

PROCESSED WORLD 12



Are you being rated...
"NON-USER-FRIENDLY?"

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All of the articles and stories in **Processed World** reflect the views and fantasies of the author and not necessarily those of other contributors or editors.

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talking



HEADS

As we go to press, we're not sure who won the election. But does it matter? For most of us, our daily lives remain the same.

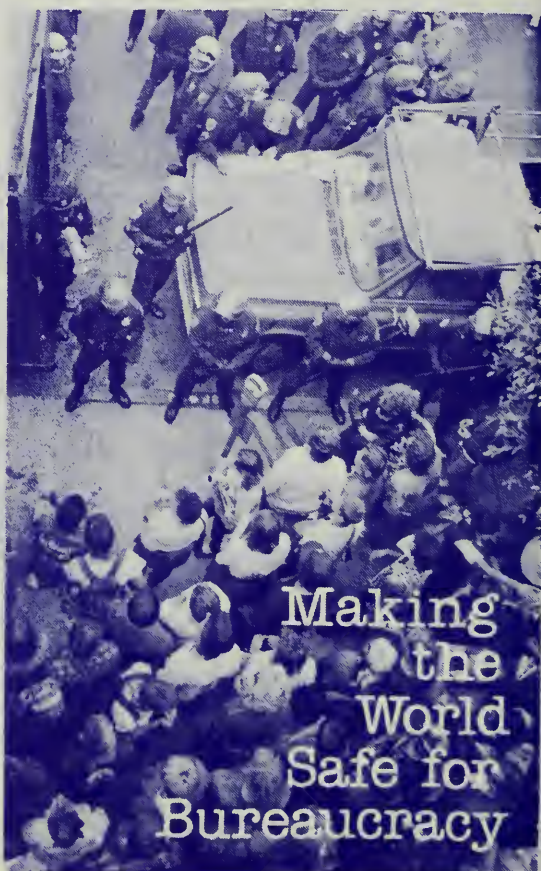
The results of the election won't affect us as closely as our face-to-face encounters with police at the Democratic Convention last summer. Our choices on the street then were as limited as our choices in the voting booth.

The Convention was one of the summer's most spectacular events — rivaled only by the Olympics (see "We're #1!" in this issue). San Francisco had been specially sanitized for the event. City agencies dumped one set of undesirables — street people and prostitutes — cashless in the suburbs or industrial outskirts of the city. The police were out to win their own gold medals with the other set — protestors. A solid wall of cops with a quick-arrest policy busted nearly 500; free speech and rights of assembly were a farce with people being snagged for "conspiring to block a sidewalk" or even for just looking like a protestor. Several of our own circle were arrested for pushing a peaceful Trojan "Peace Ass" (it ate money and shot missiles and conventional arms).

When the conventioners had gone home and the cops had returned to their normal levels of hostility, everyone was still at work. Some who had taken to the streets with spirit were left with an unsettling question: was it worth it? Those who are still facing many months of agonizingly slow legal procedures may end up doing time in jail. But most would do it again. For them, Mistress Feinstein's enactment of a Democratic Party-controlled police state made it

even more clear that we need to take to the streets, and often. Others felt the show of the macho vs. the powerless wasn't worth the beatings and arrests — they'd rather find alternatives in their everyday lives for expressing their dissatisfaction.

And the election season drags on. Some will vote, some won't. Some will sleep through it, some will get drunk. (For further discussion on voting, see "Any Port in a Storm?" in this issue.) For those who rely on elections to make a difference in their lives, the prospect of one more term with the Gipper is depressing. Others feel despair as movements on the left lose momentum, lose touch with reality, or turn upon



Zoe Noe

their own. The political situation, like the situation at work, arouses two related feelings, despair and outrage. Tension builds and wavers between sadness and fury. It releases into different kinds of political response with one unifying theme: we refuse to passively accept the limits imposed on our lives by the political system, by the government, by the job market, and by commodity culture. Two features in this issue focus on making changes. In his piece, "Down In The Valley," 'Doc'

discusses the resistance he encountered while working for Tandem Computers in Silicon Valley. Our new regular feature, "Hot Under The Collar," explores instances of office rebellion and issues against which to rebel. And as usual, we have an array of provocative graphics, poetry, and short fiction to take the imagination beyond the mundane. We crave your thoughtful letters. Air your thoughts in PW's Letters section! Write to: PW, 55 Sutter St. #829, SF, CA 94104.

secret

MELQUIADES — (Computer)-manual laborer with chip on shoulder seeks insurrection, patron w/no wires attached. No visible pets.

KELLY GIRL — Hi! I can type eighty-five words a minute, and I can smile. These days I can word process, too, and make more money. **WANG**. Where can I pour my coffee?

PAXA LOURDE — How do I love thee, let me count the keystrokes. Another bona fide temp word processor, a faggot revolutionist, a compulsive gardener, a disbeliever in resumes, including this one. I mean really, isn't this a little bit too much like a personals ad?

HELEN HIGHWATER — I am a visual artist who worships plastic & kitschy fragments of culture. An eccentric, nurturing a soon-to-be 26-year-long identity crisis, I manage to have a pretty good (or at least interesting) time in spite of it all.

LUCIUS CABINS — A receptionist/secretary/word processor for about 5 years, I've "escaped" into self-employed typesetting and graphic arts. Anti-wage-labor developed doing PW. fired several times for agitating... proud new father, bicyclist-PW mail-fetcher.

LINDA THOMAS — Secrets? Ask me personally & I'll decide whether I want to tell you or not.

ZOE NOE — Not a lady biker.

BOZ — Chemical worker and fork lift driver and... you guessed it. Alcoholic!

PRIMITIVO MORALES — Free (maybe), white male, over 21, former driver, currently programmer, will travel.

lives



Dear Processed World,

I read the article in *INFOWORLD*, June 4, 1984, about your work and I was quite impressed with its sensitivity to the political economy of computers and information technology, in general.

I am a Sociologist of Education and am very interested in the social aspects and outcomes of microcomputers in education. At present, several of my students and I are putting together an article entitled, "The Political Economy of Microelectronic Devices in Education." While micros are being touted as a liberating technology for teachers, students, and administrators, and indeed, may have that potential, it is more likely to deskill teachers, distort learning for students, and to give too much control to administrators.

Microcomputers as participatory devices have to be fought for and will not easily fit into current organizational structures. If our organizational work settings are already hierarchical, top-down and "boss-oriented," then the introduction of micros will only strengthen that kind of structure. This is already evident in the private sector. Recent studies in education suggest a similar outcome.

In a recent article in the *Harvard Educational Review*, Karen Sheingold and her co-authors found in their study of microcomputer use in three school districts that school districts, their organization and style had a greater impact on the technology than the impact of technology on them. I quote, "The results suggest that the effects of microcomputers on education will depend, to a large extent, on the social and educational contexts within which they are embedded."

Anyway, this gives an idea why I found your work so interesting. What you are worrying about in the everyday workworld I worry about in the

educational world. While microcomputers provide new possibilities in work and education, they also are not likely to become democratic tools that liberate unless we get smart about how easy it is to talk micros as liberation (ideology), and how difficult it is to practice it.

Sincerely,
G.P. — Tallahassee FL

Dear Processed World,

I'm still in the process of reading #11, but I want to say that the janitor story really rang a bell. When I lived in SF, I lived with one of those alcoholic janitors who worked at the Embarcadero and was one of the few white guys there and was going to school in the daytime (It was at school that I met him). He had started out scrubbing commodes, then worked his way up to assistant foreman, then eventually foreman. He was also a Vietnam vet. He worked from about 4PM till midnight; then after work he would go to a bar, usually this place called Pastene's where all the janitors hung out, and guzzle about 6 or 7 straight Jack Daniels, then come home around 3AM and drag me out of bed and start beating on me. Thus I became a Battered Woman and I've been semi-psychotic ever since. This really fucked up my sleep patterns as you might imagine, and made it a nightmare when I tried to go back to a 9 to 5 office schedule (after having lived a laid-back Bohemian student lifestyle for a few years). I couldn't get any sleep the night before a new job started (I was doing the temp thing); then I was a wreck all the next day. "The Tyranny of Time" [PW#11] really rang a bell too for that reason; I've had this utter TERROR of 9 to 5 schedules ever since.

The only solution I could find was to simply not do those jobs anymore. And ever since then I've had this real problem with how to "fill my time." I

haven't found any *lucrative* ways to fill it, but at least I've found some more *creative* ways to fill it than I had for a long time. I've had an opportunity to work in cable TV, which I am now trying to make the most of. It's Community Access so there's no money in it, but I don't care. I seem to be allergic to working for money. I'd rather do the kind where there's no money involved, even though it means living in ridiculous poverty and being half-starved much of the time. But of course it won't *always* be like this, I keep telling myself (though I don't really believe it).

Blessings,
B.R. — Allston MA

To the Editors:

Cabins is on target about the corrosive effects of drugs, illegal and legal (ever take on a member of the Kalifano Kadet Korps of anti-smokers?). He's slightly off the mark about the extent of use. It is not that illegal drug use is more widespread but



© Cargo Cultists

HAPPINESS

is an inside job
 overthrows the system from time to time
 comes in torrents like an orgasm
 then once again
 subsides
 to an undercover agent dressed in gloom.

Ronald Edward Kittell

that the drug culture is more widespread. Opium, morphine, nitrous oxide and cocaine were once legal drugs and their use was common well into the 20th century. The widow's walk was an architectural feature of the house in New England ports, and with the China trade it is easy to see why women were anxious for their men to return. Opium was used freely, until the supply ran out, and of course the supply was replenished when the ship came in. "A shot in the arm" entered the language, as did "quick fix," and both are still around, though somewhat dated. Modern marketing efforts have brought us to "altered consciousness" and methadone treatment.

Cabins, therefore, is dealing with a syllogism. Ordinary consciousness is unsatisfying because work, friendships, city living, and recreation are absent or deficient. The promise of altered consciousness is seductive enough to find plenty of converts, whose best hope is a temporary reduction of the sense of emptiness, and whose worst fears are frequently well-founded. In other,

simpler words, drug use is a symptom of the disease it purports to cure. The same can be said of so much of modern life — from automobiles to computers to psychiatry. We're simply up against it, the technology, that is, an old story.

By technology I don't mean simply the electronic, as most of your writers and readers do, but the entire state of the art from the BART system and aspirins to the methane-breathing plastic furniture, the disposable diapers. "Plastic, plastic, everything's going to be made of plastic," sang Guthrie. Well, now everything *is* made of plastic except the things I can't afford.

I can't afford to glorify drug use. Like Cabins I've lost friends who preferred careers in dope to just about anything else. It really is a triumph of modern marketing that a career in dope is just that, something requiring a lot of hard work to get to the top, a hardening of the hierarchies. The occasional Kennedy heir might score in Harlem, but most vice presidents toot with other v.p.'s. The work itself, as Cabins notes, is dangerous and time-consuming, requiring administrative and marketing skills worthy of an Iacocca.

Illegal drug use bridges rather than cements, and the bridges are stretched over dangerous heights and swift rapids. Cabins understands this. Isolation, addiction, and prison are excellent reasons for caution in a choice of career, whether the work be programming (the hacker has his own media problems — he is outlaw, hero, romantic and priest) or dealer.

Ad astra,
B.C. — San Francisco

Dear friends (& anarchists [where-ever you may be.]):

So far I have received 4 issues of PW (7-11) and you send them to me of no charge (I am a state prisoner).

This past March I was placed in violation for having PW (because) a correctional officer here said that PW

was related to the Aryan Brotherhood. (No joke!) After being put into "the hole" for a period of ten (fucking) days, I wrote four grievances to the superintendent here. The first three were (honestly) — lost. *Finally* the supt. wrote me back and said that the violation mentioning my "collusion" with the Aryan Brotherhood would be removed from my file. Just thought I would let you know that in my opinion management and administration are all together one (thing).

I've just recently begun working in the library (which is nicely organized). I'll put PW on display there once I'm through reading it.

S.S. — Missouri



The first grammar course developed exclusively for people in business

Corporate Grammar

Dear PW,

Enclosed find a delightful piece of nonsense courtesy of the airline "news" magazine.

No need to use such vulgar expressions as, "You'll have to work faster." Now you too can render gems such as, "Referencizing fiscal responsiveness has facilitated necessary input-orientation scheduling overbalance-wise, thus replicating, motivationally speaking attitudinally-derived factors with respect to the underlying prolificness." Doesn't that sound grand!

Of course, slams on enforced illiteracy have been done before (though never often enough to my thinking); the point to get across is that language, no less that computer science, is a technology used against us. Orwell's concept of a language structured so as to eliminate thought processes has always been for me a very profound and dangerous observation. "So remember, Kids, 'We do it all for you!'"

T.H. — Detroit

timeclock blues

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...YOU KNOW, BOSS, UNOCCUPIED MINDS ARE THE DEVIL'S PLAYGROUND! WHEN MARY & I KICK BACK IN THE EVENING, WITH A VARIETY OF BEVERAGES AND SNACK PRODUCTS, WE LIKE TO TURN ON ALL OF OUR INFORMATION UNITS AT ONCE! OUR TELEVISION CAN ONLY HANDLE SPLIT-SCREEN DUAL-STATION RECEPTION, BUT THAT NEW STEREO OF OURS CAN SIMULTANEOUSLY OUTPUT FIVE DIFFERENT SIGNALS WITH NEGLIGIBLE FREQUENCY CANCELLATION!

YOU TWO SHOULD BE PROUD OF YOUR INFORMATION CONSUMPTION! ONLY IN OUR MODERN WORLD IS SUCH A THING POSSIBLE! DO YOU REALIZE THAT SUPPOSEDLY WISE MEN SUCH AS PLATO AND SOCRATES WOULD HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY UNABLE TO COPE WITH MORE THAN TWO SIMULTANEOUS INFORMATION INTAKES? HA, HA!

...AND DON'T YOU WORRY ABOUT THAT OUTDATED TELEVISION OF YOURS, BOB! I'M GOING TO RECOMMEND YOU FOR THAT PROMOTION! YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO INCREASE YOUR CONSUMPTION FACTOR NICELY!



Dear PW,

I'm at one of my far-flung trade shows with some time and access to a DECmate III word processor (courtesy of the press room here at Intech '84 in Dallas) on my hands.

Two contradictory things have happened. One is that I have gotten to the point where I can't write without a word processor: for me, the ability to turn out readable copy (my handwriting is

wretched and my typing is worse), and more important, revise and rewrite as much as I need to, has enabled me to get over my writer's block/performance anxiety in a way years of psychotherapy never did. The negative side of all this is that I spend so much of my waking hours at work, writing and thinking about computers, and data processing, and the impact of the technology on all

of us poor humans, that it's the last thing I want to do with my free time.

I now work as an editor 41 floors up in mid-town Manhattan, for a prestigious trade magazine at a Fortune 500 mega-publishing company. I go to press conferences; get hounded by flacks, directors of marketing, and company presidents; zoom around to trade shows in major U.S. convention centers where I live far better off my expense account than I ever can when I'm home in New York in my small, cold dark cave with a view. And what has been the effect of all this on me, the original Berkeley alienated disaffected nihilist, who can't relate to anything, whose first 9-to-5 job was at age 28? Well, for one, I like the autonomy that the corporation gives me, the perks (without which life in Manhattan would be impossible, or nigh intolerable), the freedom to get paid for writing what I think, to slip in small bits of splenetic commentary on things. For the rest, I've stopped writing poetry; in fact I've stopped writing altogether, except when I'm on business trips as I am now, where I use the hotel's stationery to write long meditative letters. It's only on the road, when I'm away from the tyranny of text, and language, and deadlines, and churning out X numbers of lines in so little time, and Thinking About What It All Means, that I feel like writing.

I started working in this field after many abortive Bay Area non-careers (waitressing, working at a fancy French bakery, working for a peace group, etc.)

at a hippy trippy Marin software company as a clerical assistant to the technical writer. I liked the vibes though — everyone wore jeans, the president of the company did his own typing, you made your own hours, and had Mill Valley to play in in your off hours. It was the fantasy of the enlightened California new age company — and I agree, it was wonderful to get paid to ask questions, make mistakes, be master of your own time. But of course, all good things must end; the company went broke, and I decided I liked being a translator of technical concepts into ordinary English, and I liked how anti-authoritarian the DP world seemed to me. So I got myself into another job, actually doing technical writing, at a bigger, straighter company, and then found out what life in the real world was like. It was about the same time I started subscribing to PW — and it was comforting to have some guidebook in hand as I went through the confusion and rage of working for a traditional corporation (bankrolled by insurance companies, retired military officers, and a stock quotation company, no less). Gad, it was pernicious. And gad, technical writing turned out to be a bore once I got over the initial thrill of gaining a skill, of having regular income, and using my brain for the first time since I was 16. I then started doing the company's marketing literature, because that seemed to offer a little more creativity and less of a feeling of machine-to-machine translation...

Two curious effects. I saw my prose getting smoother, but with an oddly flattened grey affect. Blanded out. The second was that I began to think of computer applications all the time, in terms of eliminating drudge work. I began to notice in conversation to friends that I would make comments like "You could get a computer to do that." I organized a passover seder for 30 people at a loft south of Market Street on the company's minicomputer. It was fun. Appropriate use of technology and all that.



Anyway, just when I decided that couldn't take it anymore, fate intervened when a headhunter called out of the blue (never ask for what you want because you might get it). I was recruited by a New York publisher to be an editor at a micro consumer magazine. Ah, every Liberal Arts flake's dream: to go to New York and work in publishing. Writing magazine articles *had* to be more fun than cranking out press releases and user's manuals... Anyway, I went after much rigmarole too appalling to go into (IQ tests! Personality inventories to check for attitudes towards authority! Endless paranoid checking of references!). It was a disaster. I never encountered professional sexism before last fall; I went into culture shock over the classist, racist nature of the New York social structure; I hated the kind of formulaic drivel I was supposed to turn out. So I was driven away, and I got another job, this time where I wasn't required to indirectly flog the consumerist ethic (buy more things and you'll be happy!).

Now, it's been almost a year since I moved to New York. I'm learning more and more about something I really don't care about (computers); they were just a way for me to make a decent living as a writer, and not sell my soul. I'm being typed as a journalist, which I never wanted or aspired to be. I don't believe most people need computers but I find myself unwilling to use the perfectly good wonderful old Hermes typewriter I have at home. What's more, after hours I don't want to think about or work with machines. I want the sensory, the social. Dealing with language and technology every day exacerbates my other needs: the longing for community, kindred spirits, pleasure, intimacy, play, a decent place to live, good light, a lover — all things missing in my life in the big city. I keep thinking of that hokey old Donovan song, you are but a young girl, working your way through the phonies...

P.B. — NYC

I DON'T WANT TO BE A TECHNOPEASANT

It was not by revelation,
that I know I'm not a technocrat.

It was fear,
tugging at my motivating force,
causing a constant dull ache
for months.

With each new hi-tech step for mankind
I search myself and find
no desire to learn Basic.

Why do I resist the way the world turns?
(Why don't I own a television?)

Do you hear the Word not seen?
the veiled voice calling
in and out of earshot,
inviting me deeper into forever
and farther from now.

I wonder

Will someone, using an Apple II,
discover the plan to make
us nothing but numbers,
And organize all the technopeasants
to rise up

They will sabotage all the Auto-tellers,
("What if I need money at 2 a.m.??")

Start campaigns

to burn cars with voices,
reverse tapes on answering machines,
break those circuits that interrupt
our conversations,
(You know, when someone more important
is trying to get through.)

Beth Jones



Dear Worldly Workers & Friends,

Believe me, your magazine is my life raft on those crowded, muggy CTA trains and busloads of workers rushing around to and from work. While their *Wall Street Journals* poke my arms and ribs, cramping the space, I am safely hidden away in *Processed World*.

I read you cover to cover and agree with your philosophies and recommendations to make work endurable via sabotage. Right now I am in the process of ripping off company time, company materials: pen, paper, postage, all in a cool, air-conditioned private office. It ain't too bad. Just got back from lunch and need to relax an hour to let the food

digest. Right!

My favorite — Excuse me. I forgot where I left off because I interjected a little work. I work hard. Like most womyn I'm ripped off royally of any financial and/or power gains. The book *Games Mother Never Taught You* supposedly gives strategies for women on how to get ahead in the corporate world but I wonder if it's worth the struggle. The book only made me madder than hell so I went into the president's office demanding a \$5000 raise, he told me I was crazy, I gave him "2 weeks notice," he said "if I were you I'd think about this." And I said "OK. I retract it." So here I am. I have a computer in my office but I'm self-conscious of the noise I make on it or having to wipe out should someone walk in. I am discreet about time stealing. I see to it I pad my lunch-breaks with work oriented pick-ups and deliveries during the warm weather season. Also when criticized about anything I say "I'll try to do better next time" and smile. They buy it and I feel good inside. Attack thoughts only attack the person who holds them. I don't need to defend myself. I do a good job but I do pace myself and I don't give one hundred percent. I see no reason to.

I especially love your graphics, the comics are exceptional. There is no weapon like humor.

Love ya,
J.B. — Chicago

SPECIAL OFFER TO PW READERS

I know, the last thing a person who's been looking into a computer terminal all day wants to do is to come home after work and plug in their home computer even to access such a revolutionary service as NewsBase.

So why not take an electronic break on the job. Use the bosses' equipment to access NewsBase while at work. In fact NewsBase will set up a special section just for workers who call NewsBase during working hours.

Communicate with other terminal slaves through NewsBase. Exchange information on working conditions, on union organizing or just plain gossip. Start using computers for yourself.

If only three of you access NewsBase during working hours and leave a message for me, the SYSOP, saying that you want a special section on NewsBase just for terminal slaves I will set it up. Only you and fellow workers will be able to access it.

To access NewsBase during working hours (or any other time, 24 hours a day) just call 415/824-8767.

Richard Gaikowski

ED. NOTE: Of course readers should take precautions to preserve their anonymity in the [likely] event this bulletin board is "visited" by managers



Dear Processed World,

Hi everybody. Here I am in the letters. I'm going to launch right into the bad form bit — that is Bad Form # D sec. 37901 and this is it — writing to a magazine that I help produce. So now I'm a slut with Bad Form. Colette knows a stripper named Lottie Dah. I like that.

When I first got involved with P.W., some of you know, I was coming out of a period of pretty intense isolation with the misanthropic mark on my head. Just previous to that, a group that I had been involved in and I had a painful parting. In that process, I was scapegoated, and attacked in various harassing ways, and made to feel pretty threatened. I made it through and have the added ability to empathize with anyone else in that position. My experience was not with a political group per se. I was involved with The Church of Satan, and later, after the first Hell Wars, the Temple of Set. Adversary — in a big way. I've had no experience with a political group before, never read Marx or those other guys. I like my politics by accident, like when I discovered not looking at shower curtains in shop windows anymore because I can't afford them is some kind of Marxist economic policy.

Now that I am (accidentally) political, I find many similarities in political groups as in religious revolutionaries. All Romes decline and fall. Factions develop, grow, new edicts and codes arise, THE WAY is defined, pronounced and all dogma clearly formed. Rigor mortis sets in shortly thereafter, but before that, someone must suffer. Someone must be made to pay for the truth, that there is no Rome, that our societies are false. Even our best ones. Those that we create ourselves out of tender idealism die as we are pressed to explain, to name, to identify. This is the fool's preoccupation, because even the sleepest must know that we can't name

what we don't know. What are we doing? Creating? Kidding ourselves? Making ourselves victims for the destroyers, so active in this arena? It is impossible to predict, as the fate of the Earth. Yet speculation and examination of current trends show...a crazed killer lurking in each of our futures and an earth with a death rattle for the radiation baby.

Oh the pleasures of false life are ever glorious — so much fun to swallow up information of other people's lives, keep the light away from me, fill the telephone with my voice, I have to tell, I have to tell. Whose hand is holding that telephone? I'd like to know, so I can pull the plug on that caller. It is a small world after all, and we all know who's fucking whom. We even know who's fucking the people we don't like. All this is much more fun than passing around information about useful activities that might require effort to be personable or responsible or human. Lets trash each other instead, make ourselves tender meat for the politicians. The gossip in the Satanic scene was more fun. You know — "He said that a Demon really appeared" and so forth.

Why does personal dislike have to become a personalized political attack? Even after my own experience, I don't have the absolute answer, but I get the sense that people get very pissed off when you won't give them directions/solutions, and when you won't make yourself accountable to them, or identify your moves. If the desired label is Council Communism, and there is a council of one, and I commune with myself, is that still Council Communism, and does that mean that my decision is not mine?

Processed World moves in lots of different ways, and that's one of the things I like about it. I spit at dogma, and it drives me away. People who can't let it go are playing a scratched record. CHANGE! CREATION! I'll sleep when





I'm dead. Processed World does not pretend that it has formed a new or even an old society. There is no intimation of knowing what's ahead and so presuming to know the way for all. I have grown in an atmosphere of creativity and support through my participation in this project. I hate bulk mailing and I don't quite hate printing all the time. I like being able to sit in the same room with someone I disagree with and not feel like I have to agree or make them change their mind. Or that I have to suffer somehow, or make them suffer.

Somehow out there in the world of left handed open minded politics, I am not seeing genuine open-mindedness or even much understanding. I just keep hearing about it. There are claims to differentiation between things "personal" and "political" and then there are separations, attacks, and defamations. What's the point? Working towards a new kind of life, or perpetuating this rut? And in the meantime, maintaining magnanimous civility? How many bloody cheeks will it take before we stop being something we're not? Life in this world/society beats us up enough, doesn't it, without turning on one another? Maybe that

means that if oppression didn't exist we'd have to invent it. There's no way of knowing.

I'm not going to make a bleeding heart plea that "we should all get along with one another." That's never gonna happen. A lot of already solid somethings have to come together to unmake shaky ground. Settle in for a long wait and try to avoid the slings and arrows out to kill the songbirds of hope.

Love, L.T.

(with BAD FORM properly filed)

#D Sec. — 37901

See Thomas, Bad Form



Dear People:

The place where I work is unbelievably straight...today I was blowing my nose in the bathroom stall and my schnozz was going HONK HONK, as it is want to do. I noticed by the little white sling-backs under the next stall that the old BOSSO was trying to take her little dump right there, next to little pink-collared me. So, to get her embarrassed I said, "It sounds just like a moose-call, doesn't it?" Another pink-collared slave would have giggled or said "I thought that was you" or something. My boss said NOTHING. When we got out to the old sinks I took my time washing my hands, next to the old boss. She still said NOTHING. I was taking such liberties! (I hope she thought I was referring to her old dried-up sphincter.)

It might be a good idea to pass on—talk to your bosses in the bathroom. You can't get "in trouble": no one is doing any WORK. It gets them all upset because a) the human side of them is exposed, if you will, b) they're at your mercy c) if you act real sunny and bright, they can't say you're being *obscene* or something, and that gets them even more! Try it!

Comes the revolution, however it comes.

Love,

R.M. — Atlanta

ANY PORT IN A STORM

"...although the Devil be the Father of Lyes, he seems, like other great Inventors, to have lost much of his Reputation, by the continual Improvements that have been made upon him."

Jonathan Swift, 1710

DID YOU VOTE ON NOVEMBER 6?

If you didn't then you are an uncaring idiot who didn't do your part in trying to get rid of the most brutal President yet. If you did, well then you're a good dupe legitimizing a 2-Party monopoly whose left hand holds a .38, the right a .45.

Like all election years, U.S. citizens this year were bombarded with appeals to do their bit for democracy and get out'n'vote. The old rallying cry that 'this time voting will really make a difference' had great appeal. Orchestrated election hoopla was bigger and more expensive than ever before. But if millions were mesmerized by images of leaders, far fewer people bothered to cast their ballot.

LESSER EVILS, GREATER MYTHS

For many, voting Reagan out was considered crucial to avoid escalation of U.S. intervention in Central America, to protect what remains of welfare and civil rights programs, and to prevent the appointment of more conservative judges to the Supreme Court.

At first glance, Mondale's position against covert aid to the *contras* in Nicaragua appeared to make him a "peace" alternative to the more obvious war posturing of the Reagan administration. But then Mondale said he would "quarantine" Nicaragua if the Sandinistas didn't fall in line behind U.S. foreign policy. An effective quarantine would mean placing U.S. troops and military resources around Nicaragua's borders, a strategy that would increase the likelihood of direct

U.S. intervention in the region. Moreover, Mondale openly applauded aid to El Salvador and endorsed Reagan's invasion of Grenada. From Woodrow Wilson's explicit campaign promise of non-intervention in World War I to "peace candidate" Johnson's escalation of the Vietnam War, the Democrats' track record is dismal (see sidebar *The Democrats' Long and Sleazy History of War and Militarism*).

The prospect for poor and minorities under Mondale was equally dismal. The Carter-Mondale administration championed underprivileged interests by proposing \$27.6 billion in domestic cuts, including reductions in job training, Social Security and other programs. Four years later at the Democratic Convention, the Mondale-Ferraro faction



rejected all but one of the (already tame) minority planks put forth by Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition, leading one of his supporters to comment: "We were treated like song and dance men...treated with arrogance by Mondale." Meanwhile, Mondale took great pains to embrace Bert Lance, a living symbol of corrupt, Southern monied interests.

The spectre of a Supreme Court stacked with anti-abortion, anti-civil rights, pro-prayer conservatives provided the most convincing reason to vote against Reagan. Such a realignment could threaten the few substantial civil liberties that can still be defended in U.S. courts. Mondale's choices for these positions of power would almost certainly be more moderate than Reagan's. But given the prevailing political climate, Mondale appointees would likely be more conservative than the two remaining liberals on the Court, Brennan, age 78 and Marshall, age 76. Election results aside, the overall injustice of the U.S. legal system would persist.

The attention given to presidential elections was ridiculously disproportionate to the real effect of ballot casting in our daily lives. Voting gives us some influence over who wins but no reassurance that the winner will serve our interests.

Politicians make all kinds of promises and projections during their campaigns that are left unfulfilled by the end of their terms. The most important issues are rarely voted on. This year, for example, voters cannot decide whether the government will authorize nationwide cobalt irradiation of fruit, vegetables and grain; whether U.S. Steel, G.M., Atari and other corporations can again shutdown major plants and ravage nearby communities by suddenly throwing thousands out of work; or whether computer chip-making is worthwhile as long as chlorine gas and other known cancer-causing toxics are necessary to produce them.

In 23 states the citizenry can raise

pertinent questions through popular initiatives. This process has placed on the ballot issues that concretely affect people's lives (rent control, repeal of sales tax on food, gun control). In recent years, the initiatives have also included symbolic measures such as municipal declarations of nuclear free zones or opposition to federal military aid to Central America.

But what began as a mechanism to supercede party politics has largely been captured by monied interests. To place a measure on the ballot, proponents must secure petition signatures from the electorate, and this activity in itself has become a "big business". Political management firms now specialize in acquiring signatures for a price. The California Fair Practices commission reported that in 1979 sponsors of the Gann "Spirit of 13" proposition to roll back property taxes paid \$537,000 or almost \$1 per name to get the necessary signatures. And when a measure gets on the ballot the big money really starts rolling. In a record for campaign expenditures that still holds today, five tobacco companies and the Tobacco Institute spent \$6 million (to their opponents' \$0.5 million) in 1978 on a California measure limiting smoking in public places. Voters' information channels were flooded with advertising which turned around an initially favorable attitude toward the proposition.

Popular local initiatives are also threatened by tremendous financial support from outside special interests. This year, California's Proposition 37 for a state lottery saw in-state opponents (mostly race track interests and churches) raise \$88,000 in total contributions. In one fell swoop, an out of state lottery ticket supplier, Scientific Games Inc. made a \$1.5 million contribution in support of the proposition. Not surprisingly, as money becomes the crucial factor in posing and deciding initiatives, they become increasingly conservative, such as California's Proposition 41 that would immediately cut wel-

fare benefits by 40%.

The emergence of a voting industry has turned voters into political "capital" for those who run the business of American democracy. For political machines, people are 'votes' to be bought, sold, and traded as the candidate's strategy and warchest dictate. Leaders of large organizations from the Moral Majority to the Nuclear Freeze Movement to the AFL-CIO, broker their members' votes as stock in exchange for campaign pledges and planks in party platforms. For pollsters and electoral analysts of all kinds, 'voting blocs' are vital data for determining the winning party 'ticket', how districts should be re-apportioned, which incumbents may be most vulnerable. The 'black vote,' Yuppie vote, farm vote, youth vote, Christian vote, labor vote, senior vote, peace vote have become so many chips

in a complex, multi-million dollar poker game. The recognition of our exchange-value as voters calls into question the use-value of this alienating industry.

WHICH SIDE ARE THEY ON?

Office-holders are not guided by the humble concerns of most of their constituents, but instead are led by the huge non-elective state bureaucracies like the Pentagon, CIA, FBI, and Federal Reserve Board. For example, once the Pentagon begins a program like the B1 bomber, a Congressional member has little control over the scientific, technical, and military experts intimately involved. Rather, elected representatives must rely upon them for pertinent information in deciding defense budget allocations.

Campaign "donations" also have a

Beware Geeks Bearing Gifts

DEMOCRATS:

A Long & Sleazy History

WOODROW WILSON

- 1914 Intervention in Mexico
- 1915 Intervention in Haiti
- 1916 Intervention in Dominican Republic
- 1917 Intervention in WWI
- 1918 Invades Revolutionary Russia

FDR

- 1941 Allows Pearl Harbor Attack, enters WWII
- 1942 Arrests 110,000 Japanese Americans
- 1945 Partitions World with Churchill, Stalin

H. TRUMAN

- 1945 Hiroshima & Nagasaki
- 1947 Truman Doctrine
- 1950 Undeclared War in Korea

JFK

- 1961 Bay of Pigs
- 1962 Fake 'Bomber Gap' and 'Missile Gap'

LBJ

- 1964 Full scale war in Vietnam
- 1965 Intervention in Dominican Republic

CARTER/MONDALE

- reintroduced draft registration
- promoted MX missile
- promoted Rapid Deployment Force
- "military advisors" to El Salvador
- OK's Cruise & Pershing II deployment
- Carter Doctrine
- Proposed "Limited Nuclear War"
- Advocates Nuclear First Strike Capability



unique impact upon a politician's perspective. And 1984 was yet another record year in the price of candidacy. Congressional campaign spending alone has gone well over \$200 million dollars, over \$50 million of which was contributed by Political Action Committees dominated by corporations and military-related unions.

The notion that politicians are accountable to their constituents is questionable considering the source of campaign funding. For instance in California legislators received over 90% of their funding from outside the districts they represent. Even in county and municipal elections, such "tainted" financial support is the rule. In San Francisco, city supervisors seeking

WHY VOTE?

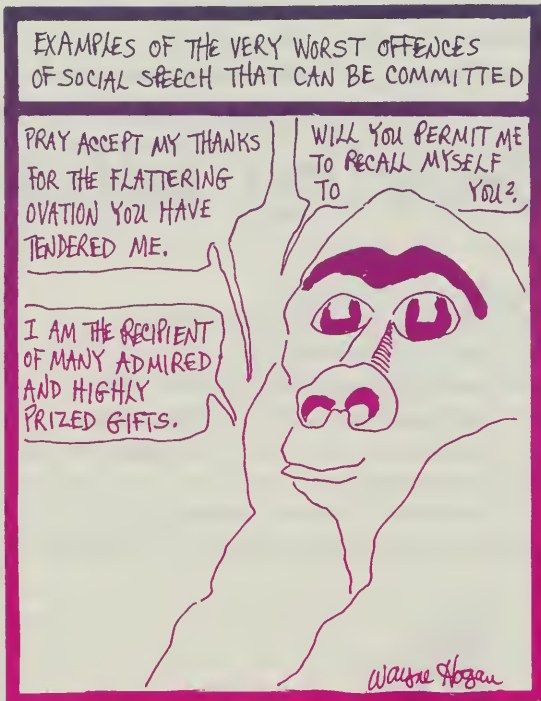
With so few options and so much corruption, it's a wonder voting enjoys the legitimacy it does. For tens of millions of Americans, what historian Charles Beard once called the "sound and fury" of election politics has dwindled to a whimper. Research indicates that voters and nonvoters alike increasingly share a common attitude — skepticism over the government's ability to solve their problems. (see, e.g. "The Decline of Electoral Participation in America" in *American Political Science Review* No. 76).

The loss in enthusiasm for elected government parallels a steady and significant decline in voter turnout. Since 1960 (when 63% of the adult population voted) the percentage of voter turnout has dropped to a low of 53% in 1982. Barely half of eligible voters voted in the 1980 presidential election; 78 million did not. If this trend continues, by 1990 more eligible voters will *not* vote than will.

Voter profiles suggest that the affluent are over-represented at election-time. Participation in the 1980 national elections confirmed a long term trend: 70% of those with annual incomes over \$25,000 voted; only 25% of those with less than \$10,000 did.

The more money one has, the greater is one's power over and stake in the narrow spectrum of policy changes candidates can be expected to make.

For example, the combined boards of directors and major stockholders of real estate, investment, law, insurance and banking corporations have the most to lose in the short run by even slight changes in tax and banking policies that politicians can and do change regularly. And if the choice between an MX or Cruise missile is a no-win proposition to most, to arms contractors and subcontractors with billions riding on one project or the other, and to the careers of Pentagon and intelligence agency factions, the controversy is one of sub-



re-election received roughly two-thirds of their campaign contributions from the following "public-interest" groups: developers and real estate concerns, major corporations and banks, professional groups (such as law and accounting firms), and other businesses. "Returns on investment" for large campaign donors are the promises politicians *do* keep.



stance.

But for the rest of us, the motivations for voting are more symbolic. In a culture marked with isolation and alienation, election day provides people with an opportunity to feel they are a part of a nationwide collectivity participating in vital public decisions. Like going to church every Sunday (and then acting with insensitivity and self-interest the rest of the week) voting every year or two provides a quick, easy way to do your duty. The cajoling and guilt-tripping of voter registration campaigners reinforce the sense that when we vote, we really are doing something for ourselves and society.

Nonvoters are dismissed by the media as “uneducated,” marginalized by sociologists as “alienated,” explained away by voters as apathetic. But non-voters are part of a significant trend in American politics saying that *voting makes no immediate difference in their lives*. For them, and for many voters too, official politics has lost its vitality and relevance. But nonvotes don’t count for much of anything. Without exercising other avenues of political expression, disaffected voters are little more than a reflection of malaise.

THE MEDIA IS THE MESSAGE

Voter apathy has presented a challenge that the media has taken up with gusto. The absence of substantive differences between candidates leaves ample room for the “media politics” of image-manipulation to transform some boring old farts into celebrities. As former Nixon speechwriter Ray Price succinctly put it in an interview with the *Village Voice*: “[the voters’] response is to the image, not to the man...It’s not the man we have to change, but rather the received impression.”

The primaries are “previews of coming distractions” and psyche the electorate for a full season of entertainment before the big climax in November. Politicians are judged more on their

performance than on the soundness of their views and policies. The media coverage of the preelection debates focused more on style and appearance — Reagan’s vocal inflections, Mondale’s make-up job— than on the political content of the debates. After the second Mondale-Reagan debate, the bags under Mondale’s eyes prompted more commentary than his contradic-

WHY I DIDN'T VOTE!

James Greenlee, former cook, Greyhound cashier, assembly line worker, and the youngest of 11 children from a South Carolina black family: “I’d love to vote if I thought it meant something... I am saying something by not voting. Hell, it may not be the right way. But it says something — like the sound of silence.”

45 year old Enrique Mixco, a 21-year-old emigre from El Salvador advised his son (who strongly believed Reagan must be voted out because he is crazy and might get us into a war): “To me, it makes no difference. Whoever gets in there, it’s the same for you. The people running the city and the country don’t care about the poor. So many people are hungry on the streets—people looking in trash cans for food. And the rich get richer...”

[quoted from S.F. Chronicle]

Med-O, electrical worker and 2-year resident of S.F.: “Despite my desire to vote against some cruel and unjust state propositions, the trade-off simply wasn’t worth it. My driver’s license and other sources of ID are from another state. Registering to vote would have given California authorities a way to trace me. No thanks.”

Be part of PW’s post-election attitude poll. Whether you voted or not, PW would like to know why? Reasonable & unreasonable answers will not be discriminated against.

tory remarks on Central America and the arms race.

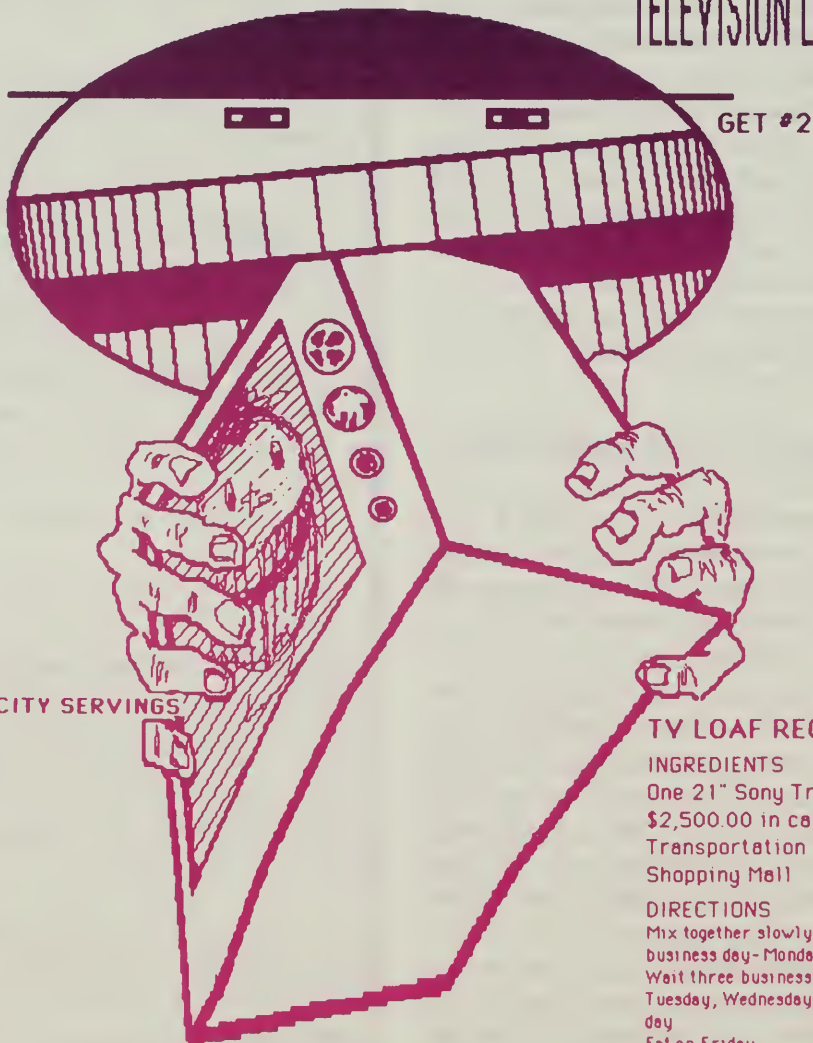
For many voters, candidates' records are far less important than their ability to project optimism for a bright and shiny future. Referring to the "art of

controlled [media] access" with which Reagan screens his political moves from public scrutiny, *New York Times* White House correspondent Steven Weisman recently observed: "Reagan and his aides have understood and exploited

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 Tuesday, Wednesday, Thurs-
 day
 Eat on Friday

what they acknowledge to be the built-in tendency of television to emphasize appearances and impressions more than information." Hence, Reagan's reputation as a "Great Communicator" survived despite his rejection of informal press conference questioning, his refusal to disclose plans to manage a multi-billion-dollar budget deficit, and his muzzling of the press during the invasion of Grenada.

THE GATHERING STORM

"The historical memory of the left is like that of a pillow: it changes shape when pounded by a fist. But it doesn't know how to avoid the blow, and it always peacefully regains its original shape, ready for the next pounding." (Jean-Francois Revel, 1976)

It is plainly a mark of desperation that many of today's loudest supporters of the ballot were yesterday's civil rights marchers, student radicals, draft resisters, and workplace rebels. Desperate for signs of hope, veterans of nonvoting politics saw in Reagan an easy mark, and in voting, an easy method. With near breathless unanimity, former activists not only enthusiastically supported anti-Reagan voting, but often did so with appeals to the good ol' days, as if, to paraphrase voting were merely the continuation of mass struggle carried out by other means.

This sentiment was taken to the parks this summer by the San Francisco Mime Troupe in the production *1985*. A street-guerilla-musical theatre previously focusing mainly on strikes, occupations and confrontational politics, the Mime Troupe surprised us with a rousing pitch — and real live booths — for voter registration.

The dismantling of the Great Society and War on Poverty programs fought for and won by 60's activists was a strong motivation for anti-Reagan voting. Ironically these very programs were not the fruit of voting, but came out of an unconventional political rebel-

lion that, at the time, seemed practical. As Robert Brenner recently observed:

"It was quite clearly the deepening radicalization of the civil rights movement, marked by its growing opposition to the Vietnam War, and above all the explosion of urban rebellions in Detroit, Watts, Harlem, Newark and elsewhere, which concentrated Lyndon Johnson's mind on his 'Great Society.' A suddenly reform-minded congress passed the civil rights acts and War on Poverty program from 1964-1965." (*Against The Current*, Fall 1984).

These programs failed to challenge the sources of poverty and racism, were inadequately funded and administered in a way that further stigmatized recipients. Still, they have made a practical difference in the daily lives of many people. The gains also suggested the efficacy of a politics not based on voting or political parties.

Unfortunately, the 60's movement toward confrontational politics never cohered — its leaders assassinated, jailed, Reborn or appointed to teaching posts, its constituents in retreat to the respectable politics of lobbying and voting or to the increasingly marginal New Left. Confrontational politics steadily declined. The hard-won 60's programs and the token military restraint the anti-war movement could claim to have won have been dismantled by succeeding Democratic and Republican administrations alike.

Debate of social issues that enlivened previous elections -- such as critiques of the 2-party system and analyses of the limitations of voting as a means of social change -- were muffled in campaign bunting. In an unabashed call to walk precincts for the Party of Cruise and Pershing 2 missiles, *Mother Jones* editor Deidre English's "How to Beat Reagan" (*MJ* April, 1984) summarized the sober reflection of a conference of 60's and 70's movement activists:

"Our discussion took off from the assumption that this is no time to think about forming a third party, boycotting the elections, ignoring presidential

WHY I WANT TO FUCK REAGAN

It may be that for most people "reality" and "truth" are now outmoded concepts, whose functional usefulness has been crushed under sheer weight of numbers of images, illusions, sitcoms, advertisements and roles proffered by media everywhere. When the most powerful "role" in the world is occupied by a "B-grade actor," and this role is accepted by the vast majority of people as credible and real, obviously the most fundamental distinctions between illusion and reality no longer matter...

RE/SEARCH



Drawing by Melinda Gebbie

Reagan's hair style. Studies were conducted on the marked fascination exercised by the President's hair style. 65 per cent of male subjects made positive connections between the hair-style and their own pubic hair. A series of optimum hair-styles were constructed.

Reagan's personality. The profound anality of the President may be expected to dominate the United States in the coming years. By contrast, the late J.F. Kennedy remained the prototype of the oral subject, usually conceived in pre-pubertal terms. In further studies sadistic psychopaths were given the task of devising sex fantasies involving Reagan. Results confirm the probability of Presidential figures being perceived primarily in genital terms; the face of L.B. Johnson is clearly genital in significant appearance — the nasal prepuce, scrotal jaw, etc. Faces were seen as either circumcised (J.F.K., Khrush-

chev) or uncircumcised (L.B.J., Adenauer). In assembly-kit tests Reagan's face was uniformly perceived as a penile erection. Patients were encouraged to devise the optimum sex-death of Ronald Reagan.

Motion Picture Studies of Ronald Reagan reveal characteristic patterns of facial tonus and musculature associated with homo-erotic behavior. The continuing tension of buccal sphincters and the recessive tongue role tally with earlier studies of facial rigidity (cf., Adolf Hitler, Nixon). Slow-motion cine films of campaign speeches exercised a marked erotic effect upon an audience of spastic children. Even with mature adults the verbal material was found to have minimal effect, as demonstrated by substitution of an editing tape giving diametrically opposed opinions. Parallel films of rectal images revealed a sharp upsurge in anti-Semitic and concentration camp fantasies (cf., anal-sadistic fantasies in deprived children induced by rectal stimulation).

by J.G. Ballard in 1967

politics or — in the long run — splitting the vote. It was clear from the very start that a consensus has developed at the leadership level of many progressive organizations that this is the year, if there ever was one, to get involved in the campaign in ways that will count in November."

English concluded "the message is clear...if Reagan gets us into war in Central America or the Middle East, we're the ones who are going to have to run the antiwar movement (again). So instead of spending the next five years protesting -- let's get our hands on some power."

To claim that power, an anti-Reagan hysteria was whipped up that rarely engaged critical reasoning. Formerly engaged radicals were sucked into a voter registration strategy. The hope that if un-registered voters, especially poor and minorities, would turn out, then "we" would "get our hands on some power" backfired. For the first time in decades Republicans vigorously conducted successful voter registration drives. In October, newly registered voters favored Reagan over Mondale by 53% to 40% (*ABC-Washington Post*). Hispanics from Texas to California registered the Republican way, and 18-24 year-olds claimed Republican affinity in droves.

GALE WARNINGS

With the possible exception of referenda, electoral politics tend to table aspirations for social change by making social change itself the preserve of "experts," i.e., professional politicians. With little recall available other than the next election, and with the dominance of media-sculpted image over critical political discussion, direct popular control over our lives will remain elusive.

Confrontational politics bypass the hardening artery of electoral politics and force the hands of "experts" far more effectively than the ballot.

It was only when housewives in Love Canal banded together and forcibly held an EPA official 'hostage' that action was taken to deal with the toxic pollution swamping the community. Part of their political confrontation was inward: women isolated in their homes broke down walls of alienation by talking to neighbors for the first time; mothers realized it wasn't their "inadequacy" that made their children sick; and everyone refused to stay passive and "calm down" until EPA experts, scientists and government officials got around to helping them.

Similarly, the direct action of anti-nuclear activists (along with the declining profitability of the nuclear industry) played a role in slowing government licensing of new U.S. plants.

It is these kinds of disruptions that will help generate real alternatives to the stifling society we live in.

Confrontational politics, unlike electoral political culture, bring people into open and direct contact with one another, allowing people to discover a collective power that can stir dormant imaginations with the creative perspective of rebellion. Preoccupation with electoral politics inhibits this creative potential.

Until mass confrontational politics re-emerge, the hope that U.S. politics can transcend a spell-binding dependence on voting and political parties is, well, as good as a politician's promise. What Jonathan Swift called the "Guardian Spirit of a prevailing Party" — i.e., the "Goddess" of "Political Lying" — will "fl[y] with a huge Looking-glass in her Hands to dazzle the Crowd, and make them see, according as she turns it, their Ruin in their Interest, and their Interest in their Ruin."

— *Melquiades, Med-O, & Maxine*





by Susan Packie

I used to be a pitter for Land of Plenty Dates, and I probably still would be if I hadn't been fired for incompetence. Not true, I was far too competent.

I took the job on a dare. I had just graduated from high school. All my girl friends were humming wedding marches. My parents were beginning to wonder when I would start to date. Then I saw the ad:

WANTED: m-f date specialist — pits

Since I have always been the pits, I applied immediately. The interviewer was afraid I was overeducated, but I quickly disabused him of this illusion. I asked if the process was painful for the dates.

My first week at the job was uneventful. A machine did most of the work. I just had to oversee the operation — regulate the flow, make sure the contraption didn't jam, help out the boxer, Maggie.

She must have answered the wrong ad, too. She looked strong enough to take on Muhammad Ali. As the dates plunged at her, she would make up little poems about them.

After the second week, I began to get a little — fruity. Maggie's ditties about dropping crates of dates down grates and spitting pits were driving me up a date tree.

Finally, when I was just about to walk into the main office and tell everyone where their dates would fit, I hit upon the ideal solution. A pitted date has a hole in it, right? An empty space. Why couldn't I roll up little pieces of paper and stuff them inside? They would be

like Chinese fortune cookies! I could write all sorts of messages and send them throughout the fifty states plus Japan — our market area.

My first message was very innocuous — "Hi. I'm your pitter. Do you want to pitter-patter with me?" I didn't get an acceptance, but I didn't get a rejection either. I sent out about a thousand more of these date surprises. Then I lay low.

Three weeks later, I started inserting my name and phone number. I thought of adding my measurements, but 31-28-37 doesn't excite many people. Maggie had been replaced by Hubert. He polished each date before boxing it. I didn't see a bright future for him at Land of Plenty.

Six weeks went by and I still hadn't heard anything from my note receivers. In despair, I switched tactics, cramming "STUFF IT!" into the ugly little monsters. I was busily working away when I heard through the partially open office door "Aaaggghhh!!!!" What had happened? No one ever ate the dates. They all knew better.

"MISS DUDLEY!"

Poor Mr. Hardon had been so proud of his product. Wouldn't his mother like to try one? Just bite down and taste the sweet, crunchy pulp, and...out came "STUFF IT!"

So I'm back in my bedroom reading help wanted ads. All my girl friends have been married and divorced since last June. Hubie is taking me out tonight. Mr. Hardon's mother also noticed the unusual shine on her date. So I couldn't have been all that incompetent if I ended up with what I was really after.

THEM, THAT'S NOT



— by *Peve Wentworth*

The clangor of the nine o'clock bell jerks me out of my seat in the warmth of the Teacher's Room and hurries me down the corridor and out into the playground. It is a raw, gusty November day. I clutch my mug of tea like a talisman as I approach the wobbly, wriggling line of kids back up behind the big white "20" painted on the worn asphalt. All down the length of the building, the other teachers are doing the same with *their* lines of kids.

"Good morning," I say, unconsciously slipping on the teacher's mask (impartial friendliness, enthusiasm, and firmness in equal part) and the teacher's voice (the same mix, pitched to carry without effort, pushed out by the belly muscles like an actor's). A couple of rather desultory "Hi's" and "Good morning, Mr. Wentworth's." Antennae up, I move down the line of kids like a politician, shaking hands, checking body temperatures. This is the toughest hour of the day. If we can get through this without any major incidents, it's all downhill until 3:15.

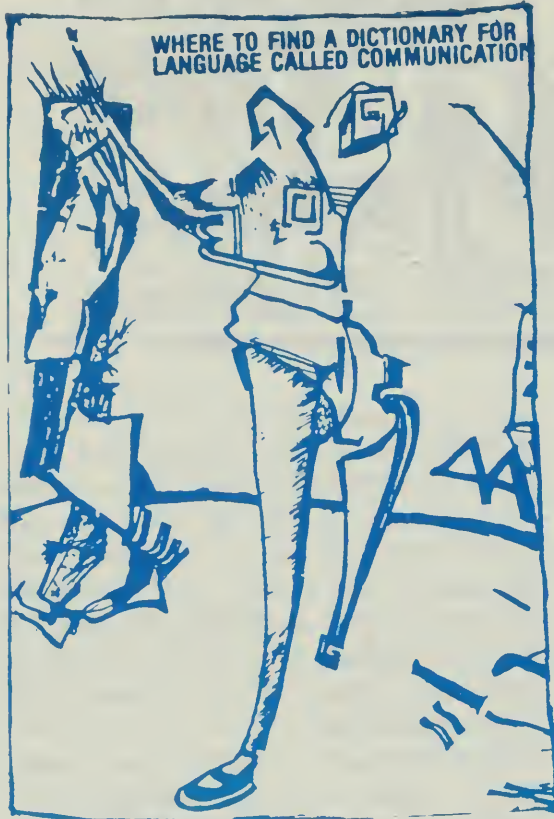
The typical day in Grades 1-3 kicks off with an hour for Reading. At Warren G. Harding Primary School (a pseudonym, as are all the other names associated with the school I'm writing about) we have "split reading." That is, about half the children in my second-grade class come in for reading and "Language Arts" at 9:00 and leave at 2:00 while the other half arrive and leave an hour later. Following the near-universal practice, my slower group is the one that comes in early. When the faster comes in we have roll call, "sharing time," and the baroque business of

collecting lunch money. This involves sorting through the change that flustered parents scabble out of purses and pockets while the school bus mumbles and honks fretfully at the corner, and passing out the tickets (free, half rate, full rate, single, multiple, milk only). If a teacher is lucky, she/he has an aide to deal with this. If not, bang goes teacher's recess.

After recess, usually Math. After Math, lunch — a blessed forty-five minutes at Harding, most other places only allow half an hour. Then comes the loosest hour in the day — Science, Social Studies, Art, or whatever, usually in half-hour chunks. At two o'clock, the early group packs up and heads for the bus while the late group gets ten minutes recess before struggling back in for its dose of Language Arts. After dispatching this last group at 3:10, most teachers spend a couple more hours preparing lessons and materials for tomorrow, correcting children's work, and cleaning up the classroom. Depending on the complexity of the plan, one may be there as late as 4:45 to 6:00 pm. Bilingual teachers, who have to plan two sets of reading lessons routinely stay until 5:30.

As I walk down the line little Teresa Paganloc wraps herself around my hip with a joyful grin. Richard Guiton, handsome as an Ashanti warrior, shows me an elaborate paper airplane his dad helped him to make. Aminah Freeman, big and sassy, grabs my hand and tries to yank me next to her. Billy Erskine stands glowering, hands jammed in pockets, jacket hood up.

"Hey, Billy," I say. "Looks like



Mari Bianca

somebody hit you with the grumpy stick." No response. "What's the trouble, Billy?" I insist.

"Ma-a-a-n," he growls softly, staring at the ground.

"Spit it out," I urge him.

"These two kids been teasin' me on the bus. I didn't say nothin' to 'm, but they won't leave me alone., Ma-a-a-n, after school I'm gonna kick their butts!" He smacks his fist into his palm two or three times, sealing his resolve.

"Relax," I say — a word I probably use with him more than any other. "During recess you tell me who those kids are and I'll talk to their teacher. Meanwhile, we've got work to do, OK?" Billy nods sullenly.

My heart sinks. If Jaharie and Angie are in the same kind of mood, the chain reaction will blow their reading group clean out of the water. It will also probably mean the Principal's office and parent call before the end of the day.

An increasing proportion of children in urban public schools are from what

used to be called "broken homes." That is, they are being raised by their mothers, sometimes in tandem with grandparents and aunts. Father is (check where applicable, as they say on Welfare applications): separated; on the lam; in the joint; psychopathic; alcoholic or heavy drug user; and/all of the above.

Nowhere are the deeper consequences of "Reaganomics" (i.e. current capitalist reality, whoever's in charge) more visible than in public schools. The decrepit buildings, obsolete textbooks, and overworked, underpaid staff are trivial side-effects compared with the havoc the 80's corporate counterattack is wreaking on poor and working-class children *in the home*. 55% of Black children are born to single mothers, many in their teens; unemployment for Black men is officially around 20%; men are leaving the labor force at about the same rate as women are entering it; rape and child abuse are on the rise. In my classroom, these statistics take on a savage three dimensionality.

Billy is a case in point. Mrs. Erskine is a computer programmer in a downtown office, clinging to job and income

"Geometry Nirvana"



by the skin of her teeth, but at least making the same rate as her white female counterparts. Billy's father hasn't had regular work in four years. They separated two years ago, after a good deal of misery and some violence. Most of what I know about him comes from Billy, since Mrs. Erskine hardly speaks of him. I've met him once on the street, a soft-spoken, gentle-eyed man in worn slacks and watch-cap, taking Billy out for a cheese-steak sandwich on a Friday night. Billy introduces us, with surprising pride in both of us. My teacher. My Daddy.

"I know Billy got some problems in school, but we always tellin' him to study," Mr. Erskine said. We shook hands. Walking away, I thought about the millions of women working for five and six dollars an hour in offices while their men, workers who once pulled twelve hundred a month before tax, along with health, dental and retirement plan, mope in front of the TV or haunt the corner by the liquor store. Now the rage and humiliation accumulates — inside them, abruptly grounding its voltage through the bodies of the very women and children they have been trained to believe it is their masculine responsibility to "provide for." These are the actual human consequences of what economists call "the shift to a post-industrial, service-based economy."

The other children in line are getting restless and testy. "Hey, Mr. Wentworth, can we go inside? It's freezin' out here!" Thomas yells. There is a small chorus of agreement. "OK, let's go," I call. Behind me the line shuffles toward the door.

It takes three minutes to get everyone up two flights of stairs. Mrs. Atkins, my aide, lets in the first arrivals, while I break up the two quarrels that have developed at the rear. This is a worse morning than usual, but not an exceptional one.

Mrs. Atkins is fairly typical of the

classroom aides in our district — a tough, shrewd, good-humored Black woman of about forty. I was an aide for about a year and a half before I became a teacher, so I know the group pretty well. Most got their jobs when the district was integrated in the mid-sixties. They were mothers of children in the same schools in which they now work, who came in (initially often as volunteers) to save White teachers who had not the faintest idea how to cope with working-class Black children.

The aides' miserable pay — \$5.33-6.20 per hour for what are usually twenty-five or thirty-hour-a-week jobs — and low status is a result of this situation. While most aides have become literate enough to teach elementary school children, few have formal qualifications beyond a high-school diploma. Nevertheless, they are indispensable — and to a young, inexperienced teacher like me, invaluable. I learned more about managing young children from the aides in three months than I learned from my "master teacher" in a year.

When I was an aide, I once asked our Business Agent, a puffy, thirty-fivish little bureaucrat, why our pay was so bad. At first he took this a personal affront, but after a little he settled into a confidential, one-white-man-to-another knowingness. Without actually saying so, he implied that "these ladies" couldn't possibly earn more anywhere else, that after all they mostly weren't too bright, that besides, the fringes were good for part-time and that when you came right down to it, they were pretty lucky. I walked away cursing myself for being too cowardly to tell him what I really thought of him: but at the time I needed the job and knew he could screw me with the district if he took a disliking to me.

Mrs. A takes the most advanced subgroup to read a story out loud together from the reader. I assign the middle-level kids some pages in their workbook and steel myself for the lowest group —

Billy, Jaharie, and Angie. I've tried some "Language Experience" when I've had time — getting Billy to dictate a sentence which I write down, then having him copy it over and read it out loud, then draw a picture of what it says, that kind of thing — but I can't work one-on-one very much of the time. So the Reading Specialist (who can't work with them himself until they've gone through the lengthy bureaucratic procedure of Referral to Special Ed) has prescribed a "linguistic reader." This is a simple narrative that builds on "word families" (chub/cub/tub, hen/Jen/men) via extensive repetition of a tiny vocabulary. The group has already read the story about three or four times and is crawling through the workbook an inch at a time; filling blanks, checking boxes, tracing letters.

I settle the three of them around me in one corner of the room. Billy groans. "Oh man, not again! I don' wanna read this dumb book!"

Jaharie sees his chance to score off Billy. "I do, Mr. Wentworth! I do! I wanna read it. I can read this book *good!*" Billy scrunches down in his chair with his arms folded tight across his chest, pouting, Angie makes a face at him and giggles sneakily.

"Be quiet, Angie!" Billy snarls. Angie grins triumphantly.

"OK, let's read," I say. "Jaharie, you start." I have long ago given up trying to get Billy to read when he refuses like this. Jaharie reads a page at a reasonable pace with few errors. At the end of the page he pauses triumphantly.

"I did good, huh, Mr. Wentworth?" Before I can say a word he goes on "Hey, Billy, you only doin' that 'cause you can't hardly read *nothin!*"

Billy does his fist-in-palm routine and throws his book on the floor.

"Knock it off, Jaharie!" I say, sharply. "Now Angie, you read a little." Angie, as usual, has not been paying attention. She divides most of her time between day dreaming and trying to get attention from the boys in

the class — mostly by flirting and "love notes," sometimes, as with Billy, by provocation. Now she giggles again and starts reading, stumbling over every second word.

"Oooh, you readin' bad, Angie!" Jaharie coos, with a brilliant smile on his guilelessly beautiful face. "You almost as bad as Billy."

"Shut yo' mouth!" Angie snaps.

"Shut up yourself, faggot!" yells Jaharie, illogically. Angie begins to cry and kicks Jaharie. I send her back to her desk with her workbook, threaten Jaharie with being sent outside, and concentrate on Billy.

With me at his side, encouraging, giving total attention, Billy struggles through a sentence word by word, like someone crossing a river by leaping from one slippery, wobbly rock to the next, his whole body tense with the effort. Another sentence, the same way.

"Good, Billy, great!"

Billy shakes his head. "I don' wanna read this book no mo'!" He pulls his jacket over his head, which usually means he's going to cry. At her desk, Angie is sitting, eyes unfocussed, occasionally giving her head a little shake or giggling, otherwise doing nothing. Jaharie is actually writing in his workbook. In a few minutes, or tomorrow, I'll try again.

Every urban elementary classroom I've worked in has contained at least one or two "emotionally disturbed" children who "act out": in other words, angry, bitter, self-hating kids who can't get along with their peers, their teachers or themselves. Most I've met were Black or White, some Latino, very rarely Asian. Most also come from Billy's kind of home — raised by their mothers alone, by foster parents, or shuffled around between relatives. Many are also "learning disabled": that is, they have trouble learning to read. These three problems — damaged family, anger and self-hatred, and learning difficulties — interact in

complicated and destructive ways.

Declining test scores have forced a widespread recognition that the obviously "disturbed" and "disabled" children are only extreme cases of problems that afflict much larger numbers of children a lot more diffusely. In the recent flurry of anxiety over the decline in public education, the Blame Thrower has been trained in all directions — at teachers of course, at "permissive" curricula and parents, at TV, and so on. There are grains of truth to most of the accusations (except the idea, favored by Reaganoids, that the abolition of school prayer is where everything went wrong) but none of them really get the whole picture.

It begins with parents — single or couples — under terrible economic and social pressures. Too much work or none at all, not enough money, isolation, frustration, boredom, despair. Children born into this set-up — often into a relationship that's already coming apart by the time they can talk — are chronically insecure. They depend for emotional sustenance on one or two adults who, worn out by survival,

seldom have enough time and energy for them.

Mrs. Erskine, a handsome, well-dressed woman in her mid-thirties, sits trembling at the corner of my desk for our twice quarterly conference, which we've had to schedule during recess.

"Often times when I get home I'm really exhausted," she tells me, tears forming at the corners of her eyes. "And, you know, Billy want to play, he's got so much energy, but I'm just too beat, so he keep on at me and then I speak harsh to him... I just don't know what to do sometimes." She wants me to find some solution, some magic that will put Billy back on track. Every month or two a parent will unburden her or his soul to me as she/he never would to a psychiatrist ("I'm not sick!") and expect me as a "professional" to be able to sort it out. Even as teachers are denigrated in the mass media, working-class parents are turning to them more and more as primary collaborators in the basic socialization of their children.

Processed World

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1984 CLASS RING

ODE TO EXCELLENCE

POEMS FROM

CORPORATE AMERICA



School is merely a continuation of the problem. Harassed teachers with classes of twenty-five to thirty children cannot possibly provide enough individual or small-group attention to make up for nurturing deficiencies in the home. Nor can they substitute for the home's crucial *educational* function. Children learn the essentials of language in the home, not at school. If the home lacks "complex verbal transactions" (i.e. real conversation) between its adult members, the child's early language learning may be critically impaired. Meanwhile, the child in the "language-poor" home usually winds up parked in front of the TV — a world of constant exciting violence, of flashy expensive toys dangled before her eyes, of reality chopped into three-minute segments. Children thus electronically weaned can only be infuriated by the relatively rigid collective structures of

the classroom, the static dullness of words on paper — and utterly unprepared for the complex tasks it requires of them.

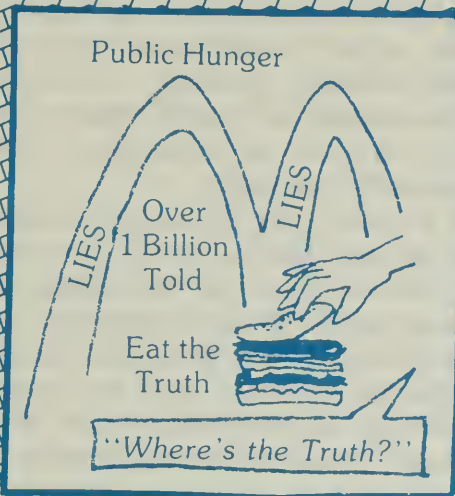
By 11:45, Billy is in a bad way. He has thrown his books and pencils on the floor several times and is hiding under his jacket again. If I try to get him to do anything, he just shakes his head violently. Finally he mumbles: "Gimme a knife."

"A knife? What do you need a knife for?"

"I wanna cut myself."

In a horrified rush of understanding, I put my arm around his shoulders and speak very quietly in his ear. "Billy, it's not your fault. You've been trying hard, and when you don't get angry you do good work. You're a good guy, Billy, and I'm your friend."

In a moment his anger melts and he begins to cry, pulling the jacket over his head again. I stay with him for a while,



THE URBAN SCARECROW

the teachers, as thin as brochures
have invaded the schools like stock prospecti.
there are no questions asked,
and whole classes, unprepared
for information hovering
all around us filling our lungs,
die of monoxide poisoning.

RICH MURPHY

wishing I could just take him *out of there* — out of the noisy, chalky, faded room into the open air, and walk and talk with him. But I have twenty-seven other children I am paid to deal with. I get up and go back to the front of the classroom to line the children up for lunch.

Everything conspires to make children like Billy blame themselves for the disaster that is befalling them — the short tempers of exhausted, frustrated parents, the reproaches and punishments of exasperated teachers, the fact that the majority of their peers seem to be doing all right. When they see those peers outstripping them in reading, math, drawing — peers whose parents have time enough to talk to them, education enough to fill in for the teacher, money enough to stock the house with books and educational toys — they feel inferior. They are trapped

THE REAL WORLD

I never like the idea of working, but people said I'd have to face up to it someday. It was part of the real world.

After a year of teaching high school, I returned my real room key to the office and wrote a letter to the local paper saying

I'd been hired to sit on the very real lid of a garbage can.

A good teacher was someone who kept the real stink in, and I wanted to rub someone's snout in it as I staggered away.

My head hurt from a real hangover and my stomach was shot and my marriage was as real as acid rain and just as nice.

I said goodbye to a redheaded woman

I taught with who claimed she was a descendent from the lost continent of Mu.

Lillian was as real and a lot nicer than most people I knew.

Both of us wondered why people in the real world had to be such assholes.

by Arthur Winfield Knight

in a violent oscillation between self-hatred (manifested as depression, inability to concentrate, bitter contempt for every scrap of schoolwork they actually manage to do) and outbursts of rage (smashing things, verbal or physical attacks on other children). In between are more subtle symptoms — compulsive lying and stealing. The fact that their parents often feel the same way about themselves slams the trap shut.

At 12:07, the Teachers' Room is already full of conversation, clattering plates and tobacco smoke. Most of my colleagues are women over 45, several only a few years from retirement. Since declining enrollments and slashed budgets resulted in a virtual hiring freeze throughout the late '70's, new teachers like me are still a relative rarity except in Bilingual, where the majority are young. As a result, there are cliques, pecking orders, unwritten rules that have evolved over decades of association. The same groups tend to sit at the same tables, day after day. I've long ago given up trying to spot the Invisible Shields around this or that chair, table, or conversation and simply plop down wherever I feel like it, ignoring snubs. Sometimes I'll select the most likely conversation, other times I'll seek out somebody who can give me advice on a particular student.

Most are glad to be asked. Teachers (like jazz musicians, field surgeons, and any number of other kinds of skilled workers) instinctively socialize their knowledge and experience, not out of ideological conviction but out of necessity. Standard openers over the Tupperware boxes of chicken salad and glistening mounds of Saran Wrap:

"What do you do with a child who...?"

"You know what Lamont did today?"

"How's your little Marina these days? Any further out of the zone?"

"How'd that egg-carton activity work out?"

Good teachers are obsessed. They trade advice, references, anecdotes about the children the way other people trade recipes and gossip. Mediocre teachers join in too, because it's easier than trying to go it alone. Yet in all this rich exchange of information, the amount of social reflection, of stepping back from the trees to look at the forest is generally negligible. Not that they can't make the connections if they get around to it. I once heard a group of

aides and teachers go from the comings of the school lunch program, to increased military spending, to the risks of intervention in Central America, to the dismal future for their pupils, all in less than five minutes.

As a rule, though, primary teachers don't talk much about social questions. Nor do they think of themselves as *workers*, although some participate in union affairs. When a strike is called, they go along. Unlike high school and junior-high teachers, who tend to be militant, elementary teachers seem to regard teaching as simultaneously a *profession* (rather than a job) and as a *duty*, an extension of the mothering they have given their own children, part of their traditional role as women. For the most part, they do not question this role (nor the continuing grotesque sexism of many teaching materials, and, for that matter, of children's TV, books, etc.), any more than they question the content of schooling, the power relationships within the educational apparatus, or the class division of society which presents itself so painfully in the lives of many of their pupils. But also for the most part, and for some of the same reasons, they do their best within the terms of their situation.

I watch the "two-o'clockers" charging across the playground to where others are already lined up waiting for the buses. Billy, whose parents helplessly love him but can't live with each other. Jaharie, whose junkie father goes in and out of jail and in and out of marriage with Jaharie's mother. Angie, whose father from all the signs (extreme aversive reaction to adult male touch alternating with open sexual suggestiveness) molested her until her mother kicked him out. Brian and Jake, my two White working-class toughs, whose parents keep them awake screaming at each other. Aminah, bounced back and forth between an easygoing alcoholic

father and an ultra-authoritarian Fundamentalist mother. Teresa, whose struggling immigrant parents punish her unmercifully every time her grades are less than perfect.

Then I turn back toward the room as the "Three-o'clockers" come in from recess — almost all of them cheerful, studious, cooperative kids. Kids who have at least one parent already there to welcome and talk and play with them when they get home at three-thirty. Kids who are read aloud to every night, who have their endless questions about the world patiently answered, who get to travel to faraway fascinating places, who are encouraged to dream, who are regularly celebrated as the center of attention. For them, the foundations of learning are so firmly established at home that the deficiencies of the schools — the insufficient individualization of learning, the dreariness of the classroom situation, the necessity for over-restrained and uniform behavior that is

imposed by this situation — affect them relatively little. For them, the problems will come later when the kindly, luminous world of middle-class childhood starts to wither around sixth or seventh grade. Even then, for many, the pleasure they take in learning will survive the schools and everything else, though it may well be extinguished by the necessities of selling their lives away in order to survive. Conversely, some of the "two-o'clockers" may find some emotional stability and some jump-start of motivation that will enable them to catch up with the others and escape the trap that has been prepared for them. But the fate of the majority has already been decided:

*"Them that's got shall get,
Them that's not shall lose.
God bless the child
That's got its own."*



Peter Lyssiotis

HOT UNDER THE COLLAR

VDT Eyes: Embossed L.A. Road Maps?

"I'm so light-headed when I walk out at night sometimes I'm afraid to drive home," confided Susan, a secretary.

"Since I've started working in front of the screen, I've become allergic to my hypoallergenic eye-makeup," bitched Jeri, a marketing secretary.

An optometrist prescribed glasses for Felix, a computer systems operator whose eyestrain (and migraine headaches) began after working in front of a Video Display Terminal (VDT).

Susan, Jeri, and Felix work for a large Silicon Valley microchip corporation with over 450 VDTs. Recently the company purchased over two dozen IBM workstations for secretaries and the publications department (where I work). The workstations include a printer, a dual floppy-disk drive, and a VDT. The workstations are called Displaywriters, a.k.a. "Dismaywriters."

None of the inhouse training sessions or 13 volumes of manuals mentioned VDT dangers. Nor were such hazards generally known among secretaries, many of whom had negligible VDT experience.

One day a memo made its way through corporate offices nationwide. Addressed to Displaywriter users, the memo began "Do your eyes feel like embossed Los Angeles County Road Maps at the end of the day?" Attached was a VDT danger fact-sheet put out by a company selling conductive mesh, non-glare VDT screens (conductive mesh is said to screen low-level

radiation as well as reduce glare.) The memo suggested a "collective purchase" of VDT screens, gratis of the corporation.

The notion that headaches, irritability, eyestrain, allergies, back pains and the like might be linked to VDTs had a gut-level plausibility. Nearly half responded positively to the memo. (Among those who didn't, several expressed concern over VDT dangers but said that they didn't use VDTs enough to warrant protection.) Concern over VDT dangers spread quickly — workstation users passed the memo to other VDT workers who then expressed a desire for protective screens.

The manager in charge of hardware acquisitions was not reassuring. He responded to the requests for screens by announcing that there was a "purchasing freeze" and that no accounting procedure existed to accommodate a collective purchase across department lines (!).

A second memo circulated, this one informing workstation and other VDT users of this absurd, bureaucratic impasse. This time, the two-page "The Ugly Truth about VDTs" (*PW* #10, pp. 56-7) was attached. The memo noted that the price of the mesh screen was 1/2 of 1% of the cost of a workstation and suggested that "those of us in accounting...find out...how we might get around" the impasse.

Several days later, the memo's author was told to report to Accounting. There, a manager apologetically suggested

that a group purchase order could be arranged after all. Three weeks later, after consistent harassment, the manager cut a group purchase order for protective screens *for everyone in the company!*

It's not exactly clear how the manager was swayed in our favor, but rumor has it that a pregnant workstation operator in Accounting, her concern over VDT dangers to her fetus, and perhaps the perceived dissatisfaction of her workstation users, had something to do with it.

It remains to be seen how many VDT users will take advantage of the opportunity by participating in the group purchase. Nor will protective screens block the corporation's sales of chips to military contractors. But we learned something about the dangers of VDTs, and most importantly, won something that will make our jobs less deadly.

—Anonymous



IBM Workers United

For eight years now, a handful of workers at the IBM plant in Endicott, New Jersey, have been agitating among the co-workers, urging them to take action, make demands, and get organized to confront management on a variety of issues. In an early issue of their newsletter "*IBM Speak Up*," IBM Workers United raised the demand that workers have "a voice of their own," separate and independent from management. "We find that the management-controlled grievance procedure no longer does the job, especially in the manufacturing plants where mandatory overtime and total management control over our lives exist." Other issues raised by IBMWU:

- Aside from making demands for better wages, seniority pay and

daycare, IBMWU has sought to unite IBM workers and the surrounding community around health and safety issues. Through their newsletter, they exposed many incidents of hazards to workers and residents of the area resulting from use of toxic chemicals, irresponsible disposal of toxic wastes, and IBM's attempts to cover up information about dangerous substances. Rather than rely on company doctors and government agencies that almost invariably condone company policies, IBMWU calls on workers to organize their own safety and health committees, independent of management, to force IBM to come clean.

- In a letter distributed to stockholders in 1979 entitled "Would IBM have sold computers to Hitler?" IBMWU publicized and protested the sale of IBM computers to South Africa. The IBM computers were used in a registration system known as the "Book of Life" which requires everyone to carry a pass book with personal information. This system is obviously used to enforce apartheid. The letter pointed to the hypocrisy of IBM's claims that they would not bid any business where they believed products were going to be used to abridge human rights.

- In a recent issue of their newsletter, renamed "*Resistor*," the group explains what kind of union they are: "So are we a union? By today's standards, no. Far too many unions/leaders have neglected the average worker, have forgotten the principles of the early days and have become 'another boss.' But, if you take Webster's definition, 'confederation of individuals working for a common cause,' then yes we are. We are independent but we do work with other unions in coalitions to share information that is vital to workers.

For years, IBM Workers United was an underground organization to protect members' jobs. But in 1984 members took the risk of coming out into the open in the hopes of encouraging others to work with them. A sympathetic news-



"Let Them E
by Paul F

and let them eat last



Technology''
tchenko

paper report on the 1st International IBM Workers Conference in Japan held in Tokyo in May (which was attended by IBMWU organizer Lee Conrad and representatives from five other countries' IBM workers) helped publicize their efforts. Despite management harassment, they have met with growing interest and support for the organization.

For more info, write: IBM Workers United, PO Box 634, Johnson City, NY 13790 or call: (607) 797-6911.



Obstructionism

'Obstructionism,' a tactic and strategy used by the FIOM (Italian Metalworkers' Union) in August 1920 in Turin:

- 1) Do nothing you aren't trained to do.
- 2) Clean or repair no equipment until it is completely off.
- 3) Do no job if you don't have the right tools.
- 4) Don't volunteer—do only what you're told to do—nothing more.

From French underground during WWII:

- 5) Take as long as you can to repair anything that breaks (they recommended against sabotage—keep the factories running).
- 6) If a worker is fired other workers should continue to come to work anyway (active support by workers).
- 7) If the bosses lock out, occupy the premises.

—Primitivo Morales

Personal Information System: Block Modeling

Universities and private firms are researching and (mostly secretly) implementing the most sophisticated and intrusive Personal Information System (PIS) yet. This technique, called Block Modeling (BM), is based on the vacuum-cleaning school of data gathering — it sucks up and analyzes *everything*. A lot of the information it needs is already in company personnel data banks — the schools employees attended, their age, race, gender, their career history, their neighborhood. Much is gathered more stealthily. Communication channels are analyzed by compiling complete records of phone calls made, phone calls not returned, cc's at the bottom of memos, car pools, bowling club teams. The proliferation of all the new small computers expand the scope of the information that can be collected (Beware your computerized appointment calendar!).

The obvious use of this technique is to "X-ray" groups of workers to search and destroy troublemaking dissidents, find and reward obedient brown-nosers. Personnel planners across the globe are envisioning conflict-free worksites. Those workers most alike culturally and attitudinally are grouped together in ways that will supposedly reduce disruption of production.

Interestingly enough, one of the first users of BM was a Roman Catholic monastery. The technique identified three factions who later played a part in dismembering the monastery — loyalists, "Young Turks," and outcasts. Other institutions that have at least researched block modeling are Bell Laboratories, the American Broadcasting Companies, the Wharton School, and the Institute for Social Management in Bulgaria.

Is your boss playing with blocks, too?

—Paxa Lourde

Reality Chasm at B of A

Bank of America Corporation's "Personnel Relation Update" monitors higher management, labor legislation and union organizing activity. One recent article was "Health and Safety Aspects of Video Display Terminals."

In response to the VDT protection legislation introduced to the California Assembly, the article denies that VDT's are potentially harmful — on the basis of incomplete and misrepresentative information. The article mentions a National Institute on Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) report as evidence that radiation levels are safe. But it neglects to mention that the same NIOSH report found that VDT operators had higher stress levels than any other group of workers, and has since been discredited by outside research.

B of A's update routinely details preventative measures as if they themselves followed these measures. On the matter of 'musculoskeletal discomfort' (those severe body pains you get after being at the terminal a long time), the article says they can be averted by "rest periods, variety in work tasks, and proper workplace design and furnishings." On damage to our eyes, the article says that "proper ergonomics [solves the problem], i.e. adjustable

chairs, tiltable screens, detachable keyboards, contrast controls, and glare-free lighting." The article skirts around the issue of job stress, saying that "the level of stress depends on the nature of the work, the way it's used, individual preferences as well as management practices."

Sounds good to us, Bank of America. But PW researchers working as temporary word processors have found that B of A isn't following its own advice. In most departments, the terminal is shunted off to the harshly-lit utility room. The same small room also contains the printer (usually without a hood) and a noisy photo-copier (love those toxic fumes and blinding lights). As for ergonomics, any old, too high desk will do for the Wang terminal with its non-adjustable screen and keyboard. And glare — few departments had protective shields (glass, definitely second rate), and none provided cleaning fluid and soft towels for the layers of finger smudges and dust.

The VDT legislation, if passed (unlikely), would not be stringently enforced. It's up to us to look after our own interests. Insist on taking your breaks. Go after management to buy screens and better work tables and chairs. Check into having them shut off the flickering fluorescents and providing you with a couple of adjustable, diffuse work lamps. Be a pest — it's *your* health.

—Paxa Lourde



Let Them Do Our Dirty Work

First there was “production-sharing,” a euphemism for the flight of industry to lands of cheap labor, quiescent workforces, and disregard for the environment. Now that the office of the future is upon us, U.S. corporations want to “share” that, too. With the promise of drastically lower costs for instantaneous long-distance communications, industry analysts and foreign leaders are envisioning a new marriage of convenience between U.S. enterprise and impoverished nations. Although “office-sharing” is not new, industry watchers are predicting that the practice of setting up data-entry centers in poor countries is likely to become widespread within a few years.

Until new satellite technology, offshore offices were profitable only for low-priority information processing that didn't require fast turnover time (like subscription and mailing lists). The most-noted example of the new trend is the American Airlines data-processing center in Barbados. AA ships a plane-load of all its used ticket stubs to Barbados every morning, where data-entry operators enter relevant information at \$1.50-3.00 per hour, which is then beamed back to the American's computers in the U.S.

The attractions for U.S. firms are low wages, cheap office space, and extremely low tariffs and taxes offered by host governments in places like Singapore, Philippines, and the Caribbean. English-speaking countries like Barbados are prime targets for the offshore office, and China, another country competing for satellite information-processing work, has the special enticement of a regimented workforce with a 99.5% accuracy rate that earns the equivalent of \$7 a week!

When discussing the advantages of offshore investments for the host countries, the chauvinistic arrogance of the business press is only surpassed by the self-serving optimism and myopia of the governments that are vying with

each other for U.S. investments. Thus *Newsweek* explains that since people in the Caribbean can't possibly afford the products offered by investing firms, “the best the Caribbean companies can hope for is to assemble goods destined to be sold in the U.S.” Now Barbadians can also facilitate services which are irrelevant to their own lives. (How generous of U.S. firms to permit Barbadians to process data so Americans can travel by plane!) The same article further explains that U.S. no longer has a large pool of unskilled workers (what about the 40% unemployment among black teenagers?), whereas “huge surpluses of unskilled labor [are] present in many underdeveloped countries.” This “let-them-do-our-dirty-work” theory tries to rationalize the division of labor which allows U.S. citizens to live far better than most of the rest of the world.

Foreign governments and chambers of commerce encouraging investment unabashedly advertise the cheapness and high productivity of their people to U.S. business. Government leaders justify exemptions from taxation on the grounds that they need the foreign exchange and jobs offered by multinationals to improve the standard of living in their countries. Furthermore, the argument goes, the technology that comes with offshore offices will help familiarize the labor force with computers thus helping to bridge the technological gap between industrialized and developing nations.

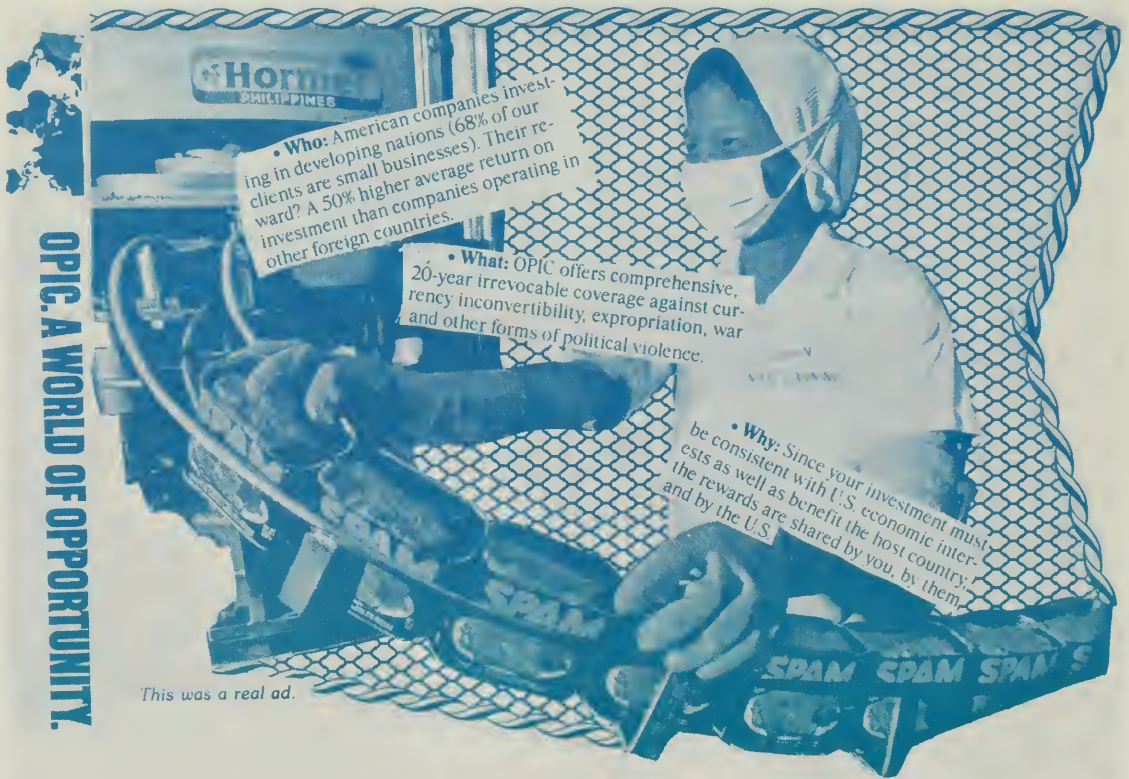
There is little chance that satellite data processing will fulfill these rosy predictions, even in the unlikely case that it temporarily relieves unemployment. The so-called “surplus” of unskilled labor in poor countries is largely a consequence of previous investment policies justified by the same faulty logic. The influx of foreign investment in the “underdeveloped” countries after WWII was supposed to lead to an international division of labor

that would benefit all. Peasants were pressured off the land to make way for more modern forms of exploitation favored by multinationals and local governments. While the multinationals flourished, countries that were once agriculturally self-reliant became dependent on the developed countries for

food, and at the mercy of a world market in which they had no leverage. Rather than strengthen local industry and agriculture, foreign investment brought with it a dependence on multinationals and the markets they control, which in turn has led to an enormous build-up of debts to multinational banks and



Peter Lyssiotis



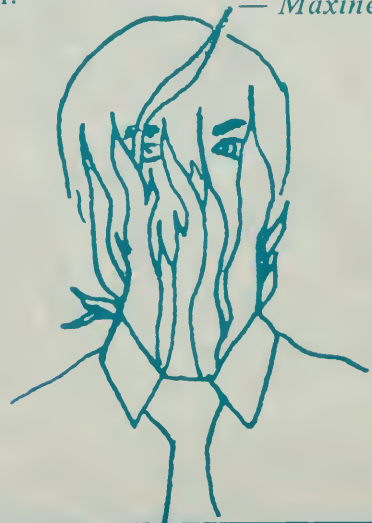
international lending institutions controlled by the U.S. and its allies. The developed countries exercise tyrannical control over domestic economic policies through these institutions.

The offshore office can only bring more of the same. Data entry centers in Barbados will not bridge technological gaps. Most of the office jobs being exported involve the most stressful, menial kind of computer work, and it may be only a matter of time before much of it is automated out of existence. A country like Barbados could never develop an independent foothold in a market dominated by multinational giants. Even in the best of circumstances, useful applications of computer technology to domestic problems would be very costly, and a ruinous waste of resources.

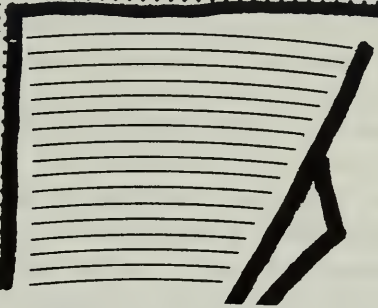
The cultural consequences of foreign investments can be at least as harmful as the directly economic ones. The office environment (decor, dress, design of buildings) promotes a culture which emphasizes materialism, extreme

time-consciousness, and a bland, aseptic modernity. The nearly indistinguishable appearance of financial districts throughout the world testifies to the homogenizing effect of office culture. A tiny elite may in fact gain the privilege of sampling the commodity-heaven that office culture glorifies. But far more people will be victimized by the looting of the country and the devaluation of tradition by multinational capital.

— Maxine Holz



b train



by *The Kansas
Clerical Conspiracy*

it's the same every morning. commuter madness. traffic doesn't move on the kennedy, standing still as far as I can see downtown. a hundred thousand suits stuffed with fat white men, coming closer every day to stress-induced heart failure. men with keys to the men's room at the office. they keep it locked. I guess they want to make sure nobody steals their shit.

across the expressway, the illinois central rockets by, non-stop. oliver tells me it's the only railroad in the country that drives its trains on the left side of the tracks instead of the right. inside, the brooks brothers shoot past at 70 miles an hour behind green glass and the pages of the wall street journal. suburbia on rails.

I wonder if maxfield is on that train. no, he's always at the office by six, he probably came three hours ago.

the b train rolls in. small crowds gather by each door; the more industrious run along the platform to cars that look emptier. the tired and sluggish simply go the closest. I figure sprinting thirty yards to the front of the train will cost me more energy than standing up the whole way to work. I'm well to the rear of the train and the crowd, so I struggle in and grab a pole. the doors snap shut, and we're off.

jefferson park b train. no smoking littering or radio playing on the train. addison is next.

I never ride in the front car. I know a

lot of people like to. Mostly men and boys. They put their feet up on the window ledge and stare straight ahead at everything rushing in. It's different from a car or a bus, where there's always the engine or the driver in front of you. On the train, you're right there on the very edge of movement. The motorman sits in a little booth right next to the front seat. He has his own window out the front. He leaves the door to the booth open to get some circulation. With the door open, the people in the front seat can see the lighted numbers on the digital speedometer. You can hear the automatic speed regulator buzz when the motorman breaks the speed limit.

Riding in the front, you see what's coming. You don't just depend on watching the already-encountered slide by on the sides. Spot the black and yellow speed limit signs on the ground by the tracks, the tunnels, the taillights on the train ahead.

I rode in the front seat once. took the whole seat. looking forward to a nice ride to work. It was a lot of fun for a while watching the lights on either side of the tunnel separate as we passed. things were fine until we got to the final underground stretch between grand avenue and downtown. It's a two mile tunnel with a sharp left turn at the end.

Leaving the station at grand, we picked up speed. The familiar squeaking of rubber against steel

against plastic arose. The train rocked back and forth with the unevenness of the tracks. The concrete tube in front of us was sloping downward, assisting our acceleration. Faster and faster. The wobbling got much worse, and I began to worry. some of the jolts seemed to be getting strong enough to throw us from the tracks.

the tunnel lights blurred. another jolt shook my feet off the window sill and my lunch off the seat. I looked over at the speedometer through the open door of the motorman's booth. the green lines kept rearranging themselves until they froze at 60. The tunnel lights showed me we were rapidly approaching the 90 degree left turn.

but the train wasn't slowing down. I looked over at the motorman. unconcerned, he held the throttle all the way forward with his right hand and was looking down at a paperback copy of PT-109 balanced carefully in his lap. sunglasses. he'd probably been doing the same run for 10 years.

.....
The Hated Suit Monster Claims Another Downtown, Bringing the Despised Buildings and Machines in Its Wake!!



I began thinking gracious god all is lost, I'm going to be shredded by wind-shield glass, when he expertly throttled back with the precision internal timing of pure reflex, clipped the turn and delivered me intact and shaking to the platform under lasalle street.

All I could think about at work that day was John F. Kennedy at the helm of PT-109. I read about it a long time ago, I think it was 7th grade. He made a habit of racing other boats in to the refuelling dock to avoid having to wait in line for hours. They would rocket in full-out and reverse the engines at the last second. One day his timing was a bit off and they smashed into the dock. they called him crash kennedy after that.

**addison. no smoking or radio playing on the train.
 california next, california.**

8:47. oh christ, I can't be late again. maxfield called me in yesterday. you know it's serious when they tell you to close the door.

I think it's time we had a talk.

?

Look, I'll get right to the point. I think you're showing a serious attitude problem. we ask very little from you here, but we do expect some things. you're never on time. your desk is a disaster area, as is your hair. you come in sometimes looking like you've slept in your shirts. it was made clear to you that you have 42 minutes for lunch. it's been brought to my attention that you took a three hour lunch break last week to go home and have sex. this kind of behavior is simply not acceptable. you've got to develop a more professional attitude. I'm beginning to think you're unfit for business leadership.

yessir.

and the blue jeans have to go. If we let one person wear them, we have to let everyone do it. and can you imagine maggie and kathy coming in here wearing calvin klein jeans? I'd never get any work done because I'd be spending all my time staring at their asses . . .

when I started listening again, he was telling me that monday I'm being

demoted to the typing pool. whatever that means. then he gave me a general pep talk on capitalist economics to bring me into line. "if we take care of the company, it will take care of us."

yeah, sure. it seems to be taking care of some of us much better than others.

Minimum Wage. Because we can't pay you any less and get away with it.

no smoking littering radio playing on the train.
logan square is next.

no smoking, radio playing, direct eye contact or conversation with strangers on the train. at last. a seat. it's the one good thing about being terribly late. people clear out at california for the train.

despite the noise, the pain, the inconvenience, the waiting, the smell and the cold of the train, I've run into some interesting people in these screeching cars. I was coming home late one night from dancing. The car was empty except for a man who sat down next to me after I had gotten on. at one in the morning, it might have been taken as a threatening gesture. in an empty car, the socially acceptable space is at least three seats. but I think he just felt like being with someone.

after a brief greeting, we rode through the north side in silence. I watched the blue sparks splash from between the wheels and tracks as we went through the turns. he offered an occasional verbal musing:

did you know spiro agnew is an anagram for grow a penis?

imagine what would happen if one year nobody bothered applying to harvard.

last year I was thinking of getting a vasectomy. I decided against the operation on my way to class one night. I was across the aisle from a young woman and her three year old daughter. The little girl was standing, holding on to the back of the seat. She swayed back and forth with the car and sang a song which she made up as she went. it was a laughing song about her mother, at whom she cast an occasional glance as

BREATHING

I walk in a cage
Formed by fences wooden & wire
Where they're putting up
Another highrise.

I walk to work;
I am employed.
But is this freedom?

When an alien lands I'll ask him.

Christopher Newton

she sang. just to make sure mom was paying attention. the lyric was simple, repeated again and again:

stoned, stoned, stoned

the young woman sat smiling through narrowed eyes, paying undivided attention, catching each glance with a wink. after a few minutes, she nuzzled her daughter's ear, trying to cajole her into ending the song. for a moment, it seemed they were motivated by nothing but love and innocence. a precious glimpse of matriarchal tenderness. it made me think that some day I would want to be part of a scene like that.

and this guy here next to me who's been sitting for the last 20 blocks with a bag of chinese food in his lap.

hi.

what's he doing with chinese food at 8:45 in the morning? who cares. it's smelling up the whole car. here we are, everyone trying to find the source of those amazing smells without being terribly obvious. it brings back dad's sermon on the loaves and fishes. how bout it god. just one small gratuitous miracle. we could use it. the guy walks into 77 chow mein on irving park and tripp and orders loaves and fishes. to go. he joins the core of rush hour traffic. between stops, he opens the bag and starts spreading food out to everyone in sight. people eat with their fingers. rice, chicken lo mein, sweet and sour shrimp slowly beginning to talk, smile, laugh. I sample a little bit of the snow peas in



Today it is a fine modern city

HH

oyster sauce from the old woman with blue hair behind me. she takes a handful of my fried rice. and the food keeps coming. a brown paper cornucopia. egg rolls, barbecued ribs, szechuan beef. someone runs a little white box up to the conductor . . .

**logan square, milwaukee kedzie diversey.
change for the a train.**

it's downhill from here. we're about 20 feet over milwaukee avenue, right at eye level with the tennis shoes dangling from the power lines. soon we'll be under the city speeding noisily to the business district.

in the interim I'm looking for the non-white majority of the city. where are they? not on this train. no, the only black people here are the driver and the conductor who operates the doors and announces the stations. for our entertainment today, or maybe for his own, he has added an am radio disk jockey affectation to his voice as he calls out the stops.

oliver has lived in the same neighborhood his whole life, ridden this train for sixty years. he told me over breakfast this morning that there is no op-

pression of race here.

how do you feel about the two of us sharing a four bedroom house while people are living out of u-haul trailers on the south side?

hey, this is a northern industrial city. we've got a black running for mayor. they can do anything they want here. this isn't the south.

it strikes me that the whole country is the south. we've got the up south and the down south. 200,000 out of work in the city. yesterday's papers reported 34,000 people, mostly black, showed up to apply for 2500 jobs that only last for ten weeks. my own employment seems completely random and undeserved. why me? handed a job without having to do anything more difficult than sit in a barber's chair for 12 minutes.

and why is this woman staring at me like I've been picking my nose in church? I can't help it, my hands instinctively cover my ears when the noise of shearing metal reaches the pain threshold. and I'm always the only one who does it. can it be that nobody else is pierced by this sound? or are they all too worried that everyone will think they're fools if they cover their ears? I mean

it's not like listening to french horn practice, where you can sometimes sit stoically on your hands. no, this is pure pain. I fear permanent hearing loss. I'm convinced it's the cause of oliver's partial deafness.

the tightness in my stomach gives way as we turn the last corner and coast in. the threat to my hearing past, my hands leave my ears to collect my lunch and knapsack.

lasalle

on the way up the stairs to the street a middle aged postal worker next to me blows his nose in a paper towel he's been carrying since breakfast. he drops it on the stairs when he's finished.

the sun has come up significantly since we went underground. the first thing I'm able to see after my eyes readjust to the brightness is maxfield crossing the street in front of the ymca. he's on his way to the post office with two big manila envelopes under one arm. he sees a blind man on the other side of the street waiting to cross toward him. it's the guy who runs the news stand in the lobby of city hall. maxfield runs across and grabs his arm to guide him through traffic. the blind man does not find this at all helpful and tells maxfield to fuck off.

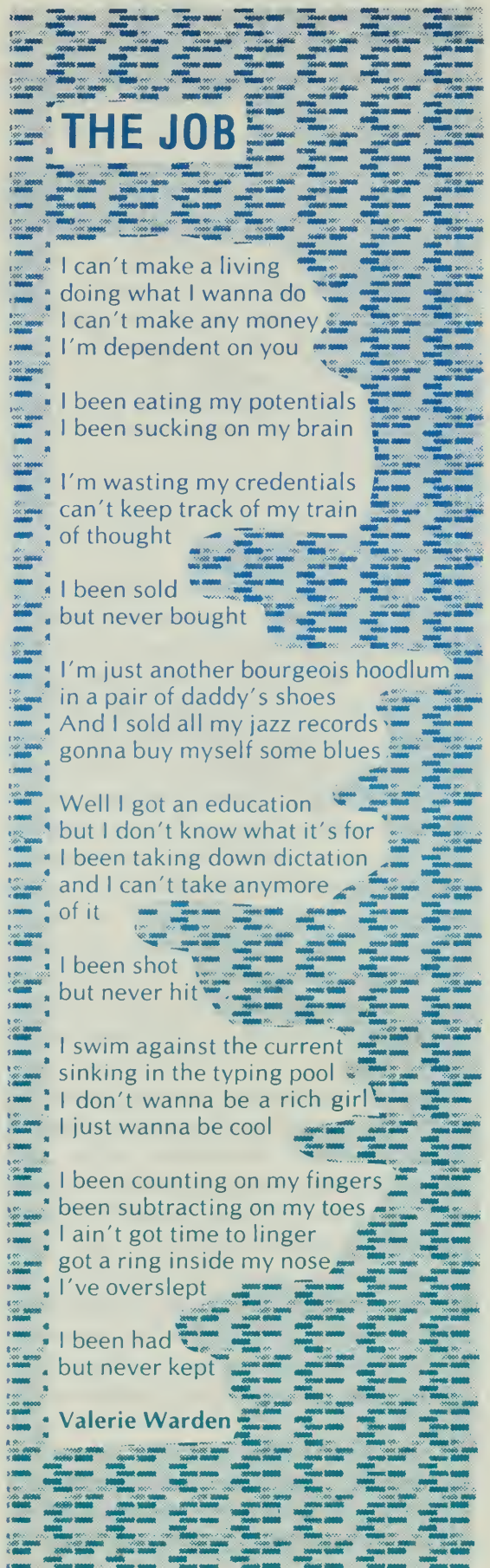
I've been walking to work here for seventeen years. I'm perfectly capable of getting around alone.

maxfield releases him to cross with only his cane for guidance. the rushing pedestrians politely clear a path for him and stand by watching as he crashes into the usa today box on the opposite corner.

maxfield continues on to post his letters, swaggering a bit, mumbling to himself.

. . . only trying to help . . .

he passes me without any sign of recognition. it will probably be the high point of the day.



WE'RE #1!

—Lucius Cabins



Part 1

Sports are always present in modern life. Right now (late October) in the SF Bay Area, 49er Fever is setting in again as the team is off to a fast start. Meanwhile Bay Area fans are wringing their hands over the failure of the Giants and A's in this year's baseball season. Since the Giants have lost money for the past few years, the owner has put them up for sale, which has led to a civic commission to "Save the Giants" and build a new stadium in SF. In the U.S. there are millions of sports fanatics — spectators and participants. Even many non-fans can't help but know some sports trivia.

Part of the appeal of sports is that they offer a system of understanding, a world of order with clear rules and limits (in sharp contrast to the confusing, topsy-turvy "real world"). Sports provide intense emotional ups and downs, as one's game or team succeeds or fails. Instead of the muted grayness and underlying anxiety that pervade much of daily life, sports provide clear resolutions and emotional catharses for the "fan."

I couldn't begin to write about the ideological implications of sports if I didn't have a deep personal involvement with sports dating to my earliest memories. Sports have been important to me for 25 of my first 28 years, and I

still enjoy following the baseball season. I have played and watched baseball, basketball, soccer, frisbee and golf — each has absorbed many hours of my life, as a participant in the games themselves, and in the culture surrounding each sport.

Each sport was deeply satisfying, though at the time I never thought much about why. The pleasure of doing well at sports reinforced my self-esteem as I grew up. I gained a command of the statistical nuances of the games and developed a good memory for numbers which satisfied my desire for a concrete understanding of "reality" (the game) — as well as my not-so-admirable desire to compare my own knowledge to others'. Statistics delighted me as a young boy; baseball cards and baseball games contained my fantasies for several years. Also, my identification with the style of certain sports heroes made me feel connected to the broader community they symbolized.

"The Oakland A's, those swingin' A's, made [getting into baseball] easy. They were not just good... they were a gimmick whose time had come. The team's long hair and mustaches, whether grown for love or money, made them the first sports heroes who looked just like me — and a lot of other people

like me. With their Haight-Ashbury coifs, arm-in-arm egalitarianism, and easy-over manner, the A's were baseball's first mutants. They were an on-the-field expression of the ways in which the diffuse rebellion of the Sixties had succeeded, and the ways in which it could be so cunningly packaged. Their upcoming confrontation with the clean-shaven Cincinnati Reds [1972 World Series] was not just a fight for the championship, but a rite of opposite forces, a sporting Yin and Yang. A's versus Reds was hips versus squares, freaks versus jocks, new versus old. Them against us.'

—BUMP CITY by John Krich, 1979,
City Miner Books, Berkeley CA

This quote aptly describes my own attitudes leading up the '72 World Series. The A's' anti-macho style and implied anti-military stance — combined with a winning team — captured the fan in me. I'm still fond of the A's to this day, even though now they aren't much different from other teams, either in style or content.

Part of my sudden interest in soccer when I was 10 in 1967, I realize now, came from the more “hip” styles adopted by some of the players (in particular I remember the Beatles haircut of a player named Willie Roy for the Chicago Spurs soccer team, as becoming a model for me, also his “cool” floppy kneesocks). The fact that soccer was the most popular sport in the world lent a certain zealous, evangelistic tone to my exhortations to my friends to get interested in soccer and practice! I really *believed* in soccer!

I always enjoyed the sense of camaraderie with my teammates. Like most people, I liked being part of a team, working together with others toward a shared goal. The mutual dependence between teammates creates personal bonds that are often lacking in people's personal lives. Playing basketball and baseball gave me an avenue to integration with my black classmates in Junior High and High School. Without

“P.E.” I would have remained ghettoized with my white school chums, as most kids tended to segregate themselves socially.

After I was about 15 I never again participated in team sports, except golf. But golf, with the icky-clean and straight image of the PGA, never appealed to me on the symbolic level. I just enjoyed the walk in pleasant outdoor surroundings, playing this challenging game. The unintelligent, non-conversational people I played with eventually drove me out of the game.

None of the relationships I had with teammates in any sport lasted beyond the time we played together. The community created by sports is a superficial one in human terms. Lasting connections need other types of friendship and joint activities.



The Joy of Spectating

“...the language of sports is the symbolic glue that links people in taverns, offices, and car pools across the country. Sports talk is concrete, personal, and its cues are readily understood. Talking about the team becomes the core of everyday communication... Talk about the team keeps the fire of solidarity burning long after the game ends and the fans must return to the more mundane tasks of everyday life.”

— Richard Lipsky, HOW WE PLAY
THE GAME (Beacon Press,
Boston 1981.)

Some men find in sports spectating the same kind of interest that women have for soap operas and gothic romance novels (although these interests are not completely sex-segregated). On one level it's just an easy escapist pastime — it's cheap and re-

quires little effort. It can be a completely alternative world for the absorbed fan, to the point of their being reduced to an uncommunicative blob except for questions about sports. But the vicarious pleasure of sports is also an expression of desire for human contact, for ways to involve oneself in the world.

Sports knowledge provides one with a passport to conversation with people everywhere. Throughout the U.S., regardless of how alienated you might feel from someone in an uncomfortable situation, you can usually (if it's a man) bring up baseball or some other sport and break through the wall, at least superficially. U.S. men in particular have a hard time being open, honest, and emotional in public. Sports allows men to share their giddiness, sentimentality, or depression over a sports event.

The rush of emotion in an excited 50,000-strong crowd is a sensation we seldom feel in any other arena in this society (except possibly religion). The highest I ever felt from a sports event was after game 5 of the '72 World Series, the A's had staged a miraculous comeback in the bottom of the ninth with three consecutive pinch hit singles and won the game. I, and about 15,000 other ecstatic fans poured out into the cloudy night, yelling and cheering, and went by shuttle bus to the BART station. All the way home on the BART train the emotional charge in the air was absolutely contagious. Everyone felt extremely close to all the other fans in the train, and we all had the (illusory) sensation that we had accomplished something that night.

A new development in sports spectating, apparently originated by the University of Washington football team fans in the 70's and widely adopted in baseball stadiums nationwide this year, is the Wave Chant. In this, fans get up from their seats section by section and sit down again rapidly, sending a wave of humans around and around the stadium. I've seen this done at the most unlikely times, totally unrelated to the game on the field. I think it is a way for

people to experience the sense of being part of a conscious mass, though I doubt if many actually think about it while doing it. The Wave Chant symbolizes the ambiguous quality of sports involvement. As a spontaneous act of a large collectivity it implies the possibility of large collective action (Sometimes it's semi-spontaneous as when encouraged by a cheerleader like Crazy George at A's games).

Insofar as this concerted human effort is contained within the rules of sports — in a stadium, and done for the purpose of cheering on a team to victory — it remains a wispy shadow of what real collective action could accomplish in daily life itself. And it certainly cannot be argued that the collective thrills of sports fandom provide any practical lessons in how to actually self-organize and live collectively. But sports do offer a taste of the emotional pleasure involved in collective experiences.

Collective euphoria can also be used and abused by national leaders and terrorist dictators like any recent president, Hitler, Stalin, or Mao. Mass pageants and the collective emotions brought on by the wave chant are easily used for nationalistic and patriotic political goals. The Olympics (see below), for example, made good use of mass audience participation in its opening and closing ceremonies.



Sports: On the Job and At the Front

Team sports are closely linked to work in several ways. For one thing, people wish their worklife would be as clear and uncomplicated as the sportsworld seems to be. Many managers play on this desire and use sports metaphors and concepts to in-

tegrate workers into management's overall goals. "Not a team player" is a serious charge in the realm of business, just as concepts of sacrificing for the "common good," i.e. for the company's profits, work to reinforce submissive behavior.

Like work-life, life with the team is hierarchical and primitively authoritarian. Most professional athletes in the U.S. only recently escaped indentured servitude with the rise of free agency in the mid-70's (a lucky few becoming millionaires, while most now get the salary of a middle manager). It is still common to refer to players as the property of the team owner. A Bay Area sportscaster recently asked Matt Keough, a former Oakland A's pitcher, "You're Yankee property, aren't you?" He answered, "Yeah."

Each team is controlled absolutely by the owner, and there is an official management hierarchy from the owner down to the manager and his coaches on the field. In this respect it closely resembles any company. In the end,

after heroism and success and failure are dispensed with, it's profit that counts.

Professional sports exist to profit from ticket sales. Sports spectating also serves as a vehicle for the additional sale of other products through TV and radio. The drive to display winning teams and superstars is fueled by financial, not athletic "performance." With the recent easing of restrictions against receiving money while competing in amateur athletics, sports is increasingly dedicated to the dominant buying-and-selling mode of life.

Corporate leaders easily adopt sports language because the profit interest of the company converges with the victory (read 'profit') interest of the team. It wasn't always this way. It's only been since the 1920's that sports has been promoted in a big way for profit. Interestingly, this transformation of a formerly free, leisure time activity into a profit making industry coincides with a general expansion of the realm of capital into all sorts of new spheres in the

**What kind of
Americans are you?
Now get out there
and beat those
goddam commies!!**



early part of the century. The 20's also saw the advertising industry get off the ground for the first time, which deeply affected the "non-working" (i.e. non-wage-labor) lives of millions, women in particular.

Because people enjoy sports and accept the structure of the games, businesses can legitimize their own hierarchies by applying sports metaphors to their organization. Just as corporate leaders benefit from identification with the ideology and hierarchy of sports, so do politicians.

Identifying with the success of one's team or sports hero (which also means the defeat of another) is what makes sports exciting to many people. Since sports participants are in turn identified with their "homes" — the city or country they come from — enthusiasm for sports translates into municipal and national allegiance. Municipal and national pride ride on the backs of players of the Home Team. Because of the intensely personal commitment fans have to their teams, attachment to (American) culture via sports involvement acts as a far more effective stabilizer than political propaganda. After all, if you are prepared to "wait til next

year" for your team to win, you may be more inclined to wait til next year (and next year and next year) for desired political and social changes, if you are thinking of such things at all.

Government leaders at all levels are quick to associate their own image with sports success. This is as apparent in the Eastern bloc as here, where athletic excellence earns a highly privileged lifestyle, and national "respectability" depends on victory in international sports competition. The relationship between politicians and sports subtly helps to legitimize the activities of civic and national political elites, even if one doesn't like the personalities or programs in power.

We're #1?

Part 2

The Olympics: A Case Study

"Beyond all the glory, the grandeur, the gold, above the roar of the record-breaking crowds, something very special happened at the Games of the XXIII Olympiad in Los Angeles. A renewed spirit of pride and patriotism, of brotherhood and a belief in ourselves, echoed across the land — and indeed around the world... ABC is proud to have been a part of the Olympic spirit that lifted the mood of our nation..."

— Full Page ABC ad
SF Chronicle, 8-16-84

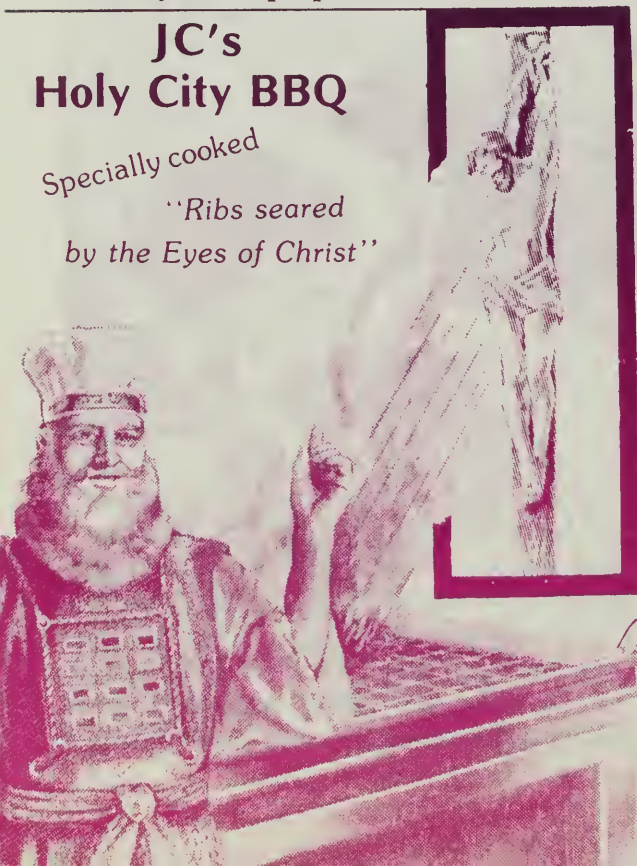
In the Olympic games, identification with the National Team represents an involvement with a Project of National Success. In the LA Olympics, this push for national participation and identification reached new heights of patriotic manipulation. A closer look at the Olympics as a media event (which is in a sense an extremely concentrated version of the many hours per week of sports broadcasting in general) reveals an integrated campaign of ads, news, and Sports Spectacular.

The TV coverage, through which

JC's Holy City BBQ

Specially cooked

"Ribs seared
by the Eyes of Christ"



most of us experienced the Olympics (if we did at all), focused heavily on US athletes for the US audience. ABC assumed that all countries would only want to see their own athletes and events in which their country succeeded, so they sent footage focused on events and athletes of the country to which they were sending broadcast signals. Those of us in the U.S. were fed a strict diet of smiling U.S. athletes, and when we once in a while saw someone from an African or Latin American country, we were quickly informed (almost apologetically) by the ABC announcers that they were students at a U.S. university.

Anthems, especially the Star Spangled Banner, played on the TV night after night, like a twisted nightmare of patriotic nirvana. Victorious athletes invariably received large flags of their country and would then proceed to run the banner around the arena, track, or pool, to show how much they loved winning for their country. And the L.A. crowds chanted "USA USA USA" throughout nearly every event, trying to embarrass the contending athletes out of the arena.

Athletic success stories are presented as models of opportunity for upward mobility and fulfillment. Ideologically, the Olympics (and sports in general) reinforce the view of society as a meritocracy. The "fittest" not only survive, but climb out of their social class into a higher, better-rewarded role. Olympians Valerie Brisco-Hooks of Watts in LA won 3 gold medals, Daley Thompson of East London won the decathlon, and numerous US blacks and chicanos took medals in boxing and track and field. Considering the reality of minority opportunities, these are powerful success stories.



Corporate Double-Talk

The advertisements featured during the 100+ hours of Olympic coverage were an integral part of the overall extravaganza. Major corporations rose to new heights of Orwellian double-talk, with their preposterous claims of all the good they are doing for their country, the athletes, and the people. Moreover, the cycle of advertisements repeated every couple of hours, so if you watched 3-4 hours you'd hear the same messages again and again. Repetition is one of the most effective ways of "communicating," especially on TV.

Bud Lite commercials featured bizarre little fables of hard work and sacrifice. Steel workers "gave up fishing trips, worked longer hours and on weekends... All so a co-worker could go to Los Angeles and see his daughter compete in the Olympics" and then joined their boss in a beautiful display of class harmony in watching the Olympics on the foreman's tiny TV. Another Bud Lite spot filled viewers' screens with a construction worker thinking to himself as his day ends: "Never was much of a flag-waver... Guess it's cuz I didn't live during the Depression... or go to WWII like my dad... But there's something about these Olympics that really makes me proud to be an American..."

Dole Pineapple took credit for Joan Benoit's victory in the first women's Olympic marathon, presumably since they helped bankroll her training. Mars candy company portrayed their Snickers bar as "Snack food, good for when you're hungry."!! Only on U.S. TV can candy bars be blithely called "food!"

ABC itself was not to be left out of the Olympic advertising orgy. Ten second

teasers featured excerpts with a voice saying "My country needs me, I'll never turn my back on this country!" to promote an Air Force-based dramatic series "Call to Glory." And ABC News played its typical, carefully honed ideological angle (let's not forget that it was ABC with its "America Held Hostage" during the Iran crisis that aggressively tried to break the "Vietnam Syndrome"). The nightly news Special Segment just before the prime time Olympic broadcast featured a piece called "Freedom From Fear". Local L.A. residents were shown serving homemade food to the massive police force patrolling their neighborhood for Olympic security. "People don't care about the Olympics, they care about the police" said a black woman organizer of the feedings. She and her community organization are petitioning the LA city government for more police presence all the time, since crime has dropped to practically nothing during the Olympics. Normally the LAPD "serves" ghetto and barrio residents with violence and harrassment, with murder of unarmed "suspects" a not infrequent outcome.

I was viewing the Olympics from Boston when a race riot erupted in Lawrence, an aging former industrial town nearby. On the midnight news after prime time Olympic coverage, the riot between Hispanics (mostly recently arrived from the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, unemployed or on welfare) and white youth, many from poor French-Canadian families was headline news. The most shocking aspect of the story was the scene of white youth chanting "USA, USA, USA" at Hispanics, identical to the hysterical patriotic chanting from the Olympic crowds in LA. The end of the remote segment from the scene of the riot concluded with the sound of marching police boots.

The Olympics delivered an ideological package coast-to-coast. In dutiful response many people experienced the thrills of the Games as the thrill of a

U.S. victory, hence the prevalent "USA USA USA" and "USA #1" that swept the nation. But a Big Victory against whom? One third to one half of the world class competition stayed home in the Soviet bloc boycott. In spite of this, ABC was able to use the Olympics to whip up patriotism and a sense of national conquest, just as the Russians did at "their" Olympics in 1980.

Of course, none of this overall package would hold together if it weren't for the "real drama" of the events and the athletic competition. I, too, in spite of my disgust for the ideology and manipulation, was able to enjoy and even be excited at times by the outstanding achievements of various athletes. The gripping battles in men's and women's volleyball, the track races, the gymnastics, to name just a few, provided a fair share of great sports. For me the pleasure was in the fierce competition and close contests.

* * *

Sports succeed in tapping into emotional desires for friendships, community identification, and the ups and downs of success and failure (a "safe" failure without serious repercussions other than "defeat"). It is also one of the few remaining areas of acceptable play, and a place to unabashedly release all kinds of pent-up emotions. Many find an escape from their real problems and the problems of the world in sports. In stress-filled modern society sports spectating can be a passive escape from the tensions of daily life, and in that way it serves as a safety-valve for the system. But not all spectating is simply escapist.

I can imagine that people who enjoy sports could direct themselves toward far loftier goals than rooting on the Home Team. But that assumes that they *understand* the emotional context of their pleasure, and *desire* to transcend the capitalist satisfaction of that pleasure. This article contributes to un-

derstanding the emotional context, but discovering the desire and methods of getting past big money sports for speculating is a more difficult problem. After all, the best athletes are fools if they don't get paid a lot of money for their skills, in this society. So if we want to see the best, we're stuck with the purchase of commoditized leisure time.

The answer lies in turning loose the desires for free community and play, which in most cases underlie the pleasure of sports. Practically speaking, how to "turn loose" desires isn't obvious, but if we can, we may help to erode the edifice of political and social stability which organized sports presently does so much to reinforce.



DOWN IN THE VALLEY



— Doc

7:12 AM. A red glow in the east is visible through the haze over San Francisco Bay as the Peninsula train scatters waterbirds along the shore. I'm trying to sip coffee as the railcar rocks side-to-side. Gotta wake myself up. Another day as a drone in the computer industry lies ahead. I've got my feet up on the facing chair, reading the paper.

The name of my employer, Tandem Computers, draws my attention to a small item. Another article about poisoned groundwater in Silicon Valley. Tandem's main assembly plant and world headquarters is located on the site of a former Four Phase chip-making plant in Cupertino. When Four Phase abandoned the facility, they left behind many gallons of toxic chemicals in underground tanks. Only it seems they never told anyone about it. Now leaks from the tanks have been discovered. I know my co-worker John will not be happy about this. He lives near that site. Doting father that he is, he will be concerned about any possible affect on his two baby boys.

Brakes squeal as the train makes another of its many stops. The car fills with chattering school kids. I look up from the paper. A familiar station facade, with its small, opaque window panes tells me we're at Palo Alto. Not far from this station is the Stanford Research Institute. What arcane military plans, I wonder, are being discussed there this warm valley morning? A missile guidance system destined for submarines roving off the Siberian coast? How to load a C-130 to fly the maximum firepower to Honduras? The pickety-pok of wheels hitting rail joints picks up as the train gets rolling again.

A knot of workers are talking in the parking lot as the train glides past the Westinghouse plant in Sunnyvale. This facility makes guidance and navigation systems for such military projects as the Cruise missile. This reminds me of John's comment the day before: "At least Tan-

dem doesn't do military work." The government doesn't buy many of their machines at any rate. Not yet. However, after ADA was adopted as the Defense Department's official language, Tandem decided that its future computers must be based around that language. With all the companies lined up at the Pentagon feeding trough, they don't want to lose out.

Tons of cash for missiles that hopefully will never used, but little money to modernize this rail line. The newest railcars were built in the 1950s. New cars are slated for the line in the near future, or so it is rumored. But even so, they'll still be pulled by slow and inefficient diesel engines. With all of the road crossings, they'll win no trophies for speed. Every so often a hapless motorist has an unfortunate experience at the hands of a massive diesel-electric engine. This area may be on the cutting edge of technological prowess, yet I commute to work on a moving museum.

The train slows for the stop in the Oakmead Industrial Park. I jump off, along with a stream of fellow wage-slaves. The lady across from me on the shuttlebus is wearing a severe dark-blue suit, and a "Memorex" badge.

The bus dumps me on the edge of the road. You can gauge the significance of the auto in this area by the fact that sidewalks are nonexistent and buildings hide behind parking lots. As I traipse across the inevitable parking area, I'm greeted by the lettering on the doors, "Customer Engineering Headquarters Operations." I wave to the receptionist. Another day begins.

Working for parasites

Tandem's particular niche in the market is the manufacture of large computers that are "fault-tolerant." This means the machine can continue working and minimize loss of data when components fail. For example, the computer monitors its own power supply and can sense when power is beginning to go out.

Backup batteries then go into operation, allowing time for the computer to take all work then in progress on VDTs and save it on disc. This can minimize the loss of data, a feature that is of particular interest to banks. If anyone owes them ten cents or a million bucks, they don't want to lose track of it.

Tandem's computers were particularly designed for situations where users would interact with them. Such as your local Automatic Teller Machine. Citibank, which was the first bank to go in for ATMs in a big way, is Tandem's biggest customer.

Building computers for the banks may seem less threatening than building a navigation system for a Cruise missile. But it is ultimately just as useless to human welfare. Banks are in the business of making money by lending out other people's money. They don't make any product that directly satisfies human needs or desires. If you get credit from the bank to buy a house (no easy trick these days), it's not the green folding stuff that does anything to make you happy, the house is what you're interested in. And bankers don't go out and build houses in their three-piece suits. Carpenters, plumbers, electricians and so on are responsible for the existence of houses. But because getting anything that we want depends on having money under the existing social arrangement, the banks can exploit this to build up their power and wealth while doing nothing of actual benefit to human beings. As such, the banks are social parasites.

'Participatory Management'

Faced with the crumbling of worker loyalty and a less cooperative workforce, a new management philosophy, "participative management," has come to the fore in recent years. Sometimes this goes under the rubric of "Quality of Worklife." A number of the newer electronics companies like Tandem have developed this management style. This theory is a recognition of the fact, paradoxical as it sounds, that there are times when the bosses' control over their workforce can only be strengthened by giving the appearance of

sharing control.

This involves such practices as holding regular staff meetings to discuss goals and problems with workers, allowing workers to raise questions and provide suggestions. The purpose is to encourage a sense of commitment and loyalty to the labor process — and to the company's profit-inspired goals.

According to a Tandem employee magazine, which contains the glib PR and puffery usually associated with such rags, I came across the following description of their "participation" con-game is "like the president and the House of Representatives and the Senate. The manager is there as a check against manufacturing people, just as the manufacturing people keep the manager in check. We've got the architecture of a democratic system. . . ." "Capitalism and humanism are converging," chirped Jimmy Treybig, the charismatic ex-salesman who founded Tandem. "Tandem's a socialist company."

The star in Tandem's "participatory management" program is their video display terminal (VDT) factory at Austin, Texas. When the workforce was first hired, they were allowed to choose between two methods of building the VDTs: Either they could work on an assembly line, and each worker would do just one fragment of the operation repeatedly (the Taylorist alternative), or else each person could build the whole terminal from start to finish.

The workers chose to build the whole terminal. After assembling the VDT, the worker tests it and then attaches a sticker with his or her name on it. The idea is that each person will feel motivated to take greater care — and the company will not be embarrassed by malfunctioning VDTs in a customer's office.

On the other hand, when top management imposed a nine-month hiring and wage freeze at Thanksgiving, 1982, this was imposed as an edict from the top. No "participation" in that decision. The company's 14.2% profit rate was higher than average for U.S. business as a whole, but not high enough to suit the top brass.

Management still makes the decisions.

They may listen to workers' suggestions but they are under no obligation to follow them. They are free to sift through worker suggestions and choose the ideas that fit their goals, such as increasing productivity and having fewer product breakdowns. The analogy with the "checks and balances" system of the federal government is entirely phony since workers certainly are not accorded the right to veto management decisions.

The underlying authoritarianism occasionally pokes out from behind the "participatory" smokescreen, as I witnessed during a minor incident early in my tenure at Tandem. The head of my department had been scheduling the staff meetings to occur just before the 4 PM Friday beer-bust (a company institution, with free beer), which meant that no one could leave early. Some members of the department raised the suggestion that meetings be held earlier in the day. John, the fellow with the two baby boys, had been taking advantage of the company's "flex-time" policy to leave early on most days so that he could see his wife before she went off to her job as a nurse at a local hospital. Two other co-workers were single parents who wanted to leave early to be with their children. Jim, the department's *lider maximo*, cut off discussion by responding curtly: "I won't be dictated to by 17 people."

Tandem's practice of giving stock-options (the right to buy stock at a discounted price) to new hires and in lieu of bonuses also fits in with their "participatory" philosophy. Because many employees owned stock, the vagaries of the stock price was a frequent topic of conversation. In the building where I worked, one wall of the coffee room was taken up by a large piece of grid paper on which the daily changes in the stock price were charted. Besides encouraging a sense of participation in a common venture, there are two other benefits the top brass receive from widespread employee stock ownership:

(1) The company cannot be taken over as easily by outside investors or a conglomerate in search of a juicy new acquisition, thereby more firmly entrenching the

current management.

(2) The employees become a major source of capital for the firm, making it less necessary for the company to go to banks for credit.

Although much of Tandem's stock was owned by employees, the power relations in production were not affected. For one thing, the amount of stock that people own is not the same. Factory workers cannot afford to buy much stock whereas huge blocks of stock are owned by the top brass.

Mail Wars

After the top management of Tandem announced their wage and hiring freeze in November, 1982, I arrived at work the next day to find an electronic mail message that had been sent to all employees by a gutsy technician in one of the company's far-flung offices. The message protested that the freeze was shameful and unfair. This electronic mail system permits immediate contact between most employees, even when separated by thousands of miles of geography.

To use the mail system, an employee would need to have access to a video display and a "mail ID" — the electronic equivalent of a postal box. About three-fourths of the firm's 4,000 employees had direct access to the mail system, including clerical and warehouse workers, technical writers, field technicians and systems analysts.

The mail system worked like an electronic bulletin board. After typing in the word "mail" at a VDT, you could page through the various mail messages you had received.

When sending messages to others, you could either "post" a "first class" message directly to another individual — in which case other people would (presumably) not see it — or else you could "broadcast" a second-class or third-class message to a defined group of mail users.

"Second class" mail was reserved for work-related topics. This usually consisted of queries about technical questions, such as snags in some specific customer application. This was in fact the main use of the mail system.

IDNO 94117CISCO152 DEAR MR. OVERDUE,
 WE REGRET THAT WE HAVE NOT HEARD FROM YOU REGARDING
 DATE 10/23/84 YOUR OVERDUE ACCOUNT WHICH IS NOW 90 DAYS OLD. IN TEN
 INVOICE # 19218 DAYS TIME, YOUR ACCOUNT WILL BE FORWARDED TO A BONDED
 COLLECTION AGENCY WHERE ALL NECESSARY ACTION WILL BE
 INVOICE DATE 7/10/84 TAKEN TO COLLECT IT.
 IF THERE IS ANY REASON WHY THIS ACTION SHOULD NOT
 AMOUNT DUE 1.59 BE TAKEN, PLEASE LET US KNOW BY RETURN MAIL. OTHERWISE,
 SEND THE AMOUNT DUE TO REACH US WITHIN TEN DAYS. IF
 YOUR CHECK IS ALREADY IN THE MAIL, PLEASE DISREGARD THIS
 FINAL NOTICE.

"Third class" mail was provided as a kind of employee benefit. Since the mail system was needed for people to communicate about technical questions in their work, the company didn't mind if, in addition, you used the mail to sell your 1968 Chevy or those spare tickets to the Talking Heads concert. The technician's protest against the wage freeze, however, indicates how employees could use it in ways not intended by management.

When "broadcasting," you would send the message to everybody in a defined group, such as all employees in Northern California or all employees in the company's global network. There existed self-defined mail groups, such as all IBM PC owners. If you wanted to send out a message to all co-workers in your department but didn't want management to see it, you could define a mail group appropriately using the exact "mail ID" of each co-worker.

Sometimes people would simply get bored and send out jokes. Other times jokes and comments would lead to controversies, as various people added their responses. These brouhahas were soon dubbed "Mail Wars." Perhaps the biggest of the Mail Wars was touched off by an in-offensive message sent out by a man who belonged to a group called "High Tech Gays."* The message advertised the formation of a gay employees mail users group and social club. The organizers did not see themselves as "activists." As they saw it, they were just organizing a coffee klatsch.

The replies ranged from erstwhile participants, activists, and "straight" supporters to "faggot" epithets and the

predictable religious loonies. Someone in the Santa Clara stockroom sent one of the more threatening replies:

FROM: STCL.MFG.STOCK

14JUL83 12:33

TO: SVLDEV.SVLDEV.EASTMAN

SUBJECT: A mail group for Gay Tandem employees

I hope you can round up all the homo's in Tandem, because if you do we will find out where one of those meetings is being held and pay you gay bates a visit, and beat the shit out of every one of you. I bet you take it up the butt you little tinkerbell.

Here is another message of the same ilk, sent from the Midwest:

FROM: CENTREG.SUPPORT.PRS

29JUL83 15:27

TO: SVLDEV.SVLDEV.EASTMAN

SUBJECT: stay in the closet fag fuck

Steve — you ignorant slimy piece of fag fuck, how dare you show your pathetic sexual perversion to the Tandem network. On top of this, you have the stupidity to be proud of the fact that you stick your little pecker up some other sicko faggot's asshole and have your perverted orgasm (you probably piss instead of cum). The next time I'm in Cupertino I'm going to kick your faggy ass across the parking lot and personally cut your balls off.

*Redneck Motha
 USA, apple pie, and heterosexuality*

Later on I talked with Steve Eastman (the gay group's coordinator) about these and other anti-gay messages he received. He doubted that the people who tapped out

* This group has been in the news recently because of their complaint that gays are restricted from military-related work by discrimination in obtaining security clearances. It's unfortunate that access to military work is seen as part of the fight for liberation — on a par with women wanting to become cops.

blunt insults in the isolation of their office or work space would necessarily respond in that way in a face-to-face encounter. Because people are atomized when communicating over the mail system, people communicate with less of an awareness of the other person as someone who is going to react to what they say.

One of Steve Eastman's non-gay co-workers happened to see the kind of bigoted replies that he was getting:

SUBJECT:

Bigots and hate mail at Tandem

Last week a mail message was sent out suggesting the formation of a gay employees mail group. I was surprised to discover that this message engendered a lot of vicious replies. What a wonderful innovation: electronic hate mail, here at Tandem.

One of the replies was particularly offensive: a threat to discover the location of the meeting place for gay Tandem employees and beat them up. The message was anonymous, of course. This is pure bigotry, and a threat to anyone with unpopular opinions and preference. Obviously, I am talking matters of private choice here, the exercise of which is not intrinsically harmful to anyone save possibly the parties freely involved.

I have a suggestion for the author of the violent reply: form a distribution list for bigots and hate mail senders. To further protect your cherished anonymity, I suggest you wear robes made of old sheets and pointed hats. Burning crosses optional.

— Gary Staas

Gary's message, since it was broadcast to everyone, brought the controversy out into the open. The anti-gay prejudice that then surfaced was more restrained. For example:

FROM: BTF.TEST.PQUINN

19JUL83 17:19

TO: D LOCNCAL

SUBJECT: TO GARY: MORE ON BIGOTS, GAYS AND OTHERS

I agree, Gary, bigotry is one of the darker sides of human behavior. But I really think that condoning advertisements for a mail-group based upon sexual-preference (read: practices) sets a very negative precedent. By following the logic of the "Tandem gays" message it's conceivable that we mail viewers/users may be subjected to ads seeking persons who wish to form a group into group-sex, or into animal-sex, or into child-sex. These ads may seem extreme but no more extreme than ads for Tandemites into gay-sex.

I feel that respect for the rights of the majority and respect for the reputation of Tandem Computers is equally important to minority rights.

— Peter Quinn

A member of my department responded with the following tongue-in-cheek reply:

FROM: SIMS.CEPUBS.KEITH

21JUL83 11:38

TO: D locncal

SUBJECT: More bigots and others

Dear Peter:

Where do you guys get all your ideas for different kinky encounters?

I don't remember any mention that the purpose of the gay mail group was to meet partners for sex, but I guess I'm just a little naive. I'll bet you just knew that was really what it was all about without being told.

And now mail groups for Tandemites who are into orgies, bestiality and child molesting! We know where your mind is, Peter. Unfortunately, the last two practices are illegal, so Tandemites into these things will just have to stay in the closet. As for the orgy mail group, seems like a good idea to me. Anyway, thanks for the suggestions Peter.

Love, Keith

In bringing the subject of anti-gay prejudice out into the open, this controversy allowed many people, straight and gay, to express their solidarity with their gay co-workers and directly argue against prejudice.

Meanwhile, the company's top brass were apparently disturbed by the level of controversy being generated on the mail system. The Gay Mail War was soon punctuated by a "first class" *pronunciamento* to all employees from Mr. Big, Jimmy Treybig, calling a halt. His message deplored what he termed "unprofessional conduct" but studiously avoided suggesting who was being censured. Soon thereafter a new policy on mail usage was decreed which, among other things, prohibited the use of the mail system to promote "political, religious or other causes." The head bosses were obviously disturbed by the prospect of an uncontrolled free speech area that gave anyone access to all other employees.

More recently a new version of the mail program was put into place which automatically displays the sender's full name on any message. The purpose is to elim-

inate the sending of anonymous messages. But it's not clear this will work. Clever employees have at times "logged on" under mail IDs other than their own to send out messages.

Overthrowing the bosses: a true story

A co-worker had been suggesting to me that we were being spied upon. The only hard evidence he pointed to, however, was an incident where Al, my rather weird and anti-social supervisor, had stood behind him for a long time watching what he was typing on his VDT, saying nothing. Nonetheless, I did take the precaution of burying anything I didn't want my supervisors to see in the middle of work-related computer files. I had occasionally spent some of my employer's time writing articles on political subjects, and I didn't want these to be discovered.

On one occasion the message "Big Brother is watching" popped up on my screen. "Oh, he's being paranoid again," I thought.

Two days later, as I'm tapping away on the keys, Al enters my cubicle. "I want to talk with you," he says. In the privacy of the conference room, he shows me a large folder, which, he tells me, is a computer printout of everything in my files. "You've been devious," he says. He tells me he doesn't care about the political content of my writings (he rolls his eyes). He just didn't like the fact that I mixed my own stuff in with the company's data.

He says he has a little program that he uses when he "suspects" someone (he laughs). Essentially, the program searches the directory of all files on the computer system and finds only those files that have been altered by people in our department during the day. It then spits out a list of those files and the times when they were last worked on. Late at night, when no one else was around, Al would print out the contents of all these files to see if what we were doing on company time related to company work.

The next day, Friday, co-workers became more aware of the spying operation as bits of evidence began to surface. Someone found copies of personal files in the

bosses' "volume" of the the disc memory. Two of the individuals who had been selected for particularly close scrutiny were people who had complained to the Personnel Department about the arbitrary and abusive management in our department. A lady whose cubicle is next to mine tells me that she always immediately erases from disc the letters she writes to her son after she prints them out because she "doesn't want Al to see them."

The computer operators tell us they had become suspicious of Al's doings. Months before, several women in the building had received anonymous electronic mail messages such as "I love you" etc. — a kind of electronic sexual harassment. The operators had traced these messages to a time at night when only Al could have sent them.

The supervisors in our department had become so preoccupied with keeping tabs on people that it began to affect the department's production. Camera-ready copy cannot be printed out and page flats pasted-up for offset printing until the supervisors read the drafts, check the art work, etc. Unread and unapproved manuals were piling up.

The following mail message was soon received by most non-management people in the department, commenting on our bosses' concern with their "authority":



FROM: CEPUBS. WAYNE

26APR83 10:35

RE: THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"It is interesting to reflect on the defecatory habits of the hippopotamus. The male indicates to other hippopotomi the extent of his own territory by defecating all around its perimeter. Outside that ring they can go where they please, but if they come inside it he will fight them to the death."

*From Anthony Day's
Management and Machiavelli*

That afternoon, Wayne, the author of the above message, saw Al printing out a copy of a personal electronic mail message he had sent to a co-worker. Wayne began inserting the comment "Fuck you, Al" at various points in his files, since he now knew Al was going to probe everywhere. Knots of people talking could be observed most of the day. Little work got done.

The following Monday was May 2nd, 1983, the day after 50,000 workers had demonstrated in support of Solidarnosc in Warsaw. As a member of the Bay Area Solidarity Support Campaign, I had been distributing "Solidarnosc" buttons, so I brought some to work with me. People came over to my cubicle on numerous occasions during the day to get buttons. For us, the buttons expressed not only support for the Polish workers but also solidarity with each other, and it enabled us to express this in a way that the bosses couldn't easily oppose.

Meanwhile, Al was pre-occupied with printing out Wayne's files. At one point he suddenly noticed the "Fuck you, Al" message. He jumped up from the printer and walked rapidly over to the cubicle of the Production Manager. He grabbed him by the shirt, and all of the bosses then sequestered themselves in the head manager's office (referred to as the "Fuehrerbunker" by department rank-and-file).

Later that day the bosses left. We found out afterwards that they had decided to concoct an accusation of "conspiring to undermine management authority." They used Wayne's "Thought for the Day" messages, my left-wing political writings and the "Solidarnosc" buttons as evidence. They took this ridiculous story to Jimmy Treybig, who referred them to the

vice-president in charge of Personnel.

The next week the vice-president and the head of our building called a meeting with the staff of our department. The VP was cool and paternal in his style. We sat in silence as he gave a smooth harangue: "Political treatises and scurrilous messages are an inappropriate use of capital resources." Then he was interrupted by the senior member of the department, an engineer and self-styled "conservative." "Look," he said, "you're just talking about symptoms. You're not getting at the cause. The real problem is abusive and arbitrary management." He then proceeded to cross-examine Al about his invasion of people's privacy, maintaining "dossiers" to be used against people, etc. One by one, other members of the department punctuated the proceedings with their own indignation.

At the end of the meeting, the top brass announced that a "partial solution was in place" since Jim, the department's head, had "resigned" along with another supervisor. Al's fate was still up in the air, however. As we left the meeting, one of my co-workers commented to me: "I'm not satisfied with the body count."

Al and the Production Manager were demoted soon thereafter and privately urged to look for work elsewhere. They were gone within a couple of months.

Several days after the meeting, some of the computer programs used in manual production were sabotaged. It seems that the bosses who had been fired had VDTs at home and still had access to the computer over the phone lines.

At the end of the meetings with the honchos, the head of our building muttered about the "adversarial relationship" that had been created in our department. As if capitalism isn't based on an "adversarial relationship"!

While "participatory management" may be used by employees to their benefit in situations like the above, we should keep in mind that this is not simply a "gift" from the bosses. The less authoritarian management style exists because some companies see it as a more effective means of gaining cooperation from the workforce in achieving management



Joe Schwind

goals. But it has been seen as “more effective” only in light of the resistance, both passive and active, of workers against more overtly authoritarian management methods. Participatory management does not — and cannot — eliminate the very real conflict of interests between workers and employers. The fact remains that workers don’t run the plant or control the funds. This makes conflict inevitable.

Unionism

The direct human solidarity that develops among people who are thrown together in the same workplace is a kind of embryonic unionism. This solidarity of the immediate work group is played out in Silicon Valley in incidents like the one I described above. But in order to have a serious affect on what companies do or contribute to social change, this practice of people being “in union” with each other has to develop into an actual movement, conscious of itself and its purposes, and organized on a mass scale, not just limited to the personal and informal ties of departmental solidarity.

Unionism of the formal, organized sort has only the most feeble existence in the valley at this point in history. Shop organizations do exist in the “dirtiest” end of the business, in chip plants like Signetics, National Semiconductor and Fairchild Camera and Instrument. The United Electrical Workers Union (UE) has groups that

are implanted in those workplaces. These groups have no contract with the employer or legal recognition but exist through the agitation and loyalty of groups of workers. Of course, it’s not that the UE is opposed to contract unionism and the institutionalized collective bargaining system. It’s just that they haven’t yet been able to impose that sort of deal on the employers.

Unions with contracts do exist at some of the largest plants in Silicon Valley. The International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) has contracts covering workers at Lockheed Space and Missile and FMC, the two largest military contractors in the valley. The IAM, as is generally true of the existing unions in this country, is dominated by paid officials who work to avoid conflict that would rupture their long-standing collective bargaining relationship with the employers. Instead of fighting the present system, the bureaucratic unions basically accept the status quo and rarely challenge management power on the shop floor or management’s “right” to decide what our skills will be used to produce. The union officialdom often act as if the union is their “business,” which it is, since their livelihood depends upon its organizational survival in an industrial and political environment that is basically hostile to working people. Thus the leaders of such unions often talk of the need for “cooperation between labor and capital.”

An alternative to this bureaucratic unionism would be the development of unions without paid officials, organized in such a way that their affairs are conducted directly by the rank-and-file. Since they would be run by the people who must work under the conditions prevailing in the shops, such organizations would not be dominated by officials with a stake in “cooperation” with the existing power structure.

There is a sector of opinion among “progressives” that holds that the best interests of the population would be served by cooperation with the high-tech companies of the Silicon Valley type rather than struggle against them. David Talbot,



Adventures in Meta-Shopping



in a piece on the high-tech moguls in *Mother Jones**, chides "left economics" for not "grappling with the central problem of how to stimulate economic growth," Talbot says the labor movement should "be joining forces with the high-growth business sector to make sure that the [government] planning process does not stifle the creative drive of Silicon Valley-type entrepreneurs." Why? Because "it is they, after all, who are giving the economy whatever vitality it has, they who are creating the new jobs." This "neo-liberal" line is just the old trickle-down ideology in Yuppie garments. Within capitalism, "growth" means profits. Thus, Talbot is essentially saying that the way for workers to benefit is by helping the employers make more profit.

But profits in Silicon Valley are made by ignoring workers' health risks and polluting the environment. And competition drives companies to use their profits for automation, to cut their payrolls and to speed-up the remaining jobs.

David Talbot thinks that an alliance with the high tech moguls is needed to bolster "America's competitiveness" in the world market. But the companies' search for "competitiveness" may not benefit their workers. "Competitiveness" was the motive when Atari and Qume (a subsidiary of ITT) closed down their manufacturing operations in Silicon Valley, putting hundreds of workers in the unem-

* "Fast Times for High-Tech," *Mother Jones*, December, 1983.

ployment lines. They found it more profitable to shift operations to Taiwan. Capital today is international. It will set down wherever the most profit can be made. It has no loyalty to workers because they are of a particular nationality.

Instead of supporting "our" bosses, it makes more sense for electronics workers in the U.S. to develop contacts and solidarity with high tech workers in Taiwan, Malaysia, Japan and Germany and other sites in the global factory.

Instead of "cooperation between labor and capital," what electronics workers need is more militant struggle against the bosses, to protect their health, to fight growing unemployment through a shorter workweek, and to fight for a different society, where we won't be forced by wage-labor to work for the generals' death machine or the vultures at BofA and Citibank.

The development of revolutionary, self-managed unionism is needed not only because a more militant solidarity is necessary to gain whatever we can within the present social system, but also to pose the possibility of electronics workers taking over the industry and putting its technological prowess to uses that will be more beneficial to human beings.

Note: The above article is excerpted from a longer version which is appearing in the current issue of *ideas & action*, available from P.O. Box 40400, San Francisco, CA 94140.

BYTING INTO BOOKS

by Tom Athanasiou



The quality, and quantity, of books on the social impacts of computing has improved radically in the last year or so. The books reviewed here are all notable, and some of them are really good.

FORCES OF PRODUCTION

—A Social History of Industrial Automation

(David F. Noble; New York, 1984)

A must-read for anyone sick of the old pro-tech, anti-tech pseudo-debate. On the surface, *Forces of Production* convincingly demonstrates that the technology of industrial automation didn't develop of its own accord, but was chosen and designed by managerial and technical elites to serve their own class interests. But at a deeper level there's even more here: a tightly reasoned and sharply drawn pitch for opposition and refusal as the core response to the new technology.

Noble is a passionate critic of ideologies of techno-determinism and progress. Techno-determinism pacifies the population by encouraging a quasi-religious awe in the face of scientific expertise and technological "inevitability." "Progress" is, if anything,

worse — it tells us not only to sit down and shut up, but to enjoy it. "Dreams of progress" Noble points out, are often used as clubs of revolt.

If your tendency is anti-tech, you'll find herein a perspective far superior to typical "back to the stone age" pessimism which holds that machine-based societies are necessarily unfree. Rather, Noble's opposition to the new technology is based on a well-schooled analysis of science and technology as weapons of capitalism and management. Noble looks beyond the ideology of automation to its reality: as a means of enforcing powerlessness with the threat of unemployment, as a source of fragmentation and isolation in society. He challenges any views of science and technology that encourage passivity.

Despite the merits of his arguments, I believe the unequivocal opposition to modern technology is impractical. We need some of these new machines and most people know it. The problems of overpopulation and devastated eco-systems leave little room for bucolic luxury in the society we are inheriting. Without powerful tools, we have no future.

If you, like I, believe that opposition to capitalist technology must grow to encompass the undiscovered potential

of science without domination, you'll find in *Forces of Production* strong arguments to whet your opinion — arguments you'd do well to understand.

ELECTRONIC ILLUSIONS

—A Skeptic's View of Our High-Tech Future

(Ian Reinecke; Penguin, 1984)

Written by an Australian and published by the British, *Electronic Illusions* is a product of the "anti-microchip movement" which brought the issue of microelectronics onto the agenda of the traditional left. The result is a prototypical leftist introduction to the technology, successfully simple but sometimes simplistic.

Don't get me wrong. America too has seen its share of clichéd introductions to high tech. And I'll take *Electronic Illusions* to junk like *Megatrends* or *The Techno-Peasant's Survival Manual* anytime.

The book is pretty strong on the real meaning of the "information age," and it presents the reader with useful introductions to some common sorts of computer assisted ideology. Short and sweet, it takes only about 250 pages to tell its tale. Without footnotes.

On the other hand, *Electronic Illusions* is hobbled by its play for mass appeal. No mention whatsoever is made of the microelectronic revolution in weapons systems and military doctrine, or to the impact of the new automation on the international division of labor. These are not small oversights.

And *Electronic Illusions* sticks to a shallow and outdated interpretation of the work related impacts of computerization. Everything is squeezed into the old bottles of "employment" and "unemployment." Even the use of computers to give management more control over workers is barely mentioned. There is no search for new forms of struggle appropriate to the new conditions, no hint of a consideration of the overall implications of micro-

electronics. Are we to assume that the "second industrial revolution" is only one issue among many? The author may not think so, but you'd never know it from his book.



MICROELECTRONICS AND SOCIETY

—A Report to the Club of Rome
(Friedrichs and Schaff, Editors;
Mentor, New York, 1983)

Remember the Club of Rome? Long ago, at the height of the ecological conflagration, they fanned the flames with *The Limits to Growth*. Now they've published a long, detailed, sometimes tedious, but ultimately substantial introduction to the impact of microelectronics. An awareness of the changing international economy pervades the book, and the arms race gets serious, if uninspired, consideration.

Note one essay in particular. Despite its unpromising title, "Information Technology and Society," it is incisively pessimistic about the impacts of "automatic data processing" on human freedom. The author, Klaus Lenk, warns his readers about the implications of restructuring of the "very essence of social cohesion — communications," and on the structure of social power. Lenk's fear is that "informatization" and "bureaucratization" will meld together to give institutions ever more power over individuals. It's an old

argument, well known since Orwell's "telescreen," but Lenk's version is more subtle, more modern, and more convincing.

THE RISE OF THE COMPUTER STATE

—A Chilling Account of the Computer's Threat to Society

(David Burnham; Vintage, New York, 1984)

Complete with an introduction by Walter Cronkite, *Computer State* is distinguished by a fact-laden exploration of its theme. Even right-wing libertarians can, and do, share the nightmare of a future in which "the computer" (not any identifiable social forces, thank you) leads to a progressive hardening of the social machine, and eventually to a techno-totalitarian state-society.

Topics include surveillance (quite a lot is going on) and databases which are shown to be central to the organization of the modern capitalist economy, and which, through their progressive interconnection, constitute one of the major "autonomous" thrusts towards the computer state. And there's some good journalism about our own Thought Police, the boys at the National Security Agency.

INTO THE HEART OF THE MIND

—An American Quest for Artificial Intelligence

(Frank Rose; Harper and Row, New York, 1984)

A new journalism has arrived in Silicon Valley. *The Soul of a New Machine* set the standard four years ago. It was a story about a squad of child-engineers just out of grad school who were mercilessly exploited by their ex-folk-singer-project leader at Data General.

"Heart" takes us into the swirl of the UC Berkeley artificial Intelligence (AI) Labs, where a dedicated cadre of grad-

uate students and their iconoclastic mentor labor at the quixotic task of giving a DEC VAX 11-780 common sense. It's worth reading because it's both amusing and a good summary of the debates about the nature and potential of machine "intelligence."

Some of the important questions do manage to sneak into the commentary, like the "strategic computing" program which the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) is feeding to the tune of megabucks. The Army wants killer robots, the Air Force an "intelligent pilot's associate," and the Navy "intelligent battle management systems?" What fun!

THE SECOND SELF

—Computers and the Human Spirit

(Sherry Turkle; Simon and Schuster, New York, 1984)

Sherry Turkle's first book was about psychoanalysis and politics in France, this one focuses on "computers and the human spirit." Yet she claims a large similarity for the two books; her interest is in the way in which powerful ideas propagate through society and transform the "popular imagination."

The Second Self is a poor book about an interesting subject — human psychology and computers. It includes the standard fare of today's computer literature: hackers, the meaning of "personal" computers, the artificial intelligentsia. The bulk of the book, and the most interesting part of it, is about children and computers. Especially striking is the examination of how children develop from a "metaphysical" stage in which they wonder if their computer toys are alive, to a stage of "mastery," in which "they don't want to philosophize, they want to win."

The most tantalizing chapter title, "thinking of yourself as a machine," leads to a shallow and disappointing agglomeration of interview fragments and hedged conclusions. The section on AI is far inferior to *Into The Heart of the Mind*.

The Second Self considers computers not as commodities or as ideological weapons, but rather as “evocative objects,” projective screens that reveal the condition of our collective spirit. It’s about the “subjective computer,” and anyone interested in the subject should read it for the glimmers it contains. But this is psychology in its classic mode, shorn of social mediation and left to fend for itself. And the depth that might justify such narrow scope is nowhere to be seen.

Why then is *The Second Self* notable? Because its basic premise will certainly prove to be true: these “thinking” machines” are more than the latest weapons in the hands of the managers. They will affect our souls in ways only now becoming visible.

And to round out the selection, here’s a short list of older books still worthy of note:

TECHNICS AND CIVILIZATION, Lewis Mumford; Harbinger, 1934.

PLAYER PIANO, Kurt Vonnegut; Dell, 1952

COMPUTER POWER AND HUMAN REASON, Joe Weisenbaum; Freeman, 1976

AUTONOMOUS TECHNOLOGY, Langdon Winner; MIT Press, 1977

PROGRAMMERS AND MANAGERS, Philip Kraft; Springer-Verlag, 1977.

WHAT COMPUTERS CAN’T DO, Hubert Dreyfus; Harper Colophon, 1979.

WHO KNOWS: INFORMATION IN THE AGE OF THE FORTUNE 500, Herbert Schiller; Ablex, 1981.

PUSHBUTTON FANTASIES, Vincent Mosco; Ablex, 1982.



DATA BASEMENT



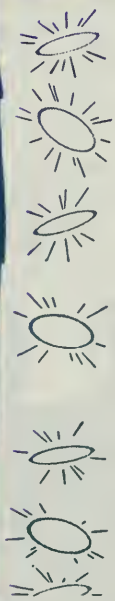
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