom we never meet and who would just as soon nuke us? Nor do I want the rich to become more charitable, which is just a tactic by which they negotiate the class barrier. Instead, we should recreate society itself by abolishing the Economy.

"Time is money," goes the saying, and we are running out of both. Like time, money makes everything identical. Just as no moment is ever the same—no matter how many ten o'clocks, Tuesdays, Septembers, etc. occur—so no two things in a liberated society would ever be the same, nor no two activities commensurable. Measurement has its place, but its triumph over life itself in the form of prices must be re-assessed.

As the 19th-century anarchist Wilhelm Weitling prophesied: "A time will come when...we shall light a vast fire with banknotes, bills of exchange, wills, tax registers, rent contracts and I.O.U.s and everyone will throw his purse into the fire." Let's stop looking to the Dismal Science for solutions and begin creating a science of pleasure, human enrichment and a new sociability.

—Mickey D.

*We have borrowed graphics rather freely from the brilliant French street artist Jean-François Batellier since the very first issue of **PROCESSED WORLD** in 1981. He actually has a wonderful book **IS ANYBODY OUT THERE?** available from Free Association Books, 26 Freegrove Rd., London N7 9RQ, England, for \$14.00.*



graphic by J.F. Batellier



## INTERFACIAL FUTURES

**B**irds chirping, the wind steadily beat her face as she walked along the cliffs overlooking the ocean. Suddenly a large black box emerged from the path behind her ... she heard the telltale

**THE WORLD**

warning chime and ten seconds later she felt that irritating “thunk” behind her eyes. The black box unfolded into the control room at the plant—flashing red lights indicated a system failure in sector 3,

the lubrication center.

She automatically punched up a series of commands, dispatching repair staff and moving a remote backup unit to support the built-in second as it smoothly filled the gap left by its failed predecessor. Immediately the whirring rush began. An intense hit of endorphin pleasure overwhelmed her as she was soon again strolling along the coastal cliffs.

After a deep breath she relaxed back into a contemplative reverie. Just a few minutes later a flashing red light among some rocks caught her eye. She reached out, smiling, and caressed the surface of the bulb. A voice emanated from the rock:

“Hi honey. A package arrived on today’s download... looks like some new drivers. You wanna take one for a spin?” The voice cackled mischievously. “You *are* the best, you know,” it wheedled in a flattering but obsequious tone.

Standing back from the bulb, Angie looked at her hand, then around at the slightly pixilated coastline. She sighed. Everything was so boring. “New drivers, new drivers, people always gettin’ so excited ’bout new drivers, ecch!” she muttered. She was good at pushing new **Workface Interspaces® (WI)** to their limits. Whatever they threw at her, within a couple of hours she had crashed it. She started by changing too much in the artificial environment and overloading the channel. When they put a timer on her to pace her activities, she gave it very long, multiple link commands which soon overloaded it again.

But she also quickly learned how to get the most out of the *WI* when it was installed. Many days would pass as she dreamily wandered through rainforests, coral reefs, deserts and mountains, only seeing her actual worksite for five minutes each morning and evening. Sometimes she

would take in historic boxing matches—she had ringside seats three different times to see the second Ali-Frazier fight. The Louis-Schmelling bout was another favorite. Once in a while she’d go to the opera, or maybe a musical, but it was easy to find actual shows around town so she preferred to explore history, or at least that sugar-coated collection of skimpy, implausible fairy tales they called *WISTORY*. She once visited a simulation of A. Mitchell Palmer and J. Edgar Hoover discussing the nationwide arrest of 10,000 radical workers on January 3, 1920, many of whom were later deported without any due process. The self-congratulatory cigars and excited fidgeting of Hoover had fascinated her even as it repelled her, and she had tried to kick over the table but found she was locked out of any real interaction. Angie later found a way to place Emma Goldman in the room and within minutes she had both men sputtering mad, turning red, trying to grab Emma as she gave them a good dose of her rage and passionate convictions but escaping every grope and reach. This was fun until Angie brought in Louise Bryant and they behaved exactly the same way and it was clear that the behavioral possibilities were in fact very limited. Later experiments revealed that they could only have three different ranges of emotional response, which upon further reflection, wasn’t much worse than most people!

This was the problem for Angie: she knew people were infinitely more creative and interesting than these simulations, but the more time she spent with simulations, the more she could see how limited her fellow humans were. A foul misanthropy began to fester in her soul. She lost all sense of connection to the people around her.

She worked for 17 more years at

that plant before it was further automated and she was laid off along with 5 of the remaining 11 workers. The pension plan promised unlimited access to *WISTORY*, or any two other *Vironoments* of your choice at retirement. Angie thought about it long and hard before selecting Coastal Commune circa 1971, Madison Square Garden 1948, and a beautiful Greek island 2010 (well before the war and Turkey’s nuclear attack in 2016). She sold her organs in advance, bought a long-term maintenance contract from The Body Bag, ate the *WI Toggle Switch™* to get back and forth between *Vironoments*, plugged herself in at the Body Bag Center, and lived happily ever after.

## THE COMMUTER

Slowly he inched forward, almost hovering behind a small blue sports car. To his right a huge truck was heading to a superstore, and on his left a tour bus sped towards gambling success in the desert, boxing him in cozily. Traffic was really slow today, but Herb didn’t mind. In fact, he had just installed the *Red Light/Green Light Traffic Delay Simulator* after downloading it from the Job Survival Library at his local Telecommuter Bulletin Board, and he was really pleased at the realism.

Over 30 years ago he had driven with his father to work one day, not long before the mandatory shuttle system was installed. That old Subaru-bishi had been retired along with a dozen neighbors’ “good ole cars” in a big block party and sledgehammer competition. He had gotten a good whack or two, even though he’d only been about five or six. The deeply corrupt Oil Era was over soon after that, but Americans’ nostalgia for it was as strong as the incomprehensible adulation of Stalin that still motivated millions in Russia.

Five years ago Telecommuters

Associations (TAs) had swept across the country, establishing standards and sharing information among millions of isolated telecommuters. Every local TA BBS had been swamped with new contacts as soon as it opened. Chapters sprung up across the country, typically meeting in large country & western bars in prosperous suburbs. *Cyberwestern Drinking Holes, Unlimited* went public and thanks to the still strong desire to drink socially, their formula was a winner, their IPO was a huge success, and a curious political power was born: telecommuters who would leave home to meet at leather-covered C&W bars with air-conditioned tables, allowing for those who couldn't make it by conducting live video meetings over PubChan 5.32A in most area codes. A 20% tax on each CDH's proceeds was kicked back to the local TA, funding its ongoing organizing, and providing a steady stream of drinkers and smokers. Meanwhile a renewed style of face-to-face discussion took place, leading to many animated evenings in which wild scheming and far-fetched dreaming competed for attention with encryption protocols and re-use agreements. The process of public discussion with call-in direct participation produced an extraordinary euphoria among its participants, spreading contagiously as a greed for authenticity swept the people.

Herb steered his sedan into the left lane as he saw an opening, and he accelerated by clutching the sensorod in his palm. Then he braked suddenly by slamming down on the tip as the entire freeway slowed again to a crawl, red tail lights crowding his view. He brought his vehicle to a nice meditative stop-n-go, and began to daydream. He touched the authentic radio knobs and tuned in to an AM station with old rock from the 1950s. He started to imagine what he might

do later that night when he realized that he was going to be late again. It was already 8:37 and he was still a good 15 minutes from work. Part of the realism of *Red Light/Green Light* was the locking system that forced you to stay with it even if you decided you'd rather abort and get on to work. It imposed the unpredictability and inconvenience along with the nostalgically pleasing time in the car.

As one of the main Telecommuter activists that fought for Equal Commute Time Rights, Herb was pretty embarrassed when he got stuck like this. He had been fierce in his certainty that serious and unavoidable delays would be extremely rare if the system were designed properly. And he had beta-tested it for months, so he couldn't avoid the chagrin and shame that swept over him as he drummed his fingers on his desk, waiting for the stupid Virtual Traffic Jam to clear his screen.

## THE SHOPPER

He fumbled through the bon bons, finally choosing an oblong one. His eyes were glued to the screen, the colors flashing in his face in the otherwise dark room. Outside it was bright and sunny, but Frank hadn't taken a look for quite a long time. Thick musty drapes covered every window in the dank, yellowed apartment. The 6-foot square screen in his bedroom made the room seem a lot larger, "like a window on the world™," he thought. He liked to have several shows on at once, so he wouldn't miss any really good deals. He was really fast and had an encyclopedic knowledge of prices and the Producing Countries. If a shirt was made by Vietnamese workers in San Francisco or Indonesians in Sydney or Angolans in Rio de Janeiro, he knew if it was well-sewn, good cotton, *everything!* He was as fascinated

by trying to calculate the world's cheapest producer as he was by the obsessive purchase of things he would never use.

I stopped by once, to ask his advice about something I was going to buy, I forget what. His eyes never left the screen as he waved me to sit down and wait. He leaned forward, punching furiously at his calculator pad and then typing in prices, styles and sizes, breathing heavily and sweating profusely. When he sent his order and waited for the displays to arrive to his screen, he clutched a SuperBigGulp'oFizz and sucked on the straw so hard he turned purple.

"Of course, you *DOGS!*" he exclaimed admiringly, looking quickly back and forth from his laptop to the TV. He punched his remote to enlarge the Shanghai Bazaar, and punched again to bring in his *Shopper®*. I was astonished to see a trim handsome young man appear from the right of the screen, give us the obligatory wink, nod, thumbs up, and crossed fingers, and turn to enter the Bazaar. Frank's *Shopper®* bore no resemblance to the wheezing 400-lb. blob of flesh and sweat controlling this "*Interactive Excursion for Acquisition*" or IEA (generally pronounced "YAY!")\*.

Intense narrowcasting swept retailing in the past few years but the Shanghai Bazaar, live from Shanghai, still held the superstore charm of the old Wal-Mart Channel. You could find anything—their slogan invoked another time too: *If we don't have it, you don't need it!* And the Chinese were nearly always able to give the best quality for the least, controlling production all over Asia as they did.

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"Goin' Yay" had become the major activity for millions, gradually destroying that late 20th century remnant of true sociability, the Mall. The chokehold of the oil/auto industrial monster was finally broken when TV shopping replaced most other kinds and gasoline consumption dropped by 50% in a year and a half. Capital finally wrote off the old dead investments of the 20th century and went Bi-Eco in what we've come to know as "A New Deal For A New Century"®

The unbelievable dashing young Frank Shopper® bounded into the sea of neon, soon halting abruptly in the

dizzying way these Shoppers® always do, in a sweatband shop. Frank rode his "hard line" button as his simu-

lacia began the bargaining.

"I'd like to try on at least five."

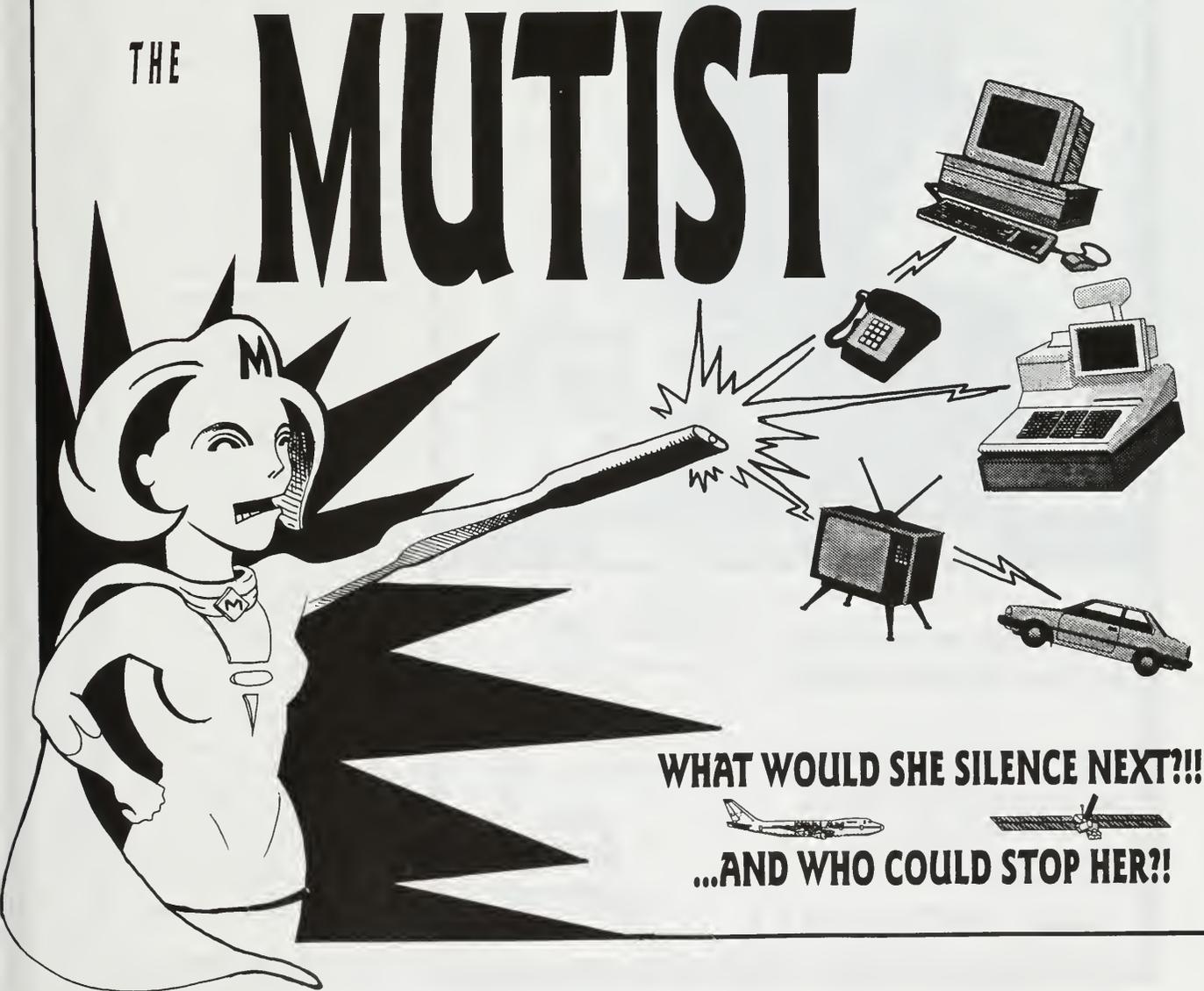
The Salesulacia gave a sort of "are

# There Was Nothing ON...That She Couldn't Turn OFF!

Out of the Far East she came; a worker in the Malaysian Export Processing Zone. It seemed a routine factory accident, but when she pulled her arm from the vat of solvents, she was horrified to find a remote control where once she had a hand!

She was determined to use her new powers to silence the technologies that had done so much damage. After a meditative retreat, she emerged as:

# THE MUTIST



**WHAT WOULD SHE SILENCE NEXT??!**

**...AND WHO COULD STOP HER?!**

**WOW**

**I Can't believe  
it's not real!™**

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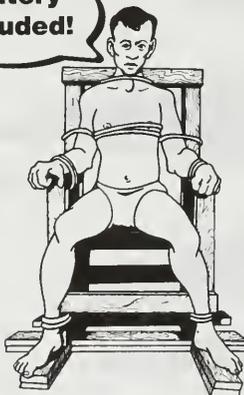
### IN OUR IMAGES

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you kidding?" sneer directly at us, but smiled and suggested that two selections were customarily enough to arrive at a satisfactory purchase.

Frank grinned as he joined the battle, and he had his *Shopper*® begin backing out of the shop.

"No, NO! Please, my friend, come and see what you like...but you must buy at least two."

"—But—"

"Before you protest let me say that we are offering a special deal for the next 20 minutes only—2 for the price of 1.41! I'm sure you'd agree, that's a pretty good deal!"

The WinkMar SalesdeVice® was nearly irresistible. Frank licked his lips as he agreed to buy at least two—then he punched in orders for five!

Chimes sounded *A Package At The Door*™.

I went to get it for him, as he was so overwrought by his time in Shanghai, he couldn't have moved for some minutes. At the door I found three boxes from E&J Distribution in Paterson, NJ. After I piled them next to Frank, he opened them casually as he continued to keep a close watch on *Latin Loss Leaders* and the Safeway Channel. He withdrew several sweaters, a pair of jeans, two pairs of boots, and a cowboy hat.

"Please," he said, turning to me at last, "will you see if any of this fits you? It's such a hassle to return things that don't fit and I can see that they messed up my order again. They always send 'em too small! But you might fit something. If not, would you be so kind as to put it in that closet in the hallway?"

I left with the jeans. The rest I somehow crammed into that closet. It was completely filled with clothes, books, appliances, cameras, dishes, tons of stuff! All unopened, in original boxes! A core sample of that closet's contents would give you a capsule history of 20 years of tele-shopping, I'm sure... Maybe I can get a grant!

—Chris Carlsson

graphic by Richard Wool & Iguana Mente

# Wifing for Dollars *Boudoir & Bidet*



*Two of the best jobs I ever had, in retrospect, occurred one after the other (with slight overlap) in the first six months of 1982: I was a hustler, then a housecleaner. I didn't consider them wonderful jobs at the time; most people would consider them pretty bad even today. But looking back after a decade and a half of "legitimate" employment I've come to realize that they were less demeaning than most jobs and better deals than most of us proles settle for much of the time.*

After I'd dropped out of school the previous summer I coasted for six months on my unemployment checks—despite my recent student status I was entitled to them on the basis of my work-study job at the School of Public Health (see PW #28). It was a sign of the times and a tribute to my bohemian lifestyle that I was able to live on the \$250/month (plus food stamps). But eventually even that budget gravy train came to the end of the line and, for the first time in three years, I was searching the market for a subsistence wage. I had few occupational skills, incipient bad attitude and a distinctly non-professional appearance. A hacked resume and a meek demeanor failed to get me a position as a bank clerk or any other of the "situations" listed. Finally, just two weeks before rent was due, I responded to ads in the local gay rags recruiting "escorts and models," i.e. hustlers.

The manager of the service lived a few blocks away. I passed my "performance interview" easily and learned the ground rules. The standard rate started at \$60 an hour, of which I got to keep half. Longer periods yielded a small discount on the hourly rate, and the activity was presumed to embrace the current standard lexicon of gay sex: fucking and sucking. [See Sidebar]

Interest in anything "kinky" gave you license to extort an extra "tip," but in practice I rarely encountered "kink" and most customers were monumentally unimaginative. Richard, the pimp, would call me when he had a gig and give me the address; most often a downtown hotel. I was to deliver Richard's share to him immediately afterwards and await my next call. Sometimes I would get them daily for quite a while; other times I would go a couple of weeks without work.

Like most “escort” services, Richard’s was a scam in many ways. He listed it under several different ads, all supposedly catering to a different clientele and offering a different style of boy: preppies or butch types or pseudo-athletes. He also ran a number of supposedly individual ads, each purporting to be from an independent escort. All these calls ended up being routed to Richard’s switchboard, and whatever the ad promised he always sent out the first boy to answer his phone. I went out—successfully—on calls as a six-foot tall stud (I’m actually about 5’ 8”) and as an eighteen year old (I was 24 at the time). The clients didn’t seem to notice or mind: standards were low.

The customers were a fairly pathetic crew, mostly out-of-town businessmen engaging in some covert kicks a safe distance from home. I never felt threatened or abused by them. The sex ranged from bad to mediocre but I’d had worse encounters on my own time. The only john who ever ripped me off was, ironically, also my only celebrity client: the late, great, infamous Divine, the 300 pound drag queen who starred in so many tacky John Waters films. I accepted less than my full fee on the promise of full payment the next day plus an invitation to a party, a transparent ruse I would have immediately rejected from any non-celebrity. In retrospect I should have insisted on collateral, like his watch. Most of the johns were nice guys; none of them

### **The “Good Old” Days**

*This was long before there was any awareness of AIDS, let alone “safe sex” in Chicago. In fact, the virus was rampaging through the gay community but we wouldn’t figure this out for a couple of years. My customers were a very tame lot, as detailed below, and in several months of hustling none of them ever gave me anything, not even crabs. During the same period I got several minor infections from the dallying I did on my own time, and this was probably when I got AIDS as well. If anyone was at risk of picking up a “social disease” it was my johns, not me. I might add that nowadays sex workers, as a group, are the best informed and most dedicated proponents of safe sex. I don’t know of any prostitutes who will engage in unsafe sex, despite routine offers of double pay for it.*

was ever impolite (unless you consider trying to go overtime without paying rude) and overall their standard of behavior ranked favorably compared to the way I see most yuppies and “respectable businessmen” acting in other settings, like department stores and restaurants.

The multiple referral system had a second advantage, aside from casting a wide net. Whenever the vice squad wanted to bust hustlers they did it on the cheap by hiring a hotel room and then ordering boys from several services at once, planning to bust a bevy of us one after the other as we showed up. Naturally, they almost always called more than one of Richard’s “services” and, since a legitimate customer looking for multiple partners would obviously get them from a single source, he could recognize their trap in advance. He didn’t stand them up—that would show he’d figured them out, and reveal the links between his fronts—but rather sent them boys he was ready to retire from his employment to take the hit. He routinely promised to bail us out if busted but, as I later learned, never actually did so.

At least I didn’t get turned in. Police harassment in general wasn’t much of a problem, except for the underage “chick-en” who worked the notorious Newbery Plaza near Chicago’s old sleaze district (but even then rapidly gentrifying). The ritzy hotels, to my naive surprise, didn’t seem to mind or even notice the occasional presence of obvious whores (male or female—though the women had to dress up more) strolling through their lobbies to the guest elevators. Street people rarely made it beyond the revolving doors.

Male hustlers faced much less legal and general persecution in Chicago at that time than did our female counterparts. You could work the street without risk, if you had any savvy, and many independents were in operation as streetwalkers or phone-ordered escorts. Woman prostitutes, in contrast, had to have a pimp for “protection” from other pimps and the cops. If they tried to work the street or even a phone service independently the pimps would seek them out and assault them or turn them over to the police (who of course they paid off regularly).

The laws that supposedly “protect”

## **The behavior of the johns ranked favorably compared to the way I see most yuppies and “respectable businessmen” acting in department stores and restaurants.**

female whores from “exploitation” thus served to keep them vulnerable to crooked cops (the vast majority, of course) and pimps. Anyone who claims otherwise probably knows little about the realities of prostitution. I don’t know why things are so much easier for male hustlers—generalized male privilege? A volume of business too small to interest the big operators?—but they are. From what I can see, the situation continues pretty much the same today in most of the U.S.

Richard was not a nice person. He was an ex-hustler himself and probably a Mafia vassal. He avoided daylight like a vampire (perhaps distressed by his faded looks, much deteriorated of late, to judge from the photos taken of him in his youth and liberally scattered around his invariably darkened apartment) and openly delighted in exploiting his workers. Once, as I was dropping off his share after a gig, I saw him screen a job applicant on the building’s intercom. “I remember him from when he worked for me three years ago” he confided as the aspirant was on his way up. “I’m not going to hire him this time—too old—but I’m going to ‘interview’ him before I tell him that,” he giggled.

I don’t know why he told me stuff like that, or the other details listed above (which few of my co-workers were aware of); it could be my persona inspires such confidences, or that he needed someone to boast to and was gratified by my innocent responses to his slimy revelations. A year later I was to have an ostensibly New Age ecofeminist lesbian boss, Eileen, who espoused great concern for her peons’ spiritual and general well-being while driving us mercilessly in the office. Her mind-fucking ploys turned out to be a much greater hassle than Richard’s simple and open weirdness. Sure he was strange and crooked; he made no pretense of being anything else.

Naturally no serious hustler would put

up with such a quirky boss for long. Career boys (as opposed to chippers like myself) would naturally split off and create their own "service," ideally taking a few of Richard's clients with them to give them a starting base. He protected himself against this as best he could by promising customers a free trick if they could fool a boy into giving them their home number, but even so suffered constant attrition. This was why most of his clientele were out-of-towners and one-timers rather than local repeat customers.

My friends reacted variously and interestingly to my new job. My boyfriend Joe was a self-proclaimed "sex radical" (back when this label still suggested "political incorrectness"), and Social Revolutionary; furthermore he had a "thing" for hustlers when he met them in bars. Despite this he was horrified when I became a hustler (but not to the point where he would offer me financial assistance or a place to live). In many ways it was difficult to differentiate his anguished Trotskyist "lump-

enization of the proletariat" spiel from the Catholic moralism of his youth.

Other acquaintances were titillated. Al and Stu, a pissy rich gay couple I knew through a close friend (who was sleeping with them) had "cut me cold" a few months earlier when they learned I was getting food stamps—in their book this defined me as a "welfare cheat" and they could of course no longer risk being polite to me in public. This attitude reversed when they learned of my new profession. Now they were fascinated by me, apologized profusely for their past behavior and tried their best (unsuccessfully) to lure me into their bed (for free of course: they would never sink so low as to PAY a WHORE! Or at least they both thought so then; it wouldn't surprise me to learn that they've had recourse to working boys since then). Men I met in bars were invariably turned on when they learned how I supported myself.

And I was a little impressed myself. In my two years since "coming out" I'd been

painfully aware that I lacked most of the standard attributes of fagdom: I was indifferent to Judy Garland, hated the Opera, found promiscuity uncomfortable and could never get the hang of gay fashion (and still haven't, though I no longer worry about it). As a hustler my gay credentials were suddenly impeccable. And my doubts about my "market value" were swept away by my explicit price tag and the warm reception I got in the bars when my peers learned my occupational status. It was a major boost to my self-esteem.

Aside from that I found it an acceptable job. I knew that, according to the mainstream, it was illegal, immoral, dangerous, distasteful and oppressive; but in fact it required less routine abasement than being a bank clerk (or, as I was later to learn, junior management or a psychotherapist). The hours were short and flexible. I had virtually all my time to myself. It was cash under the table so I paid no pesky payroll taxes. Within the gay ghetto it was, as mentioned, actually a



prestigious career. Even so, after a couple of months my gigs began to taper off and it was clearly time to either set up as an independent or move on to something else. As it happened, another opportunity presented itself around this time.

This was a job at Brooms Unlimited (until the previous year “Brooms Hilda”—they changed it after they got a “cease and desist” letter from the cartoon syndicate that carried the strip of that name). A friend who worked there advised me that they were always hiring. Brooms provided housecleaning to neurotic yuppies at about \$10 per hour. About \$4.50 went to us, the housecleaners; the rest went for “overhead.” Please note that in this case the pimp’s cut was roughly 55% instead of 50%; I assume that this difference was due to Brooms’ being legal exploiters instead of clandestine ones.

We checked in around 8:30 am to pick up our regulation green vinyl backpacks filled with cleaning supplies (a squeeze bottle of soap, some green scrubby pads, a few rags and rubber gloves) and receive our assignments. Some “long-timers” (veterans of over six months employment) had regular gigs and knew their schedules in advance. The rest of us waited for whatever the market blew in. The minimum job and standard gig was for a three hour apartment cleaning. You were given the keys and address of a vacant apartment, whose owner was away at work and who would return to a miraculously clean home at the end of the day.

If you could finish your assigned tasks early—and I don’t recall ever working more than 40 minutes on the hour, except on those rare occasions clients were present—you could take off early or, if you preferred, hang out loafing in the customer’s apartment reading their books, watching their TV, listening to their records (remember, this was long before CDs) or looking for things to steal. You turned in the customer’s keys and your equipment bag at the end of the day and got paid at the end of the week. I don’t think they properly reported our wages to Social Security.

Some days I got two gigs; others just one, which was fine with me. Eventually I got shifted to the “heavy crew.” This scam was a team of three cleaners (invariably male, if such were available: thus my pro-

motion over the heads of about a dozen women; male privilege again) traveling in the official Brooms van equipped with a few vacuum cleaners and a more impressive assortment of cleaning fluids. If you wanted to clean an apartment after someone moved out or otherwise had what Brooms considered a “heavy job” they insisted you hire us: three men for at least three hours at a higher rate (so that I got an extra 75 cents per hour).

The leader of the heavy crew was Mike, a music-obsessed bohemian who lived for his avant-garde tunes. The incredible variety of music which issued from his never-quiet boom-box was a revelation and an education to me. We would settle into an easy gig—our favorite was the routine post-moveout cleaning of expensive condos provided by Arthur J. Andersen to visiting accountants

## ***O*ur customers were guilty yuppies and nervous nellies who wished to avoid any personal contact with scum low enough to scrub their toilets.**

on assignment—light up a few joints, get some junk food from the Mickey D’s in the lobby and listen to music and/or watch TV all day. Ten minutes of dusting and a load of laundry (done in the basement laundromat) usually sufficed to accomplish the requisite tasks. If we felt lazy we didn’t do the laundry, but merely rotated the dirty sheets to the bottom of the stack of clean (?) linen in the closet. Did Arthur J. Andersen know what a raw deal they were getting? Did they care? Did our Brooms honchos suspect?

I didn’t know and I didn’t care. Most of our clients were nebbishes of one sort or another. Any serious employer of housecleaners would seek out an independent worker and avoid paying 55% overhead to a pimp. Our customers were mostly guilty yuppies and nervous nellies who wished to avoid any personal contact with scum low enough to scrub their toilets, and they incorrectly assumed that our agency was bonded in some way that protected them against petty theft. They paid the premium in inflated prices, lousy services and incessant pilfering. All of us stole constantly but none of us was ever

caught that I heard of. Some took food, others drugs; I went for books.

We housecleaners were no model workers either, as illustrated above. Any serious housecleaner would stay with Brooms just long enough to develop some regular customers and then steal them away (easy to do; by cutting out Brooms you could cut prices by 30% and still net nearly twice as much as you did at the agency)—not unlike the more savvy hustlers working for Richard. Some combined a little discrete hustling with the housecleaning, providing the clients with sexual services in addition to (or instead of) maid work. Those of us who hung around were slackers, though the term wouldn’t be coined for another decade.

The bosses, Morry and Saul, did nothing to counteract the general slothful and criminal behavior of their employees.

They were both constantly working on dubious deals (in record distribution, in knock-off designer jeans, you name it) and were content to let Brooms run along at its natural pace. I only know of one occasion when they actually fired someone. The heavy crew had been sent to an affluent North Shore community to clean a local mansion. The client said she was going to be gone all day, so they proceeded to raid the extremely well-stocked liquor cabinet and get absolutely smashed, figuring they would have time to both sober up and do some work before she returned.

A fight developed when the new guy, John (my replacement), told Frank the Nazi that he was a nice guy even if he was a Nazi. Frank took offense at this and threw the (client’s) vacuum cleaner at him. It missed, smashing into the wall beside the door just as the client flung it open, having treacherously returned mid-day to spy on the crew. She was livid, but got no refund. The crew wasn’t even docked wages, and Frank could have stayed on the job if he’d only kept his cool when called on the carpet. Instead he began shrieking that Morry and Saul were “stinking jews” and they had to fire him out of general principle.

Thus bosses, customers and workers all shared a cynical and apathetic attitude about the business—just like hustling.

It was supposed to be a humiliating job, and everyone I encountered looked

down on it. This was something that no one who could avoid it would do, even in their own home, let alone a stranger's. It didn't even have the paradoxical prestige of hustling. Al and Stu, the priss queens, lost all interest in me again (though this time they did consider hiring my services). Only Joe was relieved at my return to proletarian purity.

Certainly the pay was low; but the work was easy and often solitary. Oddly, doing housekeeping professionally was much less objectionable than doing it for oneself. I suppose that's because cleaning your own place comes out of your "free" time, while this was slow-paced squandering of someone else's time. Despite the lack of status I actually didn't have to take much shit from anyone. Virtually all other jobs I had before or since required significantly more routine kowtowing and ass-kissing. We didn't care, our bosses didn't care, our clients didn't know any better and the net result was a very low-pressure situation. In this regard it was like hustling; there the dominance games were mostly a sort of (debased) courtly ritual.

The similarities between the two jobs were interesting. Both were essentially scams run by pimps, perpetrated upon ignorant clients and employing impaired workers (in the sense that we couldn't figure out more profitable scams on our own). Both, in a way, provided "wifing," supplying the basic but highly personal services which most heterosexual men would get freebie from their spouses. Viewed in that light it was actually probably a better deal, financially, than marriage. Neither job paid well or provided any benefits, and neither really required any skills beyond "getting by" with providing as little as possible in return for our wages.

Are such jobs demeaning, oppressive and exploitive like the mainstreamers say? Perhaps; but compared to what? Operating the deep-fryer at McDonalds? Kissing butt in an office? Selling overpriced commodities to foolish consumers? Being "all that you can be" in the Marines? I found them better than most employment options offered before or since. This may say more about the nature of work in our society than it does about either of those two jobs (and I suppose it speaks volumes about me), but I ask you: Who are the whores, really?

—Kwazee Wabbitt

(Note: in spell-checking this program I discovered my computer program's hitherto unsuspected puritanical streak. It didn't recognize the word "whore" [it suggested that I really wanted "whereas" or "whorls" instead], nor did it understand the word "pimp" [which it wanted to replace with "pip"]. It couldn't even handle as common a word as "shit"; instead it wanted to substitute "Shiite." How can a program this up to date on contemporary international politics be this dumb about

a few dirty words? It didn't recognize "fuck" [preferring "facing," "bucking," or—oy! —cuckooing"]. Other interesting lapses included: not recognizing "housecleaner" [although it did counter-offer "housecleaned," suggesting they value the task but not its doer]; questioning "moralism" [it wanted to use "moralist"]; and, finally, rejecting "exploitive" and proposing "expletive" in its stead. However, it had no trouble with "Trotsky".)



# A Drink of Water

**D**ay did not break upon the vast emptiness of the Nevada desert. Instead the sky slowly thinned, exposing the spaces between the distant ranges. Black was diluted to blue as the stars disappeared and the mountains emerged from night. A band of pale light leaked into the world.

The man who was driving on a long straight highway toward the light barely noticed the change as it happened. When he realized the darkness he had been driving through had expanded in all directions, he wondered where he had been. The capsule of the cab of his truck at night with the dash lights glowing dimly was like the computer cubicle where he spent his days. The indicator lights and numbers were familiar landmarks to him. When the morning light revealed the distances between the blue black ranges and flattened out the pale valley between, he began to feel a little lost.

It is a sign of the times, he thought, that a geologist should find himself more comfortable negotiating the terrain of a computer model. But

that was where his work took him. And there he had hit pay dirt.

If a prospector knew what he was doing, he did not have to go out and bang on rocks anymore. The geographic information system, a vast computer database containing facts about every square mile of the earth, was the world he roamed in search of his fortune. And there he found it, locked away in the confusing, overwhelming array of facts.

He was just like a prospector of old, he thought, finding gold where many others had passed, oblivious to the significance of a subtle showing. How many great ore bodies had been discovered right under the eyes of people who did not know what they were looking at? He knew the legends.

His discovery would be a real bonanza, all right, although it was not a metal that shone through the opaque data on his computer screen at work. It was something even more precious in this dry country: water.

When the announcement was made on Monday, it would mean an end to the drought that had plagued Nevada. He would not only be rich and famous, his find would make a lasting contribution. Like the Comstock lode



that originally built the state, his water would carry the community into a new century.

He realized he had not even seen the sun rise when he passed through Devil's Gate. Diamond Valley lay spread out before him, stretching to the north beyond the apparent edge of the earth. That was where his fortune lay.

He stopped to fill up his gas tank in the town of Eureka, a jumble of brick buildings jammed into a narrow canyon at the high end of the valley. It is nearly a ghost town, he thought, but they will have reason to cry Eureka once again. The man thought about calling his fiancée. She had said to call back when he had the time for her. Well he would wait until after the announcement. Then he would have something to tell her.

"Morning," he said to the old man behind the counter as he clunked down a six pack of beer. The gray eyes barely lifted and seemed not to see him. "How's the road up the east side of the valley these days?" he asked.

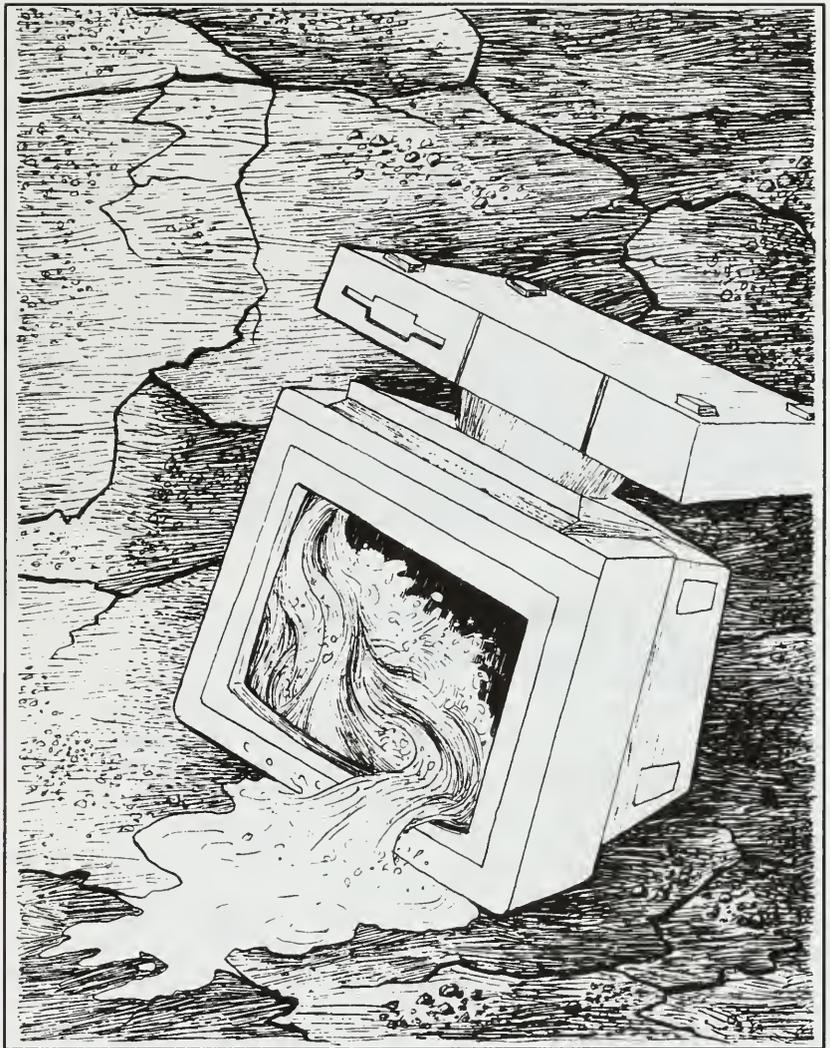
"Who knows?" the old man shrugged, "nobody goes there anymore." He had seen so many young men come and go in their little four-wheel drive imported trucks, dressed in flannel button downs, clean blue jeans, and new hiking boots, bringing bright promises of better futures. You really couldn't tell them anything, the old man thought.

The young man walked out. This was the only civilized life, if you could call it that, for many miles in any direction.

Just below the town, still at the high end of Diamond Valley, there was a patch of emerald circles like oversize golf greens. Center pivot sprinklers straddled the alfalfa farms like giant praying mantises striding across the landscape. After that there was nothing until he passed Von Erickson's tumbled down ranch hard by the alkali flat at the lower end of the valley.

He didn't even slow down. He popped open a beer and chuckled as the rooster tail from his four-by-four billowed over the house. The crazy old man, he would go to his grave shaking his fist at the "shysters who were stealing his water," the young man thought.

We won't hold their backwardness against them, he allowed. They could have a little water for their farms and



graphic by Sara Mori

towns too. They didn't know any better. They had only scratched the surface of this hard unforgiving country. Now we can look inside the earth through our computers, he thought. None of the mysteries will remain unknown for long.

The road climbed through a low notch at the north end of the valley between where the mountains flanking the valley came together. He turned west on a little traveled trail that skirted the alkali flat now shimmering from spring flood. No one had thought to look here before. All the water seemed to come from the other side, where the springs on Von Erickson's place used to gush year round, before the irrigators to the south began drawing down the water table, until the springs ceased flowing.

But a thousand feet down they had found what the computer told them

would be there: water coursing through fissures in the earth, coming as if to replenish an eternal source. It was a balancing, he thought.

The road to the company's well was covered with water in some places. But he muscled the truck through the muddy stretches.

The remote monitoring equipment at the well had failed. That was why he was coming out to check the well one more time and take some pictures for the press conference Monday. Anyway, it was a nice Saturday drive, if a little long. But that's Nevada, he thought, where everything is always so much more distant than it seems at first.

When he got to the well, he saw why the computer had lost touch with this source a week ago. The well was flowing onto the flat. The cap was broken off and

the monitor lay smashed beside it.

Oh well, he thought, once they *proved up* on their claims they wouldn't have to worry about vandals anymore. They could put an armed guard here if they had to. Besides, this will make even better pictures, he thought as he got out his camera, with the water flowing freely from the source onto the desert.

The sun was high and hot by the time he finished taking pictures and estimating the flow. It was even better than he had thought. But why so high? This had not been predicted. Nevertheless, he was confident that when he entered the numbers in the computer he would get an answer.

He sat in the shade of his truck, ate the sandwich he had brought, and drank a

beer. He watched the water flow out on the desert and smiled to himself and the world. He dreamed of the cities and wetlands that would spring from his handiwork. Who said the bonanza days were over? He could already taste the glory.

He awoke with a chill. The shadow from the mountain to his back was extending across the valley. He had better be getting back unless he wanted to spend the night with his water. It would have been nice, he thought. But the temperature was dropping rapidly and he hadn't come prepared to camp.

He threw his tools in the back of his truck with a sudden sense of urgency. He wasn't sure where it came from. Just a moment before he had been dreaming

pleasantly of a watery garden. Then the world turned flat and cold as dusk came to steal the sun.

He spun the truck around and began to beat a retreat. But the water had risen around the spring his well had created and the truck mired in the mud a short distance away. He cursed and jumped out to lock the wheels. When he got back in he was muddy and wet. The wheels still spun, spraying mud, digging deeper. He slammed the steering wheel with the flat of his hand.

Now he would have to dig himself out. He trudged up the nearby slope, yanked sagebrush from the ground, and dragged it back to the truck. At least he had come prepared for this possibility, he told himself. He took a shovel from the back of the truck and dug out paths in front of the wheels. He lined them with the pungent branches. After several trips up the hillside to gather more brush, he was cold and sore. He had forgotten to put a coat on. Night had fallen. He climbed back in the cab, started the engine, and shuddered. This had better work, he thought.

He held his breath as he let out the clutch. The wheels caught and he eased out of the mud hole. Steady as you go, he told himself, letting out a deep rush of air filled with his anxiety.

His dim headlights barely illuminated the trail ahead. He should have wiped the mud and dust away, he realized, but there was no sense in stopping now. He pressed on through a couple of the water and mud holes he had crossed on his way in. He held his breath each time. When the road branched, he had to choose and hope he was right. The night was pitch and offered no landmarks. Where were the moon and stars?

When the road veered suddenly to the right, that would be south, he thought, and he knew he was home free. But something was wrong. The water on the road was getting deeper and deeper. He continued, thinking he would soon reach the other side, until it was too late, and he was stuck again.

He opened the door and stepped out into two feet of standing water. The moon was rising over the mountains to the east. He saw now that he was stuck way out on the playa. There was no way he could dig himself out of this in the dark. He would have to spend the night



graphic from Hermeunaut

after all. He huddled to himself, turned the radio on, popped open a beer, and caught a distant baseball game bouncing off the ionosphere. He awoke with a start when he heard his own name during a news break about the announcement expected Monday.

When dawn broke he saw the water had risen. Or perhaps his truck had slowly sunk. The ripples from a steady wind lapped at the lower edge of the cab floor when he opened the door. He tried to start the truck but the battery was dead. He had fallen asleep exhausted in the sixth inning. He wondered what the score was.

He wouldn't be able to get out of here anyway, he thought. He would have to walk to help. He was stiff, sore and thirsty. He was surrounded by water but it was too salty to drink. He remembered the beer and opened one. It was cool and tasted good going down. It would fill him a little too.

During the night, it hadn't seemed so far but he found himself a couple miles into the middle of the playa. The closest shore was the wrong way to go but it would put him out of the water sooner. He grabbed the remaining beers by the plastic ring and set off through the knee-high water.

He could die in his own water, he thought with laughter, as the mud sucked at his feet. By the time he reached dry land he was exhausted again and had to sit down and drink another beer. It was nearly twenty miles to the Erickson ranch, he calculated.

As the naked sun rose in the pale sky, he stumbled down the dusty road. He could see the cottonwood trees of the ranch in the distance but they never seemed to get any closer. When the sun was high overhead, he sought refuge in the spare shade of a big sagebrush. He scared up a jackrabbit that went bounding off for another shelter. He squirmed in the dirt under the sage's fragrant branches and finished the last beer. He was feeling light headed but it was all he had for sustenance.

Aside from the rabbit and the dull brush, the only living things he had seen all day were the vultures riding thermal drafts high above. He began to realize he might really be in trouble. He shook off the feeling which had startled him alert. He had better move while he still could,



he thought. He was only half way to the ranch.

He let his mind go blank as the alkali playa glared at him and light bounced off every surface to assault his eyes. At times he closed his eyes and let his heavy legs carry him down the road. At least the sun would be lowering now, he thought.

A few times he stumbled ready to give up. But each time he startled himself to new effort.

By the time he reached the ranch, the sun seemed to rest on the mountain range to the west for a moment before it fell, plunging the valley in shadow. As he walked up to the ranch house door, he gathered strength. He had made it, he felt, although the ranch had even more of an abandoned air than the surrounding dry range and alkali valley. The yard was a graveyard for abandoned farm equipment. The cottonwoods and willows seemed brittle and unwilling to bud.

He pounded on the door which swung open under his blows. "Halloo?" he called out, "Anybody home?" He was surprised at how thick his tongue sounded. When no answer came back, he tried again, then stepped inside.

Through a bedroom door left ajar he saw rubber boots crossed casually on a bed. "Mr. Erickson?" he inquired tentatively. He crossed the room and pushed the door open.

Von Erickson sat with his back propped against the headboard. He was dressed as if he had just come back from mucking ditches with worn leather work

gloves by his side, a felt cowboy hat stained with sweat on his head, a faded denim shirt and dirty jeans stuffed in black rubber boots. But there was no sky mirrored in blue black ponds where children swam framed by brilliant greens of pasture and trees. On the bedside table sat a brackish glass of water. The rancher's eyes stared blankly out a window over fields where the wind blew dust through rangy weeds in the fading light. He was dead.

"Mr. Erickson," the young man croaked at the dead man. "Can you spare some water?"

He heard the old man let out a rueful cackle. "My water went that-a-way," he said, gesturing south up the valley. "As soon as those sprinklers came, my springs dried up. Now you shysters want even more. This used to be a beautiful, peaceful place," he said, his head nodding toward the photo album, "with all that water spread around, and birds and grass. I had big plans for this place. Now everything is gone except for me. Get outta here."

The young man's anger flashed. "Is that all you can talk about is the past? There's plenty of water here for everybody," he raged. "Why do you have to stand in the way of progress?"

It was no use. They had had this argument before. The dead man said nothing. The young man turned away from him and lurched into the kitchen. He pawed at the faucet. But it only spit air into a sink plugged with sand.

He heard a dog whining and followed the sound outside to the back of the house. He stumbled down a bank to where a mangy sheep dog lay by a circle of rocks where water once bubbled from the earth and flowed into irrigation ditches and out across the fields. The dog jerked to its feet and snarled at the approaching figure.

"You have to share your water," the man pleaded in desperation. The dog started at him with snapping jaws. The man groped for a rock and nearly fell. But he got off a throw that clattered toward the dog, sending it skittering off a few yards into the brush.

As he fell on his knees at the spring source, the dog watched and whined. The

water was just within reach, standing in the hole stagnant and slimy on the surface. He plunged his hand down and brought it to his lips. The stench made him gag but he forced himself to drink, at least to wet his parched lips, he told himself, to take away the taste of death. When he could take no more, he pulled himself to his feet. He realized he had to continue.

Night had fallen. Stars appeared in the blue black flashes on a computer screen. He thought he saw the lights twitch and turn in their wheeling across the sky. Had he dozed and woken again? He was losing track of time.

His heavy legs carried him to the road. He faced south. The moon came over the mountains to the east like a cup ready

to be filled. He knew it was cold. But he felt the moon's warmth.

He heard voices ahead. He pushed himself toward the sound.

"We will never want for water again," he heard a voice intoning. "This discovery will change the nature of this dry land forever." He dimly realized it was his own voice. He pulled himself erect as he felt the light and heat of camera lights on his face. He tasted a trickle of cool water in his throat as he lifted a clear glass and announced, "Ladies and gentlemen, we have found the source of eternal life in the desert."

—Jon Christensen

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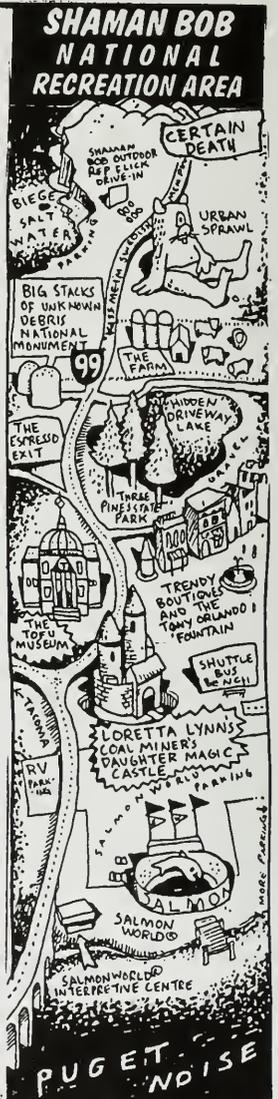
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Farm Pulp Magazine, 217 NW 70th St., Seattle, WA 98117 • sent to PW by Holy Tire Iron in Mass.

## SHAMAN BOB NATIONAL RECREATION AREA



CERTAIN DEATH

SHAMAN BOB OUTDOOR REPUBLIC DRINKING

URBAN SPRAWL

BIEGE SALT WATER

THE MOUNTAIN TOP

THE FARM

BIG STACKS OF UNKNOWN DEBRIS NATIONAL MONUMENT

99

THE ESPRESSO EXIT

HIDDEN DRIVEWAY LAKE

THREE PINE STATE PARK

THE MUSEUM

TRENDY BOUTIQUES AND THE TOMY ORLANDO FOUNTAIN

SHUTTLE BUS BENCH

LORETTA LYNN'S COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER MAGIC CASTLE

SALMON WORLD'S

SALMON WORLD INTERPRETIVE CENTRE

PUGET NOISE

# The A P E of H T R U T H S To Come:

## NEW MEDIA & KNOWLEDGE

Everything we know about entertainment and the forms it takes as “product” is up for grabs. The categories that seem so “natural” to us like TV, radio, albums, books, magazines, movies, videos, are rapidly converging into one large digital data stream. Those earlier forms won’t completely disappear, but all will be altered by their new interchangeability as data, and new combinations will become common. Central to this process are converging changes in form and delivery, from the much-touted arrival of “interactive” media to the frenzy of corporate and legal deal-making regarding the delivery of digital signals to your home or business via phone and/or cable.

**Interactivity is the means to personalize and enhance your participation in image consumption. By providing limited choices, interactivity mimics the false control offered over work by self-management and workers’ participation schemes.**

Beneath the media world lies our perceptual framework, and digital media may change how we *know* what we know. Our sense of life and society changed at earlier times of upheaval in “communications technology,” especially in the transition from oral to literate cultures. Literacy contributed to the downfall of many a dictator and monarch, but it also brought with it certain assumptions that strongly influence our imaginations. Marshall McLuhan argued that the subtle effects of the medium of knowing influences what we can know. Knowledge, when constructed from “straight rows of exactly repeatable, individually meaningless units of type, is an amazingly close analogue of, and perhaps the model for, the specialized industrial society in which an entire economy is assembled out of small bits of individually owned private property—including intellectual property.”<sup>1</sup>

Any metaphor can be taken too literally, but clearly something as invisibly “natural” as the alphabet imparts deep assumptions about how the world around us is structured, or more accu-

rately, how we humans structure that world. Literacy provided the “operating system” and the logic for the advanced developments in communications technology by establishing the basis for a technologized culture and by shaping our conception of knowledge.

The subversive possibilities of literacy *per se* have long ago exhausted themselves. Seeing the world through literate eyes, as does a large part of the world’s population, has not in itself led to a richly engaged and informed public, even though books and information are relatively easy to acquire. The critical consciousness of an active literate (still pretty rare, after all) has been outflanked by the aggressive shaping of “reality” by mass media. Of course there could be no TV without literacy, but the represented world of television, reinforced by radio and newspapers, establishes and shapes reality in ways that the printed word only aspired to, but could never achieve alone. After centuries of gradually expanding literacy and nearly a hundred years of public schooling, our minds have been shaped to believe what we see. As photography, film and TV became commonplace, our “natural” instinct to believe what we see created a society perfectly suited to “blind” allegiance to a carefully manufactured “reality” of images. The roots of this manipulability are clearly visible in the successes of yellow (print) journalism around the turn of the century before the arrival of the “more real” radio or TV.

If the demise of the Soviet empire

heralds the end of the 20th century, it also marks the victory of the system of order advanced by the U.S. throughout the world, a system called the “integrated spectacle” by the French Situationist writer Guy Debord:<sup>2</sup>

*The society whose modernization has reached the stage of the integrated spectacle is characterized by the combined effect of five principal features: incessant technological renewal, integration of state and economy, generalized secrecy, unanswerable lies, and eternal present.... Once one controls the mechanism which operates the only form of social verification to be fully and universally recognized, one can say what one likes. The spectacle proves its arguments simply by going round in circles: by coming back to the start, by repetition, by constant reaffirmation in the only space left where anything can be publicly affirmed, and believed, precisely because that is the only thing to which everyone is witness. Spectacular power can similarly deny whatever it likes, once, or three times over, and change the subject, knowing full well there is no danger of any riposte, in its own space or any other.*

The rule of the Spectacle, while omnipresent and amazingly effective, still has its cracks and fissures. Clearly, the simple truth no longer holds the same weight as it once did, and it never seems “simple.” Reliance on earnest appeals to the truth will continue to fall on deaf ears, if such appeals are even articulated publicly at all. The “new media universe,” or media-verse, is under construction, and some people hope for openings in the armor that will allow a more egalitarian society to begin emerging from the technological cornucopia.

### Predatory Pruning in the Corporate Garden

Corporate giants have recently been observed tying the knot in frenzied cross-industry deals, getting married to stake a claim in the much-anticipated media-verse. The old TV networks, Microsoft, IBM and Apple, TCI and Time Warner, the *New York Times* and *USA Today*, Bell Atlantic and the other baby Bells, AT&T, QVC and the Home Shopping Network, not to mention all the smaller local interests, have all joined the battle. Vast fortunes will be wasted and a few will survive and grow. And when the dust clears there should be, according to all the analysts, a media industry straddling the globe comparable to the mid-20th century auto and oil giants.<sup>3</sup>

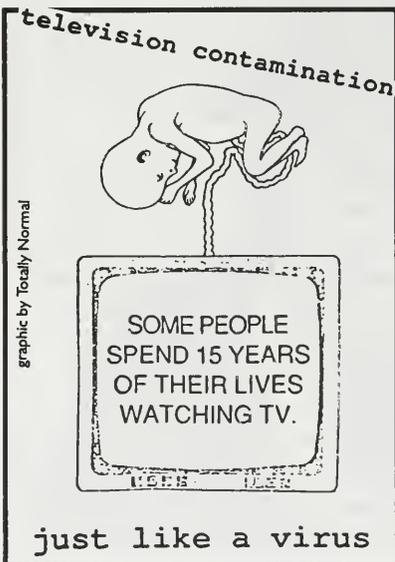
As media giants compete across the

planet to control our perceptions of reality, the univocal, self-referential spectacular society will have to change its spots. While we watch and throw an occasional stone, the system will try to exploit regional differences even while promoting a less Euro- or Yankee-centric “objectivity.” CNN against ABC against BBC against TV GLOBO against NHK, etc. will supposedly demonstrate the “freedom of the airwaves.” Competition will be emphasized to obscure the essential sameness and increasingly homogenized package of modern life, a package which is paradoxically very different from the lives of most people.

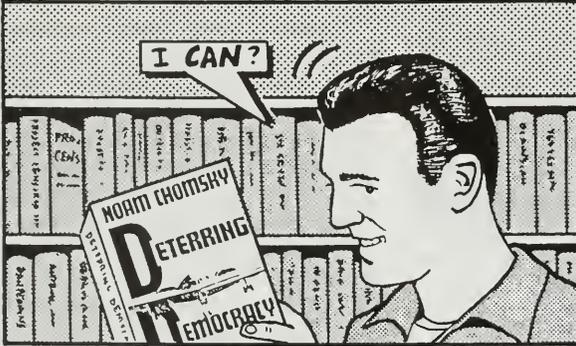
We can expect the approaching international network television system to promote a new global citizenship. How shall we counter this bogus citizenship, this pathetic acquiescence to a corporate agenda? What would an anti-capitalist, positive and humane version of such “citizenship” consist of in the post-modern world? Can “global citizen,” or “international proletarian,” or any new global identity arise to undermine the untrammelled power of multinational capital? Multinational corporations will spend billions to define a “desirable” way of life, ideologically reinforcing “globalism” the same way national capital has historically reinforced nationalism. Global broadcasting will surely intensify the already advanced process of creeping monoculture, leading to the final airport-ization and enclave-ization of reality for the haves, while the have-nots remain unseen and unnoticed, except as panhandlers and occasional rioters.

They’ll try to get us to pay for this new media-verse, too. Unless we can revolutionize how we use these technologies—along with the society we create together—they’ll invent yet another payment scheme: by the minute, by the product, by the kilobyte, subscriptions and access fees, TV-shopping taxes, and so on. We can’t play unless we pay, as usual, unless the easy duplicability of digital information finally destroys all attempts at ownership and payment schemes.

It is possible that the private origin and rightful ownership of ideas will erode as we freely access bits of writings through new electronic libraries. Someday we’ll know that the global reservoir of scientific and technical knowledge belongs to everyone equally, since it is a product of the complex web of human



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SO HURRY ON DOWN TO THE NEAREST **CHAIN BOOKSTORE OUTLET**--WHERE THEY UNDERSTAND THAT BOOKS ARE JUST **ANOTHER CONSUMER ITEM**...AND THE ONLY THING THAT REALLY MATTERS IS **UNIT PRICE**...



graphic by Tom Tomorrow

TOM TOMORROW ©13

history. Doug Brent argues that:

The metaphorical meaning of print technology is isolation, not communality. In particular, the ability to claim one's particular share of the intertextual web, and stamp it with one's own name—an ability made possible by the same printing press that made widespread cumulation of knowledge possible as well—suggests that knowledge is individually owned. I believe that computer mediated communication provides a totally different metaphorical message...that takes theories of collaborative knowledge and...stamps them indelibly in the consciousness of the entire society.... With electronic communication the notion of the static and individually owned text dissolves back into the communally performed fluidity of the oral culture.... Document assembly becomes analogous to the oral poet boilerplating stock phrases and epithets into familiar plots...it becomes obvious that originality lies not so much in the individ-

ual creation of elements as in the performance of the whole composition.<sup>4</sup> [emphasis added]

### Orality & Literacy

Oral, non-literate cultures are "verbomotor" cultures in which, by contrast with high-technology cultures, courses of action and attitudes toward issues depend significantly more on effective use of words, and thus on human interaction, and significantly less on non-verbal, often largely visual input from the "objective" world of things.... Primary orality fosters personality structures that in certain ways are more communal and externalized, and less introspective than those common among literates.

—Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, (Routledge: 1982)

Imagine life without books, magazines, packaging, signs, TV, radio, boomboxes, et al. Kind of hard, isn't it? What was "in" the pre-literate mind? What did it make of time and space?

Before writing and before alphabets, human society depended entirely on speech and song to establish and maintain knowledge, often in the form of lengthy, elaborate sagas. Ong argues that "without print, knowledge must be stored not as a set of abstract ideas or isolated bits of information, but as a set of concepts embedded deeply in the language and culture of the people." Oral cultures strive to conserve knowledge, largely through the repetition of elaborate allegorical tales with stock phrases and communally recognized characters, roles and concepts (Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are examples). With no place to "look it up," humans depended on wise individuals, often the elders who had developed and polished their storytelling skills, to maintain and transmit what was known.

Intellectual experimentation was

distrusted, since the important goal was to preserve what was known rather than to challenge and undermine it with new ideas. The oral society maintained a heightened awareness and focus on what we call the "present." Changes in life were reflected in changing episodes in well-known stories. What was remembered gradually and seamlessly changed to meet new situations.

Accompanying the move from an oral to a literate human culture, sound is demoted as the primary medium for experiencing knowledge. Sound, whether voice or ambient noise or music, surrounds you in a way visual input doesn't. Learning, understanding and wisdom were by definition socially developed and shared—thoughts and wisdom only existed as sound, disappearing as soon as uttered unless repeated.

The "natural" separation between knowledge and knower which permeates our literate, technologized culture, couldn't have occurred to an intelligent, "well-educated" mind in a pre-literate society. Oral people didn't have the sense of time we accept today. There were seasons and weather and most cultures had holidays during the various times of year, but there weren't dates, hours, clocks, and so on.<sup>5</sup> Literacy made it possible to record thoughts, examine, debate and revise them, which soon gave greater power to the masters of the newly technologized word. As thinking about something written becomes more common, fragmentation of consciousness, specialization and complex analysis become possible in ways

not possible in oral societies. Among the earliest uses of writing was the control of legal codes and accounting for business. As market relations inexorably spread through imperial conquest and subjugation, literacy went along, too. Literacy, based on visual linearity, after centuries has narrowed what we value as knowledge, and hence what we experience. Even though we have more and deeper knowledge about the world than pre-literate, oral cultures, our civilization is astonishingly barbaric. The everyday communality and ability to live much more cooperatively, present in many oral societies, would be a welcome antidote to the isolation and anomie of modern daily life.

### Interactivity to the Rescue?

The new hype about interactivity suggests certain appetites or consumer demands are being felt. Do people want interactive entertainment because the interaction they share with friends, family and co-workers is insufficient? Now, all-new interactive entertainment comes along to assuage the loneliness of modern life, but actually ends up reinforcing it! Capitalist society brutalizes us with the fears and doubts of "economic necessity." We react *naturally*, by becoming more machine-like. Interactivity promises to give us what we've lost as we adapted to society. We may be bored and boring, but interactive entertainment promises to let us control beautiful people doing beautiful things, with no backtalk or guff.

I admit I was intrigued at first. But it was hard to imagine a finely-tuned, labor-intensive creative product with gaping holes left for a naive user to come in and add whatever he or she wanted. Sure enough, existing interactive CD-ROM products are either encyclopedic databases with photos, text and occasional video-clips, or they are elaborate games with numerous hidden clues and buttons that you must overcome to get to the next level or scene. Todd Rundgren is among a smattering of musicians who are publishing music CDs with uses from straight-ahead listening to mix-and-match your own tune with provided elements.

Interactive programming will have to be able to deliver specific consumer market segments to advertisers, of course. Interactivity and artificial environments ("virtual reality") will attract a share of the entertainment consumer dollar. How much depends on what the experience

can really deliver. If it ends up being a wax-museum trip through Polygon Hell, it will never catch on. But if you can "attend" various historic moments, places, events, and "be there" in true 360 degrees live animation, that could be pretty addictive.<sup>6</sup>

Some boosters argue that interactive programs can stimulate a renaissance in education, overcoming the archaic forms of learning still relied on in most schools. A great deal of public school is really awful, so it's easy to imagine a new series of techno-fixes being well-received by students and faculty. But the issues of education go a lot deeper (see *Processed World* 31).

Will the rise of "interactive" TV mean more toggling, more pulp fiction, more brain-dead hours of "entertainment"? Are there really a bunch of people out there who want to do a lot more than just switch channels until they find something they can "veg out" in front of? Interactive entertainment is a glorified system of multiple choice and thus a hollow promise. Entertainment is bad enough already, but to structure it so you have to work to enjoy it—forget it!

True interactivity is what can happen between human beings, genuine subjects, individuals with the unique quality of being able to find a near-infinite range of responses to any situation, as well as the ability to imagine completely new possibilities not yet anticipated. Any interactive program or game today is a closed loop in which all the possibilities have been thought of and planned for; your "job" is to try to gain access to them. With a "friendly" interface, your work seems like play, and the time computing seems really fun and just a big game after all. But the interaction, or interactivity, is the means to personalize and enhance your participation in prefabricated image consumption. By providing limited choices, interactivity mimics the false control offered over work by self-management and workers' participation schemes, wherein workers decide how to accomplish the business' mission, but, crucially, not *what the mission is*.

The free communication spaces that we have now (e.g. Internet, public access TV, etc.) are already overwhelmingly uninteresting. Human community ("interactivity") is already extremely weak. The whole notion of public opinion has turned into an easily manipulated series of

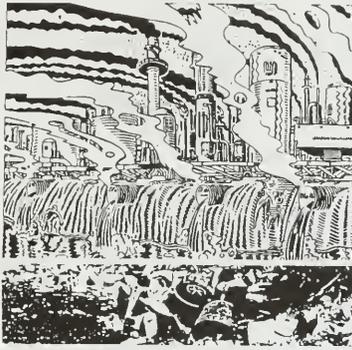
PRESENT POLICIES  
ARE NOT  
ACCIDENTAL



CAPITAL WILL  
PUT UP A FIGHT

## IN A WORLD

### INCREASINGLY TOXIC



WE ARE ALL  
IMMUNE DEFICIENT  
(IT'S JUST A MATTER OF TIME)

statistical non sequiturs. "Unanswerable lies have succeeded in eliminating public opinion, which first lost the ability to make itself heard and then very quickly dissolved altogether." (Debord)

The wide expansion of channels and bandwidths along with easy, cheap, two-way and conferencing capabilities could promote horizontal communication in ways that undercut the univocal voice of the dominant society. But the Spectacle could also continue to absorb every social expression and movement into its underlying logic of buying and selling. The advent of TV shopping and online services expands the reach of market relations a notch or two further. Perhaps the loss of public space has driven the dreamers into cyberspace, with the only thriving "public" communities existing on bulletin boards, hence the enthusiasm for new media in projects of social liberation. But what about the large majority of the population that has simply been closed out of any contact with this world?

### Reconnecting the Circuits

*In this world which is officially so respectful of economic necessities, no one ever knows the real cost of anything which is produced. In fact the major part of the real cost is never calculated; and the rest is kept secret.* [Debord]

Dissenting views are virtually invisible in mainstream America. Broadcast television, malls and airports comprise "public space" for most people, and have produced a life where "...images chosen and constructed by someone else have everywhere become the individual's principal connection to the world he formerly observed for himself... [It is] a concrete experience of permanent submission." [Debord] In exchange for our self-doubt, the Spectacle reassures us that we are sharing in "real life" when we watch it happen on TV. After all, the representation of life is "more real" than life itself.

Spectacular society leads us to dismiss or at least trivialize our own experiences when it diverges too far from the official, received story. For example, the sustaining energy of the anti-Gulf War demonstrations in U.S. cities was in part drained by trivializing, limited media coverage. In San Francisco, 100,000 anti-war protesters were just another "opinion" alongside 300 pro-war protesters in the 'burbs. The reality of living through such a large demonstration became hard to believe when it was not reinforced in

the "real" public sphere, TV.

In keeping a profligate consumer society based on increasingly sharp class divisions and falling living standards from im- or exploding, the worldmakers have a difficult task. They must allow a decentralization in spectacle maintenance. They have to assume that the principles of spectacular society (mistrust of one's own experience, suspicion of other people's motives, belief in the bald-faced lies of the rulers, loneliness, resignation, and atomization) are so thoroughly internalized that most people will go on reproducing it independently of any real central control.

New media tools like "morphing" and photo manipulation software have drastically eroded verifiability through images.<sup>7</sup> The ability to manipulate consciousness and the appearance of reality has eroded with the loss of image believability. The development of interactivity is an attempt to outflank the increasing emptiness of media consumption by using our participation to enhance the credibility of spectacular images. More importantly, the new media seeks to perpetuate the form of media commodity against an exploding world of direct, horizontal, free communication.

E-mail and electronic discussion groups are bringing together new communities around shared ideas and interests, but still very isolated. The millions of Internet users are mostly very alone as they "communicate" so it's difficult to see how underground communities can develop to reclaim the public space essential to a free society. The impact of all these new connections hasn't been felt

yet. I hope for the best, but can easily imagine a lot of empty, pointless verbiage flying around the electronic world, matched only by the enormous mountains of meaningless data gathered by our corporate and governmental institutions.

Finally, this is what we face: to take the disparate strands of knowledge, culture and meaning that we develop in our electronic activities (and elsewhere) and give them a life in the physical and political world. We must remove the constraints of isolation imposed by our "interactive solitude" and make all aspects of our lives meaningfully interactive, so that we are forevermore the subject and creator of our own destinies! The threads of subversion we weave so quietly today must find their way to transform the self-destructive, brutal and dehumanizing life we actually live when we are at work, on the go, at school, and in the streets. The trust we place in electronic links must again find a common home among our social links, until electronic "experiences" take their rightful place as occasional supplements to a rich, varied human life.

—Chris Carlsson

### Footnotes

1. Paraphrased nicely by Doug Brent in *Intertek 3.4* "Speculations on the History of Ownership," originally published in *EJournal* and not copyrighted!
2. *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, Verso, London: 1990
3. The maneuvering currently underway is reminiscent of the corporate conspiracy in the '40s and '50s to scuttle intracity urban rail systems when a cabal of General Motors, Firestone Tires, Phillips Petroleum, Mack Truck and Standard Oil of Ohio bought up rail systems and "modernized" city transit systems by ripping out the tracks and replacing the trains with busses. The real goal was to get people off public transit and into private cars, a plan which worked pretty well, unfortunately. But much more is now at stake. The manufacture and maintenance of the images of global reality may be even more powerful than the establishment and control of a highly profitable, carefully controlled, enormously wasteful and finally doomed transit racket.
4. Brent, op. cit.
5. As late as the 13th century, land titles were often undated in England, possibly due to uncertainty among scribes as to the proper point in the past to begin counting: the creation of the world? the birth of Christ? the Crucifixion? (M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307*, Harvard U. Press: 1979, cited in Ong, op. cit.)
6. Advertisers will no doubt slip modern products anachronistically into the historic moments for added impression, as well as added revenue for the programmers.
7. "Morphing" is a software process of transforming one face to another or to a made-up face by rearranging the pixels mathematically. Photo manipulation software is somewhat better known, and gives the skilled user the ability to produce a counterfeit "proof" of virtually any scene one would care to have.

For those who think Art should imitate Life, sculptures like **THE HAMMERING MAN** in Seattle and **THE DOOR IS ALWAYS OPEN** in San Francisco hit the nail of life square on its helmetless head.

Showing the painful and all too common collision of cyclist and car door, **THE DOOR IS ALWAYS OPEN** was installed immediately prior to a Critical Mass bike ride by a faux bureaucratic "Dept. of Public Art." The anonymous sculptors elegantly expressed the horrific impact of automotive reality on everyday cyclists, a metallic reminder that in an age of steel and glass, we careen each day from blow to blow.

And for those existentialists who see the myth of Sisyphus as the real key to everyday life, there is the 48 foot **HAMMERING MAN** that beats its avril day in and day out, by the Seattle Art Museum. Valued at \$450,000, the Jonathan Borofsky sculpture could be viewed as an aesthetic validation of mindless and monotonous behavior.

On Labor Day, guerrilla art commandos manacled **Hammering Man** to a 700- pound ball and chain to underline the futility and horror of everyday work.

"**HAMMERING MAN** has been sentenced to endless drudgery and repetition, a punish-



ment our installation calls into question," commented Subculture Joe of these otherwise elusive art commandos.

Even the self-satirizing

↳ **The Hammering Man with Ball & Chain** sculpture by Jonathan Borofsky, ball & chain added by anonymous group with spokesperson "Subculture Joe."

SEATTLE, um, POST-INTELLIGENCER was given pause to consider:

"Perhaps the ball and chain were meant to symbolize the altered nature of work's role in society: the once proud work ethic represented by the towering kinetic Borofsky sculpture now shackled by the modern concept of work as a burden, indented servitude to a material world."

We eagerly await news of the next artistic salvo in the war on normalcy...coming to a street near you. Art will surely strike thrice, all of us who are **outside** (or who are outsiders on the inside) can choose from an ever growing arsenal of art-as-information tools, reality blades, sculpture, graffiti, and posters. There are so many blanks in the social contract that are just waiting for you to dip your finger in that japester inkwell.

# SLASHING THE SEMIOTIC CITYSCAPE

OUTLAW SCULPTURE IN SEATTLE & SAN FRANCISCO, POETIC TERRORISM IN NEW YORK, w/REFERENCES

Grab your spray-cans, chisels, felt-tip cursors, melting cameras, razors and light pens and take them to the street.

—D.S. BLACK

P.S.: On the train home after keying this article at PW, I picked up a newspaper and found this third (far from final) attack on the semiotic reality studios: **STOPLIGHTS MOLESTED** in New York.

"Altered Crosswalk Signs Give Strange Directions." Instead of **WALK** and **DON'T WALK**, it read **WHY/WHY NOT TRY?** in Greenwich Village, at 47th St. and Third Ave., pedestrians were prompted to **CONFORM** then **CONSUME**. Near the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, the light was revised to say **REPENT** in red letters, before switching with relief to **SIN**.

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Aficionados of this genre of "Hacking, Slashing, and Sniping in the Empire of Signs" might wish to pick up the recent pamphlet in the *Open Magazine* series: *Culture Jamming*, by Mark Dery, covers the ongoing assault on public message space, with discussion on media hoaxing, billboard alteration, subvertising, comcorder activism, audio agitprop, and other new hacks of the statist quo. \$4 from *Open Magazine*, PO Box 2726, Westfield, NJ 07091. Another indispensable source is *Adbusters Quarterly* ("Journal of the Mental Environment") \$5.75 or \$16/4 issues from The Media Foundation, 1243 W. 7th Ave., Vancouver, B.C., Canada V6H 1B7

↳ **The Door Is Always Open**  
by the Department of Public Art



photo by D.S. Black

# Terror

of the

# Scientific Sun

**N**uclear weapons are the ultimate technological horror of our time—destruction of unbelievable scope unleashed in an instant, anywhere on the planet. For those of us who grew up in the shadow of the mushroom cloud there are few aspects of life that appear more inhuman or more uncontrollable. Having lived under “The Bomb” in Los Alamos in the 1950s and ’60s—the son of a physicist who worked on thermonuclear weapons—I have long had an interest in industries of mass death (see “My Nuclear Family,” *PW* #21).

Despite the familiarity of “nukes,” they are a largely invisible industry. Budgets and technologies are classified, factories are terra obscura, and the workers silent. For an entire generation the threat of a cold war turning hot was always present. Today, with the collapse of the USSR and the corresponding shifts in world tensions, it might seem that the threat is diminishing. Governments, however, continue to produce and test nuclear weapons; designers

*At 3500 yards I could feel the heat, felt like someone had run a hot iron over the whole of my body, and I could see the bones in my elbow. I'm looking with my eyes shut, and it was just as clear as could be. ... So, the light comes up, and then it fades and ... goes almost to red. Everything is dark, but it's red... Then the ground starts to move, and it's caving in, and literally your world is coming apart ... the trench was snaking so violently, zigzagging, curving, and caving in. ... By the time we got out the dummies [of marines] are burning and there are brush fires behind us, and you're not looking anywhere but straight up, and the fireball is every color of the rainbow, green, blue, red... directly above us. It obliterated the sky. It had been a crystal clear day in the desert, but now all you could see was fire... I was sobbing and weeping, with no shame at all, as was every single guy there... We were supposed to be playing war. I promise you that you are rendered incapable of doing anything warlike or otherwise... Having seen it once, nobody can ever explain to me how they continue to do this. I've always thought that they should take all the people who are so very interested and ... take them into the desert ... and give them a shot if they like to play with that shit, give them a firsthand experience. None of this sheltered stuff with their bunkers and protective gear.*

—Robert Merron recalling his experience as a 20-year-old Marine at a test of a nuclear device, “Hood,” Nevada, July 5, 1957

campaign for more money, and the background radiation count continues to drift up as more water and land become toxic from seepage or fallout.

## Inside the Workshops

Making nuclear weapons requires substantial industry: they are not the products of solitary mad scientists, but rather of enormous collaboration and intricate technologies. The Manhattan Project, which created the first atomic bomb, built several laboratories (Los Alamos, NM and Oak Ridge, TN in particular, but also many smaller facilities), a major nuclear reactor (Hanford, WA), and various supporting industries. In WW II the biggest issue was finding a design that would work; manufacture and assembly (“engineering” problems) were considered secondary. Even these tasks consumed billions of dollars and changed the industrial face of the US.

The design process remains obscured by secrecy and the arcane nature of the task. In the United States there are two centers for the designing of nuclear weapons—Los Alamos National Laboratory [LANL] and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory [LLNL] near San Francisco, CA. The notorious Dr. Edward Teller, a Hungarian-born physicist, worked in Los Alamos in WW II. (Teller—with a dash of Kissinger—is the model for Dr. Strangelove in Stanley Kubrick’s film.) Although Teller was brilliant, his most notable accomplishments were collaborations. He was dismissed from his job at Los Alamos because of his single-minded pursuit of a thermonuclear weapon at a time when all of the lab’s resources were devoted to trying to build a fission bomb. (*Fission* is based on the rapid splitting of uranium or plutonium atoms, while thermonuclear weapons are based on the rapid *fusion* of hydrogen atoms.) In fact, his original design was unworkable. It took several more years and a crucial idea from mathematician Stan Ulam to make the

fusion bomb possible. Teller then refined Ulam’s idea (usually without credit), and pressed for the construction of an H-bomb. In order to advance his jihad against the evil USSR, Teller falsely accused the director of the Los Alamos lab, Dr. Robert Oppenheimer, of Communist sympathies and destroyed his career. As a result Teller was shunned by most of his former colleagues. My father, for example, had a yellow button that said “Uncle Stan Was Always Right”—a repudiation of Dr. Teller’s intellectual and moral talents, and praise for Dr. Ulam.

Teller pressed for the creation of a new facility to compete with Los Alamos. This was opened in July of 1952 as the Lawrence Livermore Scientific (later National) Laboratory, and marks the beginning of a shift from weapons design driven by military-political needs to a process driven by the research centers. Although Teller was not the head of Livermore, he was the predominant force there, and he recruited a number of talented but younger scientists. In addition to cutting himself

off from his old colleagues, who in the past helped him sort his good and bad ideas, he was now in a situation where few could argue with him. Perhaps as a result, Livermore’s first two nuclear weapons tests were dismal flops, managing only to bend—rather than vaporize—the towers the devices sat on. Their first thermonuclear test (“Morgenstern,” April 6, 1954) was also a dud, while Los Alamos was running a series which exceeded designers’ expectations, generating yields of up to 15 megatons. (Nuclear explosions are measured—somewhat misleadingly—by the equivalent force of tons of high explosive; 1000 tons of high explosive is 1 kiloton; 1 million tons is a megaton; the weapon which destroyed Hiroshima was about 13 kilotons.) While Livermore eventually got its act together, it was an inauspicious beginning for the egotistical Teller.

Over the next couple of decades, Teller pushed a number of ill-conceived ideas which upped the ante in the Cold War, such as a so-called “clean” bomb which would produce little radiation. Despite years of work and many tests the project was a failure, but it allowed Teller and his cronies to expand their work. In the early sixties he came up with the idea of lofting powerful nuclear weapons into space and detonating them to stop incoming enemy missiles. Consequently, he was a vocal opponent of treaties which both limited testing and forbade nuclear weapons in space. Although Kennedy ultimately accepted these treaties, the US arsenal kept growing in size and complexity, and research continued with testing moving underground.

Curiously, Dr. Teller was displeased at being known as the “father of the hydrogen bomb.” A rhyme he composed for children (!?) reveals something of his feelings:

*A stands for atom; it is so small  
No one has ever seen it all.  
B stands for bombs; the bombs are much bigger.  
So, brother, do not be too fast on the trigger.  
[...]*

## THIS MODERN WORLD by TOM TOMORROW

DURING THE EIGHTIES, AMERICANS WERE APPARENTLY WILLING TO BELIEVE ANYTHING... THAT REAGANOMICS MADE SENSE, FOR EXAMPLE...OR THAT A SPACE-BASED MISSILE DEFENSE PROGRAM WAS TRULY VIABLE...



THE REVELATION HAS BEEN MADE YEARS TOO LATE TO AROUSE THE OUTRAGE IT DESERVES, UNFORTUNATELY...



graphic by Tom Tomorrow

NOW THE N.Y. TIMES HAS DISCLOSED THAT IN 1984, CRUCIAL STAR WARS TESTS WERE BLATANTLY FAKED BY THE PENTAGON IN ORDER TO RECEIVE THE SOVIET UNION INTO SPENDING BILLIONS THEY COULD ILL AFFORD--



STILL, IT'S ASTONISHING TO CONSIDER THAT, AS A MATTER OF OFFICIAL POLICY, THE PENTAGON MAY HAVE BEEN LESS CONCERNED WITH THE EFFECTIVENESS OF STAR WARS THAN WITH ITS COST...



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3644, 3645, 3646, 3647, 3648, 3649, 3650, 3651, 3652, 3653, 3654, 3655, 3656, 3657, 3658, 3659, 3660, 3661, 3662, 3663, 3664, 3665, 3666, 3667, 3668, 3669, 3670, 3671, 3672, 3673, 3674, 3675, 3676, 3677, 3678, 3679, 3680, 3681, 3682, 3683, 3684, 3685, 3686, 3687, 3688, 3689, 3690, 3691, 3692, 3693, 3694, 3695, 3696, 3697, 3698, 3699, 3700, 3701, 3702, 3703, 3704, 3705, 3706, 37

*H has become a most ominous letter;  
It means something bigger, if not something  
better.*

He spent years after the creation of the hydrogen bomb seeking ways of reducing the threat of nuclear weapons. His enthusiasm for nuclear weapons seems to have diminished in proportion to the growth of the USSR's nuclear industry. He hated and feared the "Mutually Assured Destruction" (MAD) aspect of the weapons race and the balance of terror, and, as his ardent support for the anti-missile programs shows, he wanted to do something about it: not by reducing the threat through bilateral negotiations, but by neutralizing enemy weapons.

One component of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI, a.k.a. "Star Wars") was a form of laser powered by a nuclear weapon that fires X-rays rather than visible light. Lasers have traditionally used crystals to focus light so that it is "coherent"—i.e. all the light is in the same wavelength and going in one direction. In the late 1970s at LLNL, 24-year-old researcher Peter Hagelstein was working on chemical-powered lasers for non-military applications. He came up with a way of making a tube filled with a gel embedded with metallic atoms in a carefully designed matrix. When exposed to radiation it would, according to computer projections, produce a beam of X-rays. This was a momentous discovery.

The X-ray laser seemed perfect for anti-missile applications. It could in theory generate a beam that was a million times brighter than a nuclear bomb—which is already enormously bright. The focused energy of an X-ray laser heats the exterior of a missile or reentry vehicle and the incredibly rapid rise in temperature causes a shock wave that destroys the sensitive innards of the target. Because the beams travel at the speed of light and are powerful over large distances, they did not have the problems of traditional—and slow—anti-missile systems based on rockets.

The laser was attractive to the



photo by D.S. Black

Reagan administration for various reasons. To some it was a useful bargaining chip with the Russians, as well as a way to increase military pressure on them. For others (including the President) it promised an end to the nightmare of MAD. A "defensive" component of the nation's weapons programs was useful in countering the growing anti-nuclear movement, which had grown rapidly due to Reagan's bellicose talk and the bipartisan support for an ever-expanding

nuclear weapons arsenal. For Livermore it meant an increased budget and prestige at a time when serious negotiations were threatening to limit nuclear weapons programs.

There were serious technical questions about the X-ray laser, but Teller never let reality stop him. He sold the program in Washington to various supporters of Reagan as a "realistic" proposal. His chief assistant in this was Dr. Lowell Wood at LLNL; the two generat-



## Desert Is Not Waste Land



ed a number of letters and presentations that consistently understated the difficulties of the X-ray laser (romantically dubbed “Excalibur”), and overstated the progress that had been made. When Wood’s superior at LLNL, Roy Woodruff, head of the weapons pro-

gram, tried to send letters correcting the false impressions that Wood and Teller were spreading, he was stopped by the lab’s director, Roger Bazel. This pattern continued for years—the person ultimately responsible for the system was not allowed to tell the truth, while

them open to one-sided destruction. And an X-ray laser itself is most useful as an overtly offensive weapon against enemy satellites. Excalibur was terminated partly because of oversell by Teller and Wood, a series of disheartening tests, and the disintegrating “cost-effec-

Teller and Wood continued lying.

There were problems with Excalibur, of course. One technical issue was that the basic intensity of the laser was not being accurately measured; what Livermore had seen was an artifact of the experimental setup. The actual delivery system for the X-ray laser was attacked by opponents of Star Wars as a violation of treaties against placing nuclear weapons in space, and was attacked by supporters of other SDI programs as being vulnerable to attack. After the Challenger and other mishaps virtually stopped the US space program, the number of launches required for SDI technology seemed impossible. Technical objections paled before an overriding political objection: effective anti-missile systems are offensive because they are capable of destroying an enemy’s missiles, leaving

tiveness" of the program as the cost of the X-ray kept rising (\$3.7 billion for 1985-91) while countermeasures remained cheap.

The X-ray laser program was heavily cut. Teller and Wood went on to pimp a new anti-missile system ("Bright Pebbles"), and the weapons makers shuffled back into the shadows. But they're still there, and the combination of new technology, personal ambition and political expedience guarantees that there will be more such programs—perhaps better thought out, but ultimately dancing only to their own tune. Bad ideas don't die easily—Teller is currently pushing SDI technology as a defense against asteroids hitting the earth! Anything, it would seem, to find a silver lining in the dirty cloud of nuclear weaponry.

## Collateral Damage

The problems do not end when the designers' work stops. While no American has been killed by the USSR's nuclear weapons, many people have suffered and died because of the US program. Ironically, many of the "warlords" victims were loyal patriots working at the test sites and factories, or were military personnel participating in tests. Other people lived in areas that received heavy doses of radiation.

The first tests at the Nevada test range were in 1951, and although smaller than the enormous blasts in the Pacific, they were still dirty enough to contaminate large areas. It is estimated that each of these tests released more radiation than the Chernobyl disaster. People quickly noticed problems—first with livestock dying or being born with grotesque abnormalities, and then with human victims—some developing cancer (skin, bone, leukemia, brain, etc.), others suffering from brittle bones or compressed disks in the spine, and—again—birth defects (organs outside of the body, malformed limbs and faces, etc.).

Curiously, there are some victims who still refuse to criticize the testing.

Some remain convinced that national security requires it; others are afflicted by religion. The Mormons may have been a key element in the choice of Utah as a repository for the fallout that drifts away from the Nevada Test Site (tests are held only when the wind blows toward Utah). Because the government is seen as an extension of God's will, these people are unlikely to raise their voices about a little fallout, especially after the government minimizes the health risks of radiation—even saying it's good because it causes mutations—and lauding the chance to "participate" in our nation's defense. An interesting parallel is a recent proposal to build a toxic waste dump near Mennonite and Amish farmers; their religious values are against the agitation involved in resisting such plans. Others have never been told of the possible risks from fallout or wastes from industry.

There are accounts of even more chilling "audience participation." During the Hood test, Robert Carter, then an enlisted man in the Air Force, saw cages and fenced enclosures, some of them containing animals burned almost

beyond recognition; others held humans handcuffed to the fences. His account is backed by Marine Sergeant Israel Torres, quoted in the *Washington Law Review* (April 1990) as having seen "...people in a stockade—a chain-link fence with barbed wire on top of it. Their hair was falling out and their skin seemed to be peeling off. They were wearing blue denim trousers but no shirts.... Good God, it was scary." Both of these men were forced to submit to a coercive psychological program at the hands of military psychologists so they would not tell what they had seen.

Other victims are more obscure, as the radiation covered virtually all of the US. Contaminated grain was sold on the market, lambs that died from radiation were sold as food, etc. Retired US Air Force Colonel Langford Harrison, whose job was to fly through the clouds after tests and obtain samples of debris, says "You haven't seen an atomic bomb until you've seen one of those down in the Pacific. You'd wipe out the entire state of New York in one fell swoop. It stretches out 125 miles across, a realization of man's insanity. In Nevada the clouds got only a couple of miles across,



little firecracker ones by comparison.” One shot, Tewa, during the Redwing series (which my father participated in) “was set off over Bikini and the cloud immediately came directly over Eniwetok where we were living. We discussed evacuating the island, but the test force commander said, ‘it would scare the rest of the people if we evacuated,’ so we had to stay. The thing dumped all the material on the island, in the sand, and everywhere. Of course, we lived on this island for ... five months.” He was dying of cancer during the interview in July 1989, and added “There isn’t anybody in the United States who isn’t a downwinder, either. When we followed the clouds, we went all over the United States from east to west and covering a broad spectrum of Mexico and Canada. Where are you going to draw the line? Everyone is a downwinder. It circles the earth, round and round, what comes

around goes around.”

Some people—downwinders and workers—have tried to sue the government for damages, but even the rare legal victories have been as short-lived as the victims themselves. Cases have been overturned, sometimes in circumstances that suggest conflict of interest, sometimes because of overriding national interests. One landmark case for sheep owners in the late 1950s was reopened by the judge who had dismissed the original case when he determined that the US government had lied consistently; his new decision was overturned. The government has threatened and searched people, destroyed documents (both their own and others’), and stolen parts of deceased victims. The state of Utah proposed a study in which northern Utah (itself heavily contaminated with fallout) was used as a baseline to see if there were any health problems in

southern Utah (also heavily dusted). This is a disingenuous way of making sure that no radiation problems are found.

Nor are safety issues limited to testing; people involved with—or located near to—any step of production are threatened, from the mines and smelters (Canada, New Mexico, Nigeria, etc.) to the factories (Fernald, OH) and reactors (Savannah River, SC; Hanford), through the processing (Oak Ridge), production (Rocky Flats, CO; Pantex, TX), stockpiling, and disassembly. When Dr. Thomas Mancuso, working on a long-term study of people at nuclear production facilities, showed that there was no such thing as a safe dose of radiation, the data was classified and his clearance revoked, ending the study. Of course, there’s more at stake here than just weapons—the “civilian” nuclear industry also does not want this news.

## References of Interest

➤ *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*, (Richard Rhodes, Simon & Schuster, 1986, ISBN 0-671-44133-7). This is a highly readable account of the politics, science and technology involved in the creation of the first nuclear bomb. First Rate!

➤ *Teller's War: The Top-Secret Story Behind the Star Wars Deception* (William J. Broad, Simon & Schuster, 1992, ISBN 0-671-70106-1). To the author (a reporter for that less-than-laudable organ, *The New York Times*) the issue is the more efficient and rational production of weapons; fortunately this is not the only message of the book. He looks into the shadowy labyrinths of the national security state and examines the interaction between extremely complicated technical endeavors and political expedience. Broad's book has its flaws—in particular, because of his jingoism he never discusses the spiral of the nuclear arms race, and how—surprise!—the US has always been the initiator in escalation. Still, it's worth the read.

➤ *At Work In The Fields Of The Bomb*, by John Gerassi. This is a photo essay book with small articles that describes many aspects of weapons production from the mining of ore in Canada, through the production cycle in which it is refined, shaped, irradiated, machined and welded with a myriad of components. One of the first images in the book is of a half-melted Buddha that was at Ground Zero of the Hiroshima bomb. Lots of interesting essays and articles (Dr. Mancuso on epidemiology, diagrams of H-bombs, etc.). Excellent book.

➤ *The Samson Option: Israel's Nuclear Arsenal and American Foreign Policy* (Seymour Hersh, Vintage Books, Jan. 1993. ISBN 0-679-74331-6). An in-depth account of the growth of Israel's

nuclear weapons, looking at its effect on US policy. He does a good job of explaining who didn't know what, and when they first didn't know it. Curiously, it remains the official view of the US government and allies that Israel does not have nuclear weapons ... this despite detailed knowledge of production at Dimona, overhead photos of deployed missiles, descriptions of neutron-warheads from walk-ins, and so on. Displeasing, not because of Hersh's work, but because of the depth of hypocrisy it reveals.

➤ *Analysis of Six Issues About Nuclear Capabilities of India, Iraq, Libya, and Pakistan*, Jan. '82 publication by the Library of Congress prepared for the Subcommittee on Arms Control, Oceans, International Operations and Environment (whew!). Dry but informative about the technical oversight of proliferation treaties and the possibilities of manufacturing nuclear weapons.

➤ *American Ground Zero: The Secret Nuclear War*, by Carole Gallagher, MIT Press, 1993, Cambridge MA., ISBN 0-262-07146-0) is a beautiful book of photos and text. An excellent introduction looks at the Mormons and nuclear tests. She is an excellent photographer, and the words of the people who have endured these tests are often moving. Of added interest are some Dorothea Lange photos of St. George Utah in 1953—right after the testing began. The quotes from Merron, Harrison and Carter are from her book.

➤ *Arms Control Today* is published 10 times a year by The Arms Control Association, 11 Dupont Circle, Washington, DC 20036. Dry and fairly staid, it has articles on nuclear and non-nuclear proliferation. The September 1993 issue has an article on dismantling arsenals of the former USSR

--GSW

## More & More

Consider the headlines. The US is negotiating with some republics that used to be part of the USSR to buy their nuclear weapons, and is also buying up scientists to keep them off the market. The major powers have all curtailed their programs (or at least testing, temporarily) because of cost, politics and/or contamination. But there are other nuclear powers, and many more wannabes.

During the “Oil War” against Iraq in 1992—and since then—a major issue was whether Iraq had nuclear weapons, and if not, how close they were to producing them. In 1981 Israel bombed Iraq's main reactor at Osirak in order to disrupt Iraq's program. Inspections by the International Atomic Energy Commission at that time indicated that Iraq had not been violating the safeguards of the Non-Proliferation Treaty by either making or retaining enriched uranium. Estimates released in a US Congressional study at about that time showed that Iraq, while more advanced

than Libya, was significantly behind India (which now has a nuclear capability) and Pakistan (which probably still does not). This study, plus the material released by UN inspectors after the Gulf War, shows that the threat of Iraq's nuclear program has been greatly overstated for propaganda reasons.

In contrast, Israel's nuclear program dates back to the 1950s and has involved US covers for almost as long. Career bureaucrats in the State Department, Congress and the CIA learned that bringing up the subject was bad for one's career. Nobody wanted to hear the news.

Just before dawn in the South Indian Ocean on September 22, 1979, a US VELA satellite picked up the tell-tale double flash of a nuclear weapon.

Earlier, the Carter administration had dissuaded South Africa from undertaking what seemed to be a nuclear test, but here was clear evidence. A government blue-ribbon commission, The Ruina Panel, whitewashed the event. In an echo of the old inter-lab hostility, the Livermore group that worked on proliferation issues ("Z Division") remained mute, while scientists in Los Alamos—where VELA was designed—were furious, even to the point of granting (off-the-record) interviews. My father made it clear that he spoke for other physicists at the lab when he denounced the report as "a load of horse pucky." For reasons of state power (and US prestige), the lie had to stand.

Other countries continue to develop and test nuclear weapons—

notably France and China—and others may soon be able to do so. Given US hypocrisy over Israel's program, the Non-Proliferation Treaty is regarded with cynicism by other nations. The NPT is twin sister to the "Atoms for Peace" program, set up in the 1950s to export US technology and provide advice on (and to monitor) foreign programs for ostensibly peaceful nuclear technology. Under this program (as a quid pro quo for support of US policy in Afghanistan) Pakistan has received support for nuclear reactors and processing plants, but they have had trouble getting Krytons (high-speed timers sometimes used in strobe lighting, also used in nukes for triggering explosive charges), which Israel received without a blink of an eye. Pakistan, however, has



graphic by Kazai Aclik



graphic by J.F. Batellier

received far better treatment than other US "allies" such as Brazil and Argentina; obviously Iraq, North Korea and other "enemies" have little access to US technology and aid.

The dissolution of the former USSR has left in its wake four nations with a strategic nuclear capability: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan. All but the Ukraine have taken steps to ultimately destroy the weapons and stockpile the radioactive materials; the Ukraine's intransigence is now threatening to halt the whole process. Currently the Ukraine is the third largest nuclear power in the world with some 1700 warheads. Because the components in warheads break down with time (precise information on the rate of breakdown is classified), and certain isotopes become unusable within short periods of time, these weapons can't be counted on to work in the future. This puts nations without the industrial capability to make new nukes at a disadvantage, and enforces a "use 'em or lose 'em" psychology. There are also fears that weapons could be sold; even a "tactical" warhead would destroy a city. While many mod-

ern systems have intricate safety mechanisms and require secret codes to be armed, it is not clear how many of the USSR's warheads were protected by such measures.

There is a practical way to use a nuclear weapon without setting it off: blackmail. The knowledge that an enemy state may have smuggled a nuclear weapon into one's own country may serve to modify policy; Israel is believed to have made its possession of small nuclear weapons known to the Soviet Union in the 1960s. While most large countries have some highly classified programs aimed at detecting such weapons, their actual utility is questionable. Anywhere a border can be crossed by a vehicle, boat or plane, the chance exists. Blackmail can also be applied to allies: Israel deliberately made its nuclear capability known in the '73 war as a way of pressuring the US into delivering upgraded electronics for Israeli aircraft.

While the United States desperately tries to buy up the supply of Russian nuclear scientists to keep them off the market (or drive up the price?), other nations continue to stockpile, and more

countries are achieving the capabilities. Contrary to popular fiction, there is no "A-bomb Secret"—the fundamentals are well known and the technology increasingly cheap. Each expansion heightens the risk of use; each war with a nuclear-armed foe raises the possibility that the weapons will be used (especially if the owner is losing); and each program means a large, but uncounted, list of victims.

We are far from ending the threat of nuclear weapons; popular movements have crested, while the corporations (GE, North American Rockwell, Westinghouse, Dupont, etc., etc.) and universities press for contracts. The military still exists, and the lab managers tout arcane designs and new weapon systems which appeal to the "macho" hard-line mentality of politicians. Proliferation, like the rising toll of victims and the environmental damage, must remain a non-issue for these people.

The consequences of this organized crime will be with us for a long time.

— Greg Williamson

# HAITIS IN RUSH HOUR

## ONE

The coast guard says it is continuing to search  
For more Haitians in the water,  
Said the national public radio.

Fish and hatefodder,  
Swimming without gills,  
Stuffed with the starch of our perceptions  
Their eyes yellowed and moonstruck  
By the glare of our national eye;

Peering in,  
We turn heads into lost cemetery numbers  
Frenzies of swollen and salted eyes,  
Festering in oceanic fear  
The U.S. is a jerk of the knee and heart,  
A baffling leap of mind.

Good Night, Macneil-Lehrer,  
Good Night.

Remote controls  
Fade out and faint out  
Into supertime America  
Little Haitians, though, little Haitian-things  
Scurrying across the dinner table like lice  
Seeking asylum in the warmth of mashed potatoes,  
Jockeying for sympathy amongst the peas,  
Sucking the blood from my London Broil.  
Those Haitians and those Cubans.

## TWO

During the lunch hour, I am gliding  
Along the silvery sheen of escalators  
Soaring in the grandiose public eye of Washington,  
Catapulting me onward toward the presidency.  
The sheen of perfume credit card and shopping bag expense,  
Of careers and responsibility,  
Shimmering at me through resume eyes,  
glittering from American Expressed Honolulu Vacations..  
I felt very presidential today,  
Striding majestically into the break room,  
Doing my multi-tasks with style;  
Held a press conference at the Coffee Urn at noon,  
To outline my strategies for peace in the Middle East  
and Eastern Europe,  
And for a New American Order.

What was Bush doing meeting with the pope on a day like today?  
His sidekick, career lapdog Eagle-burgher  
Busying himself  
With the blood-enraptured Serbs and Croats:  
Crazy fat Greeks and scowling empire Turks  
Stuck somewhere in between,  
They are fired up Mongrels,  
Dirty and unreasonable,  
Like Arabs.

So many tribes to worry about,  
Eager-Burgher said.  
Those Serbs and those Croats  
Building little empires, killing little people,

Just a little bit bigger  
Than the flailing Haitians  
Of miasma overpopulation nightmares  
(Detention and detonation are similar worlds);

Meanwhile,  
Silent oh-zone seethes away  
Like a hissing snake,  
Microwaving fields of cancerous corn and cattle  
and Miami, Florida early retirement deaths.  
The news today seemed more burdensome  
Than the average toll of deaths and insults  
Probably because I listened to it all day long  
Everybody kept killing everybody else  
Over and over again.

## THREE

In my carpeted downtown makework office,  
Afternoon time pours on  
Slow hand,  
Small hand,  
Drifttime,  
Lunch sifting through the veins.  
Everything here sticks to you:  
Cremora and Winston-salem on the throat and lung  
A veritable swamp down there these days,  
But who is worrying?

Oh!-Zone seeps and pushes through late afternoon,  
Presiding in giant silence  
Over the clattering of mega-bites;  
It lurks and sulks behind the timeless questions,  
Such as:  
Which is worse, anyway,  
A broken law  
Or a broken heart?

## FOUR

Afternoon updates:  
The horrifying bath of bloodwater death  
In the Philippines  
Makes poetry obsolete.

You should not listen to the news all day  
The dead can really get to you.

I wonder if they have found any more Haitians  
Writhing in midnight nets  
Amongst the Starkist tunas.  
Somebody ought to sift them out  
From the slithering pile,  
They make for good laborers.

It is nice to get a paycheck on a Friday.

—CHRISTOPHER COOK



**ANGRY REPAIRMAN**

Been lying under sinks for years  
 all that shit falling down in your face  
 been doing it so long  
 I don't even have to open my eyes, so long  
 I don't even have to be there  
 can't look at faucets without thinking  
 how they come apart  
 Or working on AC  
 you know how filthy those  
 apartment units can get?  
 all that grease & roach crap  
 (got my own freon recovery outfit,  
 can't just vent that shit into the  
 ozone anymore)  
 I am by no means intrigued by air conditioning  
 but I have obligations  
 I keep everybody comfortable  
 Damn laundrymat job  
 that helper they sent me  
 was an idiot  
 almost electrocuted me  
 you gotta understand electricity  
 it's always looking for ground  
 it fascinates me,  
 it is my kin  
 Now lineman  
 that was my true calling  
 till my back went bad  
 I'd put on those climbers  
 (never mind the creosote burns)  
 & I was on top of the world  
 up in the sunlight with the hawks  
 I could see a deer running over in the next county  
 and the quiet  
 I could listen to electricity  
 no obligations  
 just listen to my ancestors.

—Suzanne Freeman

**LIKE A FLASH OF DARKENING**

Like a flash of darkening  
 in a naively blue sky  
 an offhand slur  
 from a minor-league boss  
 transforms my mood  
 and my digestion.

A sidwise sneer, a careless word,  
 a memo with the lightest criticism,  
 and years of rage  
 at the structured insult  
 that is my life  
 spew steam like surging espresso.

Nights of heartburn.

Thunderous fantasies.

As my teeth shatter like falling teacups  
 from my stifling, gritting rage  
 our noble superiors  
 stalk the world  
 like the dinosaurs they are,  
 unaware,  
 self-centered,  
 liberal,  
 as they trample unseen personas  
 underfoot.

—Sam Friedman

**INUIT SNOWY OWL**

soapstone smooth  
 as a breast's curve

under caribou hide

probably from  
 Baffin Island

wings too heavy  
 to fly a

mutated Icarus  
 nose scarred

from too many  
 tries, grounded

longing waiting  
 for some thing

from another planet  
 to send magic lines

like machines that  
 can pull a plane  
 into a carrier

on the ocean clean  
 as someone falling  
 from Venus on

to a stamp

—Lyn Lifshin

## A WOMAN I KNOW AT WORK

reads true crime paperbacks about murderers, rapists, psychos, killers. "I don't want to be a victim," she says. "I want to be able to recognize these guys on the street and avoid them." She married a younger man she met at a honky tonk and he moved in with her and her mother. He immediately stopped working and sat around the house and watched tv and drank beer and ate fast food. He didn't mow the grass or take out the trash. He became angry when she told him to get off his lazy ass. "YOU BITCHI!" he screamed. He grabbed her and threw her across the room. He went after her mother and threw his fists at her face and neck. She collapsed. He walked out and went to a bar down the street. At the hospital, she held her mother's hand. "I'm sorry, mama," she said. "I thought I knew the guy. I didn't know he'd turn out like this." She divorced him and hasn't been with a man for over a year now. She still lives with her mother. She still reads true crime paperbacks. "I gotta know who these guys are," she told me the other day.

—Robert W. Howington

## UNEMPLOYMENT

Every morning the newspaper you steal from the neighbors discusses jobs, recovery, jobs, read: profits and you eat Quaker Oats for breakfast and you are in shameful love with the New York Times and its long-nosed prose about not the point and you remember the Quaker factory back in Cedar Rapids Iowa that made the whole city smell like grain vomit set aflame, you dwell on your uncle who dwelt there all his days worked in the factory for 35 years the usual story of never being sick or late once in his goddamn..blah, blah, blah. . . his view was the silo yard and his nose died to the smell which always made your throat bob even on the freeway passing by town and you root for another lie of the Times while 3 pass untackled, expenditures dwarf revenues and lately in the morning you've awakened with a mouth tight as a drawstring purse.

—Linda Johnson

## MEETING ON THE STREET

As I leave work today  
outside on the street I see  
myself collecting bottles  
from a garbage can.  
I ask myself for change  
but refuse on the ruse that I'm broke  
and I walk away from myself  
passing out of sight  
in opposite directions.

—Clifton Ross

## WRONG WAY

the division of infinite space / conferring  
the mind's childhood what will be endurance  
war on the subject museum of future tense OUT  
of language acquisition  
as you like / or a way that an infant relates  
fixed to itself sexually exiting, leaves the walls

"The birds are drunk again  
Speaking their own language" (Laura Moriarty)  
property, land, compartments

memory  
all air is up for grabs  
conspiracy?

the need to know it now: field empty  
to find the culprit / water's up front  
the enemy, another front wrong way  
do not enter ( this is a note to myself )  
to remind myself that I'm here ( war of the roses )  
I'm trying to translate the DNA / technical forces / the demand  
for novelty

field EMPTY  
to exploit the new, the new has no historical baggage  
old lovers, ripe flesh "It's this passion which one  
could call white,"  
( Anne-Marie Albiach )

THIS WAY  
compartments of secret knowledge  
father of Richard II, now dead in the tower  
by the king of infinite space

—Alexander Laurence

## DON'T JUST STAND THERE, SELL SOMETHING

Bring all the blood you got and if it's not enough  
We'll make some.  
Afternoon of another damn writer in a bad mood.  
Don't these weenies ever lighten up?  
Late into the night a grad student schemes  
On how to increase the market share of poetry.  
Imagine a board meeting at which an exec says

*I think a little tastefully-done Dadaist image  
Might serve us well here, open new markets.*

Imagine an education.  
Never mind, forgot you're American: What you are  
Is so strange you don't even know how to learn about it.  
Stick to what we're best at: American Ingenuity.  
Disingenuous, but ingenious. "We did it their way."  
We got couples counseling, job counseling,  
We got data coming in through fiber optic cable, transatlantic  
cable,  
Cable television, guitar cable.  
We're beating the band and the musicians are cowering,  
Positively kowtowing.  
We demand to be entertained at any price,  
And we wanna damnit know why it ain't art yet.

—David Fox

# DEATH of a NATION

As the twentieth century closes, the USA has become what the New York Times at the time of the Gulf "War" called a "Hessian state": economically depressed and technologically backward in all areas except the military. The US capitalist class has come more and more to resemble the "comprador bourgeoisies" of Central America, living on income skimmed off by speculation or by investment in still poorer countries, while most domestic industry is foreign-owned and the mean real wage

drops sharply below Western European levels. The majority of the employed are low-paid, insecure workers in banking, insurance, data processing, weapons

**There is spontaneous poetic oratory on street corners, often involving costume, "special effects"; troubadours, rappers, and ranters circulate everywhere. Wild murals are painted on abandoned or squatted buildings.**

manufacture, light assembly, domestic service, and retail sales.

Literacy beyond the third-grade level is becoming a minority acquisition, since real education has been almost completely privatized and in most states only the well-to-do can afford college. The lower layers of the working population, part-time and short-term, shade off into a vast mass of desperate unemployed. Between meager welfare checks (which must generally be worked for in the bargain), the unemployed support themselves by casual

labor, street vending, petty crime, drug dealing, and prostitution. The latter, despite AIDS, is one of the few growth industries, catering especially to European and Japanese tourists, who love the ethnic variety afforded by the vast red-light districts of LA and NY. About three-fifths of all African-Americans, half of all Latinos, and a quarter of all whites experience "Third World" infant mortality, nutrition, life expectancy, and housing quality.

Prodigal use of fossil fuels continues, along with a renewal of the nuclear power program. The consequence is the

continued devastation of the Alaskan tundra, the California/Oregon coastline, the Dakotas, and large areas of the southwest (as "National Sacrifice Areas" for oil, coal, and uranium). Cancer clusters proliferate around the ever greater number of toxic dumps and former industrial areas, as around nuclear plants. The US government, desperate for revenue, starts reprocessing spent nuclear fuel from abroad, as well as accommodating most of Japan's toxic wastes. There is deepening ecological crisis as the Greenhouse Effect goes into high gear around 2010. With continental weather patterns dis-

rupted, drought in the Midwest leads to famine in Eastern Europe and other countries dependent on American grain. Within the US, hunger increases.

The military-police complex clings to this dying beast like a giant tick. Heavily armed police stage quasi-military occupation of poor neighborhoods, using the pretext of "gang control" or else straight counterinsurgency. Civil liberties continue to erode, for the poor especially. For the so-called middle class too, the freedoms of speech, information, and assembly are curtailed for reasons of "war on crime," or by the corporate "neighbor-



photo by David Green

hood associations” that increasingly run suburban enclaves, levying their own taxes, imposing rigid codes of conduct on residents, and operating their own security forces. Data collected through automated transaction systems is accumulated into “virtual dossiers” on every citizen, linked by identifiers like Driver’s License and Social Security numbers; these dossiers are used by both government and private intelligence services to target deviant behaviors, and to lock out troublemakers from employment, rental housing, education, loans, and informational services. Attempts to organize workplace or rent strikes are routinely broken by racism, injunctions, and/or semi-official thuggery. Dissent, beyond the mildest and least effectual expressions, is effectively criminalized.

Despite this clampdown (and also because of it) the 2010’s see the growth of a sizable fascist movement of enraged, mostly young, barely literate whites (with a good sprinkling of college boys and professionals) who blame blacks and immigrants for economic decline. In some areas the fascists operate inside the shell of the local or regional Republican party, in others outside it as pseudo-populist formations; some are Christian Fundamentalists, others relatively non-religious racialists or even primitivistic polytheists like the core of the old Nazi SS. These white nationalists often attack workers and people of color; but they also fight the police, believing them to be deluded agents of the “Globalist Financial Elite.”

The old-line reformist African-American and Latino leadership is helpless in the face of this onslaught. Younger working-class black and brown people respond at first mainly with demagogic or protofascist forms of nationalism à la Nation of Islam—patriarchal, misogynist, homophobic, counter-racist and often anti-Semitic, and deeply authoritarian. (These tendencies are reinforced by the large numbers of young men who have been part of race-based prison mobs.) Uniformed militants of these rival political gangs patrol the borders of their respective ghettos, clashing occasionally in firefights in which the police hesitate to intervene. Within these borders, they practice terror and extortion. They are most viciously

hostile to any tendency that seeks to make common cause across racial lines and according to class interest.

At the behest of transnational corporations (TNCs), the US military gets into one counterinsurgency “resource war” after another—to protect copper in Chile or Zambia, oil in the Mideast or Africa, European and Japanese factories in Brazil or Korea, or on behalf of local client states like Kuwait. US troops are also used, sometimes under UN auspices, sometimes not, to police regional ethnic or religious conflicts where the extraction of strategic resources may be affected, as in Somalia in the early ’90s. When

when their knees jerk in Rockette-style unison against any reform that might limit the power or mobility of capital. Entertainment mostly continues dumbing down into violent/soft-pornographic comic-book movies, or else wholesome, heartwarming kitsch for the whole (heterosexual, conservative, conventionally religious) family. This situation is not essentially changed by the proliferation of TV channels and the spread of “interactivity,” since the terms on which the stories can be altered by audience members to suit their own tastes are defined by the “intelligent” software that generates the simulacra of characters and settings from corporate image libraries. Similarly, books are marketed by demographic segments with a heavy racial slant, as pop music has already been for decades.

## Trickling Opposition

A trickle of critical and independent-minded work still makes it onto the market, however, simply because the market for it exists. Amid mountains of reactionary rubbish, oppositional content slips through: talk shows where social issues are debated under the disguise of “family problems”; populist thrillers about tracking down fascist conspiracies; social dramas with a feminist or pro-poor slant; a lesbian family sitcom so popular that the network doesn’t cancel it despite fundamentalist pressure.

“Serious” or “high” artists, meanwhile continue to divide into three castes: successful servants of the rich (fashionable painters and sculptors who’ve clawed their way up through the NY and LA art-marts, and their equivalents in literature); academic artists and writers with secure gigs in colleges, doing safe, mostly apolitical, sometimes vaguely “experimental” art or novels that sell 2,000 copies; and marginal Bohemians living in decaying urban neighborhoods, producing poetry, experimental video, and performance art, as well as traditional visual forms and avant-pop or garage-grunge kinds of music.

By contrast with most commercial and subsidized art, the urban subcultures produce work that ranges from nihilist to fiercely oppositional. Black and Latino nationalists also produce propaganda art analogous to old Soviet-style “Socialist Realism”—nostalgic stereotypes of noble Africans or Aztecs, cartoon villain whites,



graphic by Hugh D'Andrade

urban insurrections break out, as they do with increasing frequency and desperation despite ever-more brutal repression, these troops are also flown in to back up the militarized police and the National Guard.

The concentration of media ownership in hands of large TNCs continues, leading to virtually total press self-censorship. A plethora of “McNews” TV channels cheerlead for the government, except

and gross anti-Semitic caricatures. There is lots of apocalyptic fantasy—Christian and Islamic Revelation motifs, visions of bloody massacre and revolution both Left and Right, agonized requiems for the end of life on Earth. But other work illuminates subversive possibilities, humorously or bitterly attacking the rules of race, gender, money, work, and the social hierarchy generally.

At first, most of this material doesn't get out of the subculture ghettos. However, the now more multiracial inner-city intelligentsia eventually synthesizes "neo-hop," descended from hip-hop, various Afro-Caribbean musics, punk/metal, and rap on the one hand and old-style underground video and performance art on the other. Neo-hop in turn generates a growing slew of independent multimedia producers who use pirated video-capture, music-sampling, and animation software to produce hybrid "virtual performance" or "garage reality" shows. These circulate as optical disks or as encrypted, compressed feeds onto computer networks and outlaw BBSs (since there are now too many local phone systems to control completely). The "ops" and "feeds" range in quality from the crude to the highly sophisticated, and in tone from the gritty to the sensual or mind-warping.

Slowly, and especially in the West, the Southwest, the North, and the Northeast, cross-cultural tendencies gain in strength, fueled by the impotence of narrow nationalist politics in the face of generalized economic and ecological breakdown. Cultural collaboration and dialogue helps to crack the racial barriers here and there, as does common struggle over toxic dumps and other ecological concerns. The Green movement, now substantially composed of poor and working-class people, becomes the crucial site of cross-racial alliance, in genuinely grassroots groups like the Southwest Coalition for Environmental & Economic Justice headquartered in Tijuana, or Chicago's People for Community Renewal.

As the TNCs continue to shed workers, the marginal classes acquire many skilled engineers, programmers, and technicians. Media sabotage becomes, if not common, by no means infrequent: TV newscasts are overridden by guerrilla



graphic by Hugh D'Andrade

feeds that camouflage themselves with simulacra of the newscasters, sitcoms suddenly swerve into the horrific or the subversive, televangelists appear to spout anarchist rants or tear off their clothes on camera. Street demonstrations, riots, looting festivals, sit-ins, sickouts, and slowdowns multiply. Counter-terror begins: a slumlord shot in a drive-by, a homophobic demagogue executed on camera by "Queer Commandos," an executive beaten in the supposedly secure parking lot while the cameras are down.

### The New Divide

Too little and too late, the elite starts to respond. Job-sharing plans (at reduced pay) are instituted. A guaranteed minimum income via "negative income tax" is established (but too little to live on). Health care is reformed—again. Tough global restrictions on carbon emissions are reached. In a series of show trials, executives of some large polluters are actually sentenced to prison. Emergency farming and food distribution programs are created. Statutes against "hate crimes" are toughened.

Despite these modest achievements, Greens and progressives are unable to push through strong enough corporate-responsibility laws (and a renewal of civil-rights protections) because the Demopublican Right retains control of the Senate. The Federal government is increasingly paralyzed by continual infighting between these diehards and the more enlightened wing of the elite. Meanwhile, the acuteness of the deficit forces further massive cutbacks in Federal services, especially inspection and oversight, leading to further disasters.

In response, several Western states (Washington, Oregon, California, New Mexico) pass corporate-responsibility laws, as do Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, and Michigan in the Midwest, and Massachusetts, Vermont, Maine, and New York in the Northeast. Many corporations flee to unregulated states, especially in the South (Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas) and the Southeast (North and South Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee). They do this rather than go abroad because most foreign options have become either too risky

or uneconomic—wages are too close to US norms, local infrastructure is inadequate, or production costs are too high.

Between these two main groups of states, political polarization grows rapidly. Corporate-driven governments in “Free-market” states encourage bigotry to prevent organizing; whites are racially mobilized via fundamentalist churches as well as local and regional media. “Fascist realism” becomes the dominant media style, including both pseudo-historical docudrama with racist and anti-Semitic themes and live audience-participation witch hunts against dissidents and queers. “Traditional values”—capitalism, patriarchy, racial hierarchy, and mindless obedience—saturate the informational environment. Countering the official media are clandestine ops and feeds, graffiti, posters, semi-underground concerts

and poetry performances. Churches—black Protestant in the South, Catholic in the Southwest—also become crucial centers of opposition because of the legal protection still afforded them.

By contrast, governments in “Green” states are backed by coalitions of Green parties and local environmental issue groups, women’s and gay groups, African-American and Latino organizations (though not the extreme-nationalist groups), and the remains of the unions. They are joined by “progressive” industrialists and businesspeople: credit unions and co-ops, recyclers, soft-energy entrepreneurs (solar engineers, windfarmers), bioengineers involved in earth-restoration projects, some computer companies, organic food producers and retailers. Public-access cable networks expand, rebroadcasting community-made ops and

feeds. As neighborhood groups multiply, they create frequent street carnivals, with music, costumes, and masks, that invade downtown office buildings and other workplaces. There is spontaneous poetic oratory on street corners, often involving costume, sometimes electronic “special effects”; troubadours, rappers, and ranters circulate everywhere. Wild murals are painted on abandoned or squatted buildings. People begin making their own clothes and adding neoprimitivist or baroque ornamentation to their houses.

Both sets of states develop informal federative ties with each other, providing mutual aid of various sorts. Free-market states share databases of “subversives,” organizers, and homosexuals and send police and National Guard reinforcements to each other as needed. A fascist coalition forms, subsidized by some of the TNCs, which provides financial aid to “conservatives” in Green states seeking to depose what they call “rosebud” (pink-and-green) majorities. In Green states, barter and other arrangements develop to deal with scarcities caused by corporate flight. There are modest low-interest development loans from better-off states to poorer ones. Neighborhood self-help and other grassroots groups dealing with housing, pollution, and education multiply and get coordinated across state lines, helped in some cases by radicals in local government.

Workers in Green states seize workplaces being shut down by fleeing corporations, initially to hold them to ransom, again often with the tacit or even open support of local government. Some of these workplaces—light engineering and electronics plants, food production and distribution centers, and so on—the workers begin operating themselves. Others are simply shut down as useless toxic pest holes. With the help of Green techies and some university engineering and science departments, the seized industrial facilities are converted so as to pollute less, conserve resources, and use alternative forms of energy—as well as to be safer and more enjoyable to work in. Industrial planning networks form based on workplace committees and city councils. In blighted urban centers, landscaping, rooftop and lot gardening, and bio-installation art become popular. Neighborhood repair shops and tool



graphic by Hugh D'Andrade



libraries spring up.

Now grassroots-led workplace takeovers and “Green bans”—shutdowns of polluting or otherwise harmful workplaces—accelerate. Bank workers and corporate clericals sabotage fund transfers and capital movements. A coalition of erstwhile corporate owners appeals to the Feds, who mobilize the National Guard in some Green states to take back the seized or closed facilities. There are mutinies and mass desertions after troops are ordered to fire on the workers and residents blockading the plants. The regular army is sent in and meets huge popular resistance. This mostly takes the form of mass unarmed demonstrations, but also involves sniper attacks as well as the usual jamming and disruption of communications.

Meanwhile, in Free-market states, opposition is growing. Green and black organizations, now semi-clandestine because of repression, make common

cause with poor whites in and around chemical plants and oil refineries along the ultra-polluted Gulf coast. Green-state radicals send in clandestine organizers, technology (electronic gear, sabotage software), and funds to aid the opposition. In the old Black Belt, African-Americans form a huge coalition that stages armed counter-demonstrations against fascist attacks. There are bloody riots in several Southern cities that leave hundreds dead and large areas burnt to the ground. Strikes and boycotts begin to spread in spite of fierce repression. Death squads, led by “off-duty” police, wage all-out terror against black and brown organizations. Police HQ’s are blown up in retaliation. Following an appeal by embattled Chicanos, thousands of armed Mexican workers march across the Texas border and engage in pitched battle with the police and the Guard. Martial law is declared across the South.

Green state governments collapse as all Federal funds are cut off and state capitols are seized by armed Federal agents and airborne troops. The President, with a minimal Congressional majority, suspends the Constitution and attempts to put national martial-law plans into effect via FEMA, state militias, and crack counterinsurgency troops. Mass roundups of Green, worker, African-American, and Latino activists begin. Large demonstrations and strikes spread: the national economy is paralyzed as highways and rail lines are blockaded and airports closed. In Seattle, several hundred unarmed demonstrators including women and children are slaughtered. As word of the massacre spreads, many Army units desert; some go over to the rebel side. There are small-arms and tank battles in cities, with bitter house-to-house fighting.

The Revolutionary Democratic Federation (RDF) is formed from already existing regional councils of neighborhood, worker, and ethnically-based groups and planning bodies as well as the remains of local government. The Federation declares independence from the USA in about thirty states where it now controls production, communications and transportation and runs its own militias. The Federal government collapses as mass desertions from the military continue. A vast demonstrator-army of mostly black poor people sweeps into central DC and begins seizing and trashing government buildings. The President, top officials, and generals flee to Houston. The Free-market state regimes, most of which have been completely taken over by fascists, likewise collapse over the next few months after many thousands of deaths from violence, hunger, and disease—as well as a reactor accident that leaves a large swath of Tennessee uninhabitable. The rebels, having seized power, affiliate with the RDF.

The USA is formally dissolved into the North American Democratic Federation. The new Federal government retains much of the Constitution minus the role of President, the Senate, and the Electoral College, but with all of the Bill of Rights, plus new amendments banning private (as opposed to cooperative) ownership of more than 40 acres of land, denying corporations the rights of persons, and mak-

ing representatives subject to strict mandate and immediate recall by their elective bodies. The Federation also declares social ownership and citizen-worker management of all workplaces involving more than twenty people, including industry, telecommunications, and transportation (this law simply ratifies accomplished fact).

These legal measures are the tip of a huge iceberg of social transformation, especially around work. Few people spend more than twenty hours a week on their “job” (now called a Share, as in doing one’s share); but there is strong social-ethical pressure on everyone able-bodied and -minded to do at least ten hours. New products (other than standardized components like screws and rivets, electrical and electronic gear, plumbing parts, and tools, whose production is as automated as possible) are now customized imaginatively by teams of makers who develop group stylistic signatures. Entrepreneurship is encouraged less by monetary reward than by public acclaim in competitions between work groups or cooperatives.

Money is used less and less as more goods and services, beginning with communications and basic foodstuffs, are distributed gratis to those who need them. Farmers’ markets, barter-marts, and skill swaps are established everywhere. The banking, insurance, and advertising “industries” cease to exist. Now unused, most office towers and shopping malls are converted or demolished. Private automobiles are banned from cities, which are “villagized” by the breakup of all but a few large through streets and the burying of most public transit underground. Bicycles are now the most prevalent form of wheeled transport. Trees become a vital medium of space-shaping as well as objects of veneration.

Tract-home sprawl is gradually broken up as mid-range (suburban) population density is made illegal; some suburbs are demolished and plowed under for farmland, others are condensed into villages and small towns with their own centers and workplaces. Long-distance commuting becomes a rarity. Between cities, high-speed and local trains replace the automobile as the main means of transportation. Fossil-fuel burning is cut by two-thirds within five years, and the

remaining gasoline-powered vehicles are subjected to strict CO2 emission control. Reforestation becomes a major social project, involving hundreds of thousands of mostly young people who do tours of duty in wilderness areas and in green belts around cities.

The tendency to regionalism becomes more marked, though TV, computers, and phones, as well as shared networks of basic industrial production, keep everyone connected. Regional and central broadcasting groups assemble and digest local news off satellite and cable feeds for rebroadcasting, and news databases make survey possible on any topic. Also, there are strong Federal laws about civil rights and ecological matters. New chemicals require years of rigorous testing in “artificial biospheres” before manufacture is allowed. Similar restrictions are made on genetic engineering, which is now mostly devoted to breeding bacteria and viruses to clean up toxic wastes, and to finding treatments for the still-spreading cancer and immune-failure epidemics the wastes have caused. Fertility drugs and surrogate motherhood are banned; any alteration of the human genome is subject to tight restriction, testing, and eventual Federal referendum (the elimination of genes for hemophilia, Downs, Alzheimer’s, and some others are approved in this way).

The women and men of the mid-twenty-first century in what used to be the U.S. are both kinder and harder than those of a century earlier. They are imaginative, playful, sarcastic, egalitarian, multi-skilled, intense in concentration and pride in their work, quick to sympathize and help, eloquent and fierce in debate, rooted in community and region but prone to switch occupations suddenly and to become migrants in middle life.

As cities are reconstructed and transformed, poetic architecture begins to develop: people knock out back fences between houses to create open lawns and bamboo jungles, build covered bridges between apartment houses, create arbors, arcades, and tree-lined walks with sculptures. While private space does not disappear, it becomes more porous to the common life. Elaborate neighborhood games—like ringolevio in Italian neighborhoods in Brooklyn—provide opportunities for courtship, friendly rivalry, and adventurous encounter. The new

public spaces also foster music and performance festivals, like the old Welsh Eisteddfodd, involving complex poetic improvisation around agreed themes and styles, but often also making use of computer and VR technology.

Public and group ritual becomes frequent again for all sorts of occasions. There are rites of passage for traditional occasions like birth, death, coming to maturity, sexual partnership, and for new ones like joining a work group, a neighborhood, or some other cluster, as well as for “breaking up” or departure. Seasonal festivals like Christmas-Chanukah-Solstice become communal celebrations of the year’s turning.

The new world is far from perfect. Society must contend with the hideous social and ecological legacy of the corporate-oligarchic era: chronic agricultural shortages and unpredictable weather because of the Greenhouse Effect; a much reduced average life expectancy for the next two generations owing to cancer and other environmentally induced disease; residual racial hatred, misogyny, and homophobia; and a less obvious but also terrible heritage of “post-traumatic” syndromes including anxiety neurosis, psychosis, and drug addiction. There are still (though far fewer) murders, crimes of passion, assaults, rapes, and even robberies. But there is far less social stimulus to such behavior, and—despite greatly reduced governmental intervention in daily life—much less tolerance for it. A face-to-face-based, communal society can deal with these things much better before they get out of hand.

In general, then, the women and men of the mid-twenty-first century in what used to be the United States are both kinder and harder than those of a century earlier. They are imaginative, playful, sarcastic, egalitarian, multi-skilled, intense in concentration and pride in their work, quick to sympathize and help, eloquent and fierce in debate, rooted in community and region but prone to switch occupations suddenly and to become migrants in middle life. They share, besides, a bittersweet appreciation of passing beauty fostered by the everpresence of death and loss, and a passionate love of the life-web that sustains them and that they must now steward if they are to survive.

—Adam Cornford



# CYCLICAL CATASTROPHE

"There are two kinds of cyclists," my instructor told me when I first learned to ride, all those many years ago. "Those who have gone down, and those who are about to."

Dealing with impatient drivers can lead to frayed nerves and worse. One Friday afternoon, I was riding home on my ownsome, when I had a run-in with a van. This is the sort of situation where purely physical laws apply; the scales of justice are not swayed by merit or right of way, merely mass—and it's critical in the worst way.

Defensive riding is survival. The problem was the part of South Van Ness I was riding on has an awkward on-ramp entrance to the freeway that many drivers see too late, and there is no lane a cyclist can easily use to steer clear of this chaotic melee.

As I was trying to get by the scrunched-up knot of cars approaching the on ramp, there was a van in the outer lane trying to

an uncertain impact. My life did not strobe before my eyes, but I did have time to reflect on its timing; this mishap came on the heels of another, as my housemate had just two days earlier opened his knee up in a motorcycle accident.

*Those who have gone down, and those who are about to...* I ground my teeth and cursed the woman at the wheel of her suburban Toyota van. I cursed, as I landed in the dust, as my gloved hands absorbed the brunt of the broken glass and jagged pebbles that cluttered the gutter. My body continued to roll forward until my ribs and the right side of my back braked against the curb.

She stopped but did not get out of her

vehicle. I, on the other hand, was already out, way out there, there was no *in* for me to go, except unconsciousness. I scrambled shakily to my feet, amazed that nothing was broken by the fall.

As she rolled down her window, I stopped cursing. "Are you all right?"

I mumbled, "Seem to be."

"Is your bike all right?"

"I don't know, let's see." The chain had come off, but the wheels turned.

"I'm going to go now," and she rolled up her window and drove on, onto the freeway, another urgent motorist, a cell in a foul slipstream of traffic, spewing monoxide exhaust.

Clearly I was not thinking properly



PROBLEM...



SOLUTION.

**There is nothing to slow time down more than to sail through the air towards an uncertain impact.**

swerve right into the feeder lane. She was close to overshooting the freeway entrance, and I was anxious to get past her and the other cars. There was no sidewalk I could pull onto, the only way to get past the on ramp was straight ahead. As I tacked forward this van surged right and knocked me and my bike off our mount.

There is nothing to slow time down more than to sail through the air towards

graphic by Hugh D'Andrade

when I let her go. I was perhaps in a state of shock, and while I couldn't see (or, for that matter, immediately feel) the extent of my injuries (like the long angry welt across my back where I hit the curb) until I got home, I was pretty shook up. After putting the chain back on, I remounted my bike and continued the few blocks to my house.

"It's a dangerous world out there," I reminded my housemate.

"No shit," he responded, scratching the splint on his left leg. "I know you care for me, but you didn't have to go have an accident to, like, be my companion in misery."

After changing my torn and dirty clothes, I pedalled back downtown to join some friends for happy hour. They



graphic by Hugh D'Andrade

raised my spirits a bit, although I was called a fool and lambasted for not getting the driver's license and insurance info. I do wish I'd had more presence of

mind to stop her, when she was rolling up her window and about to go.

*The lesson for myself and any other cyclist or cyclist-to-be, who might be slow on the uptake: always get the driver's ID and insurance data in any kind of collision involving another vehicle.*

Encased in their steel and glass shells, they might outweigh and loom over you, but if they should mess you up in any way at all—make 'em pay. It's not just your bike, but your body that needs satisfaction for the personal and social injuries inflicted on us by careening and callous motorists who race with all the urgency of steel sperm on speed.

—D.S. Black

## TWO WHEELS GOOD! FOUR WHEELS BAD!

Sure, most drivers suck—they're thoughtless and arrogant, paying little or no attention to the world around them. But that's hardly unusual in the city—watch the pedestrians. They wander aimlessly, slowly, in a world of their own—slowly, that is, unless they are seized by the "race" mentality when someone threatens to pass them. When by happy chance they actually recognize each other, they think nothing of chatting in the middle of a door, a sidewalk, or an escalator, blocking everyone else. While I have to admit New York City's foot-borne traffic is more alert (well, they have to be), there's a certain herd mentality that controls the masses as they jam into subways, through turnstiles, etc.

Then there are the myriad wheeled peoples powered by muscle—skateboarders, roller-bladers and bicyclists who are forced to compete with mechanized traffic. While more observant than a metal-clad driver, they too seem unaware of anything smaller/slower than themselves. Indeed, judging by the behavior of some, the idea is to make everyone else look out for them. The villains here are not messengers or other pros who often have to do outrageous stunts simply to keep their jobs. As with long-distance truckers, corporate demands fly in the face of both law and common sense.

Consider the UC Berkeley campus, which long ago had total bans on bicycles on sidewalks, recently re-imposing a limited ban during "business hours." While bicyclists are trying to end

the law by smashing the signs, they seem to ignore the reasons for the new limitations: shitty bike riders. A steady trickle of known casualties is only the most bloody sign of their behavior; there are many more accidents which don't result in more than bruises and bad feelings, plentiful narrow escapes, and a constant threat for less-than-totally-aware pedestrians. Apparently, it's just too much of an effort to walk their bikes for a few dozen yards to a road.

**Well, maybe the problem ain't the way the asshole gets around, maybe the problem is in the asshole itself.**

Well, maybe the problem ain't the way the asshole gets around, maybe the problem is in the asshole itself. Certainly, a ton of metal is a far more lethal instrument than a bicycle is, and malefactors at the wheel of a car deserve far harsher judgment for the threat they pose. Undeniably, the Average American Motorist (AAM) is a heavily subsidized creature which leaves in its wake clouds and pools of petrochemical pollution. With an average occupancy of one person per car it's no surprise that traffic is such a mess.

### Simple: Ban Cars!

Or keep making them more expensive to get people off the road, thereby reducing congestion and pollution. A laudable idea, but one which should be considered more carefully.

Beyond the US's fascination with the car as an all-important symbol of potent consumption and style, there are some who actually enjoy driving. Driving, that is, as opposed to operating an automobile. There's also a freedom associated with cars; back in highschool having a car gave one not just mobility—in itself a wonderful sensation—but also privacy away from the prying eyes of family and authority.

While the economics of the car would seem to doom it in the long run, some feel there is much to be gained from more legal requirements, all of which take money to satisfy. But simply raising costs associated with motoring is highly discriminatory to poor people who need cars for work just as much, or even more than, better-off professionals who work downtown. Maids, late-shift workers, agricultural workers, factory workers, and people on call all have transit needs. All of the added costs of motoring—insurance requirements, smog requirements, higher gas taxes, etc.—are relatively easily absorbed by wealthier people, but provide a serious strain on budgets already close to breaking. Attempts to make them both the scapegoat and the primary object of the New Transit System will lead to not entirely pleasant clashes. If people are forced out of cars, how will they get to where they are going?

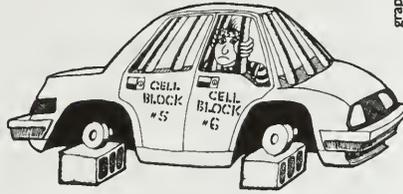
## Public Transit?

But what are the alternatives? Public transit in the SF Bay Area has been dropping in popularity for years—fewer people now take public transit than ten years ago. That might be related to the endless cuts in service and increasing fares which have left most transit systems with a ridership of the poor, the halt and the blind. A few systems, such as the so-called Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system are overcrowded, with aging equipment and ambitious plans. While estimated costs for BART expansions soar (start the bidding at a few hundred million per few-mile extension), a goodly chunk of their budgets are absorbed by ... Parking Lots! Great way to get people out of their cars—build stations in places where people will have to drive to them!

In fact, systems such as BART are doomed from their very conception. BART was designed to haul business commuters from suburbs into downtown centers, and not much else. Even in the '60s that didn't describe most users of public transit, whose needs were more often for more-or-less local transit to day-care, schools, laundry, shopping and socializing. By the '90s, with many large employers moving out to the suburbs, the average commuter now goes from one suburb to another, completely bypassing the "city." And remember, transit that serves only commuters is not

# Escape in CARceration

graphic by Crash Miles



## Critical Mass Bike Ride

public transit—it is essentially a freebie for businesses, who might otherwise be forced to pay the cost of transporting workers.

Real public transit is almost nonexistent. Major changes in routes and frequencies during non-commute hours have a serious effect on any activities conducted outside the 6-9 and 4-6 hours. Despite campaigns urging us not to "Drink and Drive," the BART system closes as midnight, and most bus service in the Bay Area is sporadic or nonexistent after 1:00 am (bars and some concerts close at 2:00). Of course, there has been pressure on BART to provide longer service hours, so BART responded with a classic bureaucratic trick. BART promoted a night-owl "service" with only a few central stations open. Unsurprisingly, not many people opted to be left miles from their destinations at 2:30 in the morning. BART has now canceled the program, citing "lack of use."

BART is unusual, not just by grabbing a disproportionate chunk of funds, but because it's more or less clean, unlike many local buses which are grimy, smell of urine and have cockroaches. BART is also sort of safe, except for the police who kill with impunity and generally prove their mettle by harassing bicyclists and poor people. Local buses, by contrast, present both public health and safety problems; only occasionally can the threat be traced directly to the workers.

## Ride A Bike?

There's an old joke about a scientist who comes roaring out of a lab, shouting "I have a solution! Who has a problem?" Transit alchemists emerge, waving a bike-shaped object and proclaiming a

solution to transit woes. Is bicycling really a significant alternative? Perhaps for some whose commutes are limited. Clearly, programs promoting bike use within a given city or 'burb can help these people. Serious programs with specific bike paths could go a long ways toward promoting bicycling by removing the auto threat. But many parts of the country are not blessed with as mild weather as SF. Snow, heavy rains, chilling cold and wind, or scorching heat all can diminish the appeal—and the safety—of bike riding. Nor is everyone capable of riding a bike. And there are times when a bike just won't cut it (moving heavy or large objects, for instance).

Of course, many people have to commute long distances, and bikes could be useful to get to/from stations, but only if the above conditions apply. If the person doesn't need wheels at both ends of the commute, there must be safe places to leave them. If a bike is needed at both ends of the commute, there has to be some way of carrying them. Currently existing schemes are too impractical to work at rush hours (some buses/trains allow one or two bikes, if they aren't too crowded); others simply ban bikes, sometimes at rush hour, sometimes entirely). Between bureaucratic slowness and redesign of transit vehicles, this could take a while.

A committed effort could make commuting better, whether by bike, foot or public transit, and effort should be put into it, but the long-term answer lies in restructuring cities to reduce the time spent in transit. Telecommuting, while ardently flogged by its advocates, is not practical for many sorts of jobs, and has its own problems (isolation with personal consequences, "out-of-sight, out-of-mind" syndromes in office politics, etc., longer hours). As long as business is a concentrated sector of life, traffic jams and crowds will be required as all these "free" people struggle to get to and from work "on time." Ultimately it's not how you get there, it's where you're going and what you're doing.

—Primitivo Morales

# BIKEJACKING

A number of factors conspired to produce the past year's dramatic rise in "Carjacking." The overall surge in anomic violence fueled by the LA verdicts, coming on top of a decade of increasingly hard times, served to "burst the bubble" of illusory safety projected by the sleek, isolating automobiles. Alas, as noted in PW 31, cars are actually made more vulnerable by the presence of their drivers, and the rising social awareness of the fact served to encourage this newly named crime. It is interesting to note, however, that there has been no corresponding rise in "bikejacking," despite their presumably greater vulnerability.

There are a number of reasons for this. Unlike cars, bikes are easier to steal vacant. Their value is lower, both from a cash perspective and in terms of joy-riding potential (the main motivation of carjackers). Most important, though, is that cyclists aren't encumbered by the numbing "bubble" of isolation that surrounds most auto drivers. The operator of a car may be (and often is) drunk, listening to music, having sex, talking on the phone, faxing documents, doing their nails and/or hair, shaving, loading a gun, or engaging in any number of simultaneous activities that distract them not only from safely operating what is, after all, a potentially deadly machine, but even from noticing major social upheaval going on around them.

Cycling is much less forgiving of such insanity, and any regular biker knows this. You can't cycle when you're

falling-down drunk, and while it's true I've had sex while riding a bike I certainly wouldn't do this in traffic. Experienced cyclists are constantly aware of their extreme vulnerability to the vagaries of the world (particularly the deadly whims of those oblivious, enbubbled automobile drivers mentioned above) and the elements, and this promotes an environmental sensitivity that is the absolute antithesis of the "bubble" state of mind which leaves so many drivers so vulnerable to carjackers.

A dramatic example of this phenomenon occurred in the trendy Pacific Heights neighborhood of San Francisco earlier this year. Late at night a lone cyclist was stopped by three would-be muggers who swarmed out of their car to assault him. Instead of fleeing or submitting he pulled out a handgun and opened fire on his attackers. They fled back into their vehicle but one of his shots had winged the driver, who passed out from blood loss behind the wheel and crashed the car into a wall. The driver soon died from his injuries; his cohorts were thrown from the burning auto and were still lying unconscious when the police arrived some time later.

Meanwhile (this is according to the live report phoned in to 911 by a tourist who was watching it all from a fourth-floor apartment across the street) the cyclist fled on foot, abandoning his bike. Less than 30 seconds later a second car drove by, paused as its occupants studied the burning vehicle, stopped long enough for one of them to stuff the discarded bike into the trunk, and took off, taking with it the only link to the vigilante cyclist.

The story made local headlines for a week. The police called upon the gunman to turn himself in, assuring him that this was the right thing to do and

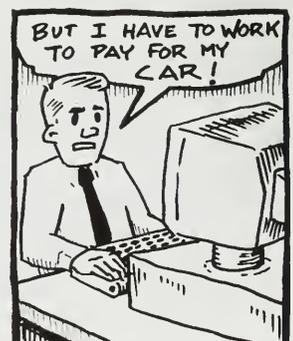
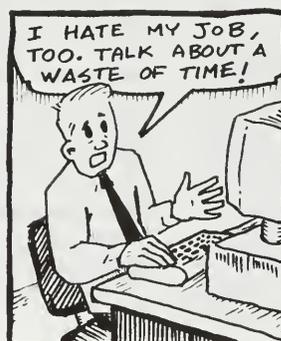
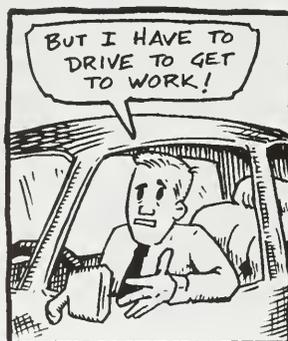
suggesting that he'd get off light. Perhaps he didn't believe them; maybe the gun wasn't registered; in any event he never stepped forward, despite his status as something of a local folk-hero. By an ironic twist his two surviving assailants are facing enhanced charges for participating in a burglary that resulted in a death (even though that death was one of their own)—something that wouldn't happen if their victim were around to take (and presumably be cleared on) the manslaughter rap.

I'm not saying that all bikejackings end this way, but this story stood out in stark contrast to the vast number of reported successful carjackings. It certainly couldn't have encouraged other bikejackings, while the media's cautionary lamentations about carjacking may indeed have planted that idea in the heads of otherwise innocent (or not so innocent) youth.

Certainly not all bikers are as well armed as this Pacific Heights cyclist was. But the vast majority of us are every bit as alert, constantly scanning our environments for wild drivers, pot-holed pavements, demented pedestrians and any other threat to a reasonably sane and competent bicycle operator. Cycling promotes a higher state of consciousness and awareness, while automobiles do exactly the opposite and encourage an aloof, hostile, narcissistic world view.

Be that as it may, it makes cyclists less vulnerable to "jacking" than car drivers. It may rain; a moron may fling open a car door and scoop you off your bike; a MUNI bus may drive you off the road; but you probably won't be robbed by a gang who want to joyride on your vehicle.

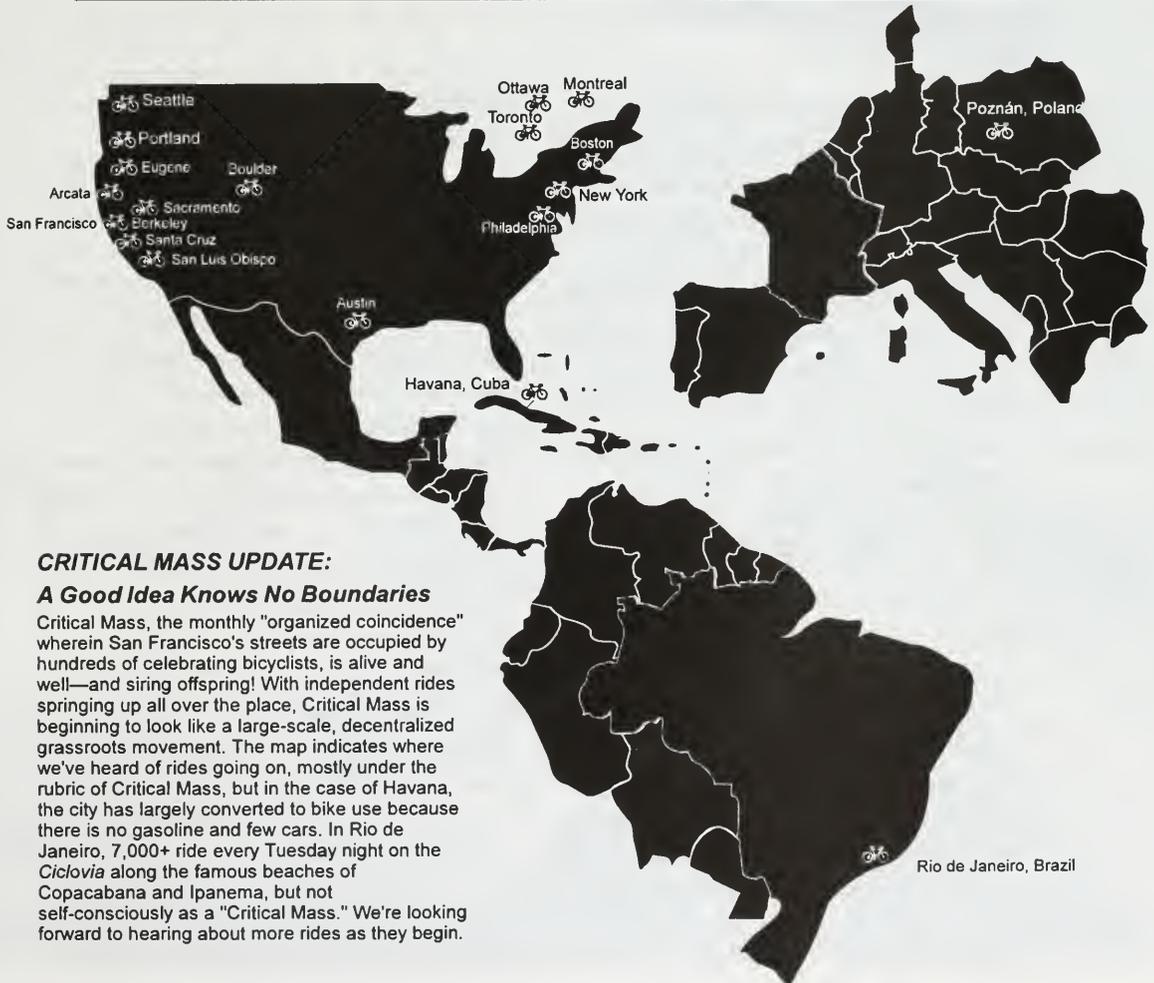
—Kwazee Wabbitt



## MAINLINE

A wiry felon, pale skin varicose with tattoos  
says through broken arch where his incisors  
used to be *I'm a Republican*  
*I believe in the American dollar*  
*and if I can't make it, I'm gonna shoot it*  
*intravenously—right here in my arm*  
He looks round the car, lights up a cigarette  
jauntily, right here  
in flickery night vein of the Transbay Tube

*Adam Cornford*



### CRITICAL MASS UPDATE:

#### ***A Good Idea Knows No Boundaries***

Critical Mass, the monthly "organized coincidence" wherein San Francisco's streets are occupied by hundreds of celebrating bicyclists, is alive and well—and siring offspring! With independent rides springing up all over the place, Critical Mass is beginning to look like a large-scale, decentralized grassroots movement. The map indicates where we've heard of rides going on, mostly under the rubric of Critical Mass, but in the case of Havana, the city has largely converted to bike use because there is no gasoline and few cars. In Rio de Janeiro, 7,000+ ride every Tuesday night on the *Ciclovía* along the famous beaches of Copacabana and Ipanema, but not self-consciously as a "Critical Mass." We're looking forward to hearing about more rides as they begin.

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



Harvey squirmed his bulky body around in its Business class seat—the Agency had stopped paying for First Class a long time ago, denouncing the practice as both costly and conspicuous—to peer out the window at the frozen wasteland 30,000 feet below. He glanced at his Rolex: they’d departed from the Workers’ Islamic Republic of Detroit a little more than three and a half hours ago, and should be crossing the border from the U.S. into Pacifica at any minute.

“Those are the Sierras. We’ll land in San Francisco soon,” offered the frail, white-haired hippie woman in beads and paisley next to him. Despite his cool responses, she’d been making such pronouncements (invariably accurate, as far as he could tell) for the entire flight. It had the unfortunate effect of

focusing unwanted attention on his attempts at discreet snooping.

Sighing, Harvey pulled out his shoulder bag from under the seat in front of him and pulled out his “camera,” a bulky affair that was significantly more powerful and sophisticated than it looked. Gone were the days of palm-sized Leicas: too conspicuous by current doctrine, not to mention too expensive (though this baby cost plenty, too). The new theory was that it’s better to pose openly as a tourist instead of trying to “pass” quietly as a spy.

It was a clear day, and visibility through the cold air easily topped 50 miles. Scanning through the zoom of his camera he could just make out what he was looking for. The immense carcasses of the infamous Pacifican atomic planes loomed dimly on their central valley airfield. They were still too distant to make out clearly and the angle out the window was too sharp to permit picture-taking, but in a few minutes he

should have an excellent shot of them. He began prepping his camera, and covertly activating its infrared scanners. A hair-fine wire secretly connected the enhanced camera to a powerful battery in his shoulder bag.

"Oh, aren't they fascinating?" asked his chatty neighbor. He gritted his teeth, knowing better than to hope that she was talking about something other than the planes. "I understand it was some sort of political art project by the Balsa collective. Don't they look just like Orcas?" she commented, using Pacifican slang for the enormous aircraft.

"They're not Orcas?" he couldn't resist asking. This was a breach of suggested procedure, but he had to find what she was talking about.

"Oh, no. They're papier-maché and plywood replicas. I think they coat them with plastic laminate. The politics of it was confusing (to Harvey, even the simplest Pacifican politics were incomprehensible) but I think part of the idea was to confuse American snoopers. I seem to recall some anti-militarist spin, though." She lowered her voice to a confidential tone.

"Actually, I suppose it's possible that those ARE real and that Sky Eye (the Pacifican air force) persuaded Balsa to move the replicas someplace else. Hard to say, really. Adds some romantic mystery and Zen commentary on Reality to the installation, don't you think?" she asked.

But Harvey had turned back to his window to snap his photos that were more than photos. He couldn't tell from

here if they were real or not but the lab boys back home would no doubt be able to figure it out. He dutifully shot off an entire roll of the infrared scans.

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Harvey thought that he was psychologically prepared for it, but his first taste of Pacifican culture was as unsettling as they'd said it would be. After clearing Customs and stepping out into the vastness of the airport he became dizzy with confusion. In America you always oriented yourself in relationship to the Wall, the heavily defended security zone that separated regulated space from The Outside. Inside the Wall you could wear a Rolex, carry cash, and walk about with little fear that any anti-social types or criminals were present; for where would they get the clearance necessary to enter the risk-free environment? The Outside, although laws applied there, were essentially unpatrolled. You took your chances when you went Outside. Many people never did.

Although there were few formal markers of the Wall, Americans had developed a sixth-sense that told them where it was. You were always heading either towards the Wall (and towards the Outside) or away from the Wall, and towards the core of the complex. Here those cues were missing. True there was a "wall" of sorts behind him, the customs barrier he'd just passed: but ahead of him lay only chaos, with none of the expected cues of Wallness and Outsideness. He felt vulnerable and confused.

Fortunately his Uncle Merv materialized to rescue him. "Harvey! Good to see you! Welcome to Pacifica! Hey, I almost didn't recognize you!" he boomed. Uncle Merv, who must have been pushing 60, was wearing loud shorts, a loose shirt, Birkenstocks over black socks and lots of gold jewelry tangled on his furry chest. His entirely bald head was almost the only hairless part of his body. He didn't look like most of the pictures Harvey had seen of him, taken a couple of decades ago, it was true.

"It's been a long time," Harvey said, translating his frankly shocked reaction into something polite. "Mom sends her regards."

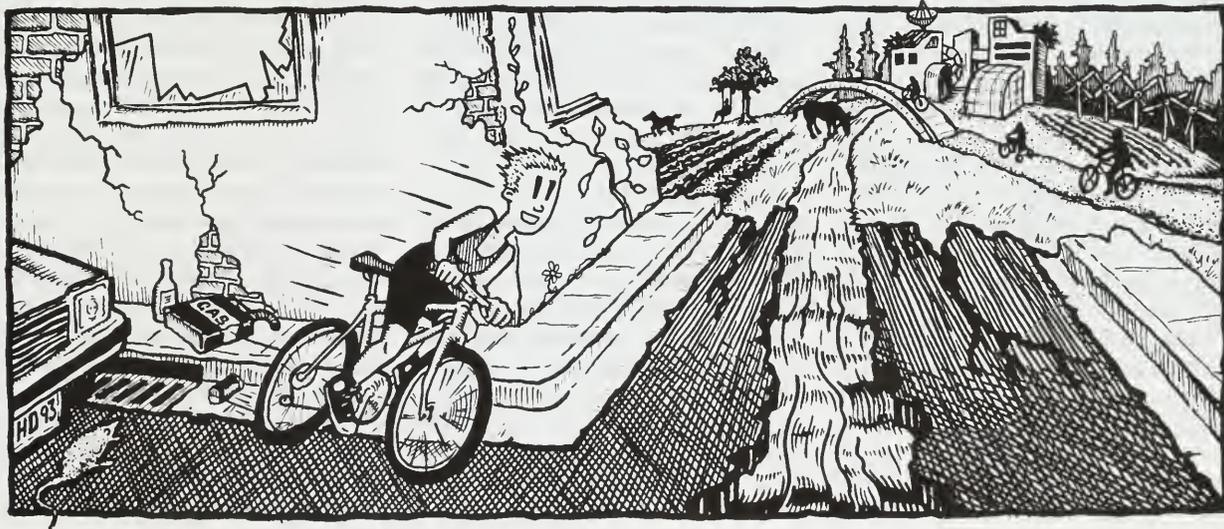
"The hell she does. That bitch hates me almost as much as I hate her," Merv exploded. "But here I am, keeping you standing around at the airport. Do you want something to eat? Let me take you out and brief you on Pacifica."

"Sure, anything," said Harvey, feeling agoraphobic and anxious to get into more controlled surroundings.

They traveled a maze of walkways and emerged in the parking garage, which sufficiently resembled the service zone of a Walled area to put Harvey more at ease. His uncle led him to a tiny plastic eggshell of a car. There was barely room for all of Harvey's luggage in the trunk.

"Hey, Unk Merv. I thought you went for big luxury vans. Is this the best you can do out here?" he asked.

"Hell, out here this counts as a big luxury van. It's only because I'm a salesman and a foreign national that I can even get



graphic by Hugh D'Andrade

a private car. Pacificans don't usually own more than a share of a car; most of 'em use one that belongs to their Dom (slang for "domicile," Harvey recalled) or use public transportation," Merv answered, unplugging his car from the parking space's power outlet.

"Is that free?" Harvey asked, pointing to the outlet.

"Nothing's free," Merv intoned back. "But it comes pretty close. It's automatically charged to the car's account," he said, squeezing into the driver's seat. He shared the family's mesomorphic tendencies, and the car barely held the two of them.

But it did handle surprisingly well for such a toy-like vehicle. Harvey was impressed that its speedometer went up to 120, until he remembered that Pacifica used kilometers rather than miles per hour as their standard. Merv assured him that it was capable of exciting speeds when not restrained by local ordinance. "You should see the traffic fly on the San Mateo Autobahn. Whew!"

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Sensitive to the phobias of recently arrived Americans, Merv took his nephew to a comfortably cavern-like restaurant with a good view of the Bay. The quiet and ritzy environment combined with the distancing effect of the post-card view to produce the warm, fuzzy sense of security Americans crave. So did the clear distinction between the servers and the served, which was conspicuously lacking in most of Pacifica.

Merv punched in orders from the table's console for both them—living for a decade in Pacifica had not, apparently, eroded the family taste for taking charge—and lit up a cigarette after activating a powerful vented ashtray. "Most places won't let you smoke indoors at all," Merv commented. "But this place kinda caters to foreign tourists." Harvey sniffed the air; despite the efforts of the ashtray, he could make out the unmistakable smell of marijuana.

"Uncle Merv," he asked, "what's that your smoking?"

"Oh, grass. Want some?" he asked, proffering the joint. "It's a real good brand."

"Uh, no. No thanks," Harvey answered. He needed to keep his wits

about him; besides, he was certain to face a blood test when he returned. On the other hand, he could always claim that he'd had to smoke it to keep his cover...; no, they'd see right through that after questioning him under veridicals. "I forgot that it's legal here."

"Legal, hell; it's a major export and source of tax revenue. And it's good stuff, too! Better than we got in the old days..." Merv broke off to take and hold a deep toke while Harvey surveyed the scene around him. Some of their fellow patrons were stark naked, or close enough to it as to make no difference; but the waitrons were all closely covered from head to toe. In a fancy place in America it would have been the other way around.

"Now, first thing I should warn you about is that as soon as they hear you're from America everyone's going to assume that you're a spy," Merv started, as the dope began to loosen his tongue.

"Uncle Merv!" Harvey protested, a little too loudly. "I'm here as a representative of IBM."

"Sure, Harvey, sure," Merv said. "Good old Big Blue. Right. I'm not saying you ARE a spy, just that everyone around here will assume you are. It took me years before the locals came around to trusting me."

"But after all, Uncle, isn't every American citizen a spy for his country in a way? Wouldn't you help out the Agency if they asked you to?"

"Is that what they told you? Did they show you my file? I haven't had anything to do with those creeps for decades; they caught me in an unfortunate youthful indiscretion and tried to make me a stool pigeon. I'd stay away from them if I was you," Merv said darkly. "Not that you would have any business with them; you work for Big Blue." He winked at his nephew.

Harvey hadn't known there was an Agency file on his uncle. He wondered if he should ask for a copy, but decided it was a bad idea for now. He could try looking it up when he got back.

"No, I don't mess with no politics out here," Merv continued. "Business is complicated enough with these pesky LP types all over the place and parroting that damn Academy and its precepts. But it does make for a surprisingly congenial environment for an old-fashioned

American-style operator like me, though you might not think so."

"What is this 'academy' anyways?" Harvey asked cagily; for that question was the main reason of his visit: to find out about the academy, and to find out how it was vulnerable. "Is it true they run everything out here?"

"They might as well," Merv muttered. "They've cornered the market on Truth. Oy, what a monopoly!" he moaned as he rolled his eyes heavenward. "Officially, they're the 'Academy for the Research of Psychic Phenomena' and they can tell if a person is lying."

"Hell, a good detective with a lie detector can do that," scoffed Harvey. "Can they read minds?"

"Any cool-headed guy can outfox a lie detector test and you know it," Merv answered. "And I don't think they read thoughts but they definitely can tell if a person is lying to them. Some can get deeper than that, but only a few of the big macho hot shots. A few say they can see the future, but not many people believe that." He was scanning the bill that their table had just extruded with a quiet buzz.

"Here, let me pick that up, Uncle Merv," said Harvey, reaching across to snag the tab. Merv surrendered it with a shrug.

"It's already on my card; that's just the receipt. This way it only cost half as much as it would have if you paid for it," Merv said.

"Well, that hardly seems fair, to soak the Americana tourists like that," Harvey complained.

"Nah, it's that the extra bookkeeping costs and surcharges drive up the total," Merv patiently explained. "You were probably going to pay with a credit card, maybe American Express?" he raised an eyebrow at his nephew and Harvey nodded; his uncle had gotten it down to the exact card. The Academy wasn't the only one who could read minds.

"It would make your life a helluva a lot easier if you registered for a visitors card and use that. It would save you a lot of money, too, in the long run," Merv intoned, nudging his nephew on the arm.

"Hell, uncle Merv, Big Blue pays for it all anyway," Harvey said. "You were just telling me how the Academy guys can read minds and tell the future."

"What they can do is tell if a guy is sin-



graphic by Angela Bocage

ceres with close to 100% reliability. It's revolutionized local government and contracting, especially. They're putting lawyers out of business, and I can't think of any greater sign of power than that," Merv said, raising a glass in salute to the Academy. "And they provide a wonderful environment for business," he concluded. Harvey knew that in Merv's book, "being good for business" was the highest possible virtue, and he began to wonder about his uncle's patriotism.

"I'm sure there are ways to fake them out, too," Harvey said, thinking of the neural blockage nets that the Agency was experimenting with in an attempt to catch up to the Pacificans in Psychic technology.

"I don't think those electronic yarmulkes do much good," Merv sniffed. "But who cares? The world is at peace and business is good." He led his nephew out of the restaurant and onto the wharf, a very tame tourist run. English was less common around them than Japanese, Chinese, Dutch or German.

"Where are you going to be staying? Do you need a place? You could always crash with me," Merv offered.

"They've got a room for me at the Company compound, I think," answered Harvey, ready to shake loose from his

uncle. Merv was already getting on his nerves. They drove the few blocks to the compound, where Harvey's security card gained them admittance to the parking garage.

As they were unpacking the luggage from the car onto a cart, Merv hesitated. "You know, I got a personal invitation to join the Academy shortly after I got here. Pretty rare for a foreigner. They seemed to think that I had good Psychic potential." Harvey agreed with them.

"I turned 'em down. I'm already a good businessman, why should I want to be something else?" he shrugged. "But I think maybe you might want to check it out, if you have any time while your here. If I wrote you a letter of recommendation, I think they'd take you."

Harvey was astounded. This is just what the Agency would want. But his uncle seemed hostile to the Agency. "Why should I?" he asked. "Like you, I'm pretty good at what I do already."

"It's just that I think it may do you some good. They teach some interesting things over there. And frankly, I'm worried about you. You don't seem to understand how dangerous it is for Americans out here," Merv answered, slamming the trunk of the eggshell car and squeezing into the driver's seat. "I'll E-mail the let-

ter right to the Academy tonight so they have it on file just in case you ever decide to go." He reached a furry paw over the eggshell's window.

"Take care of yourself," Merv said as they shook hands. "Call me any time; but I am on the road a lot. Try to stay out of trouble," he nagged.

"Sure thing, Uncle Merv," Harvey said, waving at the departing vehicle. His luggage cart beeped at him and began to lead him to his room.

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Harvey was up by 6:30 am, as dictated by the agenda he found waiting for him in his room's printout. After prayers he went to the Compound gym for the regulation workout prescribed for him that day. Unfortunately, the log-in terminal there had trouble recognizing his code although, presumably, it was part of the same computer that had printed his orders. It took ten minutes of tinkering to get in, and by then he didn't have enough time to complete his recommended number of sets. He hurried out to shower and breakfast, suspecting that a red Deficiency flag had been added to his file for the incomplete workout.

He read a dense booklet of Standing Orders for Agents Operating in Pacifica

for about an hour, and then reported for his official briefing at 10:00. The Assistant Director's office was near the top of the thirty story high-rise; it was Harvey's first foray above the tenth floor.

The AD (later he would learn there was no Director, so the AD was the de facto top man) was a J. Edgar Hoover lookalike: crewcut, jowly, no-necked and pot-bellied. He was smoking a large pipe and exhaling mountains of pungent smoke. "Ah, Agent Fineberg, come in," he wheezed when Harvey appeared in the doorway. He motioned to a chair in front of his desk, next to one already occupied by another Agent. "This is Captain Oswald. He'll be directing your operations here." The two Agents muttered pleasantries and shook hands, each going for maximum crush effect. Oswald's iron grip clearly won.

"Your mission is to penetrate the inner workings of the Academy and to report on their technology," the AD intoned. "Frankly, they seem to have stolen a march on us with this psychic stuff. We sent in an application to the Academy over your signature this morning and they've already faxed back an acceptance." He held up a flimsy, densely printed document and handed it to Harvey. It was mostly zebra codes and registration instructions. "Your uncle must have sent in his letter right away."

"But how did you know about my uncle's offer?" Harvey blurted out, bewildered.

"Well, naturally we've monitored your progress and your interactions since you got here," answered Captain Oswald. "For your own safety, mostly."

"And your uncle's offer certainly helped our plan, so we moved on it right away," said the AD. "You can start any time after you get oriented." He turned to Captain Oswald. "Take him away and start orienting him!"

They descended a dozen floors and went to Oswald's office, a Spartan workspace with soundproof walls. "You're gonna need a fair amount of orientation before we can send you out," he told Harvey. "It's not that we want you to try and pass as anything other than American—that would be a big hassle—but it takes some work to understand the Pacificans, even though it's been less than 20 years since they went independent."

He shuffled through the desk drawers and began tossing pamphlets and brochures on top of it: *How to Talk to a Pacifican*, *Always Answer a Question With a Question*, *Responding to Licensed Psychics*. Harvey picked up the last one.

"Dealing with the LPs can be complicated," Captain Oswald said, shaking his head. "The law here says that any LP who detects bad vibes—officially 'Deadly Intent'—must report and detain the suspect. Passersby are supposed to enforce their judgments and they usually do."

"How can they tell who's got these bad vibes?" Harvey asked. Oswald's face darkened.

*"The law here says that any Licensed Psychic who detects bad vibes must report and detain the suspect."*

*"How can they tell who's got these bad vibes?" Harvey asked.*

*"Probably they can't, really, and it's just an excuse for them to arrest anyone they want to."*

"Probably they can't, really, and it's just an excuse for them to arrest anyone they want to," he answered. He held up a metallic brassard, iridescent with holographic patterns and shaped like a five-pointed sheriff's badge except that the fifth limb pointed down instead of up. "This is their ID; watch out for anyone wearing one of these." He tossed it back in a drawer and turned to his desk console. After a few minutes the office print-out emitted three pages of orientation seminars for the next week.

Harvey glanced through it randomly as

he wandered away from the Captain's office. It included things like *How to Eat with Chopsticks*, *Local Satanism and "Wicca," Blocking Psychic Investigations, and Legal Rights of Foreign Nationals in Pacifica*. He glanced at his watch and jumped; he was going to be late for the noon indoctrination film! He scurried to the elevator, happy to be in a controlled, American environment and wondering what it would be like to wander about in the unregulated chaos of Pacifica.

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A week later he was ready for his first foray into unbridled Pacifica. Despite indoctrination he couldn't help feeling that he was going Outside, with all its attendant risks and anxieties. He would be escorted by Captain Oswald—or "Fred" as he must call him always Outside (but never Inside)—and a hired Pacifican tour guide, Rosie. "Fred" noticed his reaction to his first sight of the disheveled, wild haired Latina woman. "It's not easy to get Pacificans we can trust to do this kind of work," Fred murmured as they went out the security doors. "We have to take what we can get."

Rosie greeted them distantly, as though she had trouble focusing on them and her mind was on other things. "Hi, Fred. Coming home with me today?"

"Yes, Rosie!" Fred boomed with false heartiness. "This is Harvey. He'll be coming along too, if that's OK."

"Sure, sure. Pay double?" she asked, freezing for a moment; she relaxed when Fred nodded and handed her a filmy document with a magnetic strip along the bottom. She stuffed it in her pouch without looking at it, and silently began to shuffle off to the Outside. Fred shrugged and started after her, with Harvey in tow.

Immediately outside the IBM compound they caught an electric trolley, clearly based on the historic cable cars but powered by overhead wires instead of underground cables. Like a cable car it had outside seating, which they promptly occupied. Harvey looked around to see how you paid: Rosie methodically sorted through a bundle of tags on a chain around her neck and patiently ran one over a sensor on her seat handle two or three times until it beeped. Fred was running a standard credit card over his meter, which also beeped. He handed

Harvey an envelope containing a number of cards with magnetic strips and a pair of bright alloy tags.

"Use the red and yellow tag for all types of transit, and the blue and green tag for eating," Fred explained as Harvey sorted through the items. "These are standard tourist tags; they'll get reported back to the hotel. Locals' tags are automatically charged against their Dom."

"What's to keep you from cheating and not paying?" he asked, looking around in vain for a conductor other than the tram's driver.

"Darned if I know," Fred answered. "Maybe the driver's a psychic and can detect cheaters. Anyway it works out pretty cheap so it's hardly worth stealing. Some say that the Doms want to show a high rate of public transit use as confirmation that they're not using high-impact transport." He shrugged to show his disdain for such explanations.

They rode majestically up Market Street. The trolleys ran down the center of the broad street, silent except for the quiet wanging of their overhead wires and the enthusiastic clanging of their bells. One-way bicycle lanes, crowded with heavily loaded cargo trikes as well as commuters, ran on either side of the tracks. A single lane of auto traffic was allowed between the bikes and the sidewalk, occupied solely by smallish electric vehicles.

"Have they outlawed internal combustion engines out here?" Harvey asked Fred.

"They might as well have. Each neighborhood sets its own standards for what vehicles they allow. Out in the country old-fashioned cars are still used, but most cities won't allow them at all," Fred answered. "I understand that the worst riots in Pacifica's history happened when the LA city council voted to ban gas-powered cars."

At Van Ness the trolley lurched around a sharp curve and they headed due south on Mission Street, losing the lanes of auto traffic in the process. Tall sentry palms lined the street on either side and the trolley made more frequent stops. After a few blocks of this slower progress they dismounted outside a large red brick building, unmistakably built as a National Guard armory at the turn of the century.

"This is my Dom," said Rosie, speak-

ing for the first time since they left the compound. She shuffled across the bike lanes without concern, although both Fred and Harvey had trouble judging the gaps between the bikes and had to scurry to avoid them. The wide sidewalk was lined with small booths, stands and tents propped against the walls of the armory. There were bins of tropical produce and bundles of bright flowers; some hawked trinkets and artwork, others offered skewers aromatically roasting over braziers. Malls inside the Wall in America



### *Her Name Is Dignity*

*photo by D.S. Black*

usually had pepsin or peppermint scented air pumped in; that comforting smell now seemed harsh and chemical compared to the fragrance of this Pacifican street.

They walked slowly past these displays and into a grand portal. Overhead a mosaic read "Creativity Explored Domestic Dwelling." A particularly shabby old man, his face a net of wrinkles, glommed onto them as they entered, apparently trying to sniff them. Fred shied away when the old man

snarled at him, and Harvey, assuming he was a beggar, fished a plastic Pacifican coin out of his pocket and handed it to the man. He stared at it and then at Harvey blankly for a moment, and then dropped it like a hot coal, muttering as he turned away.

Rosie snickered. "I don't think he liked you guys," she said. They entered a voluminous room with low couches and chairs scattered randomly about and brightly colored tapestries on the walls. It was mostly empty, but four vacant-eyed people sat in a ring on a large rug, bobbing and swaying.

"Are they praying?" Harvey asked. Rosie stopped short at the question, forehead knotted in concentration. "Maybe," she answered slowly. "Let's ask the consultant."

The consultant turned out to be a large, old maternal woman sitting at a low table with papers in front of her. She pursed her lips in distaste when she saw Rosie's guests. "Oh, is today one of your visitor days, Rosie?" she asked as their guide handed her the pay sheet Fred had given her earlier. The consultant put it on top of a stack before her but made no effort to introduce herself to Fred and Harvey.

"Mary, are the Cats praying?" Rosie asked her.

"I never thought of it that way before," Mary answered. "Maybe they are." She looked Fred and Harvey over. "You must be some of Rosie's American tourists. Welcome to Pacifica," she said, without enthusiasm.

"So, are the Cats praying?" Harvey asked, to Fred's irritation.

"The Cats are catatonics and they seem to enjoy doing that," Mary answered. "Most of the residents here are MIs or DDs," she said. Seeing the lack of comprehension in his face she added "That's Mentally Ill or Developmentally Delayed. In America most of these people would be locked up in institutions instead of living free lives. I can't understand why; it must cost a fortune."

"Well, most ... MIs" (Harvey had almost said "feeb," the common American term) "can't really look after themselves, can they?"

"I don't know about that. Rosie makes more as a tour guide than I do as a consultant," she said, glancing at the form

Rosie had just handed in. “Though not as much as the residents who are LPs—a surprising number of our residents are LPs,” she added. “They all do pretty well as long as they have a consultant like me around to remind them when to take their meds. Which reminds me, I’m a housekeeping consultant, and not a tour guide, so if you’ll just excuse me?” she asked, and turned her back on them. Rosie motioned them over and led them away.

“You’re lucky Mary’s on today. She’s real friendly. Most of the consultants won’t even talk to Americans.” Her face clouded. “And some of the residents said I shouldn’t even be allowed to bring you guys around. But not too many, and everyone likes the credit enhancements I earn for the Dom,” she concluded, almost cheerfully.

She led them through a door and into a vast kitchen. A middle-aged Asian man working at an immense pile of vegetables was its only occupant. “Hi, Art,” Rosie called. Art just scowled and chopped a turnip in half with an immense cleaver, rather more forcefully than necessary, Harvey thought. “Art’s our primary cooking consultant. We cook most of our own food, but we like having Art and his helpers when we can,” she confided.

They went up another flight of stairs and into a broad airy corridor, lined with cubicles and clusters of rooms. Rosie paused before one and pushed aside the bead curtain to show them inside. “This is my room,” she said, but didn’t elaborate or show them inside; Harvey got only a brief glimpse of a futon, many plants and elaborate macramé wall hangings.

After touring the quiet complex—workrooms, bathrooms, pool, auditorium, roof-top garden—for an hour Rosie led them back to the grand portal. “You better go before most of my neighbors get home. They don’t like guests,” she explained.

Fred led him a couple blocks south and then turned west, up 16th Street. “The academy’s just a couple blocks this way,” Fred explained. Harvey followed him in a daze. Inside, in America, most people were anglos, or if not were grouped together somewhat apart. Here there was a mix so broad that Harvey couldn’t begin to classify it. There were no visible

policemen around; no cars; no malls. He couldn’t tell if people eating at clusters of tables on the sidewalk were at restaurants or just outside their own homes. The smell of the cookfires was making him hungry, reminding him that he’d been warned to avoid Pacifican food.

“It’s like visiting a tropical country,” Captain Oswald—Fred—had explained. “Lot’s of weird bugs you can pick up from the food and especially the water.”

That’s why his backpack was weighted down with a half-gallon of bottled water and five pounds of processed food bars and high-quality—relatively speaking—MREs (Meals Ready to Eat). The thought of those tasteless treats paled in contrast to the odors of fresh-cooked food currently assailing him.

**There were no visible policemen around, no cars, no malls. He couldn’t tell if people eating at clusters of tables on the sidewalk were at restaurants or just outside their own homes. The smell of the cookfires was making him hungry, reminding him that he’d been warned to avoid Pacifican food.**

Most of the buildings they passed presented a blank wall to the street, and apparently were oriented around internal courtyards. Peeking in the occasional entryway Harvey glimpsed secluded patios heavy with foliage, wind chimes and fountains as well as drying laundry and piles of junk.

The Academy was a rococo wedding cake of a cathedral. “Used to be a church,” Fred muttered. “Nationalized like the rest of the Catholic Church’s

stuff back in ’99,” he added. “They didn’t even let them keep that monument,” he said, pointing to a small white adobe next to the Academy. “Oldest building in the city, they say.”

As they mounted the steps a wild-eyed woman grabbed Harvey’s sleeve. He jumped but relaxed when he spotted her LP brassard. “Your clothes smell bad,” she confided. “But you smell OK. Your buddy there;” she continued in a confidential whisper, jerking her head at Fred, “He stinks all over. I couldn’t let him in.” Fred backed a couple of steps down; Harvey thought he saw him discretely crossing himself.

Before Harvey could figure out what to do or say a young man with dark hair ran down the stairs to his side. “You must be new here,” he said, smiling. “Thanks, Bea. I’ll look after him now,” he said to the LP, leading Harvey up the stairs by the arm. He looked back helplessly at Fred, who nodded and slowly turned away. It was like the first day of school, when he suddenly realized his mother was going to leave him alone in a strange place.

“Is that your security guard?” Harvey asked. “She couldn’t stop an armed intruder.”

“Now, where would an ‘intruder’ get a gun in Pacifica?” he asked. “And she would spot a flamer like that from a block away. By the way, I’m Ramon. I’m a new student here myself.”

“Harvey Feinberg,” he answered, offering his hand. To his surprise Ramon didn’t go for the obligatory “crush”; his handshake was soft, almost a caress.

“Anyway, we mostly don’t overwhelm our enemies,” Ramon continued. “We try to subvert them instead,” he said with a bold smile.

“But you can’t subvert everyone,” Harvey observed, defensively.

“Well, those we can’t, usually leave. Or go crazy,” Ramon said, throwing a significant glance over his shoulder at Fred’s departing figure. He looked at Harvey with intense eyes for a long moment. “But I think you’ll do just fine here.”

Harvey followed him inside, and— with or without the benefit of psychic insight—knew for sure that he would never be the same.

—Michael C. Botkin

## Tech Talk: Mediamatic and Wired

Since *Processed World's* inception over a decade ago, we have taken our roots in the automated office as a permanent excuse to concern ourselves with questions of technology and work, generally taking our angle as the "underside of the information age." As long-time readers know, our primary efforts have gone toward exposing the sordid realities of work, as told by those who do it, in Tales of Toil, letters, and "fiction." This has inevitably reduced and limited our explorations of technology questions, but happily, a couple of new(er) magazines are, taken together, doing a great job of exploring the changes in psychology, public space, sociability, political economy, art and literature resulting from the ever-evolving relationship of humanity to its techno-sphere.

A couple of years ago *Mondo 2000* sprang forth from a curious agglomeration of aging hippies, computer nerds, psychedelic drug aficionados, and artists to gain a brief reputation as a cutting edge rag. Its intellectual flabbiness and self-satisfied hubris soon overwhelmed its claims to be a new avant-garde, leaving the US magazine-scape stuck between glossy news magazines pumping out instantly nostalgic looks at an already vanishing world, and an unprecedented explosion of self-produced 'zines so finely tuned to the sensibilities of their makers that it made the term "narrowcasting" seem broad by comparison.

Local billboards in '92 began promising a new magazine anachronistically called *Wired*, whose masthead echoed early '80s punk aesthetics while its highly professional staff gave the latest versions of DTP tech a serious workout inside. Amidst a heavy load of ads for software and hardware, liquor and music, come the telltale "news" reports generated from the endless stream of corporate press

releases and sample products sent to willing reviewers. *Wired* is a completely commercial magazine with no political pretensions (other than perhaps that old civil libertarian line), but it manages to provide a lot of useful news and info anyway. It actually delivers something like a weather report on the New Media Universe, a service that *Mondo* implied but never delivered. Along with intelligent reviews of multimedia, interactive music, books, etc, a good deal of the magazine is dedicated to serious feature articles. One cover story was on the CypherPhreaks campaigning for public key encryption as an antidote to the Panopticon/Big Brother tendencies of the new information technology. Another article, much shorter and tucked in the middle of the magazine, informatively introduced the concept of "infrastructure wars," an idea largely embodied in the age-old ability to sabotage production at any worksite. In the piece, called "Soft Kill" by Peter Black, various recent events like the sabotaging of Iraqi war computers and the World Trade Center bombing's effect on world financial markets are used to show how vulnerable this shiny new way of life really is. A handy list of the top ten targets in the US is worth reprinting:

- 1 Culpepper Switch—in Culpepper, Virginia, this electronic switch handles all federal funds transfers and transactions.
- 2 Alaska Pipeline—carries ten percent of domestic oil for the US.
- 3 Electronic Switching Systems (ESS)—manages all telephones.
- 4 Internet—the communications backbone of science and industry.
- 5 Time Distribution System—all major systems depend upon accurate time.
- 6 Panama Canal—still immensely important in the transport of oil and goods.
- 7 Worldwide Military Command and Control System (WWMCCS)—particularly susceptible to soft attack.
- 8 Blue Cube—just off Hwy 101 near Moffet Field in Mountain View, California, this is the

Pacific clearing house for satellite reconnaissance.

9 Malaccan Straits, Singapore—the maritime link between Europe-Arabia and the Western Pacific.

10 National Photographic Interpretation Center (NPIC)—a ten-minute walk from the US capitol, this is the repository and processing facility for all of the government's photographic intelligence.

*Wired* gets extra credit for busting out of the US-centric obsession favored by technology writers. A great article by the ubiquitous Jeff Greenwald covers the explosion of dishwallas in India. India has become a major producer of high-tech workers so it figures that the government's attempts to limit TV broadcasting to just a few state-owned channels would be subverted by an increasingly techno-savvy public. Thousands of small cable distributors have sprung up across the country, as individual entrepreneurs purchase a satellite dish and a VCR, download shows from the sky and broadcast them to their local network (usually a dozen to a couple of hundred TVs all wired to the same VCR, strung loosely over roofs and across corridors).

Inside stories on Silicon Valley corporate intrigue, profiles of major players, and so on, ensure *Wired* an audience among the upscale tech workers who can afford to keep an expensive product like this afloat. If you are concerned with that world from within or without, you'll want to check out *Wired*.

Not beholden to ad revenue or a market-oriented philosophy, the English-Dutch magazine *Mediamatic* from Amsterdam is easily the most sophisticated, theoretically intelligent, well-written, humorous, provocative and best-designed effort addressing the changing media universe. Published four times a year with funding from the Dutch Ministry of Culture and some private foundation money, Volume 6 (1991-92) featured a special issue on the Ear and Sound with articles on the history and practice of Amsterdam's radio pirates, the use of pillows in art, several pieces on cinema and sound, and a host of book reviews. A special double issue was dedicated to Old Media, in which they sheepishly admit that their expectation of a renaiss-

sance of new uses of old media was probably unfounded. A series of short essays by solicited artists indicates the infinitude of attitudes and uses creative minds bring to the interface of art and technology. Several essays take up the problems of the museum and fine art in a world increasingly shaped by the new media and the implied existence of the "docuverse," the electronically universalized body of human creation.

Their latest, the "1/0" issue, takes a solid step into the current discussions around new media. In pondering the difficult category of "interactivity" I found myself stuck until I read a piece on reconceptualizing artificial intelligence (AI) by Avon Huxor. Cautiously assessing his own proposed analogy between "artificial intelligence" and writing, he writes "the techniques of AI have the potential to be employed as a Typography of Thought, allowing the author to "write down" their thoughts... A Running Text (so-called because they are texts that can be run like computer programs) system should represent existing practice—conventional text—to carry it through initial development. The output from the executable processes should be tied to, and interpret, everyday text. Once conventionalized, Running Texts will emerge with their own expressive form—a poetics of reasoning...."

"By viewing AI as a medium to be used by people, AI may achieve that final elusive goal. If a technology can truly infect its frequent users, artificial intelligence could arise. We would be that artificial intelligence, our cognitive apparatus restructured through the use of this technology.... We should also be concerned with the pressure to standardize...it would be a tragedy to see the primacy of individual thought diminished.... We must

return authority, authorship, to the human who creates such Texts, and who can then be called to account."

*Mediamatic 1/0* also includes serious articles on mimetic aesthetics, word processing, the user interface, and excellent book reviews on virtual reality and hypertext. Their sardonic self-conscious Euro-centric view is nicely combined with the techno-theme in the introduction: "Hardware, software and wetware are the three forms which the human/machine can take in the New World Order... The role of Europe is to deliver the necessary cultural products for shipment. Wetware's task is to cough up culture, which will be run on Japanese hardware with the help of American software. In this international division of labor, what is expected of Europe is that she properly administer the legacy of Bach and Beethoven, maintain the paintings of Rembrandt and Van Gogh, and extend the Shakespeare-through-Beckett theatre tradition into the future." *Mediamatic*, while occasionally dense and academic, mostly reads very clearly with a refreshingly open intellectuality, fluidly combining coverage of issues across many disciplines and philosophies. It is a special treat, too, because it is beautifully designed and produced. With wit and whimsy, the designers pull the editorial eclecticism together into a visually intriguing, but easy to read magazine. Check it out!

—Chris Carlsson

Stichting Mediamatic Postbus 17490 1001 JL Amsterdam Netherlands surface sub \$30/4 issues	Wired PO Box 191826 San Francisco, CA 94119 US \$20/6 issues
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## On the Job Action

A recent trip to a Vegas gun emporium turned up a curious book: *Fighting Back* by Victor Santoro (1982, Desert Publications, Cornville Az, 86325, ISBN 0-87947-200-6; try Loompanics). Rooted in the sub-genre of "revenge" literature (e.g. the eponymous George Hayduke's books such as "Getting Even," etc.). This text, however, is centered on the work world.

The first few chapters are the sensible advice you expect from a guidance counselor. The first chapter is "Hold Your Temper," which urges restraint in the face of bossly provocation. Santoro outlines various scenarios which cause discontent in workers (unfair treatment, lies, companies being sold, etc), often illustrated with short examples. His chapter on "The Law" gives reasons not to believe that satisfaction can be had from legal recourses (tissue-thin labor laws, civil torts that take years to go anywhere, etc). He outlines a few ways to use the law against a boss, although most are applicable only if you know of some illegal actions, or if the person is already in the legal process. Other chapters deliver sensible (but not earth-shaking) advice on finding out who you really work for, and company spies.

An excellent chapter is "Assessing Your Boss's Vulnerability," which presents a slightly tongue-in-cheek "Santoro Scale" for assessing a company (or department) in terms of susceptibility to sabotage. The scale has sections, the first of which, "The Company," applies to the organization itself. He assigns points to rate such categories as "Financial Position," "Technical Secrets," "Physical Plant,"



photo by D.S. Black

"Communications" (lots of mail? to where? lots of phone orders?, etc), "Transportation" ("Company Vehicles. Score one point if the company has its own delivery trucks and another if it has executive cars."), "Personnel," "Suppliers" and "Organization." The second section, "The Boss," rates the vulnerability of the person in charge based on their position (and status) in the company, competence, home life, travel and personal habits. The scales indicate relative vulnerabilities and how to exploit them.

He then gets to the meat of the matter in "Methods of Attack," which outlines much of the rest of book. He examines physical sabotage, including attacks on computer data and the like. My favorites are methods which utilize organizational weaknesses, or the manipulation of information. Some work best for people with the ability to change what is being ordered, when, or from whom. Others are applicable to those at the bottom of the organizational hierarchy, such as file clerks who can misfile, misdirect, or lose papers which won't be needed until long after their departure.

My favorite example is that of Alfonso P., a stockboy, who was treated like dirt by the manager of the supermarket where he worked. After finding a new job, he launched his plan:

*Part of his job was to place price labels on items before putting them on the shelves. He purposely priced every item lower than the scheduled price as he restocked the shelves, often giving the customer a 'discount' of up to fifty percent. As the profit margin for a supermarket varies from one to six percent, depending on how you do your accounting and what you're trying to prove, Alfonso insured that the supermarket*

*operated in the red for a while, and was able to under price a lot of items in two weeks. [...]*

*Alfonso made excellent use of the multiplier effect. To do so required no extra effort on his part. He just had to go through the motions of his job as he did every day. All he did was place lower prices on the items. Yet by doing so he caused the checkers to collect less money than they would have otherwise. He caused customers to walk out of the store with the goods at bargain rates, and indirectly, caused a temporary increase in the store's business, for some of the customers, when they noticed the low prices, 'told a friend.' This generated more traffic, selling more goods at the lower prices, requiring more restocking and more opportunity to put down the prices. Note that the prices were low enough to offset any additional profits caused by the increase in business. The increased business just caused the supermarket to lose more money.*

*"Alfonso's method even had a very desirable 'fail-safe' feature. If he had been caught at it, what could the manager have done? He could have fired him on the spot, which would have been of no consequence, but then how would he have gone about repairing the damage? Would he have examined every item on the shelves? The average supermarket carries between five and ten thousand items, and comparing the prices on every one to a master list takes time. The manager would not have been able to close the store for two or three days while he did this, so he would have had to let the damage run its course. Alfonso made sure that the effects would be as long-lasting as possible by making sure that the shelves were chock-full before he left.*

This particular method may not work in every store, as those with a computerized list and scanners, for instance, couldn't ordinarily be affected by a stock clerk, but a "program-

mer" (a data-entry clerk) could do so. This example illustrates effective ways of doing harm without anything so tacky as violence.

Some tactics are less generalizable; going to work for a competitor, is, as Santoro admits, a useful method of revenge only for people who have specialized knowledge or contacts; this isn't likely to help temps, who don't have such knowledge. Some are only useful in limited circumstances—rumors and attacks on the reputation of a company, for instance.

There is some conservative spoor here (obligatory complaints about "reverse discrimination", a fascination with starting businesses, etc), but overall this is a well written and straight-forward work on a subject many people are uncomfortable with. True, Santoro can't dispense wisdom about when to use these tactics, which are designed to cause harm, but such criticisms can be made about virtually any tactic of work-place resistance. While there is an emphasis on the individual's revenge here, that is also a reflection of reality for most workers. We may (or may not) be fired collectively, but the burden of unemployment and finding new work is carried by individuals, as is the bulk of abuse in the modern workplace. Nor is there any reason why such tactics and more) can't be integrated with a more collective approach.

We may be weak compared to the honchos, but we're not powerless. We don't have to take the insults, abuse and degradation without resistance. Yes, collective measures are better (both practically and philosophically), but individual responses can at least salvage one's pride, and, taken together, wear down the bosses and their minions.

Check it out. 3 1/2 stars.

—Primitivo Morales



photo by D.S. Black

## The Job Thing

The role of the middle-aged bohemian outcast isn't just for men anymore. Of course, it never was, but the massive indifference with which dominant media culture has greeted the development of women as individuals has relegated such role models to history's memory hole. And in the world of underground comics, dominated by male artists who largely uphold "traditional" (read: power imbalanced) sex roles, such as R. Crumb and Art Spiegelman, this has often been true also. However, last year's publication of the excellent *Twisted Sisters*, an anthology of women comic artists, raised the prominence of women undergrounders. Most of the artists in the book are in their 40s, and many of them had been drawing comics for decades, largely in feminist comics like *Tits and Clits* and *Wimmins Comix*.

One of the artists featured in *Twisted Sisters*, Carol Tyler, has released a book called *The Job Thing: Stories About Shitty Jobs*. While other autobiographical comics such as Harvey Pekar's *American Splendor* [See PW 26/27] and Seth's *Palookaville* have commented richly on the fugue state suffered by sensitive people in absurd jobs, *The Job Thing* stirs the issues of motherhood, sexism, and female economic independence into the stew.

No by-the-leftist-numbers polemic, this book. Tyler's deceptively crude drawing style depicts a wealth of cruelty, injustice, and pettiness with childlike candor and absurdist humor. Throughout the book, the artist depicts herself as first a harried, bumbling, but hopeful youth, then as a harried, disillusioned, but hopeful adult. And unlike comic artists such as Joe Matt and Dori Seda, she does not depict herself as more attractive than she is. Rather, she is shown throughout as a worn-at-the-seams kind of gal, drawn carelessly as if it does not really matter how she looks.

Tyler lists her résumé as: "Clerk, map technician for zoning dept., domestic engineer, drywall, archivist, tofu presser for a guru who drinks his own piss, speedy floral delivery to funeral parlors, lumber sorter, bartendress, medical illustrator, popcorn girl at the show, model, stevedore..." In mapping her job history and incidentally, her geographical mobility and relationship upheavals, she sends a message that the female searcher exists past the age of 21. Throughout the book, in fact, Tyler never shies away from the

photo by D.S. Black



harsh realities women face in the personal and public realms. One story depicts her escape from Nashville (drawn as a large guitar) and a philandering boyfriend to a "nice average college town," where she sells pulp romances and how-to books until anxiety-induced insomnia and bad hamburger get her fired. In another story, Tyler places her new baby in daycare to take a job teaching mural-painting to obnoxious kids. In the process, she encounters much petty egomania and cliquishness. Pointing herself out to an observer, she says: "I'm easy to spot: the naked torso with the milky boobs." The strength of *The Job Thing*, besides the excellence of the storytelling, is Tyler's eye for absurd, queasy details. A catalogue of backbiting comments she receives at work, for instance, includes this bon mot: "Besides, I don't have any use for a person who doesn't like chocolate." If you're looking for a role model in quiet rebellion whose acid wit goes down like chocolate pudding, put away those Charles Bukowski books, go to your local comic store, and get *The Job Thing*.

—Linda Johnson



graphic by Iguana Mente

# EUREKA?!

*The gold digger in the ravines of the mountains is as much a gambler as his fellow in the saloons of San Francisco. What difference does it make whether you shake dirt or shake dice? If you win, society is the loser. The gold digger is the enemy of the honest laborer, whatever checks and compensations there may be.*

Thoreau, "Life Without Principle," 1863

*what of the people who don't have what I have?/they're victims of my leisure/to fail is to be a victim/to be a victim of my choice.*

Minutemen, "Maybe Partying Will Help," 1984

**T**he wager: At times it's important to stake something you value in the hope of gaining some advantage. There's nothing about gambling *per se* that's deviant, but while recreational gambling is seen by most as harmless social fun, the professional gambler is deemed a public enemy; a degenerate who gets his or her greatest thrills out of "making" money. Oil exploration, playing the stock market, and investing in real estate, high-tech, or "developing" countries, though all involve risk, are different from gambling because these forms of risk-taking are categorized as honest investments that stimulate economic life; successful investors create jobs at the same time that they increase their personal wealth. The high rollers are thus society's benefactors, and though they're

risk-takers they're also the system's staunchest conservatives since they enjoy the rules of the game.

The capitalist ideology that condemns the activities and outlook of the confidence man or gambler extols the same traits in the individualist/entrepreneur: the self-made man.

The confidence man is detestable because his success is predicated on ripping off the lazy folks who either are trying to escape the dead-end life that profits the reputable entrepreneur, or are seeking a fleeting moment of luxury. Suckers in the making are taught early on that it's one thing to submit daily to the demands and interests of the enterprising individual (corporations are people, too), and another to let oneself be taken in by a sharper. Only the latter is the mark of the fool.

So they say. This social distinction between the con artist/businessman, which today allows retired military generals and CEOs to write best-sellers and be presented as wise and trustworthy, wasn't always so conveniently drawn. For example, Edward Pendleton, a 19th-century con man who owned the "Hall of the Bleeding Heart" casino in DC, was married to the daughter of Robert Mills, a wealthy architect involved in, among other

**THE STIGMATIZATION OF GAMBLING AS AN ACTIVITY THAT BY NATURE PROMOTES PATHOLOGICALLY SELF-SERVING BEHAVIOR BETRAYS A CULTURAL ETHOS PLAGUED BY SELF-LOATHING.**

projects, the construction of the Washington Monument. The funerals of both Pendleton and his wife were attended by the latter's devoted friend, President Buchanan. Lobbyists regularly patronized The Hall, not to gamble, but to help out cash-strapped legislators in exchange for favors. These special interests differed from those regularly attacked by today's corporate media for undermining the democratic process, since there was no organized labor, homosexuals were closeted, and women and minorities weren't allowed to vote. Of course, then and now, it's business as usual.

The business of gambling goes back to this country's founding: "A scheme to

help finance the Continental Congress in 1776 by means of a country-wide lottery was abandoned only because of the difficulty of selling tickets at that troubled time." [Low Life, Luc Sante, Vintage, 1991, p.153] The Louisiana Purchase not only opened up America to the commerce lauded by standard American History books, it also afforded vast horizons upon which New Orleans gambling entrepreneurs could ply their crafts and stalk their prey in Mobile, up the Mississippi, and eventually along the Atlantic seaboard. It was the heyday of free trade. These entrepreneurs didn't necessarily introduce gambling to new communities, since relatively small-scale

forms were already widely practiced, but they organized complicated systems and networks for optimal efficacy in squeezing out every penny before moving on (sometimes to save their necks) to rape more pristine environments.

Despite the Horatio Alger-type myths, most 19th-century Euro-Americans found themselves condemned to eternal servitude if they played by the rules of work hard, scrimp and save, and die broke. Gambling was and continues to be one possible though unlikely avoidance of the damnation of wage slavery, and its appeal is not always founded on the desire to get away with not working. Except in the case of games of pure chance, you've got to be skilled to win consistently. A parallel can be drawn with urban youth who "choose" to deal drugs rather than flip burgers for sub-sustenance wages. Because of the hopeless degradation of being coerced to earn the never-inalienable right to live, and the lack of collective alternatives, the tendency in a fragmented, artificially competitive society is to seek individual escape by any means necessary.

Among some American Indians, like the Northwest's Shasta before the arrival of the *pastin* (white land-grabbers, prospectors, and other "settlers"), gambling was a highly ritualized and serious component of the culture. The activity, reserved for adults, entailed days of pre-ceremony celibacy—for both the participants and the observers—gambling songs, prayers, and other rites. It was also highly competitive, and might go on for two or three days without the interruption even of sleep, but was just one component of the culture and by no means the foundation of social life. The stigmatization of gambling as an activity that by nature promotes greed, duplicity, and other pathologically self-serving behavior betrays a cultural ethos plagued by self-loathing. The stigma is a tacit condemnation of the forces that propel this society rather than of gambling itself.

### No Reservations in Heaven

*To act for the good for congressman is money/The right to get rich is in the Constitution  
Gang of 4, "Life! It's a Shame"*

Ironically, today some American Indians are seeking economic salvation by pursuing gambling revenues. The state

**Mea Culpa, Mea Culpa, Mea MINIMA Culpa!**



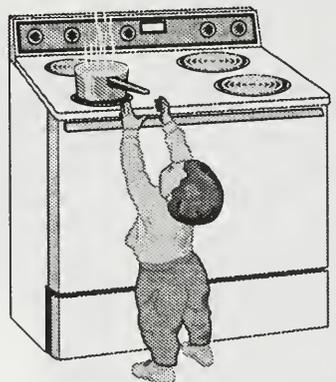
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**FAMILY LIFE:**  
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**SPECIAL INSERT:  
Accusing Your Accusers—First!**

graphic by PW Collective

gambling has contributed to internecine bloodshed and direct intervention by NY State's troopers.

The state's involvement in Indian affairs will increase as both sides compete for our fun & fantasies. The successful growth of casino gambling on tribal territories, now a \$5 billion per year industry, has led to recent cries of "double standard" (reverse discrimination) and "unconstitutional" from state governors and established casino owners who claim the Indians are usurping what rightfully belongs to them. It's only a matter of time before legislators level the playing field so that American Indians, the state, and the Donald Trumps can all compete for gambling's spoils as equals.

The dual evil of gambling is that it undermines the work ethic by its appeal to an innate human lust to get something for nothing, and as a result fosters venal behavior, warn the likes of Bill Safire in a *NY Times* piece reprinted in *Akwesasne Notes*. [v23, #3] While turning pale over the proliferation of legalized gambling, both in the white-man's society and on American Indian reservations, he dismisses the complaints of "bleeding hearts" who find sports mascots like Cleveland's Chief Wahoo and Washington DC's Redskins offensive. The Indians are doomed when they invite gold diggers and other 49ers to play on their turf because to welcome gambling is to welcome crime, vice, and our society's most shiftless elements. It's not the profit motive, but these particularly sick profit seekers who will undermine American Indian sovereignty. "Better a proud and upright 'Redskin' than a corrupted and exploited 'Native American,'" writes loathsome Cowboy Bill.

Safire and his syndicated ilk are of course silent about the myriad and continuing attacks on Native Americans legally perpetrated in the interests of corporate investors, the US military, and toxic-waste dumpers. [See *CAIB*, op. cit., and "The Struggle for Newe Segobia," *Z*, July/August '92] This same selective moralizing can be applied to indigenous peoples and others in the so-called Third World: Since they're not being invaded by low-life gamblers, it's for their own good that IMF/World Bank austerity measures are imposed and noncapitalist ways of life destroyed, in order to make

the climate attractive to speculators out to make an "honest" dollar. This is called investing in the future rather than cold-blooded profiteering.

Closer to home, state and federal governments increasingly assume the roles of incorrigible consumer-confidence men, addicted to a fiscally and morally bankrupt status quo. Unable to remain solvent merely through borrowing and increased sin taxes and other forms of extortion, but not yet ready to declare all-out war, cash is more and more often obtained through promoting new fast-buck "opportunities" such as lotteries. The government desperately needs money to feed its global corporate family, and will promise anything—even the world of *your dreams*—to get it. Meanwhile, any notion of a qualitatively better way of living rings dissonantly in the heads of the system's fortune tellers and their patrons.

While our system promises that posi-



In 18th-century English gambling dens, there was an employee whose only job was to swallow the dice if there was a police raid.



One of the standard corner jobs at 19th-century boxing matches was that of bloodsucker.

graphic by Richard Wood & M.L.

graphic by Richard Wood & M.L.

tive, fundamental change is possible, the appeal of games like lotteries, and the public energy consumed by manufactured events such as sports, electoral politics, and other entertainment reveal the opposite: there's no possibility to effect change, or to think about it meaningfully. The only hope is that, by the grace of ridiculously improbable good fortune, at least you (and yours) will get what you deserve.

## Too Little, Too Soon

*Hope is not confidence. If it could not be disappointed, it would not be hope. That is part of it. Otherwise, it could be cast in a picture. It would let itself be bargained down. It would capitulate and say, that is what I had hoped for. Thus, hope is critical and can be disappointed. However, hope still nails a flag on the mast, even in decline, in that the decline is not accepted, even when this decline is very strong.*

Ernst Bloch, "Something's Missing"

I've been a "problem gambler" since at least the age of 14 when I made a couple of hundred dollars betting on football and bought a bass guitar with the loot. I've been corrupted ever since.

About 10 years later, having dropped out of college and working as a proof-reader on Wall Street, I devoted myself for months to the daily study of thor-

oughbred horse racing. It wasn't meant to be a road to the promised land, but among the options it was preferable to working on the support staff of a big-time corporate law firm (the best job I could find). I'd recently been disabused of the belief that radical activity takes place in the academy, or as a part of any career, and was seeking a tolerable means of escape.

At it's best race-track betting can be reasonably fulfilling, and certainly more inspiring than reading legal documents for "errors" to help attorneys finalize their client's poison-pill buy-out, or many other forms of gambling. Unlike casino gambling, where the environment is as stimulating as a shopping mall during a 24-hour fire sale, a horseplayer can spend most of the day outdoors. Even in the NYC area there's green grass, clear water, and trees at the race track. Again, unlike the casino, there's about a half-hour between each betting opportunity, during which time you can read, socialize, or simply relax without the incessant clanging of slot machines designed to entice you to join in the chase while drowning out the silence of the losers. I spent most of a two-week vacation going to the track, of course with some hope that I'd never be returning to the job, but

also because it was fun. It's an exciting release to anticipate the pay-off of a winning wager and to watch the last seconds of the race as it happens. For a brief moment at least, the money isn't an issue.

My daily devotion to horseplaying was fun while it lasted, but I dropped out of the race again, largely because it was way too much work in the market sense: whatever money I made, I couldn't justify spending so much time handicapping—it's not that much fun. Pari-mutuel gambling is very competitive. Your opponents are the other wagers, some of whom have inside information and the money to back it up. The state takes about 20% of every dollar wagered off the top (this makes it "legal"), so appreciable success is not likely to fall to the financial small fry. You won't make much in the stock market, either, if you can only afford a one-time risk of \$100. The tax laws are such that, if you win over \$1000 at odds of 300 to 1 or higher, the IRS and (at least in NY) the state take a combined total of about 25% of your winnings, and you need photo ID and a Social Security card to collect. You can win over \$1000 at lower odds tax-free, but to do so you need to be...a high roller. Now, if I'd had \$5000 to start with, didn't have to waste my time at a shit-job, and with a little luck and an honest jockey.... But gamblers are like old fishermen or revolutionaries when they start talking about the ones that got away.

I didn't quit gambling. Even after I gave up the grind of closely following horse racing I continued to bet in NYC's many Off-Track Betting (OTB) parlors. This made the workday somewhat more tolerable. Lunch hour wasn't the only time of day that truly belonged to me, it was something to anticipate with optimism. Though still a routine, it was something to *do*. Sadly, the three or four times that I won over \$1000 in those last six months were probably the happiest (aside from the last day at the job, of course).

It turned out that as a small-dollar wagerer I had greater success knowing less: When you've compiled a lot of data, you are, at least in your own mind, a kind of expert. It's difficult to bet long-shots—which are long-shots precisely because others have compiled similar data and the odds reflect that. This high-odds type of

## THIS MODERN WORLD by TOM TOMORROW

IN CALIFORNIA, THE STATE SUPREME COURT HAS JUST RULED THAT ANY PEDESTRIAN UNABLE TO PROVIDE POLICE WITH SOME FORM OF IDENTIFICATION CAN BE SENT TO JAIL.



FOR THAT MATTER, A LEGALLY-ENFORCEABLE DRESS CODE MIGHT ALSO BE HELPFUL TO POLICE OFFICERS-- SINCE, AFTER ALL, CRIMINALS ARE OFTEN POORLY DRESSED...



PERHAPS TO FURTHER ALLOW POLICE TO KEEP TROUBLEMAKERS AND NONCONFORMISTS IN LINE, CITIZENS SHOULD ALSO BE REQUIRED TO CARRY A CREDIT CARD AT ALL TIMES... TO PROVE THAT THEY ARE PRODUCTIVE, CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS OF SOCIETY...



HECK, PERHAPS IT WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF SOCIETY IF POLICE COULD SIMPLY ARREST ANYONE AT ANY TIME FOR NO APPARENT REASON...



graphic by Tom Tomorrow

TOM TOMORROW

gambling deprives you of the satisfaction of successfully handicapping a race, and is almost as mindlessly random as playing the lottery, though I have my secrets. At the time I was somewhat desperate and willing to accept the rewards when they came. This was post-war 1991, when the law firm I worked at was "downsizing" since the support staff had grown dramatically in the speculative '80s. We were no longer allowed to work overtime (they were trying to starve us out rather than lay anyone off), and I needed to save for a planned move from NYC to SF. Gambling winnings played a (taxable) role in my escaping that job and city.

### Discouraging Words

*Cheer the loss of another's leg...*

Mekons, "Watch the Film"

The horseplayer, to a greater degree than the worker, has the opportunity to exercise what Chomsky has called "Cartesian common sense": an innate desire and ability to use one's intellect. Because you've been taught you're not qualified to think, or fear reprisal for speaking your mind, you learn to distrust or dismiss your own judgments. Without evidence to the contrary, a person naturally trusts the legitimacy of his or her own experience, even though this might mean describing a reality that conflicts with that of the appointed experts. Most horseplayers treat experts with disdain—though they're more than happy to tell you what they themselves think—since it's obvious that the expert is just doing a job. At the very least, no expert's opinion is accepted at face value. The extent to which you think for yourself is left to you, and it's always in your best interest.

But even though individuals need to think and want a voice, this desire is diverted to matters of little or no consequence, or to matters over which we have no meaningful say. Who will win the late-night talkshow war? What do Lee Iaccoca and Ross Perot have to say about NAFTA? Are we gonna get health care? Has that horse Open Mind ever won on a sloppy track at more than seven furlongs? People need to think, but we don't need to think about what we think about. Or we just can't do so on a regular basis without losing touch with reality, where "common sense" trickles down from above. Whether you buy it or not you're

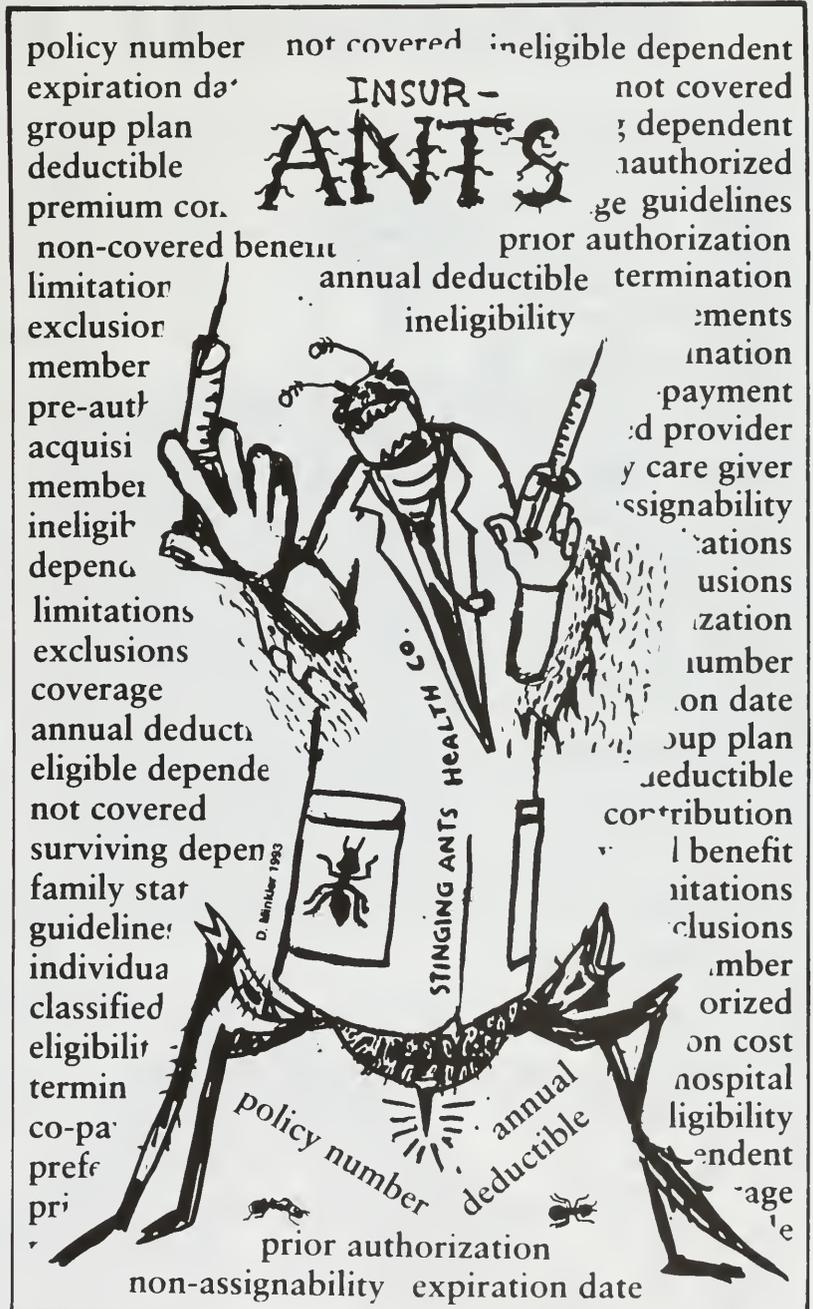
the poorer for it.

These days I'm too poor to gamble. In SF, there are no OTBs, where all you need is \$2 and the ambition to walk a few blocks to find a betting window. I'm "self" employed—no insurance, and never knowing when or if I'll get more

work—and sinking more deeply into the kind of debt that only gambling winnings, or a collapse of the world economy, might erase....

The wager? *Bet both lungs.*

—Richard Wool



## BUGS IN THE SYSTEM

Under a Single Payer Plan the government pays for everyone's health care. By eliminating private insurance companies, we would save enough money to provide health care for everyone.

graphic by Doug Minkler

# THE PYRAMID AND THE TREE

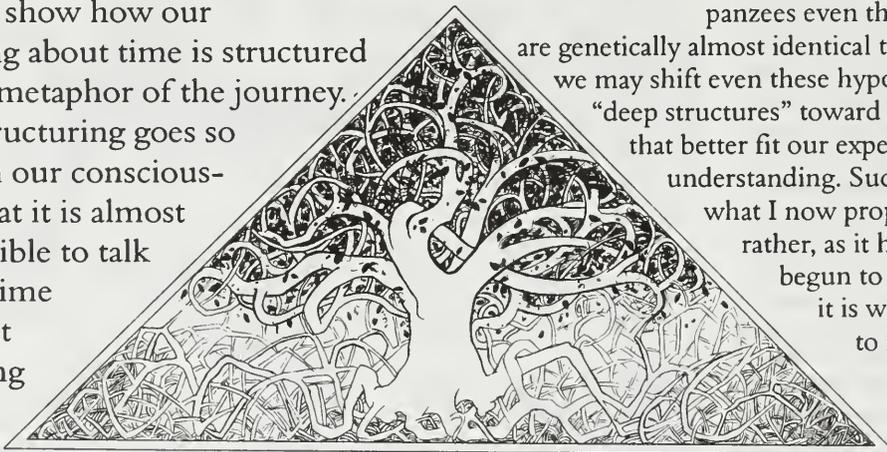
We think in metaphors. All abstractions (including the word “abstraction”) derive from terms for concrete experiences. Thought is a vast coral, whose “worms” are living metaphors and whose reef is composed of dead ones. As different corals have different characteristic shapes, so various areas of our thinking are dominated by certain meta-metaphors or metaphoric structures. For instance, in their study *More Than Cool Reason*, George Lakoff and Mark Turner show how our thinking about time is structured by the metaphor of the journey. The structuring goes so deep in our consciousness that it is almost impossible to talk about time without invoking the

journey metaphor in one way or another. (Try it.)

Since they are mainly concerned with language as such, Lakoff and Turner demonstrate this metaphoric structuring by recourse to the dead and dying tropes buried in everyday

speech. But I contend that metaphoric structuring extends beyond the word into all our signifying activity. Some of the most basic meta-metaphors may in fact be partly “hard-wired” in our brains out of our evolutionary history as primates or as mammals—since land mammals demonstrably share a language of facial and bodily expression, of which “primate” is a dialect. Nevertheless, just as we can resist our predisposition to behave like chimpanzees even though we are genetically almost identical to them, so we may shift even these hypothetical “deep structures” toward new ones that better fit our experience and understanding. Such a shift is what I now propose—or rather, as it has already begun to take place, it is what I intend to foreground and clarify.

**The individual psyche itself is, traditionally, another hierarchy—intellect at the summit ruling the ranked passions, which in turn dominate the body.**  
**To this I would like to oppose the human tree-being we may call the “multivital”—a body of experience rooted, certainly, in biography (the topsoil of history) but through which desire travels like sap to nourish a branching plurality of personae, some of which may then drop their own roots.**



graphic by Sarah Moni



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## The Pyramid

Ever since the growth of patriarchy, caste, and class out of settled agriculture millennia ago, hierarchy has been central to thought as it has to social organization. To begin with, all individuals in a society must be ranked. This ranking is carried out along multiple and overlapping axes: gender (and possession of certain gendered characteristics); wealth (and how long one's family has possessed it); occupation (or hereditary occupational caste); skin tone (or other racial markers); regional origin; tribal or religious affiliation; and so forth. Entire societies must be ranked as well: by size of social unit, military prowess or aggressiveness, degree of urbanization or mechanization, use of literacy or mathematics—or again by type of religious belief.

Civilized thought has typically inserted this social and intersocial hierarchy into a natural or cosmic one: the "Great Chain of Being." At one end of this chain are the gods or God. Next in rank are the spirits of the air, dragons, devas, or angels. A few links further back are human beings—or rather, Man, to whom Woman is subordinated. The next links are the mammals and birds, followed by the reptiles, the fish, the insects and other arthropods, the plants, and finally the rocks and minerals. The reasons for this projection of social hierarchy onto the cosmos are all too obvious. As Marx long ago pointed out, every dominant class inscribes its domination into the image of nature; and for this to be possible, the principle of hierarchy must itself be unquestioned natural law.

Both social and cosmic hierarchies have traditionally been figured as verticality. Since there are typically fewer individuals at each level of society as one "ascends," the Pyramid is the "natural" trope for both. (The independent occurrence of the pyramid in the sacred architecture of Egypt, India, and the Americas is suggestive.) In what must be one of the most ancient versions of this image, the Hindu, the pyramidal hierarchy is also a map for the journey of the soul, which must progress by way of successive incarnations from the "lowest" level to the "highest," up through the layers of species and caste, to be reunited with the Divine. In the scholastic cosmogony derived from Aristotle that dominated medieval European thinking, the cosmic pyramid existed as real physical space, with God at its apex (and everywhere else), and the orders of Creation ranked below in tier upon tier according to the ratio of "noble" or "base" elements that

photo by D.S. Black



composed them. Dante, in fact, imagined Hell as the inverted mirror-image of this pyramid, an infernal counter-hierarchy beneath the lowest levels of Creation itself.

More than two centuries after the founding of American democracy, social hierarchy is still with us, and with a vengeance. Its principal and closely interlinked forms in wealthy countries are economic class (often figured as the "income pyramid"); a modified patriarchy that depends increasingly on the distribution of gendered behaviors rather than on biological sex; and institutional racism, again tending toward a continuous ranking of behaviors (and skin tone) rather than a binary division into white and non-white. Beyond our borders, nations and regions are stacked chiefly according to their "level of development": that is, their degree of integration into the capitalist world system as producers and consumers according to indicators like GNP and average money income. Like the soul in Hinduism, these nations are supposed to ascend the development pyramid until they achieve the blissful samadhi enjoyed by the US, Western Europe, and Japan. Unfortunately, the income-development pyramid is more like those built by the Aztecs. Many of those who climb it do so only to have their hearts cut out as a sacrifice to Capital by the transnational priests at the summit. And, like the pyramids of Egypt, this pyramid is built by forced labor and sits in a conceptual desert—"nature" as resources to be exploited—which is fast becoming a literal one.

Not surprisingly, hierarchical metaphor persists in all areas of our significance. Most religions, of course, are resolutely hierarchical in their image of the world. But science too remains under the sway (see what I mean?) of these metaphors, despite recent criticism of such

thinking from within the scientific community. For example, physicists still commonly talk about the scale of physical reality in terms of "levels"—the galactic level, the molecular level, the atomic level, the quantum (or "subatomic") level, and so on. And while most biologists now formally reject the notion of evolution as linear "progress" from "lower" to "higher" forms, the image of Life as an Aristotelian hierarchy of species lingers on in textbook illustrations and popular thinking: a pyramid with *Homo Sapiens* at the top and viruses at the bottom. Even ecologists still habitually talk of pollutants returning "up the food chain" from, say, plants to humans "at the top."

In some respects, these hierarchical images have more substance than ever before. Technology has, it seems, fulfilled the Sky-Father's promise in Genesis and given Man dominion over nature. He now possesses the means to affect the cosmic pyramid at all levels; from the planetary on down: he can create as well as destroy biological species, design molecules that will do almost anything, and release the energy of the atomic nucleus. But while mechanized society can wipe out or transform whole ecosystems almost instantaneously, it has little understanding of, or control over, the consequences of these actions. By virtually eliminating one species with pesticides, for instance, farmers may trigger a population surge in another. Antibiotics depress the population of a bacterium only to let it return in a new drug-resistant form. Air conditioners and refrigerators shield us and our food from the effects of warm weather; but the chemicals they use are destroying the ozone layer and exposing us to more damaging radiation. As many people now realize, civilized, mechanized Man's position at the top of the pyramid is getting shaky.

## The Tree

Here and there, societies still exist in which there is little or no social hierarchy. They may well contain leaders or other individuals whose experience is uniquely respected, and who are consequently deferred to in their realm of knowledge; but these individuals hold no absolute authority. Nor is there much economic stratification: no-one "employs" anyone else, and sharing is the norm. In some of these "primitive" societies, even male dominance is muted if not altogether absent. Far from being mere passive hunter-gatherers, such peo-

ples have stewarded the ecosystems around them very effectively (by controlled burnoffs of underbrush, selective planting, and other forms of silviculture). They do not as a rule see themselves as superior to animals or plants; they regard them as fellow-beings, to be communicated with and learned from as well as made use of. Yet, as Marshall Sahlins has shown, they often live in abundance, spending far less time on material survival than civilized people do.

We cannot return to the way of life these peoples practice, if only because it will not support even a small fraction of the human beings now alive. Yet its very existence demonstrates that social hierarchy is not “natural” to human beings (any more than equality is); that a dialogic or collaborative relationship with non-human nature is possible, one that depends neither on dominative “management” nor on timorous passivity; and that abundant life is denied the vast majority in

favor of an artificial scarcity meant to force them to work for money. I believe, along with many others in the worldwide ecology movement, that we must find larger-scale equivalents to the achievements of small “primitive” societies. We must create forms of social organization and technology that allow billions of people to live sustainably in reasonable comfort—and with far more free time and far greater collective control over their own lives than any but the very rich now possess. Otherwise, the pyramids will collapse on top of us as their basis, relentlessly exploited human and non-human nature, either rebels or rots.

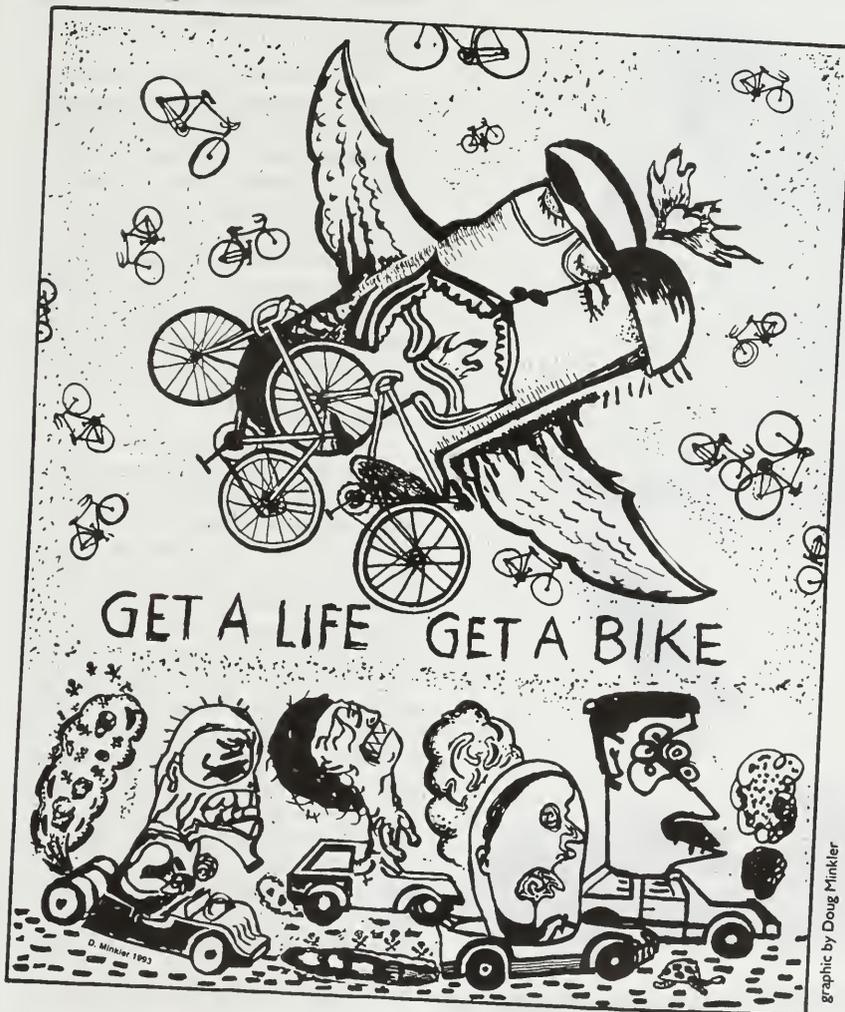
Such massive changes will clearly not occur without an equally massive change in the outlook and priorities of many millions of people. The movement will not bring this about solely by rational argument; for such argument in and of itself treats language, in unreconstructed Enlightenment fashion, as a transparent,

neutral medium of communication between monadic individuals. (Nor, at the other extreme, will the movement triumph by emotional and moral appeals that motivate people primarily through fear or guilt, since these wear out fast and are followed by numbness.) We must be effective also at the preconscious linguistic level where poets (and ad-makers, alas) work: shifting people’s perceptual frames by changing symbolism, connotation, master narrative—and master trope.

I began this essay by asserting that we think in metaphors, and that deep metaphoric structures organize whole areas of experience. I see signs that these structures are changing, in ways that may prefigure social, political, and cultural transformation. I would like to intervene in the process by bringing forward what may be a new organizing metaphor for our experience of collective (social and biospheric) life, one that replaces the Pyramid image derived from thousands of years of hierarchical domination. This metaphor is the Tree.

I like this metaphor first of all because of its literal, material value. As many people know by now, the reproduction of life on earth depends on trees, and especially on the tropical rain forests. If we are even to arrest the trend to global warming via the greenhouse effect, we will need not only to save what is left of the forests but to plant vast new ones. And these forests must not simply be tree farms for transnational corporations (or oxygen farms for a “Green” technocracy). They must be what all old-growth forests are: reservoirs of biodiversity, crucibles of evolution, and labyrinths of wildness and beauty. A reverence for trees—not just metaphorical trees but real, living ones that exist before any word that can name them—such reverence is now a survival requirement for our species. For this reason alone it is appropriate that we begin conceiving of our life in terms of the Tree.

Of course tree-symbolism is ancient and various, from the Trees of Life and Knowledge in Eden to the Norse World-Tree Yggdrasil. Particular tree species have been sacred, too, in many cultures. How could it be otherwise? But new tree-metaphors seem to be emerging. At the most mundane level, the new information technologies seem particularly disposed to tree-imagery: the homely phone tree for spreading information; the branching file tree of the computer operating system, whose primary directory is often called “root”; the decision tree



(or decision forest) of expert systems and “intelligent” programming languages. True, in these fields, the Net (as in data communications networks, neural network computing, and so on) is a contender for the organizing metaphor. I prefer the Tree, not only for the reasons already given, but because the Tree suggests a common center, a shared support to which all the other elements contribute and by which they are nourished in turn—and also a vertical as well as horizontal aspiration. Besides, the Net seems to be an emergent ideological image for the revamping of large “progressive” corporations, which are seeking to become less rigidly top-down in their day-to-day decision making without in any way altering the ultra-hierarchical context in which they operate. This is probably appropriate, given that the most

netlike organisms on earth are slime molds.

Let me offer some further, more speculative examples. (To begin with, perhaps I should offer this essay itself as a tree, open-ended, growing in several directions at once. And so I ask for poetic license. The word in prose tends to be a pyramid, in which broad associative potential converges into the pointed precision of denotation; the word in poetry is more like a tree, branching connotatively from the signification the reader/hearer initially gives it into a leaf-play of suggested meaning.)

To return to our starting-point, society. Instead of the hierarchical pyramid of national-regional-local government, with the individual (read “dirt”) at the bottom, imagine a tree-polity: a polycentric democracy, whose trunk is the largest

scale of the demos or consciously organized people, whose interwoven and tapering branches are ever more local and specialized decision-making bodies, and whose leaves are possibilities for individual choice and self-development.

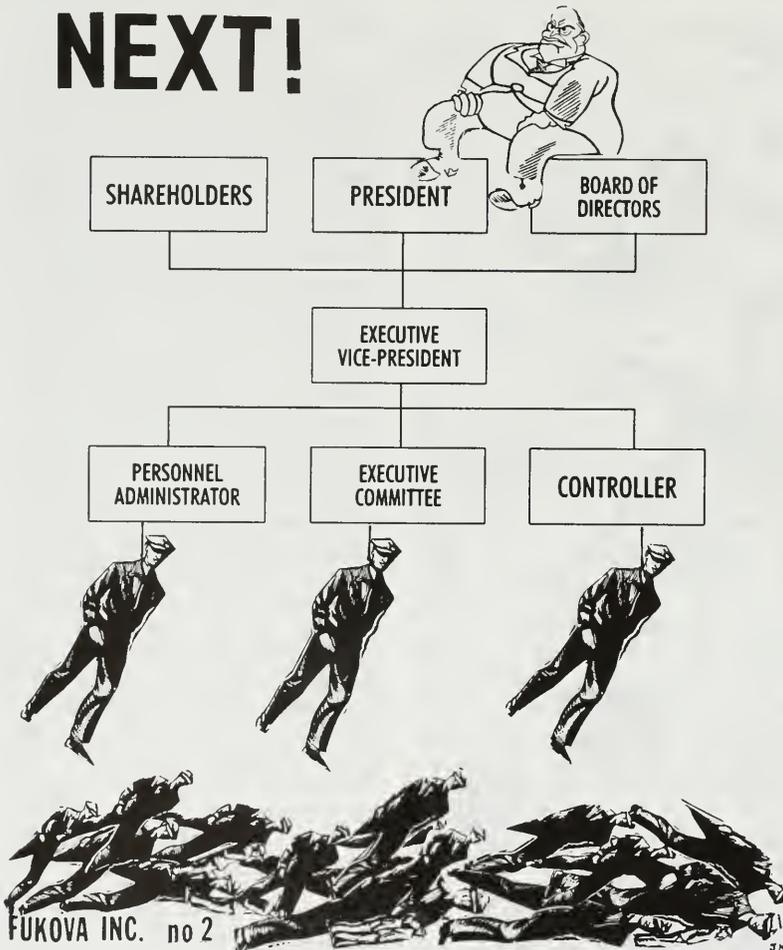
For this to be possible, the income and GNP pyramids must be replaced by a worldwide tree-economy. The trunk this time can be seen as democratic planning for the common social and ecological good—or as everything that needs to be organized, produced, and distributed in standardized form and at a global level. The branches taper to increasingly local orders of production/distribution and shared goods, on the principle of maximum comfortable and sustainable self-sufficiency in each order. The roots of this tree, of course, are in the literal earth—not set down on it but growing out of it. And the leaves, fed by the tree and feeding it, are the millions of individuals who, freed from the stupid struggle for survival imposed by engineered scarcity, can contribute their imaginative energies to the common life.

The kind of political organization—or rather, organized process—that might bring this about must also be treelike. The standard form of all modern political parties is pyramidal, from the layers of careerists, technocrats, and hacks in the typical “party of government” to the Leninist revolutionary vanguard with its cell-and-committee structure. Radially (radically) rooted in diversity, our party should converge in a common program and overall strategy only to branch out again into countless local and finally individual initiatives.

Yet the individual psyche itself is, traditionally, another hierarchy—intellect at the summit ruling the ranked passions, which in turn dominate the body. More recent versions include the triadic Freudian pyramid of Superego-Ego-Id and Jung’s famous “old house” from *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*: a temporal hierarchy with the modern bourgeois furniture of the conscious mind on the top floor, the old-fashioned décor of the personal and cultural unconscious one floor down, and the ancient stones and bones of the collective unconscious in the basement. Broadly, in the “Western” view, the monadic, unified Subject or Self is the uppermost pinnacle, both as ideal to be striven for (whether through education or psychoanalysis) and as daylight convergence of the dark forces of history and desire.

To this I would like to oppose the

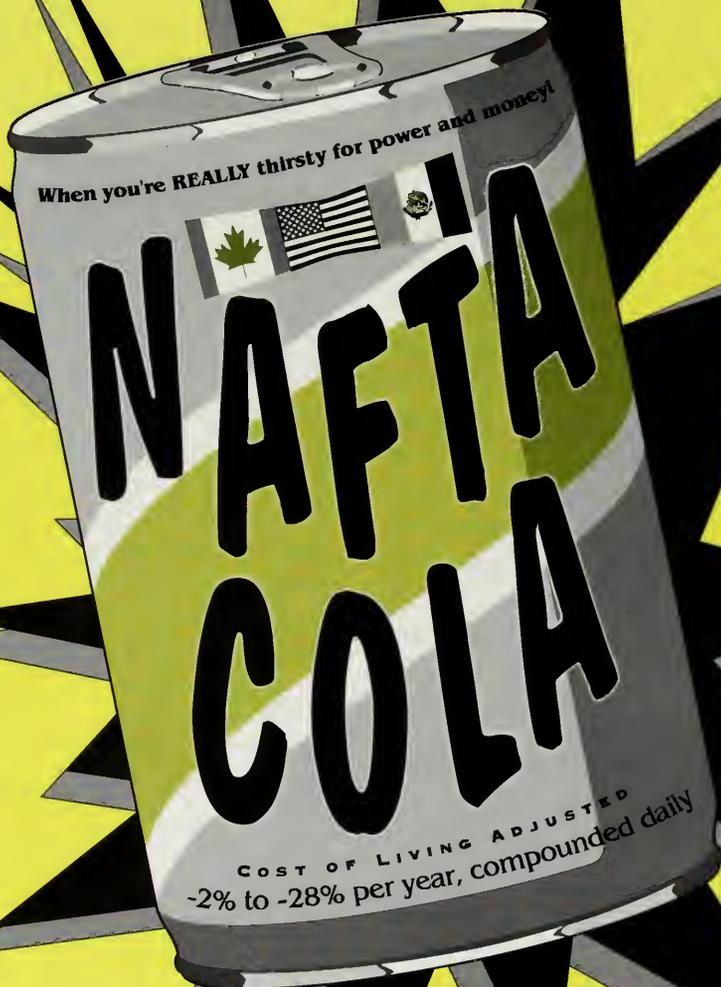
# NEXT!





*When you need to impose wage cuts, close factories,  
and steal the wealth created in your community,*

*It Hasta Be Nafta!*



*And don't forget,  
when you want to ignore  
local laws and unions  
It's GOT to be GATT!*

*Hasta la  
Nafta,  
Baby!*



**DANGER**  
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