

AS WE ARE

#3

Velvet Crush:
Prepare to be
Enlightened

Can Diet Coke
Kill You?

Pissing on the
Pentagon

And So Much
More!

\$3



LEAD...OR LEAVE

WHO ARE THEY?

WHAT DO THEY WANT?

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

It would be a great thing if there were laxatives for magazines because we really need help staying regular.

Here, at last, is *As We Are* #3. We're a bit late this time around. Sorry about that, but when you're running a new magazine you have two choices sometimes— come out on time and look lousy, or come out late and look great. We chose the second option.

Those of you who read *AWA* #1 and #2 will notice many changes in this issue. Changes in style, of course, not in content. We have acquired a genuine art staff who have completely redesigned the magazine. We hope their work will make *As We Are* easier to read, and more accessible to our growing audience.

Our cover story is different too. It's a heck of a lot bigger than the investigative work you'll find in other youth magazines. But, for all its size, it packs much more punch than the typical *Details* magazine piece on "Tattooing and the Single Man." The article is devoted to über-nasties Jon Cowan and Rob Nelson of the conservative front group Lead or Leave.

For the last two years, Cowan and Nelson have appeared nationally on major talk shows and elsewhere in the media claiming to be "leaders" of our generation.

Yet, what Lead or Leave has done in the name of young Americans has been extremely negative. They've whipped up hysteria against Social Security, claimed it must be dismantled. . .and given absolutely no thought to the consequences of their actions. They've lied about our elders— claiming that old people have "ruined our future" and that they are "responsible for the National Debt." They've lied about themselves— claiming they're a giant "grassroots" organization of a million young members— when the facts indicate that Lead or Leave has only a few hundred members, and that they're anything but grassroots.

But for all this, the mass media has taken all their claims at face value. *As We Are*, meanwhile, has discovered information so disturbing about Messrs. Cowan and Nelson and their organization Lead or Leave, that it took a four-month investigation and a 14,000-word piece to do the subject justice. Turn to Page 27 for all the sordid details.

There's lots of other stuff to keep you busy. New features, new artwork, new amusements...and, yes, The Hostile Elder, too. So dig in. Our 64-pages ought to be a least enough bathroom reading to keep folks occupied until our next issue comes out three months from now. That's when we're shooting for anyway. Three months from now.

Which brings us back to that laxative. The best thing to "keep a magazine regular" is money. With a bunch of new subscribers we have a good chance of cranking this 'zine out more and more often. So, tell all your friends about *As We Are* and keep those checks coming! The more bucks we get, the more often you'll see us on the stands. Deal? Good. Thanks for checking us out.

AS
WE
ARE

As We Are Joins the Internet Craze...

AS
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If you have access to the World Wide Web (via Mosaic or Lynx),
you can browse our back issues at: <http://as-we-are.com/awa/>



"the magazine for
working young people"

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WHO WE ARE

Stephen Bergstein is a Civil Rights attorney in the law offices of Michael Sussman. He is a graduate of the City University of New York Law School. He lives in New Paltz, NY. He is 28.

Clay Butler is the creator of Sidewalk Bubblegum. Damn, he funny! His address is: P.O. Box 245, Capitola, CA 95010.

Chris Coffey is the Associate Art Director of *As We Are*. She is a free-lance artist born, raised and residing in Boston, MA. She is in her 20s.

Ted Cormey honed his drawing abilities as a participatory viewer of the many fine episodes of "Captain Bob." He can now draw a variety of scenarios, most notably those featuring some sort of shore-based avian. He is a graduate of Ithaca College and is 24.

Tim Cormey is in no way related to Ted Cormey, though the two live in the same house and bear a striking resemblance. He attends the University of Massachusetts at Amherst when he's not living in Randolph, MA. He is 23.

Peter Crone is the Designer and Art Director of *As We Are*. He is unhealthily obsessed with typefaces and expects to have face-cancer by age 30 for all the time he spends bathing in monitor radiation. He is an English and Communications graduate of the University of Massachusetts at Boston. He keeps a residence somewhere south of Boston and is 24.

Cultural Jetlag are Jim Siergey and Tom Roberts. Damn, they funny! They can be reached at: 4135 N. Hermitage, Chicago, IL 60613.

P.F. DeFazio is a free-lance writer from Attleboro, MA who spends his days working for the state. He is a graduate of the University of Massachusetts at Boston and is probably 27.

Peter H. Desmond is a singer/songwriter, political activist, and all-around fun guy. He graduated Harvard in 1969, but we let that slide because he was involved in the famous strike of that year (when he and many of his classmates shut the school down, in protest of its complicity in planning the Vietnam War and a whole bunch of other bad things). He is therefore somewhere in his 40s.

Shannon Donahue is a brown-headed, wrist-slashing, angst-ridden, bitter poet/organizer. She lives in N. Andover, MA and is 16 or 17.

Lisa Fay is an artist/activist who lives in Boston's Fenway area. She is a member of the National Writer's Union, and is 39. **Rick Friedman** has been a successful free-lance journalist since 1983. For the preceding 25 years, he was an award winning journalist, columnist and editor for newspapers and magazines in Chicago, NY City and Boston. He is 64, and is The Hostile Elder.

Simson Garfinkel is the Associate Publisher of *As We Are*. He writes about science and technology from his home in Cambridge, MA. He is 29.

Ann Harrison is the Business Manager and an editorial board member of *As We Are*. She is also a regular free-lance journalist for *The Boston Phoenix*. She is 32.

Ruth Housman is a poet and the owner of The Company of Writers in Cambridge, MA.

Jonathan Abbott Leavitt is the Maximum Leader of the Lawrence (MA) Grassroots Initiative and founder of Buckfest—The Party. He is a Y Groupie. He is 27.

Jill MacLeod is the Photo Editor of *As We Are*, she is also a free-lance photographer and the assistant manager of a big-name Boston photography shops. She is 28.

Buck O'Shea is the Arts Editor of *As We Are*. She was the Arts Editor of *The Mass Media* at UMass-Boston, until her graduation put a sudden end to that position. She did however graduate with honors degrees in both English and Political Science. She lives in Milton, MA, and is 31.

Harry Petzold is Lawrence, MA's preeminent postman/artist/mountain biker. He is a Vietnam-era veteran and a York-Rite Mason. He is 43.

Jason Pramas is the Editor/Publisher of *As We Are*. He is Director of the Boston Local of the National Writers Union/UAW. He founded and ran the *New Liberation News Service* from 1990-93. He is a Gray Panthers National Board Member. He lives in Cambridge, MA, BUT he is from Peabody, MA. He is 28.

Charles Provenzano is an editorial board member of *As We Are*, a software engineer, technical writer, poet, and "used to be wicked pissah" guitar player. He lives in Cambridge, MA, BUT he is from Peabody, MA. He is 28.

Beth Rosenberg comments on society and writes for a prestigious magazine out of Brookline, MA. We know she lives in Cambridge, but can only guess that she is in her mid-to-late 20s.

Andrew Schriever is a free-lance digital imaging artist. He is also an English instructor and master's candidate at UMass-Boston. He has a girlfriend in Chicago who he misses sorely. He also plays a pretty mean guitar. He is 24.

Sarah Shoemaker is the copy editor of *As We Are*, and has had no prior training as a cobbler. She is a graduate of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and is seeking employment as a world traveller. She is 23.

Marc L. Songini is the editor of *The South Shore News* and writes regularly for *The Boston Herald*, *The Patriot Ledger*, and *The Boston Business Journal*. Born in Dorchester, MA, he currently lives in Walpole (the town, not the prison). He is 29.

Randolph Louis Viscio is a singer/songwriter, and the author of "Under the Bridge," an autobiography. He is a grad student at the State University of New York at Albany majoring in Special Ed for emotionally and behaviorally disordered youth. He is 27.

David Weinstock knows things. All sorts of things. Many of these things relate to computers. Some of them relate to sound engineering. He also knows other stuff. He lives in Lexington, MA and is 20.



Some members of the **As We Are** Editorial Board (l to r) Jill MacLeod, Jason Pramas, Randolph Louis Viscio, Peter Crone, Ann Harrison, Buck O'Shea and Charles Provenzano

A space with content is our hope for Liberty.

You come out of a Starbucks, Au Bon Pain or any chain, feeling empty. They don't try to say anything (but-maybe Buy; Buy, Būy) nothing that makes you larger as a person, or makes you think at all.

It's safer profit wise to just babble about quality.

This total lack of content makes sense for the chains, but why do all the little places follow along?

Is it that we have nothing to say?

No need of space to communicate true emotion or thought?

We need no place to write, dream, read and organise?

Anyhow Cafe Liberty is at 497B Mass Ave in Cambridge.

That's sort of diagonally across from the Middle East.

We have Public Access internet terminals in the works, A free stage, great coffee and a thoughtful atmosphere.

The hard part about all this is personally I have such a hate of advertisement. That if I were you I would disregard this in full. But look past that, this isn't about selling you. All I want to do is inform you about this place we have made:

Colin

Don't Blame It On Kurt

From Letters to the Editor, *The Boston Globe*

Your article citing the death of our son, Harrison (Ozzy) Klate (Metro, Dec. 30), presumably from a heroin overdose, was accurate in its central presentation of the information about the availability of this always dangerous and frequently lethal unregulated drug, commonly being sold by virtual children to other children. We are moved to correct one point, however, as we know our son would insist.

Ozzy was not influenced by Kurt Cobain, whom he considered inane, or River Phoenix, whose acting he did admire. He was inspired by true genius. The lives of many sensitive seers flourish amidst profound suffering, reflective of their struggles to hold the light amidst a sea of darkness, often including the use of alcohol and drugs. Prominent among his influences were Jack Kerouac, Arthur Rimbaud, Charles Bukowski, James Joyce, William Blake, Thomas Wolfe, Oscar Wilde, Van Gogh, John Coltrane, Jimi Hendrix, Mozart and many others.

Ozzy himself was a gifted writer and musician, described by the Amherst Regional High School college guidance counselor as a true genius when it came to the written word. He had an IQ of 145, was a National Merit Letter of Commendation scholar, left behind two complete manuscripts and over a thousand pages of poetry. He was not a junkie but a seeker of inner wisdom, who played with fire in a brief alcohol and drug binge, with horrible consequences.

We ever futilely lay the blame for the anguish of our innocents at the feet of our artists and visionaries. Thus, with tragic clumsiness, we blunder, seldom awakening to see what they see, feel what they feel and hear what they are trying to tell us about our suffering world.

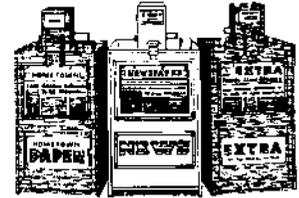
What happened to our beloved son could happen to any of our children. We must listen to their cries, not blame their heroes and pretend we understand.

JONATHAN KLATE
CARLOTTA WILLIS
Amherst

**NEWS
BRIEFS**

**Skimming
the Media...
so you don't
have to.**

**Compiled by
Ann Harrison**



Report Commissioned by AFL-CIO Shocks Leaders; Changes Needed

An article in the Nov./Dec. issue of *The Labor Educator* cited the troubling results of a survey commissioned by the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations to "develop a long-term strategic communications plan." The survey, titled "Being Heard," was conducted by a Washington pro-labor consulting firm, Greer, Margolis, Mitchell, Burns & Associates, which has as its clients the AFL-CIO and a number of international unions. Numerous polls for the report were conducted by Peter D. Hart, well-known pollster for the Democratic Party. The 50-page report contained the following findings:

- Of the four-fifths of Americans who live in non-union households, only 29 percent have positive feelings about unions; 39 percent negative; and 32 percent neutral.
- The AFL-CIO is regarded somewhat less favorably than unions generally: only 22 percent of all respondents feel positive toward the Federation, while half again as many (33 percent) felt negative (20 percent don't know enough to volunteer an opinion).

The authors of the report said that one of the greatest problems faced by the labor movements is the sense that unions are not democratic institutions and not fully accountable to their members. Members of the study's focus groups found that "mostly, unions are discussed as something no longer relevant, as symbolized in the frequently used shorthand 'they're dinosaurs.'"

The report cited three reasons why unions are held in such low esteem by the public, including union members. Reason number one is that most people do not see unions as offering solutions to the problems they and their families face in a changing world. Only 25 percent felt that unions are concerned about all working people, while 65 percent said that unions are concerned only about their members. According to the report, "research shows that labor unions are seen by many people as bastions of older, white men who are looking first after their power and institutions, then after their members' interests, and only then — if at all — the rest of the nation."

The report urged a strategy that emphasizes reaching out to women, who respond more favorably to unions than men. It also recommended that a reform of basic laws protecting workers' rights should be the central near-term priority.

Although the report was completed on March 21, 1994, there has been no public mention of it in the *AFL-CIO News* or elsewhere, reports *The Labor Educator*. The publication noted that the AFL-CIO Information Department refused to answer phone calls to discuss the leadership's reaction to the report or provide figures about its cost.

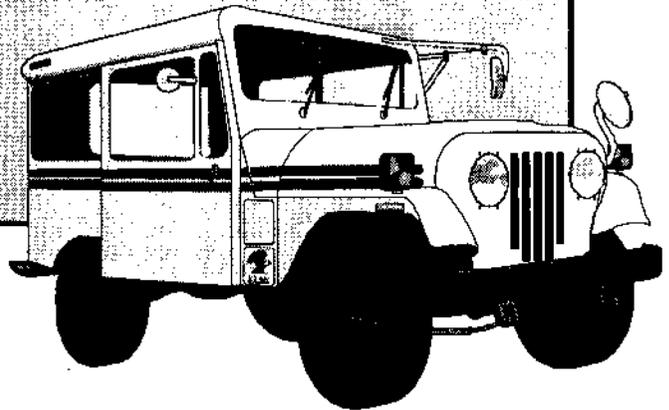
We Need More Hate Mail!

To balance the overwhelmingly positive response to our last issue, we thought we'd offer a (verbatim) dissenting view for reasons of limited space availability. The criticism is actually aimed at the *Utne Reader* reprinting of our article, so technically we didn't get any hate mail. Enjoy.

Your story in the Nov/Dec issue of *Utne Reader* ("Mall Rats") sounded like a whole lot of nothing. You don't know what the hell you're talking about. Your story is just the typical Kerouac, Salinger, Denis Johnson kind of story that is supposed to typify rebellious youth—Fiction! Don't think I'm comparing you to literary God's like Kerouac or Salinger, either. You suck. And if you are/were such a nonconformist, you wouldn't be ripping off Dostoevsky. You'd operate your own opening. Good luck with your writing career, Randolph. Just because you're published, doesn't make you publishable.

Later,
Greg
Flagstaff, AZ

Well Greg, here you are, a fine example of your own parting comment. Thanks for writing! Uh... what do you mean by "operate your own opening?"



Generation Hex

Daniel Strong, a graduate student in art history at Princeton, has harsh words for the "Generation X" syndrome in an Oct. 1 Op-Ed piece in the *New York Times*.

"America's readiness to accept the Generation X hype is symptomatic of a broader tendency to raise up only what it enjoys knocking down," writes Strong. "Twentysomething pundits eagerly crowd the media landscape, dolling out blame and decrying the impossible world that has been left to them. Then they are ridiculed as fast and furiously as their books move off the shelves. The image they present is accepted as accurate even though the vast majority of young people are not watching *Brady Bunch* reruns or partying with grunge bands from Seattle... The vocal young political class in this country has eschewed the tedium of wise management in favor of the search for self-gratification. They wear causes like designer clothes: the environment, the deficit, the White House — all the fashionable problems that they insist were dumped on them by some previous administration.

"We have heard this refrain before, which proves that this new generation, but for its seamless techniques, is little different from any other. It arrived too late to prevent its problems, it has no easy answers for any of them, and it has packaged itself as Generation X only in an effort to put a new spin on them."

**WRITE FOR AS WE ARE
YOU'LL FEEL BETTER ABOUT IT.**

GOING  GOING
MAGAZINE

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Eight issue subscription \$25 (\$40 Int.)

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Ten Trends Your Bosses Are Banking On

from a list by John R. Graham, author of *Magnet Marketing: The Ultimate Strategy for Attracting and Holding Customers*; publisher of *Magnet Marketing newsletter*.

Trend 1. Mass merchandising will replace local retailing. According to Graham, today's small retailers will either disappear or downsize to just a few employees, mostly part-timers. Owners will view themselves as having a job rather than operating a business.

Trend 2. Services retailing will replace merchandise retailing. Hair salons, small specialty restaurants, and other service-type retailers will move in when the product retailers leave. They will require fewer square feet of space and will pay lower wages. This is an interim trend, as there will be takeovers in the services sector.

Trend 3. Downsizing will continue unabated through all businesses. The effects of automation are just now being felt in the non-manufacturing areas. Computer power is going beyond maintaining financial records to servicing every corner of a business, and thus reducing the need for people.

Trend 4. Part-time and temporary work will replace full-time work. "Variable Time Worker" is the phrase used by businesses to describe how they view employees who fill in as required.

Trend 5. Technical training will replace a college degree. It's beginning to be difficult to justify spending tens of

thousands of dollars on an education with little return on investment. Computer sophistication will become the primary prerequisite to obtaining and holding a job.

Trend 6. Low pricing will be more valuable than high quality. People with reduced incomes will look for bargains; those with high incomes will be paying high taxes and look for good buys.

Trend 7. The societal configuration will change. There will be a shrinking middle class. This will happen until perhaps 25 or 30 percent of the population will be at subsistence level, due mostly to low-pay service jobs.

Trend 8. The mindset will be toward the disposable. Equipment will be disposable — computers, cameras, etc.

Trend 9. Self-absorption will replace company loyalty. There is recognition that most everything outside of the self is beyond control, i.e. government corporations, the future, etc. There is an effort to control one's working conditions by achieving personal satisfaction and avoiding anything that is boring. Loyalty will be to the self.

Trend 10. There will be an increasing sense of cynicism — absence of career opportunities; layoffs of parents and others due to downsizing; growing division between haves and have-nots, including a realization that homelessness may be just one paycheck away; rationed medical care; and a recognition that education no longer opens doors. This will have an impact on purchasing patterns and advertising.



Predictions We Really Hate

Neil Howe and Bill Strauss's book, *13th Gen: Abort, Retry, Ignore, Fail?* makes some truly dumb predictions about the younger generation that *U.S. News & World Report* felt compelled to repeat. Below are those we considered most absurd.

1. "Thirteeners will never outgrow their 'bad' image. The children allowed to grow up unskilled, unschooled and unwanted in the 1970s and 1980s will carry those pathologies with them." **Yes, this is the most incarcerated, and soon to be the most executed, warehoused, and Norplanted generation in American history. Is this a result of their "pathology" or the authoritarian burden placed on them by legislators, judges, and juries who have made the criminal justice system the nation's number-one growth industry? Remember that 58 percent of those incarcerated in federal prisons are there on drug charges.**

2. "Throughout their lives, 13ers will be America's most politically conservative generation since the Lost Generation of the 1920s."

Oh really? If they were conservative, they would be voting for Republicans. Most are not voting for anyone. Political conservatives are waging war on feminism, gay rights, abortion rights, First Amendment freedoms, sexuality, drug use, and other subjects of concern among young people. This will hardly endear young people to conservative notions.

3. "Throughout their lives, 13ers will neither ask for nor receive much assistance from government. In their 30s they will vote to cut young adult welfare benefits. In their 50s they will vote to raise income taxes. In their 70s they will vote to cut social security. They will never effectively organize or vote in their own self-interest." **Nonsense. Government has already seen to it that the young generation will get little because government is primarily run for and by those with access to real wealth. When it chooses to embrace policy decisions, the generation will act in its own interest as an economic underclass.**

The Baby Busters Launch A Boomlet

Fortune magazine notes that the fertility rate of young Americans is climbing, pushing the number of births into boomlet proportions. The story cites Diane Macunovich, an economist at the Population Reference Bureau in Washington, who says the fertility rate of women age 20 to 24 began to rise in the late 1980s and should keep increasing. With male wages rising, says Macunovich, more women will opt to take time off to have children.

Intriguing. We read no reports about wages rising. Women typically give birth and then go right back to work to make sure their families can make ends meet. What parallel universe does Macunovich live in?

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Letter To The Aliens

Correspondence from Earth Sent via Space Fax to Residents of Other Star Systems

Hello from America. We're a diverse and beautiful nation, organized around principles set forth in a document we call the Declaration of Independence. It's a stirring piece of work, which promises the citizens of our land life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Our freedom as citizens is also protected by our U.S. Constitution. It guarantees the females of our species, whom we call women, the right to terminate their pregnancies if they so choose.

But our leaders do not protect and defend women who exercise this right — or those who assist them. Sometimes they are murdered. Three men died after being attacked by gunmen in a place called Pensacola, Florida. In the town of Brookline, Massachusetts, two women recently lost their lives in a women's health care clinic. Five people were wounded. We imagine ourselves to be an intelligent species, but some members of our society have apparently stopped evolving. If you could arrange to transport them from the planet's surface, we would be grateful.

We are especially concerned about a group of confused people who claim to act on the instructions of a certain deity. They do not believe that females, who represent over half the residents of our planet, should be permitted to control their fertility. This despite the fact that earth is already overwhelmed by 4.5 billion humans who are swiftly exhausting our biological resources.

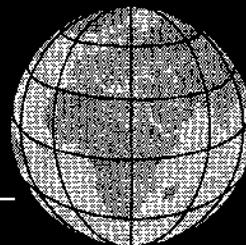
This is highly illogical.

In the past decade alone, these misguided so-called pro-life advocates have been responsible for more than 600 incidents of murder, death threats, kidnapping, arsons, bombings, invasions, thefts, and burglaries at clinics. Their rhetorical arguments, which condemn women as murderers, agitate and provoke deeply troubled humans into violent acts.

Please come and remove these people. Prime candidates for transport include Catholic leaders Bernard Cardinal Law and John Cardinal O'Conner, who appear disguised as women in dresses, but, in fact, are not. Also please re-settle all members of a group called Operation Rescue and those who insist on advocating outside clinics. Take them all, unharmed, to an uninhabited planet where they can promote their views without committing aggressive acts or restricting the rights of others. Given their beliefs, they should repopulate quickly.

Thank You.

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୫୨୯୨: ୧୨୮ ୧୧୨ ୧୫୫୫ ୧୨୮ Ann Harrison

The Temp Workers Union

The Next Wave of Labor Organizing

For young people, and for working people in general, the job market is pretty bleak these days. More and more companies have begun "downsizing" (firing) large percentages of their full-time staff and hiring "temp" workers to fill the gaps. Temps are preferred by companies because, in most cases, they are not paid benefits of any kind — even if they work for a given company on a long-term basis. Temps allow the company's management to continue to increase their profit margin at the expense of the livelihoods of most of their work force.

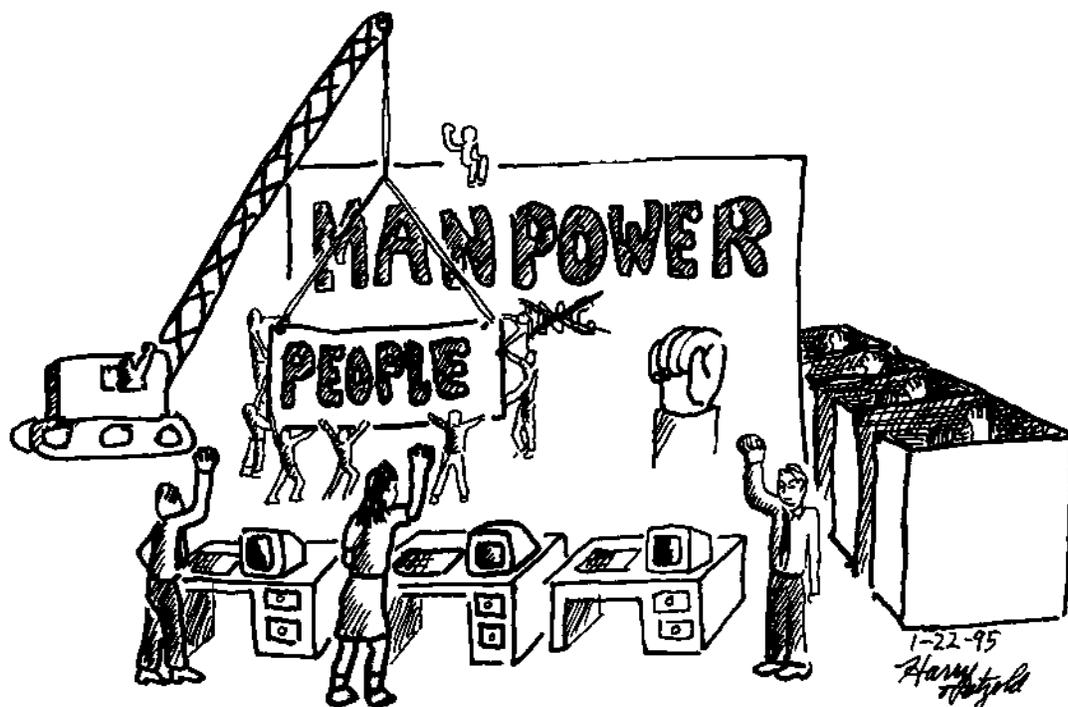
'real job' with paid vacation time, health benefits, pension plan, and paid parental leave?" "If I'm working for a temp company for over 30 hours a week for more than a couple of months, why isn't it considered a real job?" "Why should temp companies get to keep almost 50 percent of what they're paid for my work?" "Why isn't there an organization that represents my interests as a temp worker?"

Well, now there is. The Temp Workers Union (TWU), a local branch of the famous International Workers of the World (IWW), has started organiz-

ing difficult. Temps can work for more than a dozen different agencies in a major city like San Francisco. They have very little contact with other temps to even discuss grievances among themselves, let alone strike for better working conditions. And it's tough to engage in any kind of collective action when temps, even from a single agency, are working for hundreds of different companies at any given time.

The TWU is attempting to solve these basic problems by starting a cooperatively run temp agency of their own. They have been raising money to

support a full-time staff for the TWU agency, but the key to the project's success lies in a novel concept. Each TWU temp is expected to volunteer a certain amount of time every month at the TWU office. In exchange for this, they can get jobs through the agency. The big difference between the TWU and regular temp agencies comes at payday, however. At a normal agency, a company might pay \$18/hour for



If this seems unfair, it is. In an era when Manpower Temps surpasses General Motors as the largest employer in the U.S., it seems to be high time that temp workers, particularly young temp workers, begin to ask themselves some hard questions. For instance: "If more and more jobs are temp jobs, what are my chances of ever getting a

by Jason Pramas

ing San Francisco temp workers. This is actually the second time around for the TWU. The same group experimented with the basic concept of temp worker organizing in 1993. They ran into a number of difficulties, but spent 1994 evaluating and perfecting their ideas for a stronger organizing drive this year.

Organizing temps is inherently

a temp's service — then the agency would deduct \$8/hour for their fee. The temp thus gets paid \$10/hour. And that's in a big city. Average temp wages in rural areas and smaller cities can drop as low as minimum wage. In a college town like Gainesville, Fla., where competition for temp jobs is at a premium, average wages are about \$5/hr.

At the TWU agency, temps will lose only 10 percent of their wages to the agency's upkeep. So, if the companies pay \$18/hour, the temp gets to keep \$14 or \$15/hour — after tax deductions and the fee. With money like this to be made, the TWU, even in their 1993 experiment, was swamped with prospective members. Which only seems natural. Given the choice between \$10/hour and \$15/hour, which would you choose? Add to that the cooperative nonprofit atmosphere of the TWU, and the idea adds up to a winner for all concerned.

But there's more to the TWU vision. They plan to run a "hiring hall" where temps and employers can make their own arrangements with each other. The TWU will provide lawyers and counselors to help people in this situation avoid getting ripped off. They are also setting up an apprenticeship program, through which temps, after going through the TWU classes in, say, word processing, can be sent out to certain jobs for which the U.S. government picks up half the tab and pays the agency fees on top of that. So the "apprentice" temp can make even more per hour.

Ultimately, if the TWU really picks up steam, it will be hard for regular temp agencies to compete. And the more temps who join the TWU, the more possibility there is for traditional union organizing techniques to help make temping conditions better. Because once more than 20 or 30 percent of temps in a given area are union members, collective action becomes a real possibility.

Let's say, for example, that 25 of the 100 temps in a big office are TWU members. And let's say that the company decides to "let go" 25 of the temps because they've worked there for several months, and the company doesn't want to have to pay them benefits (common practice in the temp world). Some of those 25 are union members. They talk to the other union members. They all in turn talk to the TWU. They call a meeting of all the temps at the company. They plan an action— in the process picking up 25 new union members.

The next day these 50 temps stage a sit-down strike at the company. They come in to work... and refuse to work, or leave their desks. Outside, the TWU calls in all available troops to picket

the entrance to the company. Police are called in. The media show up. The company suddenly has had its poor labor practices exposed to the public. The TWU strikers issue demands: "No more unfair layoffs." "Automatic full-time regular employment with benefits for any temps who worked for three months full-time." The company sends the police in. The striking temps are arrested. Sympathy strikes break out around the city. Mediators are called in. The company agrees not to fire the striking temps and to cease unfair layoffs. The TWU agrees, only if negotiations over full-time employment continue, and if the company signs a collective bargaining agreement for any

temps who wish to join the TWU. The company agrees. The TWU has won its first battle.

Maybe it won't happen exactly that way, but one thing is clear: organizing in groups like the TWU is the best hope of a secure economic future for the millions of Americans who are finding that temp work is not just a temporary way station on the path to full-time employment. It's all there is.

For more information on the Temp Workers Union (TWU), write: Ray, TWU, 57 Taylor St. #446, San Francisco CA 94102-6408.

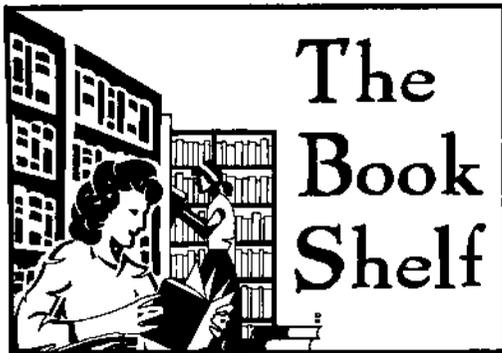


MEANWHILE ... BACK IN THE CIVILIZED WORLD



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The Book Shelf

Strange Justice: The Selling of Clarence Thomas (Jane Mayer and Jill Abramson, Houghton Mifflin, 406 pp., \$24.95).

Resurrection: The Confirmation of Clarence Thomas (John C. Danforth, Viking, 225 pp., \$19.95).

Alas, we never did find out just who put that infamous pubic hair in Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas's coke. That bizarre query, posed by Thomas himself in his salad days and invoked again years later during his Senate confirmation hearing, lies unanswered in the depths of time, and no doubt rightfully so. But that is not the only question that was not answered during the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee's confirmation hearing. And there is one infinitely more significant: Just who is this man? Will the real Clarence Thomas please stand up?

The two books being reviewed here do not contradict each other so much as overlap. *Strange Justice*, written by two *Wall Street Journal* reporters, offers a handsome overview of Thomas's life and career — as well as that of his nemesis, Anita Hill, who became the sole voice openly opposing what would otherwise have been a Supreme Court shoo-in by the right wing of the Republican party, not to mention a rather dull spectacle.

Retiring Missouri Sen. and ordained minister Jack Danforth's *Resurrection* is an eyewitness account of the hearing as seen through the eyes of Thomas's supporters, not to mention the church militant and triumphant.

The surrealistic, almost irrelevant circus witnessed on television during fall 1993 was far more complex and bizarre than the public ever dreamed. While it is only once in a lifetime one gets to hear grim-faced senators (like former Mormon missionary and pug-

list Orrin Hatch) discuss with the earnestness of medieval theologians minutiae concerning trash novel *The Exorcist* and porn star Long Dong Silver, it was the mere tip of a glacier.

The book by Abramson and Mayer does justice (no pun intended) to this real story about Real Washington. It is a fascinating, well-researched account — and, just by telling the facts, makes the Hill — Thomas saga sound even more perfectly absurd than before.

According to *Strange Justice*, the story runs like this:

Black Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall's retirement left then-President George Bush with the challenge to appear friendly to the poor and to people of color and still appeal to the far-right wing of his party. The answer to this seemingly insurmountable quandary was Clarence Thomas.

Thomas was, at that time, a rather inexperienced Circuit Court judge with little demonstrable ability to interpret law. Nevertheless, as far as Bush was concerned, he had excellent qualifications. After all, Thomas attended a church where abortion was considered genocide and members spoke in tongues. He was also a disciple of Ayn Rand and a true believer in the free market as the all-powerful solution to society's problems.

Bush's predecessor, Ronald Reagan (who must have had a sense of humor), had appointed the affirmative-action-and-government-regulation-hating Thomas as head of the despised Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which Reagan had wanted to gut. Thomas proved to be the next best thing.

The forty-something Thomas was born in Georgia, a state that was no great friend to blacks at that time. Most of his own life, however, was spent among white folk, and in relative comfort. Early on, Thomas deemed the condition of blacks hopeless beyond any remedy, which, of course, didn't stop him

from taking advantage of a Yale Law School race quota to complete his education.

Like many conservatives who rail against big government, he worked diligently to find himself a job on the public payroll. His first position was with Sen. Danforth; he then made his way up to EEOC. His sights, however, were always set for a spot on the highest judicial body in the Republic — the Supreme Court. A self-promoting opportunist with excellent political credentials (black and right-wing both), he did his utmost to get himself there.

And so Bush nominated him — it was a win-win situation. Bush had a man who would make him look good to minority leaders and to men like Sen. Strom Thurmond (a former segregationist) alike.

For Bush, it was merely politics as usual. For fundamentalists, Thomas appeared, quite literally, a godsend. Marshall himself took a dim view of his proposed successor, considering him a "black sellout" — the sort of ladder-kicker who would use affirmative action to climb up in society, then try to deny the same advantage to other blacks.

The Senate Judiciary Committee in charge did not ask Thomas any particularly probing questions, and he proved evasive enough to slide by them. Just what Thomas stood for remained a mystery. Then Anita Hill came on the scene.

Hill, a former worker under Thomas, knew a side to him no one in



Danforth's or any of his colleagues' circles were aware of. Thomas (unlike Bill Clinton) had already admitted to the FBI that he had inhaled marijuana in his college days, but Hill claimed he had also been a purveyor of "blue" movies and was hiding even worse skullduggery. While no Mike Tyson, Thomas was blunt and vulgar and had tried to bully the women working under him into his bed, even firing one who refused. At Hill's revelations, all jaws dropped.

Danforth's account gives his first-hand view of these days. *Resurrection* reads something like a sermon by revivalist Jimmy Swaggart. Danforth, a sincere Southern Christian gentleman, could not believe his protégé was guilty of such shoddy carnality as telling his employees to either put out or get out or that he was a connoisseur of XXX movies like *The Adventures of Bad Mama Jama*.

In Danforth's opinion (buttressed by a quote from the Talmud), Thomas had in fact been murdered by way of his reputation being destroyed. God had apparently turned his back on his anointed one. To Danforth, Anita Hill was literally evil personified, and she had smitten the Lord's one and only hand-picked Supreme Court justice.

Thomas himself was crushed. He writhed on the floor. There was wailing and gnashing of teeth. There was weeping and hyperventilating. There was even vomiting. It appeared Satan had won the day. The Biblical story of Job was being retold.

In Danforth's account, there were numerous tools used to get Thomas through the valley of the shadow: prayer meetings (with hands held), the reading of psalms, "praise tapes," soul searchings, etc. — even the playing of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir's emetic rendition of "Onward Christian Soldiers."

Thomas, says Danforth, was plagued not by Hill's accusations as such; rather, he felt it was some deep secret sin that had brought God's judgment down on him.

Luckily for Thomas, vengeance was not solely the prerogative of the Lord — He had his earthly army, too, equipped with cash and connections. An odd coalition of right-wingers, Washington insiders, fundamentalists, and PR men formed to destroy this female and keep their man from getting "Borked," as

Washington insiders had put it.

Hill, seen as the female Antichrist/Whore of Babylon/Jezebel, became the victim of an all-out sleaze crusade from the Army of Right. She was accused of lesbianism, hallucinations, radicalism, erotomania, of being a spurned woman, a perjurer, and a sprinkler of pubic hairs. Thomas (whose second wife is white) also did not hesitate to point out that he liked women with lighter skin than Hill's, and therefore there could have been no attraction between them.

Despite a vicious and dishonest counter-campaign being waged on his behalf against Hill, Thomas claimed he was able to take out some much-needed time for spiritual growth and was emerging from the crucible a true son of the faith.

Thomas said that "it was the first time... since the '60s that I have just opened up... and asked Him to take charge of my life, and also to connect myself to following His will... I became a better person... and became closer to what Jesus was." Danforth claimed no less than that Thomas had been reborn — presumably for the second time.

Contrary to rumor, Hill, a former teacher at Oral Roberts University Law School (named after the holy-rolling faith healer of that name), had no Democrat bigwig as her sponsor. She

had come to Washington out of a rather simple, naive sense of duty more potentially destructive to her career than helpful.

The tide turned when at last Thomas made his "high-tech lynching" speech (rather in the same spirit as Richard Nixon's classic "Checkers" pitch). Thomas, claiming divine inspiration (reborn for probably a third time) and full of the Holy Spirit, went before the Judiciary Committee repeating over and over again, "In the name of Christ. In the name of Christ."

He turned the tables by accusing the committee itself. He said (and I agree) that the affair was "Kafkaesque." He told them they would not be allowed "to probe into my private life. This is not what America is all about."

He also said privately that they could "Take this job and shove it."

So Thomas, despite his shortcomings, was duly confirmed. The announcement came to him as he lay in a bathtub, reading to the sound of religious music. Appropriately, he merely shrugged at the news.

Apostate and libertine Massachusetts Sen. Ted Kennedy, the only liberal on the committee capable of interfering, was, at the time, suffering from a

— Books page 61

The Tofu Tollbooth, compiled by Dar Williams [69.95 softcover; Ardwork Press, PO Box 814, Northampton, MA 01061-0814, 1-800-TOFU-2-GO]

This useful little book is a guide to finding vegetarian food when on the road in the U.S. (minus Alaska and Hawaii). Broken down into sections by state, *The Tofu Tollbooth* gives a city-by-city listing of grocery stores, food cooperatives, delis, cafés, and juice bars that cater to the needs of the meat-free eater.

Each entry gives detailed directions from major highways to the site, and lists clever little logos that tell the reader at a glance what services are offered — whether pets are allowed, whether beer and wine are available, and, most importantly... is there a bathroom?

Compiled by Northampton, Mass. musician Dar Williams (and a cast of thousands), the book has already received praise from such veggie luminaries as Jonathan Fishman of PHISH (one of America's strangest bands). Indeed, this book seems geared best for the new crop of far-traveling vegetarian musicians who may have toured through prairie outposts like Tulsa, Oklahoma, a hundred times without realizing that they could healthily stuff their faces at Tulsa's Akins Natural Foods. French fries and beer, 60 nights running, do not make for a healthy band.

The book's only weak point is that it gives virtually no description of each location except for the logos. A couple of sentences about each place would flesh out the book nicely, and make it even more valuable to America's tofu travelers. But, in general, this first edition of *The Tofu Tollbooth* is more than worth the cover price.

—review by Jason Framas

Can Diet Coke KILL You?

Are you still drinking Diet Coke? Or have you taken the Pepsi Challenge, and now feel you are addicted to your diet drinks? You might be.

Although the scientific data is sparse, there are a growing number of consumers who feel that NutraSweet is pure poison. They tell stories of mysterious medical problems, from dizziness and seizures, which they attribute to ingesting moderate amounts of foods containing the substance, which goes by the trade name of aspartame. These symptoms almost always go away when the person stops consuming the artificial sweetener.

Leading the charge against Nutrasweet is Barbara AlexanderMullarkey, a journalist in Oak Park, Illinois who writes an ecology/nutrition column for *Wednesday Journal*. Over the past decade, Mullarkey has published dozens of articles questioning the safety of aspartame. Mullarkey charges that the FDA's initial investigation of aspartame was flawed; that the G.D. Searle Company, in charge of testing the sweetener, withheld information from the FDA regarding negative side-effects suffered by laboratory animals; and that U.S. Attorney Sam Skinner, who was investigating Searle, was offered and accepted a job with Searle's law firm, and then canceled his investigation citing a possible conflict of interest.

Then there is Mary Stoddard, who runs the Aspartame Consumer Safety Network in Dallas, Texas. Stoddard used to write ads for Diet Dr. Pepper. She also used to drink it - about a can every day. Then one day, Diet Dr. Pepper changed its artificial sweetener from saccharine to aspartame. "I started drinking it, and I started getting sick," she says. Her daughter, who was drinking Diet Crystal Light, developed migraines and tachycardia. Eventually, Stoddard contends, her daughter had a grand mal seizure before her whole class. Both mother and daughter's symptoms began to clear up when they removed aspartame from their diets.

Of course, removing the substance from ones diet becomes increasingly difficult as aspartame finds its way into more and more foods every year. And, though you may have seen the ubiquitous NutraSweet logo on diet drinks and low-fat yogurt, you may not know that aspartame is now approved for use by restaurants, and is routinely added to children's medicines. All in all, Stoddard says that more than 6,000 people have contacted her reporting problems with aspartame. She tells them all the same thing: "I tell people that if they are having a problem, to get off the product." *Wednesday's Journal* has also published numerous letters in which parents say that their children's behavioral problems mysteriously disappear when they stop drinking diet soft drinks.

by Simson L. Garfinkel



Call up the NutraSweet Company, now an independent entity, and they'll tell you that Mullarkey and Stoddard are on an irrational witchhunt against a safe and effective artificial sweetener. NutraSweet says that these two women are trying to stir up public hysteria using non-scientific surveys and anecdotal reports. "The official company position is that aspartame is safe. It is the most tested food ingredient in history," says Richard Nelson, NutraSweet's Vice President of integrated marketing communications. The FDA backs up NutraSweet, using data provided by the company as well as the information obtained by the Centers for Disease Control's "passive monitoring" effort, a system which has been in effect since aspartame's approval.

The facts, undisputed by either side in the debate are that NutraSweet, a.k.a. aspartame, is a small molecule made from two amino acids, aspartic acid and phenylalanine. Amino acids are the basic building-blocks of proteins. In fact, NutraSweet would chemically be considered a protein if 22 amino acids were present in its structure. However, since it has only two amino acids, it is considered a dipeptide. Literature provided by the FDA states that "aspartame is made up of the same ingredients as proteins." Unfortunately, that's a misleading statement to make. Snake venom is also made up from amino acids, and it is deadly.

When aspartame is heated, it breaks down into a variety of chemicals, including methanol and diketopiperazine (DKP). Methanol is a deadly alcohol that people sometimes accidentally get when making moonshine; it causes blindness, brain damage, and ultimately death. Not much is known

about DKP, although Dr. Jacqueline Verrett, a former FDA toxicologist, testified before a U.S. Senate hearing in 1987 that DKP can cause uterine polyps and significant changes in blood cholesterol. Aspartame can also break down if it is exposed to moisture for an extended period of time.

If aspartame breaks down in water, then why is it in Diet Coke? Good question. When aspartame was first approved in July, 1981, the FDA only allowed it to be used in dry food products. A few months later, the FDA broadened that approval to cover table-top sweeteners, tablets, cold breakfast cereals, chewing gum, dry based for beverages, instant coffee, and a few other dry products. Aspartame wasn't approved for soft drinks until July 8, 1983 — a week after the National Soft Drink Association urged the FDA to delay approval of aspartame for carbonated beverages pending further testing, according to an article by Mullarkey which appeared in the May/June issue of *Informed Consent* magazine.

And while the findings on aspartame seem speculative at best, there

are many who contend that aspartame also causes carbohydrate cravings, and worse, that it may be addictive. If so, then it would be a dieter's nightmare: a substance that leaves you wanting cake, and wanting more diet soda as well.

"There is no evidence that aspartame causes dizziness or other medical symptoms," contends NutraSweet's Nelson. "Aspartame has been demonstrated to be safe in a very rigorous testing program, and those results have been confirmed time and time again around the world."

Nevertheless, Nelson does hedge his words: "Our advice to people who believe that aspartame is not right for them is that they choose another sweetener."

What Nelson says is probably good advice—advice that I follow myself. Three years ago, a friend gave me a glass of strong lemonade. Within thirty minutes, I was dizzy and having visual problems. It took more than an hour for the whole experience to stop. When I came down from the drug-like experience, I learned that the lemonade had been sweetened with NutraSweet. 

For more information, contact:

Aspartame Consumer Safety Network

P.O. Box 780634
Dallas, TX 75378
214-352-4268

NutriVoice, Inc.

P.O. Box 946
Oak Park, IL 60303
Published Bittersweet Aspartame:
a Diet Delusion, by Barbara
Alexander Mullarkey

The NutraSweet Company

Box 730
1751 Lake Cook Road
Deerfield, IL 60015-5239
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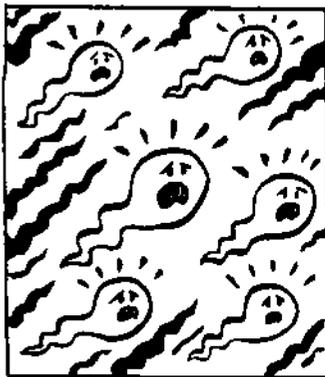
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I HOLD IN MY MIND THE PICTURE OF A HUGE CROWD OF CHILDREN, CHILDREN I KEPT FROM BEING BORN BY MY LIFELONG HABIT OF MASTURBATION! I SEE THEM GROWING UP, GOING TO SCHOOL, PLAYING GAMES, LAUGHING TOGETHER — ALL PREVENTED BY MY RECKLESS SPILLING OF SEED! IF YOU THINK MASTURBATION IS HARMLESS AND DOESN'T HURT ANYONE — **THINK AGAIN!!!**



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One Egg, Two Twins

You who think the embryo
has a fully human soul,
you who call abortion sin —
hear the paradox of twins.

In the caverns of the loins
a sperm and egg have joined.
Soon the cell divides;
the cluster grows in size.

A future member of our race
drifts towards its nesting place.
What's this? The cluster splits,
separates in equal bits.

Strange, but true —
what was one is two:
two tiny particles,
genetically identical.

You who claim to speak for God,
don't you find it rather odd
one egg became two twins?
Tell me when the soul begins.

At the moment of conception,
before their separation,
was there one soul, or two?
Does this problem puzzle you?

Was this a miracle —
two souls in one particle?
Or did one soul split
and half go in each bit?

Or do you think that sperms have souls?
Will you banish birth control?
Does it make you squirm
when I mention sperm?

The earth revolves,
humanity evolves.
One egg, two twins:
tell me when the soul begins.

— Peter Desmond

Feet That Are Dirt

Once deepa and i stood
in the Town Forest
after we crouched to examine
deep purple round berries
(tough skin outside —
a test to help us find
rich glowing juice within
that we streaked across our skin
as terna told us we were a woman
from Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*
who stained her skin with berries)
we only existed because of a mosquito
on deepa's arm
who overindulged in the wine of her blood
(we stood perfectly still
allowing it to confirm our existence
and it stayed forever until we
were distracted by something else —
perhaps a spider or mushroom)
later we'd yearn to live
in a stream in Oregon where
we could stand on a hill forever
until our feet become dirt or stone
and we'd know we exist.

—Shannon Donahue

First Period

We did a job
for the school board
when we locked a
one-room memory
of a teacher
in a closet
who died before
they asked her
to retire.

—Lisa Fay

Walking the Dog

A woman walks her red shaggy dog,
I say, "Hi, puppy."
She says, "I am missing one."
"You mean you have another one?"
"No, it's gone."
"I had a dog and I miss her dearly," I say.
"Get another dog, it's different," she says,
"You never stop missing."

—Lisa Fay

WHEN TO SAY "NO" TO POLICE SEARCHES

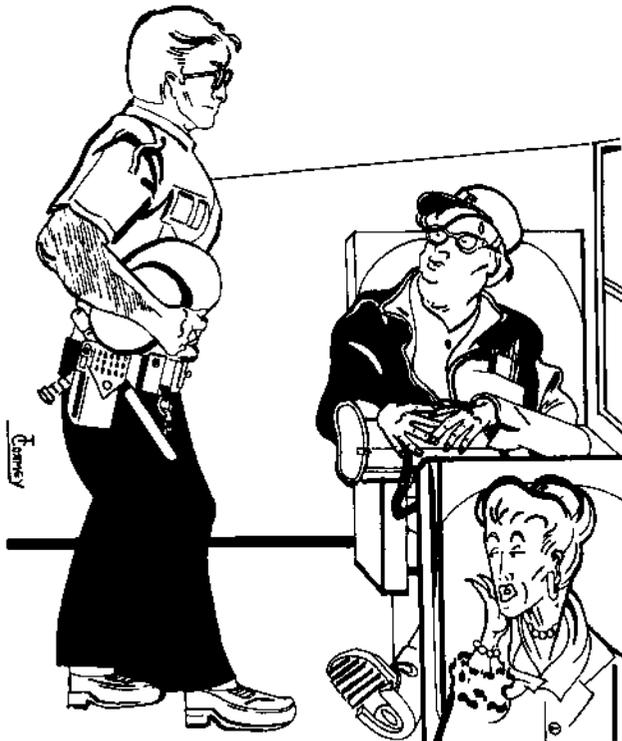
BY STEPHEN BERGSTEIN

Unless you attended an innovative high school or dabbled in college law courses, you are probably unaware of your most basic rights. These include your rights when the police approach you and ask questions, the answers to which may yield evidence the state can use against you in court. These concepts are difficult to learn, because many criminal procedure laws are created by judges who establish the contours of permissible police conduct in the context of whatever facts are before them in a given case. Because the public is not taught how to research and comprehend the law, lawyers monopolize this critical function, often charging hefty fees for performing it. Accordingly, few people know much about that well-known phrase, "the right to remain silent."

On the Bus

You are sitting on a Greyhound bus, your mind on some far-off destination, when a voice from above politely demands: "May I look in your bag, sir?" You look up and see a state trooper staring you in the eye. Several dozen passengers watch as if the officer tried and convicted you on the spot. Even the bus driver is curious. All aboard relay a message to you with their eyes: Open The Bag.

Despite pressure from the passengers, driver, and trooper,



you may refuse the command if an unbiased observer would conclude that you are not responsible for criminal activity. The catch is that if you open the bag and the police find incriminating evidence, the evidence may support a criminal conviction. In other words, the officer cannot look inside your bag if he or she lacks a reasonable belief that a crime has been or will be committed.

In *Florida v. Bostick* (1991), the Supreme Court ruled that a bus passenger may legally refuse to comply with an officer's request to open a bag or suitcase if the request does not stem from the reasonable belief that the bag contains the fruit of a crime. But the court also ruled that such an order, by itself, is not coercive enough to qualify as a "seizure" and require the police to abide by Fourth Amendment principles. These principles require the police to obtain a search warrant or possess a reasonable belief that criminal activity is imminent *before* confronting you in a manner which prevents your freedom of movement.

If the police ignore procedural guidelines when collecting evidence, a defendant can invoke "the exclusionary rule." The exclusionary rule prevents the state from introducing evidence against you if the police obtained it through a search or seizure that violated your constitutional rights. The loophole here is that prosecutors may introduce the evidence if the officer acted in "good faith," or under a reasonable belief that his or her conduct was appropriate under the circumstances known at the time, even if 20/20 hindsight reveals the conduct was improper. Unfortunately, the good faith exception allows judges to permit prosecutors to use tainted evidence and justify that decision by broadly interpreting the concept of "good faith."

The Right Not To Consent

One of the easiest ways to assert your rights in the face of authority is to withhold consent when a cop asks to search your belongings or car without reason to believe you broke the law. If a police officer approaches you but you remain free to leave and go about your business, a seizure has not occurred, and the Fourth Amendment's protection against unreasonable searches and seizures does not apply. Mere police questioning does not by itself amount to a seizure. If, under these circumstances, the police find illegal materials, the exclusionary rule also does not apply. In *Terry v. Ohio* (1968), the Supreme Court stated that "[N]ot all personal intercourse between policemen and citizens involves 'seizures' of persons. Only when the officer, by means of physical force or show of authority, has in some way restrained liberty of a citizen may [courts] conclude that a 'seizure' has occurred." When a seizure has occurred, the police must follow constitutionally mandated procedures, such as reading the Miranda warnings ("You have the right to remain silent," etc.).

At first glance, *Terry v. Ohio* would seem to grant citizens significant leeway when confronted by the police, because the law allows us to move on and stay quiet. But it is the rare person who can stare this type of confrontation in the face and ignore even general, routine questions. While a precedent like *Terry v. Ohio* prevents a court from sustaining a conviction that rests on illegally obtained evidence, it is a safe bet the officer does not share your enthusiasm for relevant Supreme Court case decisions. Even if the refusal to comply incites the officer's wrath,

silence is your only weapon against abuse and may forestall a trial, a fine, and even incarceration.

Working the Buses

Although *Terry v. Ohio* was decided nearly 30 years ago, it remains a precedent that other courts must examine for guidance when considering whether the actions of a police officer created a seizure. Theoretically, the legal principles set forth in *Terry v. Ohio* would remain unchanged and always regulate police behavior. In reality, the Supreme Court's composition changes when its members die or retire and are replaced by whatever legal hack suits the fancy of the president in power when a court vacancy opens up. Over the years, most of the justices responsible for *Terry v. Ohio* were replaced by conservative Nixon, Reagan, and Bush appointees who diminished the case's precedential value with subsequent decisions which, if not overruling the case, nonetheless found ways to excuse shady police conduct by concocting procedural loopholes through which the police may bypass *Terry v. Ohio* and like cases.

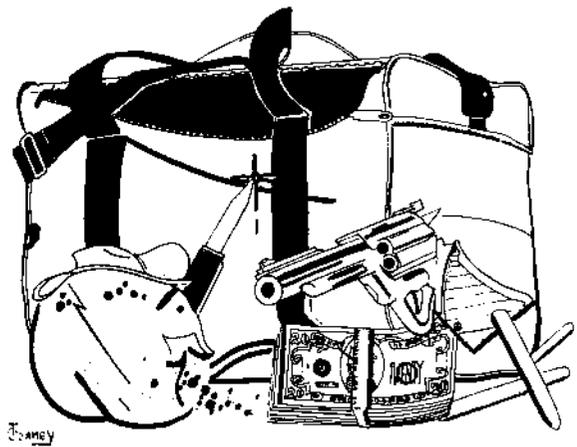
In 1991 — in the midst of President Bush's "war on drugs" — the Supreme Court was asked to determine whether prosecutors could introduce evidence against a bus passenger who opened his bag for police who surrounded him and asked to search his luggage. Despite *Terry v. Ohio*'s ruling that the police cannot ignore constitutional procedures when exercising their authority to inhibit the free movement of those they confront, the court, in *Florida v. Bostick*, ruled that police did not necessarily violate the Constitution when they arrested the passenger after he complied with their random search request, which revealed cocaine. Justice Thurgood Marshall, dissenting from this decision, noted that this police practice, known as "working the buses," typically allows the police to engage in an untold number of bus searches and target young black males.

The passenger had two options: turn his bag over to police, or ignore the request. Relying on past cases that allowed the police to question individuals in airport lobbies and other public places at random, the Supreme Court ruled that the passenger could

escape prosecution for drug possession only if a reasonable person would feel coerced into complying with the demand. In the court's words, "the appropriate inquiry is whether a reasonable person would feel free to decline the officer's requests or otherwise terminate the encounter."

The problem with the Supreme Court's decision is that a bus is not a street or public park; it is easier to walk past a police officer in these places, because your freedom of movement is unfettered and bystanders in those situations may overlook or ignore the fact that the police are randomly questioning people. But a bus passenger is caught in a bind: open the bag and risk arrest, or exit the bus and miss an appointment or whatever else he or she has planned following the bus trip. Of course, the passenger can legally refuse the random request. This refusal will probably require him or her to put up with icy stares from other bus riders, who may conclude that anyone who refuses the request must have something to hide and is therefore a drug dealer. It may be a long bus ride under these circumstances. By ruling that the random bus search is not necessarily a seizure, which triggers constitutional police restrictions, the Supreme Court made it easier for the police to snoop around and more difficult for people who lack the courage to ignore them.

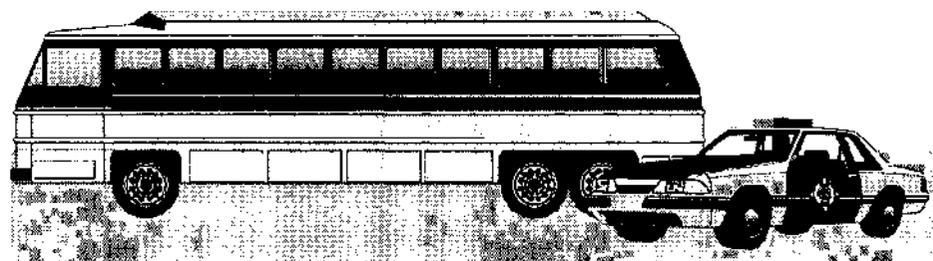
The bus scenario is similar to other situations in which the police confront people for no reason and examine their belongings after they waive their rights out of both ignorance of the law and fear. The way the law works is that courts will consider the bus case when



resolving a case that resembles it. The reasoning in the bus case may also apply to searches on a train, but it may not apply to searches in a school. In addition, federal and state judges are entrusted with substantial discretion to ignore precedent when they see fit, as long as they offer a rationale to explain the departure.

Regardless, the Supreme Court has made clear that a refusal to cooperate with the type of random police request described above is not, by itself, sufficiently suspicious to allow the police to place you under arrest.

Though Conservative ideologues like to characterize judicial restrictions on police conduct as protecting the rights of criminals, these rules, described as "technicalities," protect those accused of illegal activity and constitute the protections we have against a police state in which the authorities run amok and arrest individuals on a whim. The next time you are minding your business, clearly doing nothing wrong, and the police wish to rummage through your bags, wallet, or purse, take a deep breath, summon your courage, and remember the words of Nancy Reagan: Just Say No.



A Brief Guide to the Internet

Part 2: How to avoid becoming roadkill on the Information Superhighway

by David Weinstock

“Now what?” is a common question from new Internet users. Fortunately for you, *As We Are* is going to give you a little insight on some of the more interesting and useful things you can do with a hookup to the Internet. This continues our first installment of “A Brief Guide to the Internet” [AWA #2]. What follows is a breakdown of some of the most common commands and programs used to access the various services the Internet has to provide. This is by no means a full explanation, but it should put you on the right track.

How can I get there from here?

Telnet — How do I reach other sites on the Internet?

Think of the Internet as a giant spiderweb. Each point or intersection has thousands of options of where to go, all ending in individual points called ‘sites.’ Each site is a machine connected physically into the Net. Once you’ve logged into your local account (based either on a large university or corporate computer, or through a commercial access provider like Netcom, Delphi, or America Online), you can connect to other sites in a number of ways. The simplest is called ‘telnet.’ It is used to open a direct point-to-point connection between the machine you’re logged into and the other site. This connection requires you to have an account and password for the receiving site as well as for your own.

Generally, people will set up on-line services that provide you with the correct login information (username/password). Some on-line games will have you connected directly to a specific port on the receiving machine without having to logon at all.

Here is how you would telnet to another site, once you’re in your account (italic print denotes what I see on my computer screen; bold italic print denotes what I typed):

works % telnet xensei.com The site name, in this case ‘xensei.com’
My local prompt, telling me I’m logged into a machine named ‘works’

Trying...
Connected to xensei.com.
Escape Char '^['

Xensei.com

login: panaxis
password: [your password here]

(Then it will log me into Xensei’s machine.)

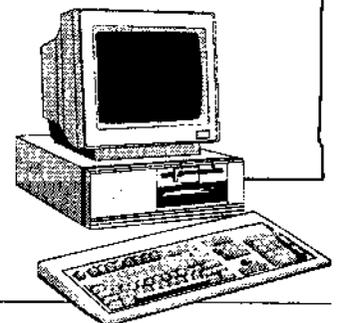
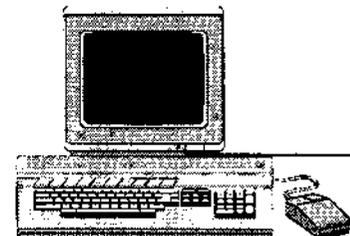
A ‘telnet>’ prompt will appear. This means you’re in the other machine! When you’re done mucking around, type ‘quit’ to end your connection.

ftp (File Transfer Protocol) — How do I get a file from another site on the Internet?

Ftp, which stands for File Transfer Protocol, is the program used to transfer one file from a remote machine to your local machine. With ftp you can access a remote machine to get new programs or anything else you might trade on disks otherwise. The major trick with ftp is learning to use commands in the UNIX operating system language—used by the big mainframes at universities and large corporations (and also by NeXt personal computers).

There are two types of access available for use with ftp. One requires you to have a login name and a password (like telnet), meaning you have an account on the remote machine. The other, and more popular, is called ‘anonymous ftp.’ It allows you to use a universal login name and access a public library of files on each individual site. Starting an ftp connection is essentially the same as a telnet session—except you have to use short commands in a computer language called UNIX to get around:

works % ftp wuarchive.wustl.edu
Machine name
command (In lowercase, as unix only understands lowercase)



Ftp will report back some information, and will ask for a username. If you have an account on the remote machine, type your name and password. In most cases, you will be just one of millions of visitors to the ftp site (without a special account). So, you will use an anonymous login to get into the file area. When the remote machine asks your username, type either 'anonymous' or 'ftp'. Usually either will work, although on rare occasions it is necessary to use one or the other. It will then ask you for a password.

At this point, you're probably thinking, "Hey! I thought we didn't need a login for an anonymous ftp connection!" You don't. They just want to know who is using the site. You should type in your full e-mail address (mine would be panaxis@works.com). Some sites won't even let you on if you don't identify yourself correctly. If you prefer your privacy, try typing any password you want, or just hitting the return key. It may work, it may not.

Once logged in via anonymous ftp, ftp will report information to you ('CWD Command successful,' etc.). Then you are given a prompt again:

```
ftp>
```

We don't have the space here to describe all the various UNIX commands you'll need to know to make full use of ftp. If you're planning to make serious use of ftp, we recommend picking up one of the many internet how-to books on the market now. For the purposes of this article, let's look at what you do if you know what file you're looking for, and where it is:

```
ftp> cd /pub/msdos/games
```

This issues a 'change directory' command to /pub/msdos/games. Then if you're looking for a file called "geek"-something, but aren't sure of the full name, you can list the files and pick it out.

```
ftp> ls
```

```
asteroid.exe  
gimpy.zip  
geekwars.zip ——— Here is what we want!
```

```
ftp>
```

In order to transfer this file to our local machine to download later (remote machine to the machine where your account is to your home computer), we must do two things. The first is to tell ftp we want to send a binary file. This is a file in binary computer code. So at the prompt, we type bin, for binary.

```
ftp> bin  
Type set to I
```

(The two types are I for binary and A for ascii. It is a good idea to always use bin because it will work on either. Binary tells ftp that when you want to copy files they must be exact copies.)

Next, we want to actually issue the command to get the file. That command is 'get'.

```
ftp> get geekwars.zip
```

You will be given a lot of information about the file size, and then it will start the transfer. When it finishes (usually within a matter of seconds, unless the file is very large), it will return you to the ftp prompt. Typing ^C ('Ctrl' and 'C' at the same time) will stop this process. The copy of the file will now be in your local account (the directory you were in when you typed ftp). Then you can download it onto your own computer (however you normally do that). That's all there is to it.

Gopher, Mosaic, and Lynx, the user-friendly crowd

Gopher-navigating from one site to another

Gopher is a menu-driven utility that allows you to jump from a main menu (there are many large gopher sites to start from) to other menus in computers all over the world. It is still the easiest way to check out text information of all kinds on the Internet. To get started, all you need to do type is 'gopher <sitename>'. A good example would be 'gopher.echonyc.com' (a crazy New York-centered gopher). Gopher lets you use the arrow keys on your keyboard to scroll through a variety of choices.

When a topic interests you, pressing the Enter or Return key will select that item. If it is an article, program, or something you can read, it will then appear on your screen. If it is a program, you may be presented with options to download it



directly to your home computer (unlike ftp, gopher has the ability to send programs or text directly to you instead of using your provider as a middleman). If, however, it is part of a larger category, you will be presented with another screen or screens full of more options — possibly on a totally different computer.

This process will continue until you find what most interests you. Common commands to know while using gopher are: 'u' for going back up one level, 'Return' to select something, and 'q' to quit the program. Gopher is a much easier way to use ftp sites (sites that have public libraries for anyone to access), and is being supported at a large number of these sites. Ftp itself soon may be a thing of the past.

You can try gopher-ftp by typing 'gopher wuarchive.wustl.edu', which will connect you to Washington University's anonymous ftp site using gopher instead of ftp. Gopher is very versatile and internally combines telnet and ftp into a usable package. When you use gopher, it starts the necessary ftp, telnet, or other programs and puts a relatively clean and simple interface on top for you to use. No matter what you're using it for, once you get going, gopher is easy to master.

Mosaic — The World-Wide Web, Home Pages, and Hypertext

The World Wide Web (WWW) is the last word in Internet services. The Web (as it is usually called) offers direct connections between thousands of computers on the Internet, but, unlike the gopher system, it does it all with pretty pictures. Since everything on the Web is done with a mouse-driven, point-and-click, graphical user environment (just like Macintosh computers or IBM-compatibles running Windows), you cannot use it unless you have a fast computer and special "Browser" software like Mosaic.

Mosaic was created by The National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA) at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. It is free and available for downloading all over the Internet. The tricky thing is that you must have a direct connection to the Internet to use Mosaic. These types of accounts are often billed as SLIP, PPP, or some variation (CSLIP, term-links, etc.). These services temporarily put your machine in direct contact with the Net. Only then can you use the full range of Web services.

Your provider serves a middleman purpose when you have this type of account. All connections (ftp, telnet, finger,archie) will go directly to your computer instead of being directed to your Internet provider's remote machine. Companies like Xensei, Netcom, and Terranet offer limited use SLIP accounts for between \$30 – 60/month. You can access a vast amount of information through Web sites.

Since Web Browsers are rather user-friendly, there's no point in me showing a tutorial here. Once you're on, you'll know what to do. But here are a couple of terms you should know.

Home Page: A specific site on the Internet where people can use their WWW Browsers to see text, hear audio, and view photos and graphics.

HyperText: The program that lets you interact directly with WWW Home Pages by using your mouse to click on pictures or words. The things you click on are "linked" to other areas of the Home Page, or to other Home Pages anywhere else in the world! That's how the World Wide Web got its name. Any Home Page can be linked to any other Home Page, creating a vast colorful information web.

What is all this HTTP stuff?

HTTP stands for HyperText Transport Protocol. It is the language/interface in which you can point and click on the options that interest you. Apple has been very successful with HyperText on its Macintosh line of computers. HTTP tells Mosaic or your other Web Browser (WWW Browser) that you are connecting to another hypertext compatible site. You can also connect to ftp or gopher sites using Mosaic. When you are prompted for a site/address, it will be in the format: `http://<sitename>/directory/pagename` This allows you to go directly to a page without traveling through any large hierarchy of other pages.

Lynx

Lastly, there is Lynx. Lynx is a Web Browser, but is entirely text-based. It was designed for users with machines that couldn't support high-detail graphics, yet still wished to wander from Web site to Web site. It is available through many Internet providers and commercial Internet services. Lynx is the only way to check out the Web for people with older computers and without direct SLIP/PPP connections to the Internet. It's not as flashy as using Mosaic, but it'll allow the casual user to get a good idea of what the Web has to offer.

Happy Exploring.

Places and points of interest

Various Internet providers

These companies can set you up with various types of accounts. Readers affiliated with large corporations or universities may be able to get these same accounts for less money or even free. Be sure to ask! To use justarchie, telnet, ftp, talk, and e-mail, a normal 'shell' account will work. To connect Mosaic or ftp directly to your home machine, you'll need what's called a SLIP or PPP account.

Netcom.com (408-983-1510, e-mail sales@netcom.com)

Xensei.com (617-376-6342 Voice, e-mail info@xensei.com)

Games

Tim.yay.org 5440 — TinyTIM, on-line multi-player free-form game-world. (Type HELP)

As We Are would like to take this opportunity to remind all of the artists and photographers in the audience that they hold in their hands a fine opportunity to gain national exposure. Just thought we'd mention it. (617) 492-2440, or write us at As We Are, PO Box 380048, Cambridge, MA 02238

WWW Sites (Mosaic)

<http://as-we-are.com/awa/> (You guessed it. *As We Are* is there.)

<http://www.whitehouse.gov> (Impressive. Check it out. Lots of information here.)

<http://voyager.paramount.com> (*Star Trek: Voyager* pictures, audio clips, and more on the new series.)

<http://www.monster.com> ("The Monster Board" — on-line job search.)

<http://www.hotwired.com> (*HotWired*, an on-line magazine sponsored by *Wired* magazine.)

Gopher Sites

gopher.echonyc.com (gopher for the East Coast Hang-Out. Lots of interesting, wacky stuff to look at — magazines, games, and more.)

gopher.whitehouse.gov (More White House info.)

Readers can e-mail with any questions at panaxis@works.com.



Sidewalk Bubblegum ©1993 Clay Butler

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VELVET CRUSH

Perfecting the Three Minute Pop Classic

Velvet Crush's Rick Menck is, in every regard, an artist of his craft. A gentle man who initially exhibits a quiet intelligence, Rick becomes animated, even opinionated, when he talks about music and the music industry. In fact, Menck thinks so much about music that, at times, it seems his answers are rehearsed.

In truth, however, it's the honesty with which Menck sees himself and Velvet Crush that accounts for the clarity in his views, not a need to appease the press. And it is this honesty that comes through in the band's music.

Velvet Crush recently played the much publicized WFNX Birthday Bash in Boston alongside such notable talents as Hole, Tracey Bonham, and Soupdragons. The debut release is receiving positive reviews, and it seems as though things are starting to happen for this pop outfit. The band will now embark on a two-month tour with The Jesus and Mary Chain and Mazzy Star, continuing to set their sights on future recordings.

As We Are: Velvet Crush is one very relaxed band. Any old friends in the lineup?

Rick Menck: Well, Paul, who plays bass guitar and sings lead vocals, and myself have

been playing together for about ten years. We started playing together in the Midwest, in Illinois, in a little city called Champagne — lots of students, lots of bands, and basically a good place to start playing. But anyway, we met ten years ago. It was around this time that I met Matthew Sweet.

OK, you know I can't let you get away without explaining that one.

Well, actually, it all started when I wrote him a fan letter. His first band was called The Buzz of Delight, and they released an EP that I got ahold of and really liked. And so I wrote him a fan letter just saying I love this record, and he sent me back an envelope filled with glitter, and I opened it up and it just went flying all over the place and I thought, wow, that is really cool. So we corresponded through the mail. Also Paul and I had met and we were sort of hanging around together. At one point we realized that the three of us were talking about and were interested in the same types of music, three-minute quality pop songs played with a sort of punk rock attitude. So we were formulating these kinds of ideas and began recording these little singles for small labels in America. This was around about 1986.



Velvet Crush

And voilà! Velvet Crush is formed?

Well, sort of. The scene in Chicago in the mid-'80s was pretty dull. There wasn't really any one band that people were talking about. There were little things happening here and there. Some bands like Urge Overkill and Material Issue were getting attention, but on the whole, it just wasn't exciting. So we decided, after being there for such a long

I·N·T·E·R·V·I·E·W

by **BUCK O'SHEA**

time, that we had to get out and do something new because we were just so bored with everything. I knew Jeffrey, our guitarist, vaguely, and I called him up and asked if I could stay with him for a while in Providence (R.I.), just to get my bearings on the East Coast. And I realized when I got there that it was really inexpensive to live there and there were clubs but not a lot of bands, so it was a perfect place to start a band and sort of get good without anyone paying attention to you.

When did you start checking out the scene outside of Providence, say, Boston?

Well, we ignored coming up to Boston for like the first two years just because we were so unorganized. Everything was pretty haphazard those first two years. We just wanted to play together; we didn't really have any ideas about becoming successful or getting our music out to tons and tons of people. Then after two years we realized that we had gotten pretty good as a band and that it was time to start making records. We got a manager and a lawyer and all that stuff. And then, about a year ago, we signed a recording contract with Creation Records in England, home of Primal Scream, My Bloody Valentine, and The Boo Radleys. We signed with them because it is basically an "art" label. The guy who runs it, Alan McGee, is insane. He knows and loves music in a way that most record company people don't.

Didn't you write him a fan letter too?

Yeah, I've been writing him fan letters for years. Every time he would release a record that was really great, I'd write to him and tell him how much I liked what Creation was putting out. He put out just streams and streams of great singles, many of them to unknown listeners in the



States. In this country Creation licenses out their records to the big labels, and so we were licensed out to some of the major labels, which is great because they make it possible for all our records to be in stores all over the place. And they promote our band and records when we go on tour, but they have no say over any artistic decisions at all.

That sounds almost too good to be true!

It's true. In fact, Creation pays for our videos. Epic sets us up with directors, but if we want to challenge what the directors have come up with, I mean, if we're not satisfied, we can work with them and they say "fine." We've been signed for about a year, and we've done one video which MTV refused to show because it was too "controversial."

Controversial? I saw that video, it was pretty tame!

I agree, I don't know where they saw controversy. The video was set up like a three-minute commercial. It was

like a combination of an old '60s teen television music program and one of those really trashy commercials that you see when the songs flash across the screen. Another reason they didn't go for the video is because they felt we

people and try to make them, you know, in as few words as possible, understand what a record is about.

I think that it's completely wrong to do this, because so much work goes into making a record, and maybe that's why it takes a year for a record to make it these days, because a truly good record has to rise above the crap and everything. Basically, I don't know what music writers are talking about. I think they get the impression that we sit around listening to The Raspberries, the Beatles, and Big Star 24 hours a day and that we're these really innocent, wispy, naive types.

Well, visually, you do sort of give that impression. I mean, take the CD cover for instance: a '60s cartoon of a young girl, groovin' to the stereo — it seems so innocent.

Yeah, it is. I mean, we wanted the CD to have a certain look to it, but we didn't expect that it would be seen as a reflection on us. I mean, we're haggard old men! What we are interested in is the idea of the eternal teenager. Every 14- or 15-year-old remembers a time when music touched their pleasure center and took them to another place.

And is this where the idea of the three-minute classic song comes in?

Yes. Velvet Crush is interested in writing brilliant, classic "pop" songs, meaning popular songs, that are popular with people. There is something so simple about this notion, and yet it is not

weren't well known enough at the time. So we had to keep going back and forth to MTV to convince them that our video is worth showing and blah, blah, blah. And these days it takes like a year for a record to get noticed. For instance, the Mazzy Star album's been out for a year and suddenly now it's a huge hit.

Let's talk about the CD. No, even better, let's talk about who talks about your CD. What do the phrases "beguiling innocence" and "hopelessly ragged innovation" mean to you?

I assume you're speaking of the illustrious words of the mighty music reviewers?

Precisely. Well?

They mean absolutely nothing to me. Absolutely nothing. And I'll tell you something else. I'll tell you the other phrases that don't mean anything to me: "power pop," "alternative rock," "modern rock," etc. etc....

How do critics come up with this stuff?

Well, the way I see it, there's so much music out there, and a rock writer has to get out this information to

an easy thing to do.

Perhaps as difficult as writing a brilliant, classic novel.

Very much so. Though there are considerable differences to some people, because they cannot see the work that goes into making an LP. What we're trying to do is create classic songs that stand the test of time without using words that shackle. Like the Beatles — they were listening to soul music, country music, and it's very much reflected in their sound.

These influences are reflected in your sound too.

I know. The thing is now there's all kinds of ready-made language for the influences. Back when the Beatles were doing it, it was all just rock 'n' roll. I grew up listening to '60s groups, the Beatles, the Byrds, etc. And I became very disillusioned with the '70s because I thought it was unnecessarily overproduced. It was so smooth and unappealing. It had no edge to it. It wasn't even bad, it was just so mediocre that there was no point listening to it. I think it's better just to hate something intensely than to just not even be able to care about it.

So, aside from the idea of creating the "pop classic," are there any other reasons why Velvet Crush is so pop-oriented?

Well, I read a lot about and am really interested in popular culture. I was a magazine journalist in college, that was my degree, and I had a minor in English. I guess I've always been interested in pop visuals and audios. I love the American tradition of classic images that register really quickly. And advertising fascinates me too. It's evil, but it's also, you know, it's hard to hit people with something really quickly. And in that sense, I guess I have a fascination with it.

It is pretty fascinating to have an image or a song convey a million different thoughts at one time. From this perspective, what do you hope people will get out of your music?

What I hope will happen is that people will look at the cover of the record and listen to the record and take it for what it is without trying to fit us into a slot. And, most importantly, that the music will remain solid, quality stuff for a long time, so that, ten years from now when you play it and look at the images, they won't have died on you. I mean... we're stealing everything! This cover is from old jazz record covers. The kid could be from an old comic book and the music inside is all ripped off from somewhere. But, you know, the Beatles' music was all ripped off from somewhere too.

But all music was ripped off from somewhere. Is there anything that you feel has been somewhat of an innovative approach by the band to re-creating good music?

Well, yes, I think we've tried to be creative with mixing our various influences. Before the LP came out, we had been listening to a lot of country music. You know, George Jones, Buck Owens and Merle Haggard, the pure real country, honky-tonk stuff. And what we wanted was to mix that music with rock music as we knew it. It's been done before, but what people can find out is that not all country rock is bad. I mean, I think if most people heard someone like Graham Parker, they'd be amazed at the songwriting, the singing, everything.

Yeah, the thing that I really like about the CD is that the songs don't fold into one another. Each song is unique, and that keeps me from labeling the sound.

Well, we have put an emphasis on a guitar-oriented type of sound in general, but each of the songs really does have its own feel to it. I mean, this is only our second LP, and there's just so much more that we want to do as we progress as a band. And just so many people try to tell me what the music is, and I think they might be missing the point.

Which is?

Basically, I think it's important to just relax and let the music affect you in whatever way it's going to. There's a lot of testosterone-driven music out there

that's really in your face. We're not that kind of band. The sound of Velvet Crush is one that includes both masculine and feminine qualities and was designed to speak to the emotional side in all of us. Say, like, number ten on the album, it's supposed to be for late at night. The country songs are for when you're driving or feeling sad and lonely; the rock songs are for when you're feeling good.

It sounds like a sort of panacea.

Yeah, well, I'm really interested in how music affects the psyche. And I know that maybe it may sound infantile or whatever, but we're trying to make the kind of music that does affect people in a lasting way. As a band, we're taking small steps to get to where we want to be musically.

Do you feel like this CD is an effort to try to get where you want to be?

Well, I'm really proud of this CD, but it's definitely not where we want to stay. We want to keep going and take it much further than this. It's going to sound boastful, but I feel we've made a really quality album that in five years people will be saying, 'this is a great record.' It's important to me to make a lasting piece of art. It's not important for me to be a star, I don't give a crap about that, or to make lots of money, I really don't care about that. But it's really important to me that while I'm on this planet I want to make something lasting. I have specific things that I've been dreaming about since I was about 14 and I want them to come to fruition and I want to keep pushing it until I don't feel interested in it anymore or that I've lost the passion for it or just that I've said what I need to say. Velvet Crush, as a band... we haven't said all we need to say.

I hope not. So what can we expect from Velvet Crush in the future?

Well, we're going on tour with the Jesus and Mary Chain and Mazzy Star in October and November, and we're gonna basically stay on the road for a year playing, because it really helps us to become a better band and also it's fun to directly communicate with people one on one. At the end of the year we'll likely come out with another record and then just... keep going.



LEAD...OR LEAVE

AND THE SELLOUT OF MY GENERATION

*“America’s a melting pot.
The people at the bottom
get burned and the scum
rises to the top...”*

—unknown

Handsome Strangers

Nobody knows where they came from.

From out of the TV sets of America, in the summer of 1992, a couple of goofy white guys in T-shirts rode down on the hearts and minds of a nation.

They came not with a message, but with a sound-bite. They carried cellular phones rather than revolvers. And their bandoleers were stuffed not with bullets — but with money. Lots of money.

They called themselves “Lead...or Leave.” The sum total of their wisdom could be reduced to a phrase or two. “Generation X has a problem,” they said, “and that problem is the national debt. We gotta cut social spending... and cut it right quick. Or there’ll be a revolution of angry young taxpayers. You Greedy Geezers better take notice. Your days are numbered.”

They cut through Washington like Gingrich through a welfare program, spreading fear and terror among lawmakers and newspeople alike. They never explained themselves very well. And they never had to. No one asked them any hard questions. No one seemed to care. They said that they were spokesmen for a generation. And that was good enough for the media. They said that they had their fingers on the pulse of the young. And that was good enough for the lawmakers.

They said they had a solution to all the country’s woes. Just cut off a hunk of Social Security here, a chunk of Medicaid there, trim the military budget just the tiniest bit, and voilà! No more national debt. Everything would be beautiful again. Everyone would live in a magical fantasy land where we can all be millionaires.

Their names were Jon Cowan and Rob Nelson. They were everything a Nightline producer could ask for: wholesome, clean-cut young aristocrats. But with that rebel edge. That vague sense of barely restrained malice. That gleam of mental activity behind bright, beady eyes. That inkling of titanic egos seeking an outlet.

They were the perfect leaders for a leaderless generation.

There was just one problem.

Nobody ever bothered to ask the rest of us.

BY JASON PRAMAS

Brave Young Wonks
"Lead or Leave is an entirely independent, post-partisan organization. It does not and has never acted to advance the interests of any political party or other organization." [Lead or Leave 1994 information packet]

Lead or Leave is an undemocratic organization. It has no elected officers. It has constantly changing membership statistics that have no basis in reality. And it has no track record of doing anything to help improve the daily lives of the young people for whom it claims to speak.

Here, in a nutshell, are Lead or Leave's politics: convince young people that the national debt is a crisis that is affecting their future prosperity. Then convince them that the best way to pay off the debt is to loot "entitlements" like Social Security, which they claim are "robbing the young" anyway.

"America's Social Security system is in trouble. It has become an unfair, unsound program — relying on younger, less affluent and less numerous workers to support an older, more affluent and larger segment of the population."

"Despite years of warnings, The Social Security Board of Trustees projects Social Security will go bankrupt as soon as 2020... And although Social Security is the largest expense in our national budget, it has become a political "untouchable" for reformers who fear angering older voters." [Cowan and Nelson, from the *Gen X Reader*, Rushkoff et al, pg. 81]

Lead or Leave did not invent these politics. They have had many mentors. Cowan and Nelson are not original thinkers, and they don't need to be. That's because their job is not to organize the young people of America into some kind of ersatz revolutionary crusade; their job is to convince young Americans that it is in their best interest to wreck their own future. And to convince the unconvinced in the halls of power in Washington that all young people in America really agree with what they say. They are a front group for powerful interests in this society.

Let us be clear about a few things. Jon Cowan and Rob Nelson are not grassroots organizers. They have held jobs very much inside the Washington power structure. They are therefore insiders, political "wonks" in the truest sense of the term.

Neither of them were activists, or even "rebels," at any point prior to the founding of Lead or Leave. Lead or Leave itself is in no way, shape or form a true activist organization. Like its founders, it has a very shadowy, very privileged history. From the beginning, it had an operating budget



photo: James Nubie/JP Pictures

Rob Nelson and Jon Cowan, founders of Lead...or Leave

bigger than most youth activists could ever dream of working with. Despite this fact, the organization has had very little success in organizing young people to do anything at the grassroots level. What it has succeeded in doing is keeping itself and its founders in the media limelight from Day One.

That might explain why Lead or Leave's dealings with large student and youth groups like the United States Student Association (USSA) have been adversarial from the outset. While groups like USSA have spent years building up grassroots programs to help young people find real solutions to real problems that are facing them (problems like an environmental system in crisis, a public education system that is falling under the budget ax, rampant racism and sexism throughout our society, or, most ominously, the entire system of social insurance and public assistance that are in danger of being totally gutted and privatized), Lead or Leave's focus has been to side with large banks and corporations in an ever-widening campaign to take over and profit from heretofore public, nonprofit programs like Social Security. And also to play old and young off each other — to help foment inter-generational warfare that will allow such privatization to take place more easily.

In point of fact, Lead or Leave is a right-wing organization, and a very particular kind of right-wing organization. They are neo-conservatives, much like Gov. Bill Weld of Massachusetts, who, not coincidentally, sits on the Lead or Leave board of advisors. A classic neo-conservative is someone who calls himself or herself "socially liberal but economically conservative." Lead or Leave's platform boils down that way quite handily, but they remain too dishonest to admit their real beliefs. They are consummate politicians.

What this dogma comes down to in practice is: tax breaks for the rich and for big corporations, tax increases (in the form of "consumption" taxes on food, alcohol, tobacco,

goods and services) aimed at the poor, elimination of most regulation of corporations, destruction of much of the public sector (education, housing, health care, public works, welfare, parks, etc.) through privatization or outright defunding, expanded prison budgets, expanded police and military outlays, reduction of environmental controls, and a host of other anti-people policies. Those who can't swim in such a society, sink — drop through shrinking societal safety nets to join the vast and growing underclass.

The "socially liberal" part of neo-conservative rhetoric is much more vague. While politicians like Bill Weld may claim "concern" over hot-potato issues like "the environment," "access to abortion," and "gay rights" to get themselves elected, they do little if anything to support these issues. Actually, many of their "economically conservative" ideas (which they DO act on) will make things much worse for women, gay people, and the planet.

This leaves us with a big question. Can a couple of well-off, white, neo-conservative guys claim to represent the hopes, dreams, politics, and beliefs of the 80 million people between 18 and 35 years old living in the U.S. today?

No. They can speak for themselves, they can speak for their friends, they can speak for the rather limited number of other young Americans of backgrounds similar to their own. But they have no right, nor have they earned the right, to speak for me, my friends, or most of the other young people in these United States. Given that, we must ask: who are Cowan and Nelson? Why did they start Lead or Leave? Who is backing them financially? Why is the media so nice to them? Is Lead or Leave a grassroots organization? How many members does it really have? What is the real purpose of Lead or Leave?

All things seen and unseen...

Two things are important to understand from the outset. First, Lead or Leave has put out so much disinformation on their key political issues, and so many half-truths and innuendoes about themselves and their organization, that it would take a fat book-sized treatment to deal effectively

with all their misdeeds. I will do my best to deal with their most glaring gaffes.

Second, no key Lead or Leave staffers (Jon Cowan particularly) agreed to speak to *As We Are* for this article. Many attempts were made by phone, e-mail, and direct intervention to get them to talk to us. Aside from the first call on Dec. 19, 1994, when I got through to Cowan directly and he agreed to call me back nine days later, then did not, all of our messages went unanswered. One of my assistants did manage a short discussion with one of their office workers, however [see Phone Interview, page 30].

Most of the times we called them, we heard only from their answering machine, which said chirpily that Lead or Leave is "The Largest Youth Advocacy Group In The Country." Such overstatement has been par for the course with Lead or Leave since its inception.

Lead or Leave burst onto the media scene in the summer of 1992 with its first "campaign," from which the name of the organization was derived. Cowan and Nelson created their "Pledge" for elected officials that election year. This Pledge asked politicians, particularly Congresspeople, to agree to "Lead" the country by helping to cut the deficit in half by 1996, or, failing that, to "Leave" office that same year.

It was not a very bright strategy. By November of that year, only about 100 prospective candidates for various government offices had signed the Pledge. Only 17 won. Most of the candidates who signed the Pledge were Republicans or conservative Democrats. And, ironically, none of the elected Pledge-signers have done much of anything to cut the deficit.

Yet things went very well for Cowan and Nelson in other respects. By September, they had a war chest of over 80,000 dollars. At least 40,000 dollars of this money came from Ross Perot — an anti-deficit booster if there ever was one. Another 40,000 dollars came from Pete Peterson, former Nixon secretary of commerce, Wall Street investment banker, and founding member of former Massachusetts Senator (D) Paul Tsongas' Concord Coalition — a major deficit-busting lobby group. More money came from Tsongas himself and from Warren Rudman, a former New Hampshire senator (R) and Concord Coalition founder. An unknown amount of money was also given by "Trade Hawk Clyde V. Prestowitz Jr. and Richard Dennis, a well-known Chicago commodities broker," according to the Sept. 28, 1992 *Business Week*. There are also ugly rumors that Perot gave them far more than 40,000 dollars in 1992, but, so far, there is no proof of that.

Regardless, we must ask a few questions about Lead or Leave's financing. If Cowan and Nelson were such unknowns, why did they get so much money from such rich powerful people? And if they were such outsiders, why did they go to the biggest of big insiders for money?

On the first count, they may have been unknown to the general public, but Cowan and Nelson were no strangers to Washington politics. On the second, it was only natural for them to get money from their natural allies — other neo-conservatives.

It is very difficult to second-guess the political development of Jon Cowan and Rob Nelson. They do not consistently tell the same story about how the idea for Lead or Leave came about. I have found at least three separate versions of their "nativity" story during my research. In one version, they came up with the idea "while rock climbing" [*Dallas Morning News*, Nov. 7, 1994]. In another, it was "over beers" [*LA Times*, Dec. 27, 1994]. And in still another, it was "over coffee"

Cowan and Nelson don't seem very concerned about whether their plans ever accomplish anything concrete. All they seem to care about is whether or not they get media attention.

[*Boston Globe*, July 15, 1993]. I have never seen a clear description of exactly how they got themselves off the ground, either.

They seem to have been in contact with Paul Tsongas as early as spring of 1992, when that worthy was still in the run for President. And in their book, *Revolution X*, they claim, "We decided to take a risk and combined 1000 dollars from our own pockets to begin Lead or Leave..." If they actually did that, they probably did not have to rely on that sum for more than a few weeks before all the money I mentioned previously came rolling in. But it remains unclear exactly how much money they got that first year, when they got it, who gave it to them, and when they first set up shop in Washington.

Menchildren in the Promised Land

Jon Cowan and Rob Nelson seem to be children of privilege. Of the two, Nelson is by far the more difficult to track down. According to rumor, he is the "brains" of the operation while Cowan plays the "front man." As time goes by, it becomes increasingly rare to see Nelson quoted in the mass media. Cowan speaks for the group almost all the time now. For this reason, very little is known about Rob Nelson's background.

That he is from money, or is at least upper-middle class, has been a consistent buzz from numerous sources who have come into contact with him in Washington. If he is not from money, he certainly acts like he is. He hails from Wisconsin. He is a graduate of Principia College in Elmhurst, Illinois. Principia's president described the school in a short phone interview as "a liberal arts college of 550 students, by and for Christian Scientists." He said the price tag these days is around 18,000 dollars a year. Not cheap for a midwestern school. Nelson studied political science and was involved in student government. He graduated in 1984. He worked for a large fundraising firm, Malchow and Co., in Washington prior to founding Lead or Leave. He is in his early 30s. According to Cowan, Nelson was preparing to go to Stanford Law School when Lead or Leave got off the ground.

Jon Cowan, 29, was preparing to go

Phone interview with Gretchen Dee, Lead...or Leave office worker Tuesday, January 17, 1995

AWA: How can I get involved in Lead or Leave?

Dee: I can put you on our database and we'll send you a general packet. I don't know how you want to get involved.

AWA: Could you tell me how big Lead or Leave is?

Dee: Right now we have 150 grassroots organizations, but they are very disorganized right now. We are in the process of reorganizing the whole thing. I'll take your name, address, and phone number down. I'll put that in the database immediately. I'll send you the information about Lead or Leave.

AWA: How many chapters do you have?

Dee: We are in the process of starting chapters right now.

AWA: How many members do you have?

Dee: We have a million members across the country. We have a million members through the national organization that have...uh...a million people have requested information or tried to be involved or have volunteered their time at a local level, a college campus.

AWA: What do you do at colleges?

Dee: What Lead or Leave has done in the past is...uh...we've done a lot of things with college campuses, gone to schools, had people organize. We don't actually have a record of everyone who has done something. We have 30,000 people who have called for information. The grassroots is involved in planning, fundraising, speaking out, in the name of the philosophy of Lead or Leave.

AWA: So you have affiliate memberships? If a student body organization joined Lead or Leave, like Harvard, you count the whole school in your million, right?

Dee: Right.

AWA: How many people work in the office?

Dee: Three or four. We are currently trying to get a larger staff. The million members, that implies college campus groups, people who have taken pledges, people who have all been involved at different times.

AWA: So they are not all involved now?

Dee: No. At times like this, between elections, we get drop-offs.

AWA: So basically your million is anybody who has taken your Pledge?

Dee: Right. We are in the process of restructuring. We're trying to get all of those who have called in to the local groups. We have a lot of them in the database.

AWA: How many?

Dee: 23,000. We have quite a few of them. Names of people on college campuses who have the names.

AWA: Do you have the list of affiliate colleges?

Dee: Yes. [offers to fax it] We are in the process of trying to reorganize and restructure.

—Simon Garfinkel

to Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. He is from Los Angeles. In a Dec. 11, 1994 *LA Times* article, freelancer Jon Buzbee had this to say:

"...Cowan says he is no revolutionary. After graduating from the Brentwood School in 1983 as president of his class, he went off to Dartmouth College to major in English."

The article went on to quote Jon's father, Bob Cowan, who was described as "president of Search West, a Century City executive recruiting firm." Cowan definitely comes from big bucks. He went to one of the most exclusive prep schools in LA, then to one of the most exclusive Ivy League schools in the country.

He claims he remained "politically apathetic" throughout his stay at Dartmouth. Yet Dartmouth was a battleground that year, and throughout the mid- and late 1980s. For Cowan to have been totally uninvolved on either the right or left sides of the divestment fight does not speak well of his commitment to campus activism, or indeed to activism in general.

The article continues, describing that Cowan "tried working for an advertising agency, but that didn't last long," and spent "a few years working at a think tank and as press secretary for former Rep. Mel Levine (D-Santa Monica)." Running media screen for a Congressman is not an outsider's job. Nor one generally available to recent college graduates. Unless they have connections. But what was that "think tank?"

I e-mailed Jon Buzbee and asked him if Cowan had told him which think tank he worked for. Buzbee responded that Cowan had said it was called "Rebuild America" and was based in Washington. He also said that if I wanted to interview Cowan I should just call him up. He felt sure that Cowan would be thrilled to talk to me. Apparently, he is thrilled to talk to everyone except critics.

As it turns out, Congressman Levine sat on the board of Rebuild America, which explains the connection between Cowan's two major pre-Lead or Leave jobs. This connection also goes a long way toward explaining the origins of Cowan's political beliefs, because Rebuild America, which we'll come back to in a bit, turns out to be yet another neo-conservative group in "bipartisan" clothing.

So. Two guys. Two guys who worked in Washington. Two guys who moved in some pretty powerful circles in Washington. These two guys just woke up one day and decided to found a "grassroots" organization? I don't think so.

What happened is a little more complex. But, for now, let's take a quick look at what these two guys actually did. And actually did not do.

"The Largest Youth Advocacy Group In The Country?"

Lead or Leave's "Pledge" was something less than an earth-shattering success. Since the end of the Pledge period in November 1992, Lead or Leave's activities have followed a very unusual pattern. Every few months, Cowan and Nelson hold a big press conference to announce their latest plans. They have catchy names for these plans, and usually have no trouble pulling a few luminaries of various sorts together to publicly "show support" for them. They ride the media wave they create as far as they can go... and then they

announce their next grand scheme.

Cowan and Nelson don't seem very concerned about whether their plans ever accomplish anything concrete. All they seem to care about is whether or not they get media attention.

Anything they do or participate in gets trumpeted by their PR machine to the high heavens. And when I say PR machine, I mean machine. From the beginning, Lead or Leave retained the services of public relations firms. In the early days it was a company called Fenton Communications. Now it's a group called Millennium. These services are not cheap, which is why most actual grassroots organizations can rarely afford the price of such manipulators of the American conscience. Lead or Leave put them to good use. They have appeared all over the network media, radio, and print as "spokesmen" for young Americans. Anything they say, no matter how outlandish or unsubstantiated, has been faithfully reproduced from coast to coast.

From the moment of their first *Good Morning America* appearance in 1992, Cowan and Nelson have successfully cast themselves in the role of "generational leaders." Let's look at what they've done to deserve such a distinction:

- They've had all different kinds of press conferences. A press conference with Ross Perot in September, 1992, "announcing the release of 50,000 postcards urging candidates to take the Lead or Leave Pledge." Press conferences with Tsongas and Rudman about cutting the deficit. Press conferences with Sen. Bill Bradley of New Jersey about cutting the deficit. Press conferences announcing most ideas they plan to launch or are planning to plan to launch.

- They have held media events. These events usually take the form of small rallies. On October 16, 1992, they got "75 students in Montgomery, Alabama" to drop thousands of pennies on the ground — symbolizing the national debt. Get it? On February 16, 1993, Lead or Leave held a rally of around 200 in front of the headquarters of the American Association of Retired Persons, "protesting the deficit and the inequities of the Social Security system." More pennies were dumped. Lots o' press coverage. More press was garnered on a couple of stints on MTV — where they appeared without having to debate any opposing experts.

- They have spoken at other people's larger rallies. On September 19, 1992, Cowan and Nelson spoke at a noontime rally at Boston's downtown marketplace, Faneuil Hall. The rally was called by The Concord Coalition, Paul Tsongas' adult version of Lead or Leave. According to the September 20, 1992 *Boston Globe*, "At a Friday rally outside Faneuil Hall, where a blues band helped build a 400-person crowd, Tsongas juiced the onlookers." Faneuil Hall sits opposite a large "food court" near Boston's Financial District and City Hall.

After Tsongas finished his "juicing," Cowan and Nelson were invited up to speak. To a outdoor lunchtime crowd of about 400. Not to a crowd that actually showed up to Faneuil Hall just to hear them speak.

Nevertheless, a Lead or Leave information packet from February, 1993 describes the event like this: "September 20, 1992. 4000 people attend Lead or Leave's first public rally at Faneuil Hall in Boston." That is not a typo. 400 people having lunch has magically become 4000 people who showed up to "attend Lead or Leave's first public rally at Faneuil Hall."

Cowan and Nelson are obviously not strangers to classic propaganda techniques.

- In their 1994 information, they claimed that "With the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Lead or Leave created ActioNet, the first grassroots action network on the Internet — linking one million students." That is an outright lie. Lead or Leave barely exists on the Internet. Their World Wide Web site just went up less than a month ago, and they don't even have a UseNet discussion group. The Web site lists the number of readers it has had since it went up. As we went to press on February 24, 1995, the site had had 655 readers. Including us. They certainly don't have a million students on the Net doing anything — except maybe remaining blissfully ignorant of their existence.

- In the same packet they said that they "Sponsored a National Youth Summit which brought together 200 young leaders..." That is true. It took place in April, 1994, and included shiny, misguided movie stars like Ricki Lake, wonks from the Young Democrats and Young Republicans, and some conservative student body presidents.

What's not true is Lead or Leave's spin on the event. It was reported in the *Kansas City Star* [June 9, 1994] as "the first-ever political gathering of Generation X" — a phrase obviously fed to the *Star* by Lead or Leave. In their own literature, Lead or Leave called it "one of the largest youth conferences in the '90s." Odd, since small liberal arts colleges routinely hold larger events.

Just look at a few major progressive student political conferences in the last ten years: 1000 students at the Rutgers National Student Convention '88 at Rutgers University (February 1988), 7500 students at the Student Environ-

mental Action Coalition's (SEAC's) epic Threshold Conference in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois (October 1990), 1500 students at SEAC's 1991 Boulder, Colorado conference, and many, many others. Lead or Leave's event seems more like a big frat party by comparison.

- In the summer of 1994, Lead or Leave's office spent months trying to cobble together an actual student coalition around a new idea, the Register Once campaign, which they had conceived of earlier on. This plan called for student governments to agitate for polling places on campus. It was "organized" mostly by phone calls to student union presidents. We'll come back to Register Once and its deleterious effect on student politics a bit later.

- In October 1994, Lead or Leave held another 200-person "Student Leadership Summit." Far too late, amusingly, to have any actual effect on the November 1994 elections, which turned out horrendously enough without their help. Conference turnout included more actual student leadership than the first, but remained heavily unrepresentative of the generation as a whole.

It was at this conference that Cowan and Nelson at last made timid thrusts toward actually involving other people in their organization. They began finding warm bodies to flesh out L.E.A.D. — the Lead or Leave "national student advisory board" which Cowan and Nelson mentioned as early as 1993, but which still doesn't seem to have any real power. What didn't get created was a democratic structure for Lead or Leave, despite an attempt to create one on the part of some conference attendees. They were apparently talked out of their momentary attack of sanity by Cowan and Nelson. Power in Lead or Leave remained firmly in the leaders'

ARE YOU CULTURALLY DEPRAVED?



"JIM SIERGEY'S AND TOM ROBERTS' 'CULTURAL JETLAG' ... GOES BEYOND STRICTLY COMIC ART, STRETCHING INTO THE REALMS OF PHILOSOPHY AND POLITICS TO FORCE Highbrows AND LOWbrows TO SWIM IN THE SAME POOL."

— AARON COHEN, NEW CITY

"NOTHING FROM MEDIA TO MALLS TO PHONEY BON VIVANTS ESCAPES THESE GUYS, WHO ARE BOTH HIGHLY AND LOWLY CULTURED. GREAT STUFF!"

— FACTSHEET FIVE

"I LOVED CULTURAL JETLAG ..."

— CLAY GEERDES, COMIX WAVE

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hands. Little else was done at that "summit" except officially rubber-stamping Lead or Leave's Register Once campaign.

Following the conference, Lead or Leave's hyperbole went back into overdrive with their claim (in an October 13, 1994 press release) regarding Register Once that "At a Capitol Hill press conference with hundreds of America's student leaders, Lead or Leave launched the largest student campaign since the Vietnam War: a 350-school, 4-million student effort to knock down the barriers that prevent college students from registering and voting."

• Lead or Leave claims to have "educated three million students in 6000 classrooms with an innovative curriculum on the U.S. Economy... which was Distributed by Disney & Scholastic Inc." Lead or Leave did produce a short packet on the deficit for high-school consumption, but it is certainly a mystery how they came up with their figures for this claim. Try dividing 3,000,000 students by 6000 classrooms. It works out to 5000 students per class. Curious.

In all likelihood, the 3,000,000 student figure refers to the potential audience of their spot on a *Channel One* show in 1993. *Channel One*, formerly produced by the financially troubled Whittle Communications, is a ten-minute infomercial that students in poor schools around America have been forced to watch daily for the last couple of years. Their schools get a modest amount of TV equipment in exchange for enforced viewing of corporate-produced "news" and at least two full minutes of corporate advertising [see "Unplugging *Channel One*," *As We Are* Vol 1., No. 2]. A

False Prophecy Syndrome: The Gaffes of Lead...or Leave

The Great "Deficit Curriculum" Confusion

10/6/93 [from *The Boston Globe*]: "...is distributing 'deficit workbooks' to 11 million high school students this fall."

11/16/93 [from *The Boston Globe*]: "...effort to reach 9 million high schoolers."

11/7/94 [from *The Dallas Morning News*]: "...reached 3 million students in 6000 classrooms."

Other Exaggerations

Summer 1994: [from the Register Once information packet]: "L.E.A.D. was created in 1993 to assist student leaders in further empowering their campuses. L.E.A.D. has become one of the largest student networks in history, with 58 schools and three major student associations represented."

10/13/94: [from a Lead or Leave press release]: "Support for Register Once has been overwhelming. More than 350 schools in all 50 states have endorsed the campaign and are leading a national petition drive that will secure more than 500,000 signatures of support."

Stuff That Just Didn't Happen

10/6/93 [from *The Boston Globe*]: "...planning to hold a 'Youth to Power' rally next spring, bringing young people from around the country to protest deficit spending."

12/93 [from 12/93 Lead or Leave information packet]: "PLUG N2 POLYTX: In the spring of 1994, Lead or Leave is joining other leading youth and political organizations to sponsor a national youth festival in Washington, D.C. — the first generational rally in two decades."

12/93 [same source]: "DEBT ROCK '94: The Lead or Leave Education Fund, together with the producer of 'Live Aid,' Mr. Hal Uplinger, is sponsoring a July rock concert to generate national awareness about the impact of America's Debt."

12/93 [same source]: "GRASSROOTS: Lead or Leave is orchestrating a national recruitment drive to triple membership and build an imposing political base for the 1994 elections."

Summer 1994: [from the Register Once information packet]: [Lead or Leave sponsoring] "Up 2 You: Fall 1994 voter registration drive..."

Summer 1994: [from a Lead or Leave print ad]: "This fall, we will be working with a coalition of nearly 500 colleges and universities to register and mobilize tens of thousands of young voters."

—JP

mere presence on *Channel One*, however, does not amount to "educating" anyone — since it has been widely reported that the most common student reaction to the broadcasts has been to sleep through them.

For more information on Lead or Leave's "activism," please note the information above [see sidebar "False Prophecy Syndrome," above].

"Excuse me, can I copy your notes?": The Media and Lead...or Leave

The American mass media shares the blame for Lead or Leave's easy rise to national prominence.

Lead or Leave is a prime beneficiary of an effect known as "Pack Journalism." Or, simply put, Coverage Breeds More Coverage. If one big city newspaper writes a cover article about handsome, "fiscally responsible" youngsters with a trendy name like "Lead or Leave," it's a sure bet that newspapers around the country will do likewise. Coverage of

groups like Lead or Leave can thus spread like a cancer.

Too many journalists are cookie-cutter products of college journalism courses. Very few of them are taught, or have the inclination, to be investigative reporters. Very few of them have much real world writing experience prior to getting their first staff jobs. When "Gen X" stories are being assigned, editors often turn, naturally, to their youngest staff members. These modern college-trained journalists are often very trusting souls.

They don't ask many questions of their sources, like, "Why are Cowan and Nelson really so excited about the deficit? What do they stand to gain from doing what they do? And who are these special interests that are backing them anyway?" Even if they have time to find out more about their interviewees, they often don't. Why bother? Why shoot down a "grassroots student organizing group" like Lead or Leave? Why rain on their parade?

So, when Lead or Leave seems to be everywhere in the media saying that they are "leaders," why doubt them? Just take them at face value, get the quotes, write the piece, put it to bed, and collect your check.

This pattern may explain why, out of the over 30 clips I've collected on Lead or Leave from newspapers and magazines all over the country, only three even bother to quote young activist critics of Cowan and Nelson et al. Only three other pieces have said anything that could even be considered critical of Lead or Leave. The general trend is clear — take whatever Lead or Leave says at face value.

There are many reasons why this is disturbing, but the worst is this: mainstream media is not holding young "leaders" to the same standards as their "adult" counterparts. Instead of analysis, we see uncritical admiration.

If Lead or Leave were an "adult" group like their mentors in the Concord Coalition, they would have a much more difficult time positioning themselves as a grassroots membership organization. Like the Concord Coalition, Lead or Leave would be considered a "network." They would still get their political message out in the media quite handily, but they would have much less populist cloth in which to drape themselves. And they would lose much of their effect in the Halls of Power.

The fact that Lead or Leave spins itself as a "youth" group gives them a certain freedom to say whatever they want to when speaking to the press.

Part of this relates to propaganda already put out in the media for some years about my generation being "apathetic" and "slackers." These days, anyone young doing anything vaguely "active" in society is supposed to be cause for extreme excitement — just as long as such activism is not calling for any real change in the status quo. Never mind that thousands of young people were quite active on a variety of bread-and-butter issues throughout the last ten years. Since they tended to be anti-corporate in their outlook and critical of who held power in society and why, they were discounted as crackpots. When they turned a thousand out at Boston University against investment in South Africa, tens of thousands at massive rallies in Washington for abortion rights, or hundreds of thousands out on campuses across the U.S. against The Gulf War in 1991, they were being "reminiscent of the '60s." Never doing anything worth consistent coverage.

Having safely buried a very large, very recent legacy of progressive activism by young people by the simple expedient of ignoring them, the mass media portrays any young person saying or doing anything that has a happy (but harmless) "active" face on it in the most glowing of lights. Since young progressive activists never really existed in media to begin with, it's no trick for a well-positioned group like Lead or Leave to claim their record without doing any of the work. Lead or Leave's slogans fly far and fast in such a vacuum, and play well to an unquestioning media:

"Largest demonstration since the Vietnam War?" Sure!
"Largest student organization in America?" Why not?
"Largest student conference in the Nineties?" Right On! It doesn't matter what the slogan is, as long as someone young and tame is saying it.

In the absence of much real political debate in the mass media, this sort of ageist "all young people think alike" mentality makes it far too easy for groups like Lead or Leave to say that they speak for all young Americans. If a) all young people think alike, and b) Cowan and Nelson are young, then c) all young people think like Cowan and Nelson, and d) Cowan and Nelson speak for all young people. Q.E.D.

"Bipartisan" Is... As The Banking Industry Does

The core political issue for Lead or Leave remains the reduction of the deficit (the amount added to the national debt each year). Their favorite way to cut the deficit is by eliminating Social Security. This idea has remained their central platform since Lead or Leave's inception.

What has changed is Lead or Leave's strategy. Students will not mobilize in any numbers around the deficit and its supposed links to Social Security. They might believe Lead or Leave's rhetoric, in part or in whole, but they are loath to actually do anything about their beliefs. The deficit is just too abstract. It doesn't really hit young people where they live. Despite repeated exhortations by Cowan and Nelson about the "huge tax burden on the young," most young people don't really pay much in taxes — because most young people in this country don't earn much.

Lead or Leave woke up and smelled the coffee some time in 1993. They must have realized these simple truths about their less fortunate peers, and come up with an appropriate strategy. Cowan and Nelson began to talk about education issues. They began to cry for a halt to cuts in education. And then they called for attacks on Social Security by posing it as a situation in which those "greedy geezers" were responsible for "spending away young people's future." Education cuts were now held up as the primary example of how Social Security and other "entitlements" benefited the old at the expense of the young.

In this way, Lead or Leave sought to stifle the growing number of critics within the student activist community who were realizing that Cowan and Nelson could talk a blue streak but had nothing to show for their talk. And they could push their core issues — reducing the deficit and cutting Social Security — to a vastly expanded audience.

Cowan and Nelson's oft-stated political positions can be found in their book, *Revolution X* [Penguin Books, 1994]. It's a sort of "one-stop shopping mart" of their sound-bites. And it is filled with typical economic and political misstatements, blunders, and out-and-out falsehoods.

From the book: "*T*oday the debt is \$4.5 trillion, so large that if you paid a dollar for every seed on every Big Mac ever sold, you still wouldn't pay off the debt. You already owe \$17,500 for your personal share — and because the debt is rising a half-billion dollars a day, that personal stake will top \$21,700 by the year 2000." [Revolution X, pg. 20]

The 4.5 trillion dollar figure for the national debt is very much a subject of debate these days by economists of all

stripes. There is no firm number that has been agreed on by all concerned, nor will there likely ever be. That's because economists argue over whether investments and expenses should be considered equally or not. The figures used by Lead or Leave on economic matters tend to come from conservative organizations like the National Taxpayers Union, but you might have a different opinion.

Do you consider Amtrak an expense, or an investment in society with returns that can be quantified in terms of increased production and other factors? Conservatives generally consider it an expense. A progressive would consider it an investment. For this reason, progressive economists have pegged the figure for the national debt as low as 3 trillion dollars. That's still a lot of money, but even the high debt figures quoted by Lead or Leave account for no more than 4 percent of the Gross National Product (the total annual worth of the U.S. economy). Talking about the debt is meaningless in the absence of a comparison to the GNP, because the GNP/Debt ratio is the best single indicator of the country's economic health.

According to Andrew Cohen's article in the July 19, 1993 issue of *The Nation*, countries like France and Italy, with much bigger social spending programs than the U.S., carry debts of as much as 6 - 8% with no major problems. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with borrowing money for productive uses; Americans do this every day when they take out mortgages to buy houses. As John Hess, a retired *New York Times* reporter, put it on a recent broadcast on WBAI-FM (New York), "The debt is like a mortgage on a house; the house is the U.S." It is something that one can easily plan a payment schedule for. It doesn't have to be a disaster.

But no matter how you calculate the debt, the kicker is the way that Lead or Leave calculates each young American's "share" of the debt as 17,500 dollars — going up to 21,700 dollars by the year 2000. This figure is derived simply by dividing all taxpaying Americans into the Lead or Leave figure for the debt, 4.5 trillion dollars. This is a very misleading way to put it to people, and typical of Lead or Leave scare tactics. It assumes that everybody in the U.S. makes the same amount of money, and, more importantly, that every taxpayer holds an equal responsibility for the debt.

It also assumes that every American holds an equal responsibility for paying off the deficit, which Lead or Leave puts at 300 billion dollars a year in their book and at 400 billion dollars a year in most of their other literature. Clearly, the entire deficit and the national debt itself could be paid off by raising taxes on the most wealthy sectors of society and by cutting the military budget. The other way to do it is by cutting social programs and increasing taxes on the poor. Before making this choice, however, we need to decide which problems caused the debt to begin with. Did the rich, large corporations and the military cause the debt? Or did social programs? Let's see how Lead or Leave addresses these problems:

"How Did We Spend Ourselves \$4.5 Trillion Into Debt?"

***"Military Spending.* Despite dramatic changes in the nature of military conflict and the diminishing threats facing the nation, the United States continued through the 1980s to spend over one-fourth of its national budget on military**

programs that did not best meet its defense need and that had limited spillover benefits to the civilian economy.

***"Tax Breaks for the Rich.* The U.S. Treasury lost billions in the 1980s by giving tax breaks to corporations and the wealthy. The recipients were intended to pass on the benefits by increasing the number of high-wage jobs available, but the expected economic benefits ultimately were not generated." [Revolution X, pg. 22]**

These first two statements are true. Unusually candid, in fact, for Cowan and Nelson.

Their last statement is false, contradicts the previous two and sets the stage for Lead or Leave's Social Security-bashing:

***"Middle-Class Welfare.* Uncle Sam continued to give away hundreds of billions in federal benefits to the middle and upper classes. In the early 1990s, \$120 billion a year in federal benefits went to households earning over \$50,000." [Revolution X, pg. 22]**

What Cowan and Nelson must be talking about here is the small amount of Social Security benefits people earning over 50,000 dollars receive — plus lots of social spending programs like Pell Grants for education, small business loans, Community Development Block Grants, and who knows what else... highway construction, maybe. All stuff that Lead or Leave makes noises about wanting to save. Except, of course, the Social Security part. (Social Security shouldn't even be considered, since it's not part of the congressional budget, and not part of the debt problem at all.)

The truth is, what we find in Cowan and Nelson's first two examples are the main causes of the huge rise in the national debt under Reagan and Bush — an increase of 2 - 3 trillion dollars depending on who you ask. And in the very next sentence of *Revolution X* we find the biggest contradiction of all in Lead or Leave's logic:

"We didn't go \$4.5 trillion into debt by borrowing to strengthen our social and economic prosperity — to build a 21st-century infrastructure, lift every child out of poverty, make our streets safe, revolutionize our education system, or give U.S. companies incentives to compete with Asia and Europe. Just the opposite." [emphasis mine] [Revolution X, pgs. 22-23]

Wait a minute. "Give U.S. companies incentives?" They want to give big corporations *more* money?! Who was it precisely that was benefiting from the massive military spending Cowan and Nelson just said was responsible for the national debt? Many, many big U.S. companies. Many of whom are also multinational corporations whose very existence is due to over 40 years of huge military spending taken directly from the U.S. taxpayer.

Let's not forget the massive tax breaks many of these corporations are granted in "exchange" for agreeing to build factories in the U.S. And the lost tax revenue (and jobs) from the many large corporations who move their factories to "free trade zones" in countries like Mexico with dictatorial governments, low wages, and repressive labor practices. And the big cuts in taxes on the richest fifth of Americans, only partially brought back up again under Clinton, and now destined to go back down under a Gingrich Congress. And we certainly can't leave out the S&L crisis — a trillion-dollar bailout of the banking industry.

All of this was paid for by the taxpayers, and benefited a

few banks — the same banks that had made obscene profits in the 1980s by pursuing risky investments that created the S&L crisis in the first place. The payments come in the form of the debt. Which brings us to the last piece of the debt puzzle. Who is this debt owed to, anyway? Well, it seems that the U.S. borrowed lots of money from a variety of rich bondholders (many from abroad), and from big multinational banks.

Banks are in business to make money. So, the U.S. with its big debt finds itself in a position formerly reserved for Third World countries who owed money to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. When you owe to the big boys of world finance, they expect a quick return on their investment. If you don't pay them fast enough, they get real upset and start raising your interest rates, which screws up your economy, or, worse still, they threaten to cut you off entirely and drive you into bankruptcy.

Our country is dancing to the tune of the world's bankers. When leaders of Third World countries are faced with this situation (being generally rich themselves, and friends to the rich), they don't empty their own coffers to service their debt. They take the money they need from the poor and from the working and middle classes of their country. They do something called "imposing austerity," which means cutting social spending, cutting all programs that benefit the bottom strata of society. The majority of their country's citizens.

Noam Chomsky, linguistics professor at MIT, persistent political and economic critic of the U.S. government, and a person one is



not supposed to quote in "respectable" publications, puts it this way in his new book, *The Prosperous Few and The Restless Many*:
"The United States is so deeply in hock to the international finance community (because of the debt) that they have a lock on U.S. policy. If something happens here — say increasing workers' salaries — that the bondholders don't like and will cut down their short-term profit, they'll just start withdrawing from the U.S. bond market... So social policy, even in a country as rich and powerful as the United States (which is the richest and most powerful of them all), is mortgaged to the international wealthy sectors here and abroad."

The same sectors that got this nation into debt not only expect the rest of us to pay the tab, but expect us to give up our democratic system in favor of an oligarchy in which the banks call all the shots. This transition is already happening in

many ways, and has been happening for well over 20 years.

It is for precisely that reason that Lead or Leave's assaults on Social Security, as the mechanism for paying off the debt, must be taken very seriously by all Americans of conscience, young and old alike.

Selling Out Our Future: Lead or Leave's Social Security Scam

"We're doing this for you, Victoria." (Lead or Leave to a 5-year-old at a Dallas book signing — from *The Dallas Morning News*, Nov. 7, 1994)

For a group that claims it is not promoting generational warfare, Lead or Leave spends a great deal of its time doing exactly that. Much of its literature and much of the book, *Revolution X*, are filled with shrill rhetoric blaming the economic, political, and spiri-

tual woes of young Americans on the "Boomers" (our parents) and on our grandparents. Why else would the book be called *Revolution "X"?* Rather than admit that large corporations, large banks, and demagogues like Ronald Reagan are responsible for the difficult economic future most Americans of all ages face, Cowan and Nelson and friends prefer to engage anyone willing to listen to them in a giant game of intellectual hide-and-seek. They point the finger at older Americans without owning up to the consequences of such behavior.

Lead or Leave is fueling the efforts of groups like The Concord Coalition to cripple, then finally eliminate, programs like Social Security. Thus, their "Social Security won't be there when you get older" comment is poised to become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Here is how Cowan and Nelson frame the Social

Security "crisis" in chapter six of *Revolution X*:

"Today's Social Security system is unfair and headed for collapse. While it worked for older generations, it is certain to

penalize most in our generation (we'll be lucky to get any return on what we pay in)... Although many government

programs give you benefits only if you need them — including food stamps, child nutrition, and student loans — this is not so for programs targeted at the elderly.

"No matter how rich you are, you are entitled to Social Security and Medicare. That means Johnny Carson and Leona Helmsley are both entitled to a federal check. Talk about welfare for the well-off.

"To fix this, we need an 'affluence' test for all recipients of federal benefits, where everyone earning more than \$40,000 a year — working or retired — would get fewer benefits." [Revolution X, pgs. 122-123]

Several stunning leaps in logic are being made here with virtually no explanation or backup facts and figures. The first statement is the largest of these. Lead or Leave claims that entitlements "make up half the federal budget" and are therefore unfair because many of them benefit older Americans. This supposedly leaves young people out in the cold. They say that "it's headed for financial collapse" based simply on an assertion that "the U.S. Social Security system projects that Social Security could be broke by 2020."

They then move on to insinuate that most older Americans are taking more than they really need from the government — which also, we're led to believe, contributes to its insolvency.

Then they suggest that rich older people are taking a tremendous amount of Social Security benefits that they don't need — which, they say, both

contributes even more to Social Security insolvency and raises the deficit by increasing "unnecessary" government spending.

The "solution" to these problems

must begin, they conclude, by means-testing Social Security (and other entitlements) and removing the rich from the system. This, they insist elsewhere, would lower the deficit by billions. Without hurting anybody, like, say, poor old people.

By way of

refutation of these fantastical claims, let's consider the "means-testing solution" first, then work backwards to the crux of the matter. In his article "The False Messiah: Pete Peterson's Revelations Are Not Gospel" [*The American Prospect*, Summer 1994], Robert S. McIntyre addresses means-testing in the midst of his demolition of the anti-Social Security positions of Pete Peterson — the Lead or Leave backer whose ideas on the subject are lifted almost word for word by Cowan and Nelson.

"But shouldn't the rich still forfeit most or all of their Social Security benefits, merely on principle? The Concord Coalition has gotten a lot of mileage out of its revelation that in 1990 retired people with annual incomes of more than \$100,000 got \$8 billion in gross Social Security benefits. It may sound like a lot, but after taxes (under current tax law) that amounts to less than \$6 billion annually — about 2 percent of total benefits."

So the rich are only getting a tiny amount of benefits from the program. But why should they get any benefits at all? Well, if Lead or Leave simply wanted to cut out all benefits paid to the richest few percent of citizens, that would be a positive thing. What Lead or Leave doesn't tell you is that they and their allies aren't just in favor of cutting benefits for the rich. **They also want to allow the rich to stop paying into Social Security altogether.**

This would be a catastrophic blow to the Social Security system. Quoting

MacIntyre again:

"In an October 25, 1993 New Republic column praising parts of the Peterson plan, the usually estimable Michael Kinsley, echoing economist Milton Friedman, criticized Social Security for 'transferring money from poorer people to richer ones.' That's a harsh indictment if true. But it's not. Despite the cap on taxable wages, the best-off fifth of all families (incomes above \$55,000) pays almost half the Social Security taxes. But the best-off fifth of Social Security recipients (incomes above \$39,000) gets only about 20 percent of the after-tax benefits. In other words, taxes paid by the better off cover not only retirement benefits for higher-income people, but a large share of the benefits that go to lower-income people as well. That hardly looks like 'redistributing income upward.'"

Look closely at what Social Security really does. And who really benefits from its continued existence.

Social Security ain't just for the old anymore. There are five major categories of benefits: Retirement, Disability, Family Benefits, Survivors, and Medicare. Taken in total, Social Security takes a tremendous burden off younger members of this society. It helps care for not just older Americans, but the infirm, the disabled, the orphaned and the widowed.

Social Security is self-financing. It is currently running with a huge surplus. It is not part of the congressional budget. Everybody pays in via payroll taxes until retirement age. Those who need assistance then get benefits from the system based on their need. It is social insurance, not an "investment fund," as groups like Lead or Leave view it. It is an income transfer program between rich and poor in this society, not a "pyramid" scheme, as many conservatives are fond of calling it.

Social Security is the single most popular program in U.S. government history. It was founded with the view that all members of our society are deserving of, or "entitled" to, having their basic human needs met from cradle to grave. It was founded in the belief that if a democratic society is only as wealthy as the sum total of its citizenry, then creating a system that would ensure people's livelihoods (at least in part, at least in old age) would enrich the society as a whole.

It seems only logical to me that guaranteeing a basic income to our grandparents, far from hurting young people, takes a tremendous burden off us. If my parents had had to pay for my grandmother's years of infirmity themselves, then my brother and I probably would not have been able to go to college. If I had had to help take care of my grandmother as well, I would have had a much more difficult time getting out of the house and making my way in the world.

I took the liberty of going to the horse's mouth about Social Security. I did something virtually no other recent article about Lead or Leave (or about Social Security for that matter) has done. I interviewed someone from the Social Security Administration, and asked his opinion about the system's health and future.

I spoke to Principal Deputy Commissioner Lawrence Thompson, the number two person at Social Security. Here's some of what he had to say:

"The program, as I'm sure you know, has got a schedule of taxes and a schedule of benefits that are in the current law, and, if you look forward about 35 years up to the year 2029, the scheduled benefits begin to be more than the scheduled revenues. All right. Now, people talk about that as if it is bankruptcy, which is certainly a loaded word, since what it is, is 35 years from now there are going to have to be some adjustments to make sure that the receipts are enough to cover all of the scheduled benefit payments. If no adjustments were made, there would still be enough money to pay about 95 percent of the scheduled benefit payments. It's not as if, somehow, there's nothing there."

This is a vastly different scenario from the one that groups like Lead or Leave are currently painting. Thompson was also quick to point out that "there are very few other financial aspects in anybody's life which you can project 35 years into the future and get some sense of what the picture looks like." He noticed that the congressional budget is never held to the same high standards. Congress is lucky if it can

project from year to year. I asked him what he thought about the claims being made that Social Security was "bank-



Lawrence H. Thompson, Principal Deputy Commissioner, Social Security Administration

rupting the country":

"The fact of the matter is that Social Security has to finance itself. It's the one part of the federal budget that is never going to cause a big deficit, because it has to finance itself. That is the rules." I asked him more about financing: "Well, we do that through the payroll taxes, and then if we have a surplus, it is invested in government bonds. But basically the payroll tax then recedes, and any interest on the surplus has to be enough to cover the benefit payments. And the law says if they aren't, then the benefits get cut back. So you're never in a situation where you have to rob the rest of the budget in order to pay Social Security benefits. They are self-financed... regardless of what the rest of the budget is doing."

Thompson also made a point that not everyone reaches retirement age.

Although people live longer these days, he said that 2 out of 10 people die before that point. Morbid thought, but it does tend to keep the budget down.

I asked him how Social Security employees think about the program:

"Well, we think of it as social insurance. What is social insurance? It is an insurance program in which people, while they are working, make contributions, and then when events occur that require the earnings to be cut off, they are covered for partial replacement of lost earnings... Now it's a social program, too. And I think it's important for us to realize that, by design, this program helps proportionally those people with the lowest wages. And so, in addition... there is more adequate protection being given to the low-wage worker than to the high-wage worker."

Thompson gets angry that this point is often ignored by critics of Social Security. He feels that the criticisms come mostly from "high earners" like Pete Peterson, "who then talk about what a lousy deal Social Security is." But "if high earners all abandon the program, then the low earners are going to be the biggest losers."

Finally, I asked him about his feelings on the security of the program's future:

"I think our program is at a very sustainable and defensible level. It's going to get a little bit more expensive to maintain the current benefit level when we look on 30 or 40 years from now. And we have to have a debate about whether we want to bear that higher cost or whether we want to make some adjustments... And we need to fine-tune some things. Parts of the disability program need to be rethought because of the evolution of new thinking about the relationship between the disabled population and the rest of the population. So there's some fine-tuning that needs to go on, but I think, as a general proposition, it's a pretty adequate program right now."

So do I. So do most Americans. But here is what Lead or Leave thinks

courtesy photo, SSA Press Office

about the future of Social Security:

"Ultimately, we will have to shift to a federally backed private pension system, which would let people opt out of Social Security and save privately for their retirement." [Revolution X, pg. 124]

Save in banks, that is. And instead of the overhead of less than 1 percent that Social Security runs at, private pension holders can look forward to 10, 20, or 30 percent of their money being taken off the top in overhead and profit for the bank. So, ultimately, Lead or Leave shows its true colors. Without offering any real explanation why, they say that Social Security will have to be privatized. And lest readers think this would be voluntary:

"Saving could not be optional; the government would have to mandate that a set portion of your paycheck was set aside and placed in a private retirement account." [Revolution X, pg. 125]

There would be absolutely no difference between that system and the current system, except that bankers like Pete Peterson, who hate Social Security because it's a fund they can't touch, would finally have their hands on all that lovely taxpayers' retirement money they've been dying to service the debt with.

This is why Lead or Leave is so concerned for our future. They're concerned to make sure that their backers get a big return on their investments.

"Register Once": Lead...or Leave's Assault on the United States Student Association

Lead or Leave's central political theme of fiscal austerity is a hard sell to the intended audience. So, sometime in 1993, they adopted "education reform" as a new public platform. They began to preach saving the education budget from the budget ax, while continuing to raise hysteria about the deficit and continually bashing Social Security.

As they pursued this tack, they began to run into a big problem. That problem was the United States Student Association (USSA). USSA is the actual holder of the title "largest youth advocacy group in the country." USSA represents the student governments of about 340 mostly public colleges. They are the main student force in Washington defending the federal education budget from cuts.

USSA has been at it for over 20 years. With an annual budget of about 330,000 dollars and a staff of 6 (2 field organizers, a field director, a legislative director, and an elected President and Vice-President running the show, plus one intern), they visit every one of their schools every year, run Grassroots Organizing Weekend seminars at 60 regional sites, run affirmative action programs, do such lobbying as they can manage, and produce background reports and positions on a myriad of student-related issues. They represent the needs of 3,000,000 students on Capitol Hill through their network of dozens of State Student Associations and member campuses. Their entire budget comes from their



The incoming and outgoing United States Student Association staff. Vice President Jeanette Galanis, front.

courtesy photo: USSA

membership. They have hundreds of activists helping them around the country.

If Lead or Leave were going to work on educational access issues in this country, they had two choices — work with USSA, or work against USSA. They have chosen the latter path.

At first, it seems Lead or Leave tried to work around USSA. They called many student governments and State Student Associations, trying to pull them into their sphere of influence as early as October, 1992 (during their Pledge period) — only to be rebuffed on numerous occasions. The most common response Lead or Leave got was, "No thanks, never heard of you, we already work with USSA."

Jeanette Galanis, 25, vice president of USSA, remembers this period well. In 1991, at the University of Colorado at Boulder, she led a slate of progressive activists to victory in student government elections on a

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FOR THOSE WHO FEEL EDGEY

platform of increasing access to education for poor and working students, increasing affirmative action for students of color, adding sexual orientation to the campus antidiscrimination clause, creating a sound campus environmental policy, and creating concrete strategies to make the campus safer for women students. At age 23, in 1992, she was a Tri-Exec (sharing leadership with two other people) of the largest independent student government in the country.

Galanis controlled an 18.3 million dollar budget, ran five campus buildings, hired and fired staff, and generally fought for the political and economic rights of the 27,000 CU students. When Lead or Leave first called her in 1992, Galanis says, "I told them that I wasn't really interested and that we were a very strong member of USSA and the Student Environmental Action Coalition, and that we really didn't need any other national organizations around — especially national organizations that didn't provide any services."

In the spring of 1994, during the last semester of her senior year, and as president emeritus, she heard from Lead or Leave again. They had begun aggressively calling the new Tri-Execs. She was in the student government office organizing for International Women's Week events on campus when a Tri-Exec, who was also a USSA national board member, came into the office laughing about having just gotten off the phone with Lead or Leave. Galanis remembers him being dismissive:

"He said, 'who are these two white men who are completely clueless and don't seem to know how to do anything but wear cowboy boots?' That's an almost verbatim quote... I didn't think evilly about them, but to be quite honest I didn't think much about them at all, even then. I said just don't call 'em back."

But as April came around, Lead or Leave had its first national conference. They began to find students, particularly from conservative southern campuses that had never been associated with USSA, who were in agreement with their anti-deficit platform and were willing to overlook their lack of a grassroots track record. The Florida and Texas Student Associations, unaffiliated with USSA, hooked up with Lead or Leave, following in the footsteps of the conservative Arizona Student Association, who had pulled out of USSA in 1993 and begun working with Lead or Leave.

By the summer, Lead or Leave had solidified its rhetoric for its "Register Once" campaign. This campaign called for students to fight for polling places on campuses, claiming (despite its name) that the lack of campus voting booths was the key element keeping students from actual participation in the U.S. political system.

USSA, meanwhile, was convinced that the problem was mostly due to a lack of student voter registration. To help solve the problem, USSA ran an extremely successful voter registration campaign called Students Are Voting Everywhere (SAVE). In the 1992 campaign year alone, USSA campuses registered 210,000 students. In 1994, they registered 85,000. Lead or Leave, lacking a grassroots base, chose a strategy in Register Once that would not require them,

once again, to actually do anything. But it had the veneer of a "student empowerment" issue.

In fact, Lead or Leave chose a non-issue. Their contention was that many states purposely kept students out of the political process. "Thousands of young people live, work, and study on each of those campuses," said Lead or Leave's national field director, Tracy Newman, "...and these students have far less access to voting facilities than the rest of the community does." They released a study on youth voting in the U.S. in October, 1994, but, since they never stated their methodology for the study, it cannot be taken seriously. And the study did not help them prove that adding more campus polling sites was a substitute for voter registration drives.

Since Lead or Leave couldn't hope to compete with USSA's registration drives, Register Once was the best they could come up with. Throughout the summer of 1994, they made another round of calls to student government offices around the country. Again they called many strong USSA schools. And this time they seriously overstepped the tolerance levels of many student union leaders in their harried, almost desperate attempts to sign up student governments for Register Once.

April Waddy, 20, president of the Associated Students of Oregon State University and chair of the National People of Color Student Coalition (a USSA affiliate), was one of the student leaders they called:

"My first interaction with Lead or Leave was this summer after becoming student government president. USSA was having the SAVE campaign, and I was active on that campaign on this campus. Lead or Leave was having the Register Once campaign, and our State Affairs Director had been getting calls from them. And they were sending me this huge amount of junk mail, of just stuff. I looked it over and thought, 'OK, this is not the kind of thing we want to participate in.' And they were calling and calling and calling us, and I was like, 'no, this is not something we want to participate in.'"

The trouble began when John Issacs, Waddy's State Affairs director, agreed to have Lead or Leave send him a packet of information, "basically to get them off our backs," Waddy says. So they sent him a packet and they sent her a packet. On the front it said, "Thanks for joining us." Inside,

There is no way Lead or Leave could be accountable to other young people, "because they don't get money or votes from you. And they don't see your participation as something crucial."

it said, "Dear April, great to have you on board, please pass this on to your liaison." It was unsigned. Waddy still didn't think anything of it. Then the calls began:

"At this point I started getting calls from our fellow schools, some of the eight other schools in the Oregon system, saying they had been solicited by Lead or Leave. And part of the schpiel they gave them was 'Hey, OSU is a member of

The State and the **MTV** Revolution

— by P.F. De Fazio —

Anybody who watches MTV in the evening has probably seen the promotional advertisements that flash *The State* across the screen in typical kaleidoscopic MTV fashion. A reasonable person might assume that a program called *The State* would have something to do with politics. Nothing could be further from the truth. Despite the endless resources that MTV could have put into knife-edged political satire, *The State* just pollutes the airwaves with

dumb, rehashed comedy. "We wanted to call ourselves 'Froggy's Your Man,'" explained one of the show's cast members. "We also considered 'The New Group.' We settled on 'The State' because it was simple... It means nothing but sounds cool."

Welcome the brave new world of comedy brought to you by those with nothing to say. The cast of *The State* began as a troupe by the same name about four years prior to being "discovered" by MTV producers Jonathan Bendis and Steven Starr. All 11 cast members met in New York City while attending NYU, where most of them were film majors. This all-white group of ten men and one woman went on to perform comedy skits in New York theaters until they were invited by MTV to bring their inanity to television.

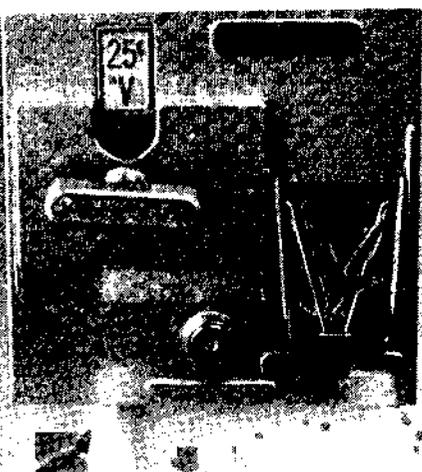
Cast members Tom Lennon, Kevin Allison, David Wain, Todd Holoubek, and Ben Garant say they are free to write and direct their own skits. But if you overlook the fast pacing, youthful cast, and MTV slickness, the show's creators display the same degree of smarmy arrogance and chauvinism that you can find anywhere else on TV. Despite the rich comic potential offered by, say, Republican lawmakers, members of *The State* repeat the same tired themes borrowed from the hackneyed stereotypes of mainstream American culture. Working-class people are portrayed as ignoramuses. The bitchy mom stereotype, as depicted by Kerri Kenney, the only female cast member, has been rehashed ad nauseam on American TV for decades. We also get inbred country folk, dippy homosexual men, lazy young people, etc. When members

of the troupe joke off-camera about wearing blackface or being closet gays, their comments ring of condescension and elitism. The real message of the group seems to be 'we're better than you and too cool to care about much of anything.'

According to David Wain, the cast of *The State* actually makes a deliberate attempt to steer clear of social commentary. "[Political humor] is not something that's particularly interesting to us," says Wain. "It always dates what you're doing," complains Ben Garant. "Everyone's already doing that," another whined.

Male cast members of *The State* have attempted to add more female characters by constantly showing up in drag. "That's just our homo side," one cast member remarked with a laugh. But even in skirts, they can't muster anything intelligent to say about gender or gay rights. Unfortunately, there's more than just subtle misogyny in the barrage of skits featuring the domineering mother, the air-headed cheerleader, or the woman with PMS. While the cast members I spoke to didn't appear concerned about these representations, their comments regarding the only female player seemed revealing. When asked how Kerri Kenney came to be a part of their troupe, one cast member explained: "She just had such a nice set of hooters." Another added, "Just kidding, her hooters aren't that great."

MTV producers who oversee *The State* have, on occasion, exercised their veto power over this swill. But according to cast members, the disagreements have been over format, not substance. "If we could cram 100 eight-second skits into the show, MTV would cream," explained Kevin Allison. Allison says the group would like to produce longer skits or present a number of skits with a unifying theme. However, what the group wants is apparently of little concern to MTV executives. Cast members self-consciously admit that the producers think "no one is really watching [the show], but skimming through it." Because of this assump-



AWA photo: Jill MacLeod/cast photo: courtesy MTV

The cast of MTV's *The State*

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The Business of MTV

Like traditional television, MTV and other free cable stations make their money through advertising. The only thing revolutionary about MTV is that it doesn't have to produce its own programming. The major record labels, anxious to use videos as a means of promoting their music, supply MTV with the videos at no charge. But this may be changing. In recent years, the Nielson rating system has forced MTV to search for newer, ever more innovative ways to entice 18- to 24-year-old viewers into watching for longer stretches of time. "Ratings are the main reason that MTV started to produce most of its own programming," MTV President Judy McGrath recently told *The New Yorker*. "[The Nielson rating] system credits a rating to a program if a household watches it for most of a 15-minute interval, and hardly anyone watches 15 minutes of videos." A higher Nielson rating is likely to translate into increased advertising revenue. As a result, the network has been producing more and more of its own longer-format shows, such as *The Real World*, *Dead at 21*, and *Beavis and Butthead*. The majority of MTV's new shows, even those occupying a half-hour time slot, are still broken up into multiple segments, apparently in order to maintain their appeal to channel surfers. But the concept of offering longer individual programs seems to be working. As *Advertising Age* and *Variety* make clear, MTV continues to pull in an ever-increasing amount of advertising dollars. It's estimated that 15 percent of all advertising dollars spent on television go to MTV, VH-1, or Nickelodeon.

MTV is big business. The network, which at last count was being aired in 58 countries, is owned by Viacom, Inc., one of a handful of media monopolies that dish out most of the world's information. Viacom was in the news this past summer when it completed its acquisition of another media giant, Paramount Communications Inc. Paramount itself includes a major motion picture studio, smaller television and film studios, several movie theater chains, and a number of book

Revolution from page 41

tion, the skits are deliberately kept short in the hopes of capturing the brief attention span of a passing channel surfer.

So why does MTV air this video junk food? If *The State* is just a reflection of the lame personal views of its actors, is it an attempt to merely solicit a chuckle from the similarly impaired? The show's producers must believe that this type of lowest-common-denominator humor pays off. Its carefully cultivated image notwithstanding, MTV is more about making money than promoting ephemeral concepts such as justice, peace, or the common good. Everything shown on MTV can be understood in terms of the target demographic, primarily the 18 - 24 age group. MTV runs public service announcements about AIDS and condoms, airs videos by controversial rap artists, celebrates the destructive

impulse with *Beavis and Butthead*, and also shows tons of idiotic programming as part of a generational sales pitch. In this respect, television executives are counting on an important principle of physics: If you throw enough shit at a wall, some of it is bound to stick.

The ideas expressed on MTV ultimately reflect those who own and control the network. Since the current formula appears to be raking in plenty of money (see sidebar), it may be some time before we can expect some slicing political humor — or even a reprieve from shows that insult our intelligence. Running ads that promote tolerance and encourage young people to vote is a nice gesture. But when MTV airs reheated sitcom material and calls it *The State*, it doesn't inspire the viewing nation toward any forward rush at the status quo.

publishers, including MacMillan, Prentice Hall, Simon and Schuster, and Pocket Books. All this is now owned by Viacom, whose subsidiaries are so numerous that a general single-spaced listing takes up several pages of standard computer paper. The company owns a ton of cable companies, TV and radio stations, computer game businesses, MTV, VH-1, Nickelodeon, Showtime, and The Movie Channel. Not to mention an even larger empire of movie theater chains and videotape production and distribution companies.

To visualize the size and scope of Viacom, one has only to think of the top grossing motion picture this past year, *Forrest Gump*, and the top grossing film of the Thanksgiving season, *Star Trek: Generations*. *Forrest Gump* isn't just a movie. It's a re-released trade paperback, it's an audio tape, it's a soundtrack, it's a videotape, and it's a recently released cookbook! Through its subsidiaries, Viacom can deliver all of these products. *Star Trek* is also more than just a movie and a couple of TV series and spin-offs. It's rows and rows of videotapes at the local video store, perhaps the video store itself, countless *Star Trek* books, and royalties from licensed merchandise. You say you're a

Beavis and Butthead fan? It doesn't matter if you buy the *EnSucklopedia* or the new video game; the money's going to the same place: Viacom.

A listing of Viacom's officers and directors reads like a *Who's Who* listing of corporate America. And it's an incestuous little group. One board member is also the CEO of Spelling Entertainment (90210, Melrose Place) and top banana at Blockbuster Entertainment (which is in the process of being taken over by Viacom). Another Viacom board member happens to be the CEO of NYNEX, one of the largest of the "Baby Bells." Most of Viacom, however, is owned and ultimately controlled by one man: Sumner Redstone, chairman of the board at Viacom. Redstone owns 85 percent of the company and maintains his own movie theater chain on the side. He and his fellow officers, as well as the top executives at MTV, are members of an exclusive club that represent the wealthiest 1 percent of the population. Despite an armada of media vehicles that seek to reflect the cutting-edge tastes of youth culture, this tiny group of media moguls are still at the helm. They decide where the boats are going and how far to rock them.

JUVENILE "JUSTICE?"

Over Six Million Served



The media is filled daily with stories and statistics inflating our worst fears about the youth of the United States. Take, for example, the issue of juvenile violence. A Feb. 13, 1994 issue of the LA Times declared that "The growth of juvenile violence... the spread of drug and gang deaths... contribute to the fears [of] America's soaring concern over crime." A March 17, 1994 issue of *USA Today* announced that communities "alarmed by an explosion in juvenile violence... are enacting get-tough truancy programs, municipal curfews and shopping-mall bans that amount to a nationwide crackdown on teenagers." The Aug. 1993 cover of *Newsweek* pictures a youth holding an automatic weapon under the headline "Teen Violence: Wild in the Streets," and informs us of "Murder and may-

by
Randolph
Louis
Viscio

hem, guns and gangs: a teenage generation grows up dangerous — and scared." What may or may not surprise us is that these publications, and the news media in general, are proclaiming the dawn of the very same "juvenile violence" crisis that they have declared with similar hysteria in nearly every decade over the last 150 years (see sidebar).

Although the issue of juvenile violence has received over a century of attention from the popular media and the public at large, many young people still find themselves in trouble with the law. In 1993, over six million young people between the ages of 13 and 25 were arrested in the U.S. (mostly for theft). Between 1984 and 1993, drug arrests for this age group increased 42 percent. Over one million young people are now incarcerated each year, and 200,000 of them are locked up in adult correctional facilities. There are as many youths in prison as there are residents in the state of Rhode Island, and if you are between the ages of 18 and 25, you are three times more likely to go to jail as you are to enlist in the United States Armed Forces. Clearly, our society has an ongoing problem in the way it addresses the plight of young people.

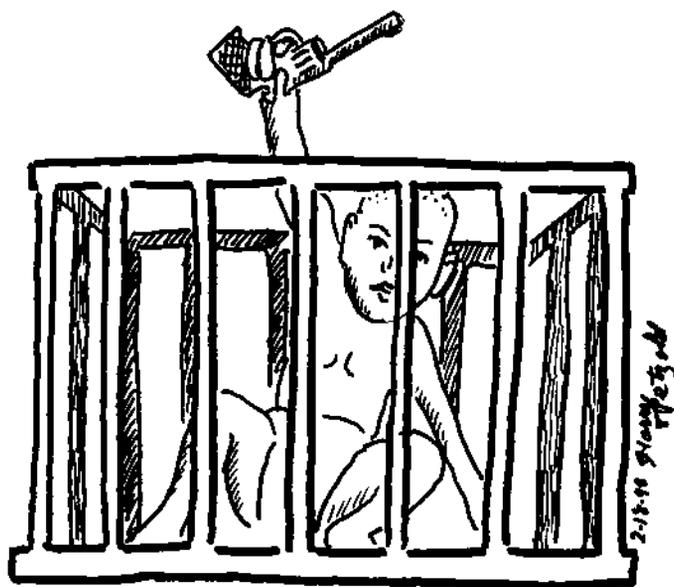
The chronic violence and crime affecting American youth suggests that we have not responsibly dealt with the issue of juvenile justice. In other words, the popular media, the justice system, and the larger public have focused more attention on the "crisis" than on questioning our response to that crisis. We are more concerned that Johnny stole a car than we are with *our own failure to help Johnny will most likely result in his stealing another car, or worse*. Perhaps by investigating some of our fear-driven responses to the cry of teens "running wild in the streets," we can begin to understand the cycle of juvenile fear and violence. Maybe then we can begin to form viable solutions and break the cycle.

In their book, *Reclaiming Youth At Risk*, Larry Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg, and Steve Van Bockern state that insecurity, the fear of failure, fear of rejection, and confusion among young people living in violent environ-

ments create for them a "sense of powerlessness... masked by indifference or defiant behavior." This sense of powerlessness is evident in many young people I have interviewed over the past year. Devon Parker and Tony Frye are two 15-year-old members of the "Latins," a local youth gang in Providence. I asked them what they thought about violence and the way it is viewed in their youth community. Parker states, "The Latins aren't into being violent, but I could get a used gun for 35 dollars. It ain't no big thing. Plenty of kids have them." Frye continues, "I wouldn't say a kid would go out looking to use a gun, but if you shoot someone, no one else is gonna mess with you for a while after that. You gain respect."

A similar view comes from Sean Day, a 17-year-old self-proclaimed loner from Albany, N.Y. Day has been in and out of foster homes and juvenile facilities for the last six years. He explains, "I would much rather use a gun than a knife or my hands to protect myself. It's safer. If I've got a gun, you won't consider messin' with me unless you've got one, and then it's a matter of who pulls it out first." I asked Day if this was his only way of protecting himself, if he didn't believe that the police, school, parents, or other adults could protect him against harm. He responded, "If someone wants to get me then it don't matter where I am or who's around. They'll try and get me."

Day's feeling that having a gun is "safer" than anything else may be the underlying reason for such a willing-



ness to possess and use a weapon. Yet while access to guns and a willingness to use them may be a new trend for young people, in most ways youths are simply following in the footsteps of the adults in society who have increasingly relied on weapons for protection. Adam Morris, a 30-year-old counselor at New Pride School in Providence, R.I., has worked with at-risk youths for the past seven years. Already this year, the school has lost one-third of its students to the jails. Morris explains, "The bottom line is that we're scared of these kids, so we reject them, which means incarcerating them, expelling them from school, and cutting them off from services. That is when they truly become violent. There is a lot of stigma attached to dealing with these kids... I think it is because we are afraid of their toughness, but that toughness is really just a defense against their fear of us. We think that they're comfortable living in fear, or that they have no fear."

How do young people insulate themselves from our fear of them? Black or White, Asian or Hispanic, young people in the street have ended up adapting to the "Niggaz With Attitude" posture (glorified by a popular rap band using that name) or the "I'm An Outlaw" posture (glorified by the hard rock band Guns 'N' Roses). Cotman says that for kids on the street, this glorification "becomes their main, and often their only, source of control over their lives. It's a way for them to gain leadership and responsibility, become a star, and get recognition for the things they do. The only way our society seems to be able to deal with their desire for respect and purpose is to further glorify and cast that 'bad motherfucker' stereotype." How we cast that stereotype is an important part of understanding and breaking the cycle of fear and violence.

Fear from the Entertainment Media

Fear and violence sell. A quick way to understand just how well they sell is to surf through newspapers, magazines, television channels, movie listings, toy stores, music videos, and so on. Nearly every information outlet in our society is making a buck off the presentation of fear and violence. Contrary to popular adult views, it's not just the negative messages of musical youth culture-vultures (Snoop Doggy Dogg and NME come to mind) that consistently praise the degradation of women, the abuse of drugs and alcohol, and the glamour of committing violent crimes, but it is also the adult culture-vulture's portrayal of cops and criminals in the dozens of made-for-TV cop-umentaries shown on prime time every night. Shows like *COPS*, *911*, and *FBI's Most Wanted* are part of a whole new genre of contemporary fear and violence entertainment. "The streets are bad. Worse, I think, than the media portrays," points out Cotman. "You have to live there in order to truly know how bad it is. Brief glances on television shows or in

the news don't tell you much. They end up glamorizing the whole thing." Watching these shows over a long period of time can give us an unrealistic sense of fear about crime and violence. In turn, entertainment media affect what we expect from the justice system and our elected officials. Is it any wonder, then, that such measures as building prisons, hiring more police, purchasing weapons, and handing down harsher penalties are becoming the mainstays of how we perceive justice?



Breaking the Cycle of Violence and Fear: The School as "Tribe"

Justice and law-and-order are not the same thing. If we want to find real, practical solutions to youth violence and juvenile delinquency, then our responses must derive primarily from our desire for justice. Too often we forego justice to achieve order, because it's quicker, easier, and settles our immediate fears. Nowhere is this more evident than in our public schools and in federal laws regarding public education.

Schools are the mandatory gathering place of all young people ages 5 - 16, yet public schools, by means of federal laws, have traditionally excluded, rather than guaranteed, educational access to young people who are at high risk of becoming violent. For example, the most important federal law affecting the education of these young people is Public Law 94-142, "The Education of all Handicapped Children Act" of 1975, renamed the "Individual with Disabilities Education Act" (IDEA) in 1990. The act extends the guarantee of an "appropriate education" to all students with disabilities. However, the act also intentionally excludes young people who are considered "socially maladjusted."

Students exhibiting "social maladjustment" are the very kids who desperately need to be appropriately educated about issues of law, order, justice, right and wrong. The dropout rate for these kids hovers around 40 percent, and the truancy rate is approximately 80 percent. These numbers imply that we have given schools the green light to exclude the young people who are most at risk for juvenile delinquency and violence. The kids who are "running wild in the streets" are there because we put them there.

A first step toward reclaiming these young people is to

extend to them a federally guaranteed right to an appropriate education. By being expected to enforce this right, schools would become more accountable to the public and to the young people they serve. Rather than creating harsh penalties meant to push kids out of school, our schools would be forced to find alternative methods.

Once our public schools are held accountable, we can begin the second step to reclaiming at-risk youth by comprehensively addressing their educational needs. Dozens of studies conducted throughout the United States over the past 20 years have proven that alternative education with at-risk youth will prevent them from dropping out of school and turning to delinquency. Common aspects of these educational alternatives include an education that provides community-based support; job-opportunity and training; specially designed curricula;

and peer support groups and tutoring. Additionally, the cost-effectiveness of a guaranteed appropriate education cannot be overstated. Perhaps once we see the benefits of providing at-risk young people with an appropriate education, we will be more willing to spend public funds for that education. We already spend roughly \$30,000 per year, per individual, to incarcerate young people. That is ten times what we spend on their education. We spend far more money than that to provide undereducated and maladjusted adults with welfare support. Imagine if we responded courageously to the crisis of youth violence by demanding that our schools educate the kids who would become violent rather than encouraging schools to exclude them.

As the authors of *Reclaiming Youth at Risk* point out, "It has always been the 'tribe' rather than the nuclear family that ultimately ensures cultural

survival." We see this trend all the time in our society. Our own survival is dependent upon the friendships and interaction we have with peer groups and on extended family ties beyond just Mom and Dad. It should be no surprise that throughout history we have seen the growth and development of youth "gangs." Gangs, violent or not, have become the tribes that ensure the cultural survival of those who are being pushed out of society. If our communities sincerely want to bring those children back into the fold of larger society, then we must see the potential that every school has to become the new tribe, to become the new gangland where responsible, supportive, and nurturing relationships replace violence and fear.



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A Brief History of "Juvenile Justice" in the U.S.

1600 - 1700s: Colonial Law

Children in America are treated as severely as adults. There is not a clear distinction made between "religious" laws (punishment and consequence) and laws created by government; most often the government and religious officials are the same people. The prevailing attitude toward reforming the behavior of juvenile delinquents is: "Beat the devil out of them." There are also no influential legal mechanisms for punishing, or avoiding, child abuse.

1825 - 1855: Reform Schools

The New York Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents opens the first "reform school," called "House of Refuge." Children are rehabilitated through rigorous prayer, work, and school. New York lawyer James Gerard leads a movement to treat juvenile delinquents with kindness as opposed to severe punishment. The reform school idea spreads throughout New England. Beginning in 1854, the Children's Aid Society begins to take youth involved in urban gangs and place them in rural communities. However, parents can commit their children to reform schools without a reason if they choose. In March 1862, the *New York Times* declares that the city has "40,000 delinquent and neglected children."

1870 - 1899: Cornerstones of Juvenile Justice

An April 8, 1870 *New York Times* article on "Children and Crime" states that "Youthful crime hereabouts is rapidly increasing. Thefts of shops by juvenile experts are of constant occurrence. . . Children have, lately killed or attempted to kill their parents."

Massive immigration, rebellion against Americanization, and poverty add to problems with youth crime. More than 70 percent of reported youth criminals are children of immigrants. Judge Ben Lindsey in Denver, Colorado, argues that harmful social conditions, not internal maliciousness or meanness, cause youth crime. This philosophy becomes the cornerstone of the juvenile justice system.

In 1894, an article about juvenile delinquency in *Century Illustrated* magazine states that "More than a hundred thousand children [are] roaming the streets. . . The street has been their teacher. . . the policeman is [their] enemy." An article in the Sep. 1899 issue of *Atlantic Monthly* tells the story of a 15-year-old boy who commits murder, and details the development of youth gangs with names like the "Young Heroes," and the "Junior Street Cleaning Band." Also in 1899, the establishment of state-run juvenile court systems and training schools spreads. By 1925 there are juvenile courts in 46 states.

1920s - 1940s: Organized Crime/Vandalism/Vagrancy

The Depression causes more than 250,000 male youths to wander through American cities looking for food, shelter, and work. Many youths become increasingly involved in organized crime activity. The *New York Times*, Jan. 4, 1912, reports on continuing theft and vandalism being committed by "roaming gangs of young hoodlums." In an Aug. 1920 issue of *Scribner's* magazine, Juvenile Court Judge Franklin Hoyt writes on "The Embryo of a Gang," detailing the rise and development of youth gangs called

"Honest Clubs." And in March 1935, the *New York Times* declares, "200,000 youth are on the road to crime."

1950s - 1960s: Juvenile Justice Attacked

Presidential commission finds that the American juvenile court system is a failure, focusing too much on petty crime and not enough on violent crime. On June 28, 1954, Robert Hendrickson, chairman of the Senate Juvenile Delinquency Subcommittee, gives a speech in which he declares: "Juvenile delinquency, now riding rampant throughout the countryside, is a challenge to the very sinews of our future existence. . . We MUST declare war on this destroyer. . . with every force at our command." On September 6, 1954, *Newsweek* covers "Our Vicious Young Hoodlums: Is There Any Hope?" and details five cases of youth murder, rape, and torture. *Newsweek* also reports that "The old Western tradition of checking your gun at the door is now literally carried on in the elementary classroom."

In addition, advocates of juvenile rights argue to extend more adult rights to juvenile criminals. For instance, juveniles should have the right to face their accusers, have the right to a lawyer, and be told that they don't have to testify against themselves (all previously denied them).

1970s: Individualism, Reforming Reform

Contemporary research says that social conditions are not as much to blame for youth crime as are individual motivations. This argument is based on the fact that youths from all social, cultural, and economic backgrounds commit crimes. In 1972, Massachusetts closes all of its reform schools and creates community-based programs. The federal government encourages other states to try community-based programs. It's "The Return of the Gang," proclaims *Time* magazine in July 1973. "Gangs are back. . . Older, better armed, more sophisticated, the gangs today operate in all too deadly earnest." And in 1977, New York state passes laws allowing children over 13 years of age to be tried as adults for felonies and murder.

1980s: Standard Sentencing, Drugs

U.S. Justice Department encourages the development of standard sentences for juvenile crimes. Previously, the personal histories of juveniles were considered before any kind of sentencing. Sentencing for various crimes could be widely defined and interpreted by judges. Thus, two youths tried for the same crime may have received very different sentences. In addition, new studies show a link between rising drug abuse and a rise in youth crimes.

1990s: Back to the Future

The primary debate of the 1990s centers around whether or not youths should be tried as adults (which leads back to the 1600 - 1700s). The death penalty is sought and given in several murder cases involving youths. In addition, schools around the country are beginning to adopt a "zero-tolerance" policy regarding youth crime in school. This policy raises a whole new set of questions regarding the role of education in the juvenile justice system.

-RLV

Street Talkers: GUN...Play???

With the seeming failure of the Brady Bill and a rampant raise in the crime rate, have more people opted for a pistol as a part of their home security system? How comfortable have we really become with violence in our society?



"This one [Uzi] looks like it could do a lot of damage, could kill a lot of people at once. I'd worry that the gun would go off. There should be more control of guns. We have this attitude that we're all rugged individualists in this country. The "right to bear arms" was meant for the militia. I think this attitude stems from a failure of our political system. Instead of thinking of the whole, we selfishly hold to a Darwinian notion of survival. We get more and more desensitized to violence every day."

— Marjorie Wechsler



"I don't believe in carrying a weapon. I don't feel especially powerful holding a gun; I think that's more of a male trait. There's a lot of violence against women. I carry mace; guns seem so unnecessary — so extreme. This [Uzi] is very sexual — power-oriented. I think violence is linked to power and sex."

— Amber Dermont



"I don't like guns at all. But this one [Uzi] is visually appealing. I don't feel powerful holding this, 'cause I don't like to scare people. I think that business owners could use other means to protect themselves and their businesses, such as cameras and alarm buttons."

— Martin Lee

"I feel very uncomfortable with this [shotgun] in my hand. I don't like guns, they cause tremendous damage. I don't think people take guns seriously, especially since extreme violence in the media is viewed so nonchalantly. Young kids seem to search for respect and power in guns. I had a peace-loving mom and dad. Feel even more uncomfortable with this one [Uzi], it simply has no practical use except to cause great damage."

— Ray Greene



"I wanted a BB gun when I was a kid, but my dad wouldn't let me have one. He was a peaceful man, didn't believe in guns. I don't feel any sense of power from any of these. I meditate and try to communicate kindness and understanding to others."

— Dennis Lawler

"I guess it [shotgun] makes me feel somewhat powerful, you know, because I've got protection. It's nice to have a weapon. It all depends on how you use it. I would protect my house and everyone in it. This [Uzi] you don't need — too dangerous, though I suppose it does make me feel powerful. But I am against weapons."

— Edward DeRose



Photos by Jill MacLeod

With the note-taking assistance of Buck O'Shea and Ann Harrison. Special thanks to Sandy & Sons Toys of Cambridge, MA for the use of "weapons" from their toy gun buy-back program.

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HEY KIDS LET'S LEARN ABOUT FASCISM!

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<p>WITH SUPPRESSION OF THE OPPOSITION THROUGH TERROR AND CENSORSHIP.</p> <p>AND IF YOU TRY TO UNIONIZE THE WORKERS YOU'RE FIRED! UNDERSTAND!</p>  <p>YES SIR.</p>	<p>SOUND FAMILIAR?</p> <p>GOOD... NOW KISS MY RING!</p> <p>UH, IS THIS A JOKE SIR?</p>  <p>NEXT WEEK... REVOLUTION!!</p>

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A Tale of Two Yippies

Jerry Rubin's Impact on a Reagan Baby

by Randolph Louis Viscio

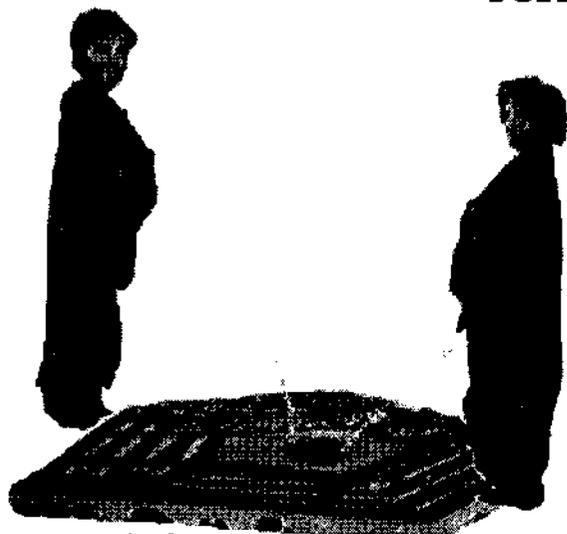


Illustration: Andrew Schreiber

The Youth International Party — “Yippies” — founded by Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman conducted political street theater and organized protests of the Vietnam War and the 1968 Democratic National Convention. They were prosecuted by the government on charges of conspiracy to cross state lines for the purpose of inciting a riot. They were tried, convicted, and later acquitted of those charges. Another defendant, Bobby Seale, was ordered gagged and bound to a chair during the case and was later removed from the proceedings and tried separately. Abbie Hoffman continued activism until he committed suicide in 1989. Bobby Seale became a chef and authored a cookbook. Jerry Rubin became a politician and a businessman. Rubin died recently after being hit by a car while jaywalking.

When Jerry Rubin's partner in crime, Abbie Hoffman, died on my 22nd birthday (April 12, 1989), I considered it an act of divine intervention — perhaps even reincarnation. I never met the man. I didn't have to. When I was 16 — a no-good, low-down, welfare-receiving, high school dropout, punk kid — I read his autobiography, *Soon To Be A Major Motion Picture*. I'd never read a book from beginning to end when I was in school, but Abbie had an effect on me. From that book I learned about Jerry Rubin and read his book, *Do It!* They were the first adults I'd ever heard tell the truth about the often suffocating reality of life for young people in United States society. Their honest writing was enough to set me on a search for historical facts — a search which ultimately led to my discovery of the passionate 1960s era.

Learning about the movements of the 1960s changed my life, simply because, for me, the era represented a hidden history in which *young people* masterfully wrought change. I thanked Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin for having communicated in a manner that was meaningful to me. Hoffman's death inspired in me a renewed sense of purpose, because regardless of who you could or couldn't trust, regardless of whether young people today were apathetic or politically correct, regardless of who did or did not sell out of the sixties, in one way or another the proverbial torch had been passed.

For many years after I found out he'd become a “Yuppie,” I hated Jerry Rubin. I grew up during the 1980s, and Rubin seemed to represent everything that went bad in that decade. Rubin was a no-good, yuppified, suit-and-tied, greedy sell-out — a hypocrite who traded in his radical vision for the middle-class security which, in his youth, he had recognized as being “bankrupt.” In direct contrast to Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin was a traitor to young people and youth culture.

When I saw Rubin and Hoffman debate in the '80s during their “Yippie/Yuppie” speaking tour, I took great pleasure in lobbing dollar bills at Rubin from my seat in the audience. Hoffman really made mincemeat of him. Rubin's calmness was simply no match for Abbie's antics. Rubin was boring; Hoffman was funny and made good points with his humor. At one point, Rubin stated that Hoffman was “forever fighting a non-revolution” that couldn't be won. Abbie picked up one of my crumpled dollar bills that had landed on the stage. He held it out invitingly to Rubin and said, “You wanna bet a dollar on that?” Rubin tried to snatch the George Washington, but Abbie was too quick. Giggling, he ripped the buck up and tossed the pieces at Rubin, saying, “See, we've already won.” It was an expression of that essential dilemma that we as young people were facing: values *vs.* money-making; people *vs.* profits.

His love of money wasn't the only reason I hated Jerry Rubin. He was dangerous to me and probably to Abbie as well, because he represented mother's frightful curse: “When you get older, your views will change.” Rubin once said, “School is the conditioning of your reflexes. School is indoctrination... We've got to liberate the classroom... Our new culture has a new authority figure — a 15-year-old high school dropout.” I wanted to believe that more than anything, because it was me he was talking about. If Jerry changed, it meant that what he once said was false. More importantly, it meant that Abbie could change, or that I could change. Change in and of itself wasn't a bad thing. The question was, what did you become?

I was never sure what Jerry Rubin had become or what happened to the man who had stopped Vietnam-bound munitions trains in Berkeley, pissed on the Pentagon, threw dollar bills from the balcony of the New York Stock Exchange, mocked a federal court judge, disrupted the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and was perhaps the only person to ever make Phil Donahue want to quit show biz.

In 1976, Rubin published a book in which he explained his transformation from radical to businessman. I tried to read it, but got too depressed after hearing how the streets he once loved now rejected him. The book title,

Growing Up At Thirty-Seven, reminded me of a video I'd seen of Rubin's 1970 appearance on the Phil Donahue show. In response to a caller's question about his age, Rubin went on a brilliant tirade denouncing society's concepts of "chronological age." Then Rubin claimed to be "six years old" based on the fact that his real birth, his "spiritual birth," happened six years before, during the Berkeley Free Speech Movement. His 1976 publication was a real contradiction. It was embarrassing to me, and I was embarrassed for him. Perhaps that is what Rubin had become: an embarrassment. Not so much to himself, but to the rest of us so-called progressive activists. With that thought, I forgot about Jerry Rubin— until he died.

When Jerry Rubin died, the media covered it blandly (surprise, surprise), focusing either on his transformation from Yippie to Yuppie or the fact that he was hit by a car while jaywalking— Wow! "His last bona-fide revolutionary act." What garbage!

I stayed up all night watching CNN in the hopes that they would do the man justice. As much as I hated Rubin all those years, I still believed that he was worth more news than 15 seconds dedicated to a banal "That was then, this is now."

At 8 in the morning, wired and droopy-eyed, I tuned into *The Howard Stern Show*. "Please, please," I begged,

"please, Howard. Don't let me down. Just this once." Then I heard Stern turn to the news about Rubin's death. "This was a great man," proclaimed Stern. "Anyone who puts their freedom on the line to protect our rights, especially our freedom of speech, and stop a ridiculous war, is a great man and deserves our respect. Abbie Hoffman too, they were both great." The phone calls came rushing in. A "progressive" man on the phone whined, "Howard, I don't think you should mention Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman in the same breath. There's no comparison. One sold out, the other stayed true to his beliefs." Stern cut him off, "What are you, drunk? You're a coward. What have you done? Jerry Rubin did what he had to do despite people like you. You oughta leave this country and go live on an island. You creep."

Another caller, this one "decent" and "reactionary": "Howard, what about the fact that Jerry Rubin became a successful businessman and renounced his Yippie years while people like Abbie Hoffman committed suicide?" Stern again: "Oh, you ninny! What do you know? No matter what these guys did, you're gonna complain. You're more concerned with the fact that Jerry Rubin earned a living than with the fact that he put his own freedom on the line to stop kids from dying in that rotten war. Geez! You... oh, forget it."

It was at this point, half asleep and in a state of natural sedation, I began to recognize the societal id and ego represented by the similarities and differences between Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin. Whether we liked either of them wasn't the point. Whether we were willing to admit it or not, they made us question our values and our beliefs. I don't think they could have planned a better Yippie direct action, a more relevant non-conspiracy, than to go to their graves having left the world to pots calling the kettles black, to leave all of us behind quibbling about who was right and who was wrong, as if the foundations of democracy would crumble because you were either a Yippie or a Yuppie. The joke was on us. All of us.

As Stern continued with the news, I learned what Jerry Rubin was working on just before his death. He and Bobby Seale were in California enlisting gang members to sell health food. I can just picture Bobby Seale in his chef's hat, Jerry Rubin in his suit and tie, briefcase in one hand, portable phone in the other, organizing a corps of Los Angeles gang members to hit the streets with bags full of Seale's latest cookbook and Rubin's special health drink. Gang members dealing health food! Gee! If it were 1968, that would sound a lot like a Yippie plot to take over the government.

WE

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As You Like It

A Forum for Questions About Sex

by

Fiona Amanteso Bretodo



Dear Fiona,

My girlfriend cannot cum unless I nibble her nipples during lovemaking. She often pleads with me to bite harder. She shrieks, she begs. But I'm concerned that I will get overenthusiastic and draw blood. How can I please her without mangling her tender tips?

Fangs of Love

Iowa City, Iowa

Dear Fangs of Love,

Your concern is commendable. Nipples should be pampered and adored, but punctured only under sterile conditions. It's a delicate region, and heals slowly when the skin is broken. If you do not know her HIV status, imbibing her blood may also put you at risk. If your beloved requires firmer pressure, visit your local sex boutique and see what types of nipple clamps are offered. I recommend a model with rubber coating that will pinch but not wound. If you are too shy to shop around, or prefer a more low-tech approach, plastic safety pins also work well. If she insists that there is no substitute for your dental equipment, blunt your bite with a double layer of extra-thick plastic wrap.

Dear Fiona,

I'm susceptible to yeast infections, and take all the proper precautions. But I've noticed that I often get a recurrence after particularly zesty cunnilingus. Could it be something that my boyfriend is eating? Should I insist that he brush his teeth?

Cultured

Canoga Park, Calif.

Dear Cultured,

It probably has more to do with what your boyfriend is drinking. Does he like beer? Is he in the habit of orally ravishing you after returning from his favorite pub? Remember that beer contains high-octane active yeast cultures,

which you are trying to avoid. If he has had a few prior to entering your boudoir, absolutely make sure that he not only brushes his teeth but uses mouthwash as well. It may taste antiseptic, but you will be assured that his attentions will not seed you with unwanted flora.

Dear Fiona,

My boyfriend recently had the flu, but this did not seem to diminish his desire to have sex. In an effort to keep me from getting infected, we decided to make love, but not kiss. Does semen carry the cold virus?

Getting It From Both Ends

Cambridge, Mass.

Dear Getting It From Both Ends,

According to health care providers, there have been no definitive studies to determine whether semen carries the flu virus. But if he's sick and you're romping with him, the question is moot. By the time he came down with symptoms, you probably had already been exposed to the virus as a result of just hanging out with him. The best thing you can do under the circumstances is keep your immune system cranked up. Get lots of sleep, eat right, and generally take care of yourself. Thus fortified, you can continue hastening his recovery through erotic nurturing.

Dear Fiona,

Do they make diaphragms more rigid these days? I just got a new one and it's very difficult to insert — sort of like trying to oven a cup coaster. What gives?

Unhappy Camper

Orono, Maine

Dear Unhappy Camper,

Newer diaphragms do seem to be made of more rugged materials than the older varieties, but you should not have to suffer to get it in place. Try breaking it in a few times to

see if it becomes more flexible. Try warming it up. Do not attempt to insert a diaphragm that's been sitting out in the car. A cold diaphragm is more rigid and requires an act of real self-sacrifice. Also make sure the diaphragm is the correct size. If in doubt, go back to your health care provider and double-check the fit. If you still hate it, exchange it for another model.

Dear Fiona,
My partner says he is turned on by the idea of me masturbating in front of him. I like the idea. But I feel self-conscious around him, and I'm afraid I wouldn't be able to relax. Any suggestions?

Nervous in New York
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Dear Nervous in New York,
Since masturbation is generally a private pleasure, it's important that you trust your partner enough to relax and enjoy yourself. Tell him how you feel. Request that he be supportive and understanding. Then try one of two strategies: 1) Lean back, close your eyes, and imagine that he is not there. Replicate your own private fantasy that you indulge in when you masturbate alone. For this to work effectively, your lover must agree not to touch you or speak, as this would compromise the illusion of sexual solitude. 2) Revel in your unique deliciousness and put on a show. Take a languid bath and dress in something that makes you feel erotic. Then demonstrate for your admirer the delight you take in your own supremely delicious self.
Send your questions on matters sexual to: Fiona the As We Are Sex Queen, PO Box 380048, Cambridge, MA 02238.

Leaf

This leaf swings back and forth.
Strange.
There is no wind to blow it,
no animal to stir it,
no child to tease it.
I throw a stone at it,
it stops, stunned, then continues swinging.
When there is no answer to mystery,
wonder takes over.

—Lisa Fay

Deer

I only know you on TV,
or the fish and game
where your head hangs
tight as dartboard
while beer drinking men
retell conquests as often as reruns.
Today you trusted me enough
to have a ringside view
of you eating before me.
It must have been
the sun shining through me,
making my mind quiet as peace.

Come more often.
Alive.

—Lisa Fay

I fell o f
f
the edge Of the world
N
E
day in May
the sky was blue
the air made me
f light headed
I thought I was plunging
n to

h to O

the birds surrounded me
their turquoise caribbeanplumage
dazzled my short-sighted eyes
i spread my arms as if i could fly
they laughed with me;
showed me it wasn't that hard
if you knew how l
l
Now i canf ly
But no one believes me
They say it's foolish to fly
If you are grounddead

—Ruth Housman

Submit your articles, commentary, fiction, poetry, art, photography or anything else of interest that can be reproduced in 2 dimensional black and white to:
As We Are, P.O. Box 380048, Cambridge, MA 02238 (Include SASE)

REACH OUT AND GROPE SOMEONE

THE FUTURE OF PHONE SEX

There was once a time when phone sex left a lot to the imagination. The squealing lingerie-clad pleasure pet who spoke breathlessly over the phone line could, in reality, have been a housewife in a muu-muu or a bored college student finishing her electrical engineering homework. But today's 900-number-callers seem to want more from the phone line than mere fantasy would allow. Like everyone else, consumers of phone sex want high-tech visuals for maximum satisfaction. And the cure for their desire lies in the new video phones — the harbingers of interactive sex to come.

AT&T currently advertises video phones as a new means of "reaching out and touching" friends in foreign countries or reuniting small cute children with their grandparents. But any marketing director with a minimum of sophistication has certainly seen the awesome sales potential of the video phone as a sex toy. After all, wasn't the promise of in-home porn movies the spur of the VCR revolution 10 years ago? People want their simulated sex real, intense, and in the safety and privacy of their own homes. And while the current video phone screens leave much to be desired in terms of picture quality, they are likely to improve rapidly with advances in technology.

Imagine the possibilities for phone sex consumers. With less left to the imagination, phone sex callers will have more control over the objects of their fantasies. If "Bambi" is supposed to striptease, she's really going to have to do it. And if the caller wants Bambi and Leticia to do it together, they'll be expected to perform for their caller. No more sitting at connecting phone lines smoking cigarettes and making faces at each other. Nor will "flaming-haired vixen Bambi with the legs that just won't quit" be the alter ego of a 200-pound veterinary student with a beautiful voice.

Though video phone technology in 1995 will only provide phone sex consumers with a distant, blurry glimpse of their fantasies, it will also, to be sure, have an outrageous price tag for those who care about that sort of thing. And what about video sex five years from now? Or 10? Video screens will undoubtedly become bigger, clearer, and more colorful. Small details that might be hidden from the caller this year — for instance, that Bambi or Leticia is clearly faking it — will become requisite later on. Professional porn stars, instead of financially strapped college students, will be the norm, and the object of desire will be real, not imagined. Also, these video screens will probably be interactive, and the caller will have an opportunity — perhaps demand — to be complimented on his good looks, size, or virility. In this case, the sex workers will need to be as good at stroking the caller's ego as anything else.

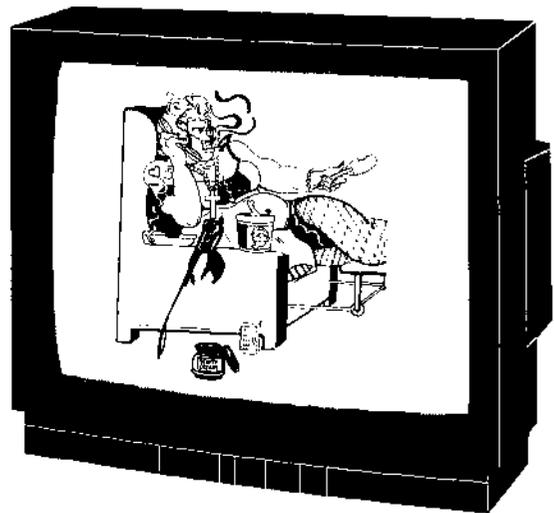
Phone sex "chat" lines will also transform. With a video screen attached to every caller's phone on the "private" or "party" lines, consumers of chat-line sex will have to expose themselves in more ways than one. Currently, chat lines are often a means for those who think themselves too shy or unattractive for ordinary relationships to connect with others. The safety and anonymity of the phone line allows

people to pose, to role-play. But what happens if every starts taking off his or her clothes on the other side of video screen? Chat-line callers are far more inhibited group than phone sex consumers and will likely be a little insecure or squeamish at the sight of someone whose physical plant does not match the fantasy. Where, then, will the shy, the unattractive, or the fantasy hounds be driven? Will they want to share in the phone sex fantasy with them? Will they turn off their video screens? Perhaps there will have to be different types of chat lines — one for those who dare to show their faces and bodies, and one for those who do not. A "primitive" non-visual line will no doubt be stigmatized as a service for the especially ugly and inept.

The future of sex is, so to speak, in our hands. Today we are being driven apart from one another by AIDS, technology, and confusion. And sometimes, the distance between virtual reality and the real world seems not that great. Some of us, enamored of the new technology, might find it easier to forsake blood tests and "verbal consent" for a screen of live, beautiful people who will do our bidding. Some computer hacks, whether or not they can afford the phone bills, will probably find a way to hook up video phone, computer, electrodes, push-button key, high-frequency current, scanners, and microphones to create a new form of sexual experience not yet initiated on this planet.

But is this sex? What form, in the upcoming century, will our love and pleasure take? How real, how really satisfying will virtual reality ever become? Next year or so, when you open to the back of *Penthouse* or *PC World* and see the phone ads advertising the fulfillment of your wildest dreams, think about it.

WE



BY BETH ROSENBERG

Leave from page 40 —

Lead or Leave, you should be too." April lost it. "I said, we're not a member of anything but USSA and the Oregon Student Lobby, this is really ridiculous!"

Then she got a list of member schools from Lead or Leave. Her school was on it. She talked to her lawyers, then got on the phone to Lead or Leave. She spoke to intern Carlos Lopez.

"Carlos was pretty much like, 'Well, John Issacs joined Lead or Leave for you.' Well, see, that's what he was telling me. My State Affairs guy is sitting right there in front of me saying, 'hell, no, I didn't join anything!' So I said, 'Carlos, you're lying to me.' And he said 'Oh, no, I'm not. I swear.' I said, 'We never joined you. We asked you for more information.' And he was like, 'Well, technically, you don't really have to join our campaign. When people ask us for information we assume that they're really in favor of what we're doing.'" After a few more minutes of arguing. Waddy hung up.

Five minutes later, Lopez's boss, Tracy Newman, called Waddy.

"And she was like, 'What's your problem?!'" recalls Waddy. "Now, number one, I'd pretty much explained my problem pretty clearly, and was like, 'Why are you calling me? I don't want to talk to you people.'" The argument raged back and forth for a half an hour. Not much evidence of the organizer's acumen was being displayed by Lead or Leave's Newman. Rather than being properly apologetic from square one, she went right into attack mode with someone she had never met.

Waddy says that Newman kept mentioning USSA in a very "unprofessional" way. "Do you not like us because of USSA? Do you

know how bad USSA is?" she remembers Newman asking. "And I'm like, 'This has nothing to do with USSA. You know, this is like our personal feelings at this student government office. And why are you even bringing it up?' And she's like, 'We're suing USSA for libel!'"

Lead or Leave was apparently far more concerned about USSA than USSA was about Lead or Leave. Waddy concludes:

"At this point, I don't think they knew that I was a board member of USSA or anything like that. To them, I think I was just 'Joe Student,' you know? A student government president in a pretty small town in Oregon. As far as they should know, I might not even know about USSA, but they're like, 'Is this about USSA?! We're suing them, you know! We're gonna get them!' And just all this stuff."

By August 1994, Lead or Leave had chosen the low road. They had declared war on USSA.

USSA, unlike Lead or Leave, is a grassroots democratic organization. Every year, a new president, vice president, and 62-member board of directors are voted into office. The entire political platform for the coming year is also voted in. Every one of USSA's 340 schools sends delegates to their National Student Congress every year. These folks hold all the real power in the organization.

The board, according to Galanis, represents each of the 17 administrative regions, and all 25 caucuses — which include women, gay/lesbian/bisexual, disabled, various people of color groups, and every possible constituency of students in the U.S. The board meets quarterly and has hire/fire power over the national staff.

In June, USSA had already gone through its annual National Student Congress without talking much about Lead or Leave. By the first meeting of the new board in fall of 1994, Lead or Leave was being taken very seriously. Incidents like the Oregon student experience had happened at numerous USSA campuses. The straw that broke the camel's back was the October 13, 1994 press release officially announcing the Register Once campaign. It listed schools like the State University of New York at Stony Brook, whose student government had specifically said that they did not want to participate as a member school.

Given the many problems numerous USSA schools like the University of Wisconsin at River Falls had with Lead or Leave's fast and loose membership requirement, one can only question Lead or Leave's boast that 450 campuses representing 4 million students were participating in their Register Once campaign. In fact, aside from the known allies in Florida, Texas, Arizona, and scattered schools in other states, it is hard to find any of the other schools claimed that are aware of their participation. Certainly most rank-and-file students are oblivious to their membership in Register Once. And when I had an assistant call a few listed schools, like the University of Alabama at Huntsville, and ask about Register Once, they didn't know what she was talking about. As *We Are* also recently learned that the student government of Cowan's alma mater, Dartmouth College, which is still listed as a Register Once member school, rejected participation in the campaign last summer.

Last October, Lead or Leave's second national conference launched the Register Once campaign and drew only 200 participants. That same month, *Revolution X* hit the stands claiming on its back cover that Lead or Leave was a "million-

member grassroots organization." Inside, it listed numerous organizations and student groups as if they were allies, including USSA, Public Citizen, National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL), the National Organization for Women (NOW), SEAC, and many, many others.

How Big is Lead...or Leave, REALLY?

"Lead or Leave... advocates only on issues which have strong support from our grassroots base." [Lead or Leave 1994 information packet]

Lead or Leave has claimed that it has up to one million members. But where are these members? In the 1960s, student activist groups like Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) tore up this country with around 100,000 members. One would think that a group of 1,000,000 would wield street power that would be inescapable. Why, indeed, they might actually be big enough to pull off this "Revolution X."

But there is simply no way Lead or Leave could have gotten that large, particularly since they haven't actually done anything concrete for anyone. As our quick tour of their "activist" track record should demonstrate, Lead or Leave exists primarily in the realm of the media. Why would average students, who are generally so swamped with school and work, work with any group that was not obviously involved in projects that were in their best interests? Lead or Leave's rhetoric might be enough to convince some, but their lack of a concrete track record won't leave anybody convinced for long.

The Student Environmental Action Coalition (SEAC) is still, six years after its founding, probably the largest grassroots student activist group in the country. But even after tremendous growth during the Earth Day hype of 1990, they cannot claim much more than 35,000 paid members. And they are a group with a tremendously democratic process. They have won innumerable battles, small and large, on environmental issues, and have acted as a training ground for some of the most brilliant youth organizers in the country. They are everything a activist-minded student could want from a grassroots organization: smart, successful, inclusive, democratic, and ultimately very effective in dealing with issues that clearly relate to members' daily lives.

The student government of Cowan's alma mater, Dartmouth College, which is still listed as a Register Once member school, rejected participation in the campaign last summer.

But even with all the selfless, tireless work that SEAC organizers and elected leaders have done over the years, they can only grow so large when most of their money comes from their activists. And their members are constantly debating whether they are getting too large to remain truly democratic — which is certainly a tough call.

The lesson of groups like SEAC is that it is intellectually dishonest for a group to call itself "grassroots" unless most of its funding comes from its members. This money is paid with the understanding that the member will get something for his or her money.

If Lead or Leave were a grassroots organization, they'd be getting most of their funding from the grassroots. But their membership fee is only 1 dollar (In a December 1993 release, Lead or Leave actually said membership was free!). Even assuming, as their office said [see Phone Interview, page XX], that they have 23,000 names on their database this year, they could have only collected a maximum of 23,000 dollars over the last year.

This is not nearly enough to sustain a group that is actively trying to give its grassroots any power or services. It's certainly not enough to sustain 1,000,000 members, or even 23,000. But that's irrelevant, because we already know that their money is not coming from grassroots sources. And nowhere in Lead or Leave's literature can I find any mention of what being a member in the group entails, what services are available, or, most importantly, how Cowan and Nelson and their office staff are accountable to anyone.

Their latest literature makes it clear to whom they are ultimately accountable.

It describes their finances this way: "Lead or Leave's 1994 operating budget is approximately 500,000 dollars. Approximately 90 percent of our funding comes from individual donors. The other 10 percent comes from foundations and in-kind contributions. Recent support has come from the Esprit Foundation, Scholastic, Inc., Princeton Review and Arthur Anderson, as well as Robin Hood Foundation Chairman Paul Tudor Jones and Rockefeller Foundation Presi-

dent Peter Goldmark."

So their money is coming from a mix of well-heeled corporate heads like Arthur Anderson (owner of the world's largest computer consulting organization), corporate-connected foundations like Rockefeller and Esprit, and perhaps a few well-meaning liberals, confused by Lead or Leave's rhetoric of activism. The "90 percent of funding from individual donors" may be far more important, however.

Notice they don't say "membership dues," but rather "individual donors." More than likely, some of these donors are the wealthy members of their advisory board. This board includes Robert W. Galvin of the Motorola Corporation and Lee Iacocca of the Chrysler Corporation. Plus all the Washington insiders and corporate big guns who gave them start-up money in 1992. And there may be other sources of big bucks for Lead or Leave. According to Jeanette Galanis, Lead or Leave office staff bragged on the phone to USSA last year that much of their funding came from Coca-Cola and other large companies, although this has yet to be substantiated.

Big money is floating all around Lead or Leave. Big money from corporations, not from young people. If most of the budget is not, ultimately, coming from the membership base, then it is very difficult to believe even the lower membership claims that Lead or Leave makes in the chart below [see "Leaders or Liars," page 57]. Galanis believes that Lead or Leave's real membership figures are much, much lower than they are claiming — probably only a few hundred members. Of those, Galanis believes that less than 100 are actually activists. And in the absence of any demonstrable democratic internal organization, or any evidence of the accountability of the national office to its membership, they are lucky if they have that many.

Galanis believes that there is no way Lead or Leave could be accountable to other young people, even if it really had a big membership, "because they don't get money from you. And they don't get votes from you. And they don't see your participation in their organization as something crucial."

This ultimately explains why Lead or Leave has declared war on an actual grassroots student group with a platform that calls for "free government funded education for all — at all levels." USSA is in the way of those forces that want to loot the public till. Until Lead or Leave can remove and replace USSA, they won't be able to use the cover of education issues to drive through their ultimate goal — destroying Social Security and servicing the debt.

Please. Just Leave!

"Lead or Leave gets financial support from citizens across the country. There are no corporate donations, PAC money, or political ties.

"There is no connection between Lead or Leave and any other organization, including the DNC, RNC, Ross Perot, or any special interest group." [Lead or Leave December 1993 information packet]

Lead or Leave is a front group for multinational banking interests. No more, no less. They do not have a significant grassroots base. They function loosely as a network. Despite a budget much larger than USSA's, they offer no concrete

Leaders or Liars? A brief listing of Lead...or Leave's membership claims

The Award for Fastest Growing Non-Existent Group goes to...
10/30/92 [from the 2/13/93 Lead or Leave information packet]: "Lead or Leave announces formation of 100th college chapter."

The Award for Worst Fact-Checking goes to...
7/16/93 [from *The Boston Globe*]: "12,000 members in 150 campuses."
10/6/93 [from *The Boston Globe*]: "Lead or Leave has about 12,000 members."
11/16/93 [from *The Boston Globe*]: Rob Nelson quoted saying, "30,000 members, with chapters in about one-third of the 435 Congressional districts, at least one in each state."
11/29/93 [from *The Boston Globe*]: "Lead or Leave claims 20,000 members."

The Award for Most Inflated Propaganda goes to...
12/93 [from the 12/93 Lead or Leave information packet]: "Hundreds of thousands of Americans have joined our campaign to get young people back into politics."
12/93 [same source]: "Establishing over 100 chapters and 450,000 members nationwide."
1/5/94 [from *The Daily Targum* (Rutgers University)]: "450,000 members and 100 chapters."
8/94 [from a Penguin Books press release announcing *Revolution X*]: "...the million-member strong organization Lead or Leave..."

The Award for Most Contradictions in One Document goes to...
From the Fall 1994 Lead or Leave information packet:
"130 chapters in all 50 states representing more than one million young adults."
Next page:
"...million-person national base of 63 universities, 3 major student associations and 100 local chapters."
Next page:
"...supported by our grassroots base of 200 colleges and 100 local chapters."
The very next paragraph:
"...58 charter universities, 3 student associations and chapters in all 50 states."

The Special Award for Unmitigated Gall goes to...
10/94 [from the back cover of *Revolution X*]: "...the million-member grassroots organization Lead or Leave..."
10/13/94 [from a 10/13/94 Lead or Leave press release]: "...more than 20,000 members in all 50 states..."
11/7/94 [from *The Dallas Morning News*]: "...25,000 paid members on 125 college campuses. They estimate that 1 million others have joined through student governments."

—JP

services to whatever membership they actually have. Their only consistent spokesmen remain Cowan and Nelson.

Lead or Leave's main ideas are not

their own. They are part of a much larger and much more powerful coalition of organizations.

Many of the ideas that permeate Lead or Leave's literature can also be

found in the literature of the Concord Coalition, to whom their direct ties are numerous. Concord members on their advisory board include Richard Dennis (who is a major funder of libertarian causes), Clyde V. Prestowitz, Jr., and Paul Tsongas. Pete Peterson, a Concord Coalition founder, though not a Lead or Leave board member, is doubtless much enamored of them. Cowan and Nelson certainly mention him and his organization constantly in their work. And the Concord Coalition's World Wide Web site on the Internet is linked directly to Lead or Leave's new site. It seems obvious that there is more than a casual connection between the two groups.

Searching for Lead or Leave's ideological antecedents also turns up some less obvious tutors.

Cowan worked for a think tank called Rebuild America in the late 1980s. Rebuild America was composed, according to *Business Week* [March 28, 1988] and *National Review* [April 15, 1988] mostly of prominent Democratic party thinkers and politicians — people like Robert Reich (now secretary of labor), Lester Thurow (dean of the MIT Sloan School of Economics), Michael Dukakis (former governor of Massachusetts), and Cowan-employer Rep. Mel Levine.

These particular Democrats' politics mirrored what is considered to be a neo-conservative platform: they called for a rise in regressive consumption taxes on goods and services that would hit poor and working people hardest. They wanted to use this money to pay off the deficit. Not exactly traditional Democratic behavior. This may also explain why Terry McAuliffe, finance chair of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), is an honorary co-chair of Lead or Leave. The DNC, as anyone who worked on Jesse Jackson's last campaign will tell you, has been working to ensure that the party becomes more and more like the Republicans with each passing year.

Another major influence on Cowan and Nelson has been the writings of Neil Howe, a major-league entitlement basher who writes books like *13th Gen.* Howe's works are meant to inflame tensions between the young and old by blaming all the young's problems on the old, with the goal being to convince people to cut the deficit and eviscerate Social Security. When the press asks

which youth group they should quote, he unfailingly points them to Lead or Leave.

In 1988, Howe (a thinker often portrayed by the press as a liberal) wrote a book bashing Social Security for a think tank called the Institute for Contemporary Studies (ICS) in San Francisco. This group turns out to be the granddaddy of all neo-conservative think tanks — and the one largely responsible for Ronald Reagan's rise to the Presidency. Their writers include Caspar Weinberger, a Reagan secretary of defense; R. James Woolsey, until just recently director of the CIA; and Lamar Alexander, former governor of Tennessee and secretary of education under Bush.

As early as 15 years ago, many ICS writers were talking about how to gut Social Security. They represent a nexus of Reagan-style Republican neo-conservatives, libertarians (who agree with neo-cons on debt issues), and many conservative Democrats (who are basically neo-cons anyway). Readers should remember that Reagan rode to power on the youth vote, and that neo-conservatism was concocted in large part to sell a right-wing agenda to the liberal young of the 1970s — very similar to the what Lead or Leave is trying to do today. The ICS's overall mission seems to be to put the United States firmly in the hands of large corporations and banks. The ICS itself connects to a myriad of other think tanks, front groups, and scholars. All these folks seem to be engaged in the destruction of the Great American Democratic Experiment.

These groups represent the convergence of interests that Lead or Leave fronts for. These groups are the circles Cowan and Nelson move in and often quote or lift whole ideas from. These groups have more money than most Americans could ever imagine. And some of that money obviously flows to "youth" groups like Lead or Leave. According to the Nov. 7, 1994 *Dallas Morning News*, "So far, Lead or Leave has raised about \$1 million."

They have used that money to wreak considerable havoc in student activist circles, and the media.

And that must stop.

Cowan and Nelson believe that they have a right to say whatever they wish in the name of my generation. They can behave that way because they

are part of an elite. They are part of the top economic and political strata of this society. They have evidently been taught to believe that they are the cream of the crop. The best of the best. They do not earn this title, they buy it. Just as they now seek to buy the title of "leaders of our generation."

But who among my generation has voted for them? What have they done for the rest of us? Nothing. They have acted as young boosters of a very disturbing trend in our troubled democracy. They have worked hand in glove with the very forces in this country that are closing the political arena to the great majority of Americans. They have fronted for the "bipartisan" propagandists in both major political parties who are sacrificing the future livelihoods of millions of people on the altar of High Finance.

They have claimed that they are "above politics." Yet they espouse a right-wing political philosophy that will cause grave injury to the livelihoods of most working Americans in the coming decades.

They are not operating in a vacuum. Many Democrats and Republicans seem to be in the process of creating a single "Big Business" party. This is the logical outcome of "bipartisanism." If we don't have two separate major parties, then we will have only one. This party will not bend to the wishes of its electorate, but rather to the will of the banking industry. It will not be responsive to the needs of working Americans, but rather to the needs of the American elite.

When Cowan and Nelson say that they are "against politics as usual," they mean that they are "for business as usual." The needs of big business and the needs of working Americans are often at odds. If Lead or Leave does speak for big business, then they do not speak for working Americans. And if they speak for big business, they do not speak for the bulk of my generation.

If my generation is willing to fight to make their voices heard, they must fight this trend toward a single-party state. We should look to groups like USSA. We should look to other grassroots youth groups like the Student Environmental Action Coalition and Campus NOW. We should join unions in our workplaces to protect our economic rights. We should help form

new democratic unions where they don't yet exist. We should form our own new organizations in other arenas of life where appropriate and necessary. We should work in intergenerational organizations on issues we have in common with our parents and grandparents. We should start thinking — as young organizers in the Greens, the New Party, and Labor Party Advocates already are — about building a grassroots, progressive "third" party. A party that will stop electing those with the most money and business connections to represent us, and will start electing those citizens from our own ranks who will defend and advance democracy for the many over democracy for the few.

We should also work hard to stop the rollback of hard-won social programs that benefit millions of poor and working Americans. Where Social Security now stands, we should have cradle-to-grave "Family Security." Such a program would include innovations like a single-payer health care system, free federally funded higher education for all, fully funded and maintained public housing, sweeping mass transportation initiatives, mandated full employment for all — in short, all the things that the past 40 years of tax money could have bought for us, if our representatives in Washington had not seen fit to feed the military-industrial complex instead.

In this era of Gingrich and Lead or Leave, it may seem like madness to call for such things. But the Women's Liberation Movement of 25 years ago had a slogan that I think still applies today: "Go for what you really want!" Why should I, or any young person, settle for crumbs? For whatever those in power care to mete out to us?

The best thing we can do to fight the Lead or Leaves of our generation is to figure out what we really, really want out of our society and our lives — and go straight for that dream. We've got nothing to lose. It's either the crumbs of a broken democracy, or a much better world for ourselves and our children.

In the final analysis, young people should not look to Lead or Leave for leadership because they will only lead us to our undoing.

Research assistants: Simson Garfinkel, Charles Provenzano

EVEN MORE POETRY

What are you waiting for?'

A pause.
ly slavery to end.'
me, speech, dark, day, food, music, the postman.
A fishbowl.
n't it pretty in here! Look how the light of the sun
reflects off the roundness!
aybe that's why it gets so dark in here.'
e water is light surrounding this bowl, but I can't swim.
all, I can, I just don't want to, that's all.
mber when you yanked down the window of the wooshing
train and hung out, wind so fierce your tears poured
into your streaming hair, speed so fast you could taste
it, like ice...'
ah, but that was *different*.
ould like it in here (I hate fish, they're so serious, they
flicker like insincere smiles, they never relax)
If only the phone would ring.
If only all the fish were gone.
s soon as my fists stop clenching, my face stops twisting,
my teeth stop grinding, the water stops churning...
mber when you went to the playground that night to swing
on the swings, and you went higher and higher, the
swingset shrieked, the swing swooped, you flew...'
it there aren't any swings in here, that's stupid.
just can't be like that anymore.
lly Rabbit, that stuff's for kids
Not for fish.

—Sarah Shoemaker

Dudley T. Station Boston

Murders noise up Dudley Station,
but you win by working
your tray of bracelets, rings, perfume, and herbs
in front of an abandoned furniture store
to please the ladies
by helping them try on necklaces,
always saying,
"Ethics with ambition."
Their buying keeps you smiling
white as life.
I want to lasso in love
with one of your necklaces
but I could only blow a kiss
from a dirty bus window.

—Lisa Fay



Sidewalk Bubblegum ©1994 Clay Butler



Goddess by Jamie MacDonald

people to pop off a president of the United States of America. He said, "he isn't fit to be commander in chief."

Can you imagine if Louis Farrakhan had suggested that his Black Muslims do the same? He'd be in prison five minutes after the words left his mouth.

On the *MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour*, I watched Sen. Malcolm Wallop shrug Helms' statement off, saying that ol' fun-lovin' Jess was gettin' attacked again by the fringe Left because he was their favorite whipping boy.

Bullshit! Helms was sticking his finger in the air to see if there were any kind of military coup brewing out there. And you can bet your ass that before the next presidential election, Republicans will have a full-blown "Impeach Clinton" movement going, led by Sen. Al D'Amato — who let his brother take the hit for him in a bribe scandal a while back.

If the right wing can get rid of both Clinton and Gore before the 1996 election, guess who's next in line to be president of the United States? Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich!

Back in the 1930s, we had all sorts of anonymous money men backing the "America First" crowd of fascists and goons who bashed in the heads of striking union workers. In the 1950s, we had shadowy billionaires like Howard Hughes putting up the secret election slush funds for the likes of Richard Nixon.

You want to know how scary it is today, folks? We have some 300 unnamed big-buck contributors to Gingrich's GOPAC, which for the past three years has been bankrolling Newt's training of right-wingers to win elections from City Hall to Congress using half-truths, smear campaigns, and outright lies. This is the guy who wants to put kids of welfare mothers in orphanages and who called Bill and Hillary Clinton "Un-American."

So here I am in the spring of 1995 in front of a right-wing shit-slinging machine carrying me again into Republican hell. Fuck! I'm about to sink once more into the deep effluvia of God-Fearing, Flag-Waving, Fag-Bashing, Corporate-Interest-Loving Republicans.

And so are you, folks.



bout of "Last Brother" syndrome (as author Joe McGinniss would say). Hamstrung by Chappaquiddick and the recent shenanigans of his nephew William Kennedy Smith, Kennedy was unable to rebut.

The rest is history. Since his confirmation, Thomas has proved to be not merely conservative, but a doctrinaire radical right-winger who stubbornly plans to remain just the way he is. "I ain't evolving," he has said. *Strange Justice* quotes him as saying that if it takes him the next 43 years to do it, he plans to get even for his humiliation.

Thomas himself shrewdly said that the ordeal "is bigger than me. This is about where the country is going. This is about the course of America." He is absolutely right.

—review by Marc L. Songini

Shut Up and Listen

The Music Review Micro-Section

Dave Matthews Band — *Under the Table and Dreaming*
RCA

Since the debut LP, *Remember Two Things*, music critics and fans have expected nothing but good things from The Dave Matthews Band. The band's follow-up LP, *Under the Table and Dreaming*, doesn't disappoint. "Satellite" provides every type of melody worth listening to, combining the band's noteworthy rhythmic ability with the multilayered sound of Boyd Tinsley's acoustic violin. Lyrically, the band takes many chances, pairing its lead tender cut "Best of What's Around" with the more mind-bending "What Would You Say," which is better listened to while in an altered state. "Up and down the puppies' hair/Fleas and ticks jump everywhere/Cause of original sin/Rip away the tears/Drink a hope to happy years/And you may find a lifetime's passed you by."

In a first sampling of five tracks out of the 11-song compilation, the standout is "Typical Situation." The song, which was inspired by the poem "A Prayer in the Pentagon" by Robert Dederick, lays the groundwork for Dave Matthews' unmistakable vocals via innovative percussion, layered strings, and flute. This track

is juxtaposed with "Dancing Nancies," which provides the pull that carries the LP through to its exciting ending, including the cut "Ants Marching." If you've seen the band live, you've felt tenfold the curious impact of this song.
— Buck-O

Lir - *Magico, Magico*
W.A.R.? Records

There are a lot of keepers on this one. The 11-song CD by Lir entitled *Magico, Magico* is carefully arranged, combining dreamy endorphin-producing sounds on cuts like "Not to be Overlooked" and "Some Folks Are Truly Evil" with the symphonic-laden "New Song," which brings new dimensions to an already eclectic sampling.

Lyrically, the band is equally versed, though at times one might wonder from what perspective the lyricist is writing: "Throwing God's chickens about before you've time to reach/Cos he's a real reeky guy with lungs below his waders" ("3 legged guy"). Odd, but interesting. Perhaps the band's creative ability is heard best in "Good Cake, Bad Cake," a song that combines the group's musical strengths. This song is an indication of what a band full of "young 'uns" can do when they don't hold back on the creative energy.



photo: Jill MacLeod, AWA

RICK FRIEDMAN is The Hostile Elder

The Republicans

Twice before in my life I've been down into the political cesspool the Republicans are about to pull this country into again. Hate-mongering over the airwaves. The threats to religious and civil freedoms. The attacks on the underclass while they push through corporate welfare for their wealthy backers.

Twice before, in the 1930s and in the late 1940s, I heard the right-wing battle cries: *Stamp out those sicko commie union organizers! Hang the niggers! Send the Jews back to wherever they came from!*

Pat Buchanan once more raised high the right-wing battle flag at the 1992 Republican convention: "We have to take the country back and fight them street by street!" I'm again hearing messages of hate and class warfare, with the big money stacked up on their side: *Kill the baby-killer doctors! Get those welfare-cheating suckers! Put God back in the schools! Shoot the president of the United States!*

Born in 1930, I was a child of the Depression who wondered why my father (a milkman), all of my working-class relatives, and all of my parents' Jewish friends qualified as "rich Jew bastards." There wasn't a doctor, lawyer, or banker among us. We did have our own versions of today's right-wing talk radio zealots, among them Father Charles E. Coughlin. He was a pro-fascist Catholic priest and was among the first to learn that radio was the right medium for right-wingers.

Anybody out there for prayer in the schools? Let me tell you what it was like in my fourth-grade class at the Forrest Elementary School in Philadelphia. Every morning after we pledged allegiance to the United States of America, the teacher read from the New Testament — which, she said, instructed my little Gentile classmates not to pray in the closet "like the Heathen Jew, who killed our Lord Jesus." I wanted to hide in a closet.

But what did I know? When the kid next door (whose mother told him not to play with "The Jew Kid") said I "didn't even know who Pontius Pilate was," it was true. I thought Pilate was a comic strip character.

But I learned what was what pretty quickly. I learned I was Jewish and they were Christian. I learned that they seemed to think this gave them a right to punish me for something my ancestors and I never did. I learned that they thought America was only for them, and not for me. America Über Alles. Again and again, I was confronted by intolerance. One day, on my way home from Hebrew school, five Christian kids jumped me and beat the crap out of me. During Easter, a bunch more with hammers and nails threatened to nail me to a tree "like you did to our Lord, Jesus Christ."

And now the nightmare returns. There's Newt Gingrich in November, 1994, telling me: "I do have a vision of an America in which a belief in the Creator is once again at the center of defining being an American. And that is a radically different vision of America than the secular anti-religious view of the Left." Gingrich and his right-wing pals have thrown down the gauntlet of a constitutional amendment to "restore prayer" — Christian prayer, mind you — in the American classroom for the sake of "reestablishing the Creator as the center of American

polity."

Newt, you can stick your polity up your ass!

I was turning 18 in 1948, and about to get my draft card when the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), with Richard Nixon leading the charge, subpoenaed "The Hollywood Ten" — and the hunt for "commies" and "commie lovers" inside and outside of government started. Sen. Joe McCarthy jumped into the search, as did Walter Winchell (the most popular syndicated columnist and radio commentator in the country), as did Arthur Godfrey (the country's most popular TV personality), as did FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover (who blackmailed presidents, Supreme Court justices, and congressmen).

How bad did it get? My high school Algebra teacher was fired for supposedly teaching us communism, although I can't for the life of me remember him inserting Karl Marx into our equations. But, then again, I had trouble converting letters into numbers. I couldn't figure out if "HUAC = uncovering 10 million commies." I flunked Algebra.

How bad did it get in the 1950s? A member of *The New York Times* was subpoenaed to testify before HUAC even after it turned out that they had him mixed up with somebody else who had the same name. On principle, he refused to testify, citing the Fifth Amendment. On principle, the *Times* fired him anyway.

How bad did it get? There was a blacklist against anybody remotely connected with "fellow-traveler" and "commie-front" organizations. The blacklist was pervasive in Hollywood, radio, TV, and publishing. Protest art, theater, literature, and cinema of all kinds (with the exception of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* and Walt Kelley's comic strip "Pogo") were driven out of America for ten years.

In the 1970s I learned that the 1950s *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, a science-fiction movie in which people were converted into zombies, was a sneaky protest against McCarthyism.

And what have we got today, folks? Sen. Jesse Helms, who raises millions of bucks fighting the arts "perverts," now in a right-wing position of power to make protest art, theater, literature, and cinema disappear again. This is the same Jesse Helms who invited

————— Elder page 61

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