

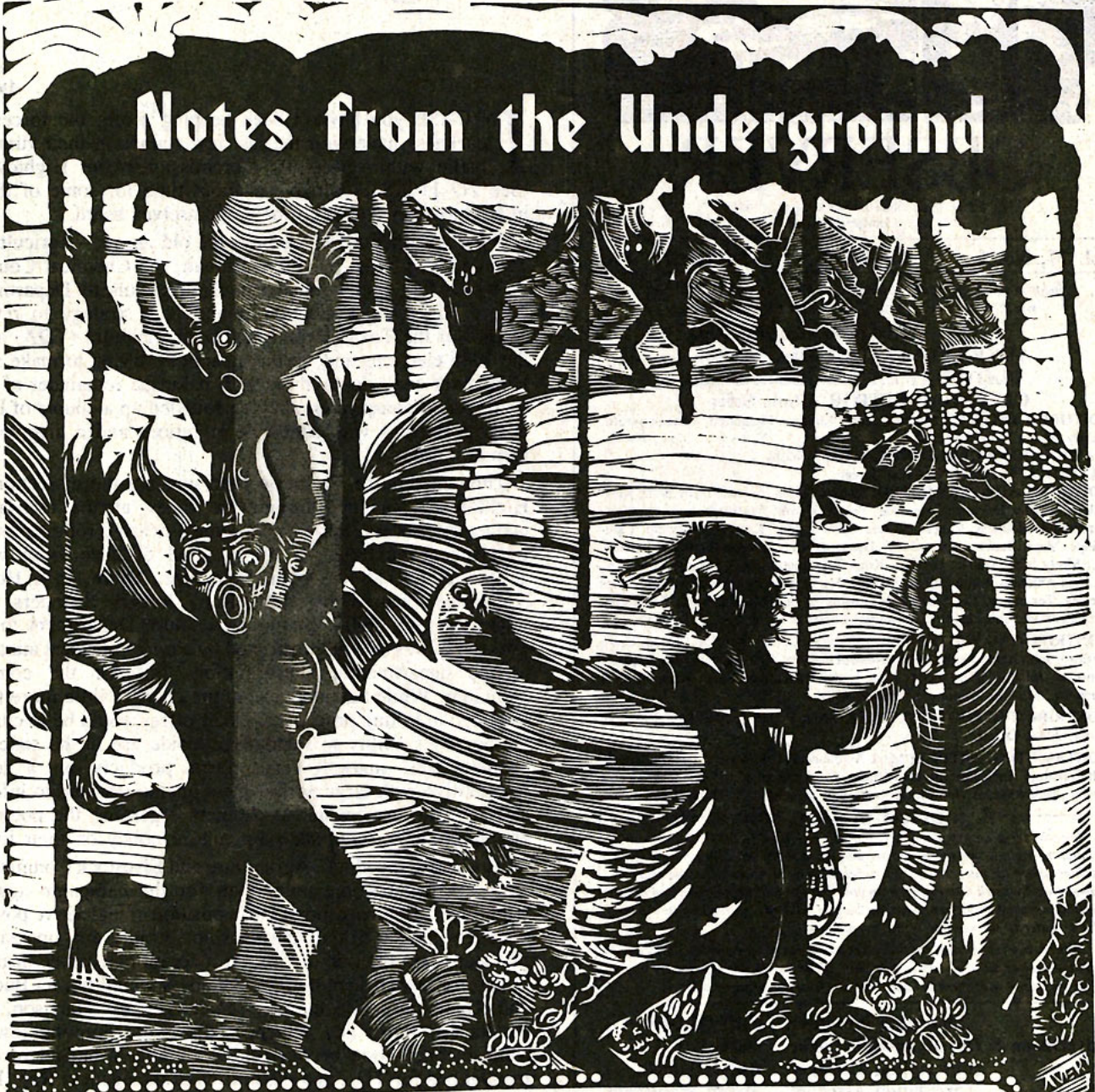
# THE TEXAS OBSERVER

A Journal of Free Voices

March 22, 1985

One Dollar

## Notes from the Underground



By Dana Loy

Austin



he immigration officials never suspected that the woman driving a late-model Olds was a part of the underground railroad movement. She had traveled to the border area, picked up three Central American refugees, taken them to a department store where she bought them suits, and started the trip north. When they reached the immigration checkpoint, the inspector glanced into the car, saw a gray-haired woman and three well-dressed men, and waved them on.

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# Ag Showdown

Austin

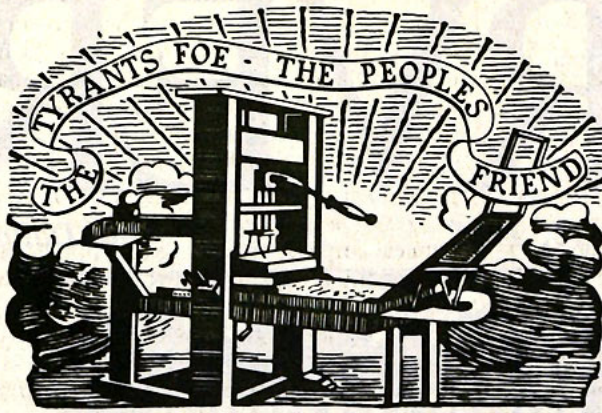
**I**N CASE you haven't been keeping score, the forces of darkness have won the last few rounds in their running battle with Agriculture Commissioner Jim Hightower. (See *TO* 11/9/84.) It may be about time for some of those in Hightower's corner to make themselves heard.

What's happening is you have the old guard — agricultural commodity groups, the Farm Bureau, the Chemical Council — which had pretty much run the Agriculture Department before Hightower's election, planning a strategy to retake control of the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) after the 1986 elections and, in the meantime, trying to make sure Hightower can't do anything with it for the remainder of this term. As co-conspirators they've rounded up a couple of low-brow politicians with statewide ambitions and a disgruntled former employee.

Their method of operation is to conduct the dissection of Hightower's agency through the fairly arcane legislative budgetary process, buried in basement hearing rooms of state government buildings, a pretty good distance from what anyone could call the public spotlight. There, in a House committee chaired by state Rep. Robert Saunders, D-LaGrange, the ability of the Agriculture Department to act effectively was severely restricted by a series of riders attached to the department's appropriations bill for the coming biennium. While Saunders called the changes little more than a change in billing procedures, their effect would be to curtail the agency's ability to regulate pesticide use in the state, to promote and market Texas farm products on a level competitive with large agribusiness operations, and to inform and educate farmers and consumers regarding the potential effects of federal and state agriculture policy on their lives.

As chair of the House Agriculture and Livestock Committee, Saunders has become point man for the campaign against Hightower. Suddenly thrust into a position of legislative power, Saunders has used his chairmanship to bully any opposition that steps into his line of fire. At a recent committee hearing on the Ag Department budget, Saunders would not let Budget and Oversight subcommittee chair Dudley Harrison, D-Sanderson, finish any sentences that were pointing toward some reconciliation between the committee's budget recommendations for TDA and the desires of the agency. Rep. Pete Patterson, D-Brookston, expressed concern about funding for TDA field offices and wanted to propose an amendment to a budget rider. Before allowing Patterson to propose his amendment, Saunders arrogantly toyed with Patterson — not known as one of the quickest legislators off the starting blocks — and subjected him to some degree of humiliation.

At a subsequent committee hearing, Saunders harassed committee witness Tani Adams of the Texas Center for Rural Studies, who was there to address bills by Saunders and Rep. Foster Whaley, D-Pampa, which would restrict TDA authority to regulate pesticide use. Saunders kept Adams at the podium for thirty minutes after she had completed her testimony, questioning her about meetings conducted by TDA prior to



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formulation of its new pesticide policies. Saunders contended that he and his ilk had not been apprised of such meetings, intimating that the TDA procedures had been rigged. He repeatedly demanded that Adams explain to the Ag committee who had been invited to the meetings and why. Adams explained that he should, of course, ask the agency for this information as she had been a participant, not an organizer.

Saunders's intent was to harass Adams, an indefatigable opponent of pesticide abuse; to level charges indirectly at TDA; to try to introduce into the minds of those present some notion of the collusion of TDA and those representing environmental or worker interests; and to perform well for his admirers in the room. These included lobbyists for the commodity groups, Jon Fisher of the Texas Chemical Council, representatives of the Farm Bureau, and from time to time, Crockett Camp, once Hightower's assistant deputy commissioner, standing by the door. In a recent *Dallas Times-Herald* article, Saunders acknowledged that he had assistance from both Fisher and Camp in formulating the restrictions on Hightower's budget. With all the attention Saunders is receiving for his chairmanship, it is said that he is now considering a run against Hightower for Ag Commissioner in 1986.

Over in the state Senate, that friend of the worker and consumer, Buster Brown, R-Lake Jackson, is co-sponsoring Saunders's bill to limit pesticide regulation. But the senator carrying the anti-Hightower banner is Bill Sarpalius, D-Hereford, making no secret of his designs on the Ag commissioner's office. It was Sarpalius whose eleventh hour filibuster killed two important farm bills on the way to preventing a vote on workers' compensation for farmworkers during the 1983 legislative session. This session, Sarpalius, long the darling of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, is dedicated to pushing parts of the New Right agenda, including a bill seeking a new definition of obscenity standards. Sarpalius has also introduced a bill, dubbed the Homosexual Rights bill, decreeing that two persons of opposite sex living together are subject to nepotism laws. Although Sarpalius denies it, the bill is aimed at Hightower's Assistant Commissioner Susan DeMarco.

DeMarco is also targeted for dismissal in a rider to the appropriations bill passed by Saunders's committee. Other riders call for the elimination of the jobs performed by Deputy Commissioner Ron White, responsible for regulating pesticide use, and Bob King, director of TDA's Office of Natural Resources, where water conservation and use, the dangers of toxic wastes, and the potential of radioactive contamination of the Ogallala reservoir are studied. Topping that, Rep. Mark Stiles, D-Beaumont, has introduced a bill eliminating the elected position of Ag Commissioner, replacing it with an appointed six-member commission.

**I**S ALL THIS happening because of some malfeasance in office on the part of Hightower? No. The legislative witchhunt is being conducted because Hightower is doing his job, because, instead of representing just the agricultural commodity groups and the Farm Bureau, Hightower is representing the interests of consumers, rural residents, small farmers, and farm workers in a statewide office that is supposed to work for the entire state.

Time and again Sarpalius or a member of Saunders's committee has said that all they are trying to do is de-politicize the Agriculture Department or the issue of pesticide regulation. What, in fact, they are trying to do is politicize issues such as pesticide regulation and worker protection and to polarize the electorate along the lines of the Reagan landslide in 1984.

When you take a look at the four so-called progressive candidates elected to statewide office in 1982, you can see

that Land Commissioner Garry Mauro and state Treasurer Ann Richards have not ruffled many feathers while Attorney General Jim Mattox has for two years been politically neutralized by his commercial bribery case. Only Hightower remains out front, aggressively pushing a progressive response to Reagan farm policy, attempting to revise state farm policies that have served the few to the detriment of the many.

Wearing the Reagan landslide as if it were a moral imperative, a few conservative Democratic legislators have teamed up with chemical corporations, the Texas Farm Bureau, and agricultural commodity groups in an attempt to undo what the voters of the state elected Hightower to do in 1982. It is not often that we elect a true progressive to statewide office. When we do, we should expect a fight every step of the way. Progressive politicians must show constituent strength and political savvy in every confrontation. In essence, they must be continually re-elected throughout their elected terms. **G.R.**

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Cover by Eric Avery

# Mr. Smith Goes for Wiretapping

Austin

**R**EPRESENTATIVE Terral Smith stood up on a Tuesday morning, the fifth of March, and spoke briefly to a noisy and inattentive House about the merits of the Texas wiretap law. The mild-mannered and moderate Republican from Travis County was carrying a bill with one plain purpose: to make wiretapping a permanent tool of Texas law enforcement instead of a temporary experiment. The legislature had enough reservations about wiretapping when it was first approved in 1981 to set an expiration date of September 1, 1985, but now Smith urged his colleagues to remove the expiration date.

One had to wonder what the distracted House members were gabbing about as the question of police snooping was put before them. Was there discussion among them of state eavesdropping, breaking and entering, tapping and bugging? Were legislators animated with lively thoughts about the problems of democracy — its checks and balances, its risky tradeoffs, its precarious curves and bends?

More likely, there was lingering gossip about how a junior representative that morning had almost pulled a fast one and slipped a surprise school prayer resolution in with the day's

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*Smith recognized wiretapping as "an intrusion" but said "I have come down on the side that it is better to get the big drug dealers."*

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routine measures. Just as likely, the representatives were talking about horse racing — the vote on legalized betting was near. Maybe they talked of what they had for breakfast and where they were going for lunch. But wiretapping? One got the feeling they weren't talking about wiretapping.

After Terral Smith introduced his bill, a floor amendment briefly caught some members' attention and merited a short debate, then Smith's wiretapping bill was passed to its third reading by a vote of 101-16. The next day it was finally passed by an even larger margin.

The bill is sure to get more attention in the Senate Criminal Justice Committee, but ultimately the continuation of wiretapping is not in doubt in the Senate either. The upper chamber passed the law in 1981 with only five negative votes and since then one of the dissenters (former San Antonio Sen. Bob Vale) has been replaced by a Republican (Sen. Cyndi Krier).

Meanwhile, the smooth and sure progress the wiretapping bill made through the House is another notch in the boot for Speaker Gib Lewis. The Speaker embraced wiretapping early, called it part of "the Speaker's anti-crime package" and induced the likeable Rep. Smith to take responsibility for it. The Speaker has commented this session that he prefers not to have too awful much debate about things on the House floor — that's really not the place for it, in his opinion. Instead, the Speaker says, the place to work on a bill is in the committee

process. You see how things work though: the Speaker had set up the House Criminal Jurisprudence committee in such a way as to ensure as smooth a ride there as there was on the floor. He gave the committee chairmanship to Republican Smith and appointed two other law-and-order Republicans to the nine-member committee.

**T**ERRAL SMITH'S House Bill 10 is a one-page bill. The only change it makes in the law is to take away the "sunset" provision so the wiretapping law is not reviewed. At heart, it was really the 1981 Gov. Bill Clements "Break, Enter and Bug" law that was at issue all over again.

At Smith's committee hearing on Feb. 11 a long line of witnesses testified to how valuable and praiseworthy the law had been over that last four years. The Department of Public Safety (DPS), led by former FBI man Col. Jim Adams, had been using the wiretap authority with an eye toward eventually having to re-justify it in front of the legislature. The DPS came prepared now with facts and figures, and tales of big-time drug dealers caught and loads of illicit cocaine and amphetamines seized.

Rep. Smith, for his part, told the committee he had fewer reservations about wiretapping now than he did when the bill was first passed. He recognized then as now that it is "an intrusion on members of our society," he said. "But I have come down on the side that it is better to get the big drug dealers."

Wiretap proponents have been successful in making the drug issue the central issue, but it is easy to imagine other stand-ins that would have worked just as well — organized crime and gambling, for example. Those issues may be argued in coming years, but for now the law restricts DPS wiretapping to drug investigations only. Though it has been used "very sparingly," Col. Adams testified, "the wiretapping statute did what we set out to do." He spoke of a major cocaine market being broken up, and an amphetamines operation covering "half of West Texas" that had been fingered. The DPS has made 164 arrests and 56 convictions due to wiretapping investigations over the last four years, he said.

But the director of the Texas Civil Liberties Union, Gara Lamarche, said the DPS record was a "failed experiment." Besides opposing the law on privacy grounds, he argued that DPS had spent nearly a million dollars from 1981 to 1983 for a relative handful of convictions, and had listened in on nine innocent people for every one "criminal."

Adams admitted that the process is costly — each wiretap costs about \$29,000 — but said that much of this money would be spent anyway because it went to employee salaries. He argued that there is simply no other way to catch certain individuals in the drug trade without tapping phones. As to whether DPS would be likely to abuse the authority, he said, "You can ask that about anything police do."

"I've always wondered," said Rep. Jim Parker, D-Comanche, tossing a big soft pitch to Adams, "is it [police wiretapping] any more subject to abuse than anything else?"

No, said Col. Adams, police could misuse their guns, but you wouldn't want to take those away.

Such was the level of debate as wiretapping passed through the committee process.

**S**MITH'S BILL was referred to subcommittee, where Rep. Debra Danburg tried to amend it by putting an expiration date back in. She was overruled 2-1. The bill was heard in committee Feb. 18. Again Danburg tried to amend the bill by bringing it up for sunset review in 1987. Rep. Tony Polumbo, D-Houston, pointed out that "we've had

a sunset for four years," and said it seemed "a little bit onerous to sunset it again for two years."

"I feel very confident, personally, with it not having a sunset in it," Polumbo said, and Danburg's amendment was disposed of. The Committee then voted 8-1 (Danburg against) to report the bill favorably to the House.

Danburg said she was not surprised by the proceedings. "That committee is stacked," she said. "It's a real difference from last year when we had some real thoughtful people on it." Danburg said committee members take an attitude that "if anybody in law enforcement is for it, they're for it. They're attitude is, if you try to amend it [the wiretap law] you're against law and order."

On March 5 Smith introduced his bill to the clamorous House. He said wiretapping was "the only tool I know of" that allows DPS to get the top-of-the-heap drug dealers.

Once again, Danburg tried her amendment. "Members, all this amendment does," she began gamely, "is add a new sunset date. . . ." She said "the best members agree" that the lack of DPS abuse so far is due to the original sunset provision.

"This amendment is totally unnecessary," responded Smith. He argued that it would set a precedent for sunseting laws as well as agencies. If the legislature becomes disenchanted with wiretapping in the future, he said, a new law could be filed then. Moreover, to abuse this law there would have to be a conspiracy between the police chief, the district attorney and Col. Jim Adams, he said. Such a situation would be "nearly impossible," said Smith.

Rep. Larry Don Shaw, D-Big Spring, spoke in favor of Danburg's amendment, saying, "I can't quite understand what it would hurt to have this extra safeguard."

Smith said the legislature can't be expected to do such a thing with other bills. Why this one? he asked.

Shaw pointed out that "this is a very special type of bill" with basic constitutional rights at issue. Rep. Dick Burnett, a former FBI agent, was then on hand to lift another lazy fly ball in Smith's direction. "Have you heard any complaints about the way DPS has used the authority?" he asked.

"I've sure not," said Smith. "There have been no complaints. In fact, everything I've heard has been complimentary."

Danburg's amendment to keep wiretapping temporary was then rejected 86-55, (which was, at any rate, a closer margin than some expected). The following day the House approved continued DPS use of wiretapping 130-17. Rep. Danburg gave up her battle and voted in favor. As often happens when civil liberties questions come right down to the wire in Texas, the only ones who remained steadfast were the minority members of the House, perhaps because they know who suffers first when the police state is strengthened. Ten of the 17 dissenters in the House were black or Hispanic.

**T**HERE WILL BE talk in the Senate, as there was in the House, of putting a new expiration date in the law. Some senators are also promising full discussion of two other important subjects completely ignored by the House. One topic concerns the DPS use of "pen registers"

## Ladies from CRIME

*Austin*

**S**HE WORE A nearly fluorescent royal blue suit with significantly padded shoulders. Her yellow-blond hair was pulled straight back and flipped up in the back; her eyeshadow blended from silver into a bright gold that nicely complemented her hair. She chain-smoked long thin cigarettes from a silver case. She was a lady from CRIME, Inc. Her mission: to talk the Texas legislature into the continuation of the wiretap law.

Ladies from CRIME? Ladies for Wiretap? It was one of the more exotic lobbying efforts seen under the Capitol dome this session. CRIME, Inc., to begin with, is not the criminals' lobby. It is a four-year-old citizens' group with the full name "Crime Reduction Involvement Means Education" that organizes around anti-crime issues. The founder and president, Mrs. Phyllis Morrow — the lady in the magnificent blue dress — was on hand to tell the House Criminal Jurisprudence Committee Feb. 11 that "90 percent of the members of CRIME, Inc., are in support of wiretapping."

At the heart of her concern, Mrs. Morrow told the committee, was society's drug problem. If police wiretapping was required to fight the war on drugs, she said, then so be it. "The average law-abiding citizen is willing to pay that price in order to grow up in a much more drug-free society," she said.

Mrs. Beverly Heinrich expressed similar views. She wore a vintage black suit with shoulder fur and a black dome hat with black gems dangling to one side as on a Shriner's fez. Mrs. Heinrich claims to have testified 72 times in one session a few years ago and says she testified in favor of Gov. Bill Clements's wiretap bill in 1978.

After some work in drug rehabilitation programs in 1978, she told the committee, "I went away very determined that this state would get a wiretap; we were one of 13 states that didn't have it." (Actually, there are still 23 states without wiretap laws.) "Now," Mrs. Heinrich said, squinting her eyes, moistening her lips, and lowering her voice to a husky almost seductive tone, "I believe the people of Texas want that wiretap more than ever."

In a private talk with the *Observer* in the House gallery, Mrs. Morrow explained her feelings about intrusive police techniques. She is concerned for her own rights as a citizen, she said, but believes the wiretapping procedures are "so closely scrutinized" that abuse is unlikely. "We have to assume they haven't abused it or at least not in a way that would be destructive," she said. If they have, she added, private citizens have recourse in the courts.

But what if her own phone were tapped?

"I haven't thought about it," she said. "I don't really say or do anything that I give a shit about anyone knowin' or hearin' about," she said good-naturedly.

After the committee hearing was adjourned, the ladies from CRIME, Inc. gathered in the lobby. Phyllis Morrow spotted Rep. Tony Polumbo of Houston and gave him a hug. Beverly Heinrich met Col. Jim Adams, the chief of the Department of Public Safety in the stairwell. Referring to the more arduous struggles it took to get the wiretapping law passed four years ago, Mrs. Heinrich said to Adams, "It's a different mood, isn't it?"

**D.D.**

— devices that monitor telephone calls but that are not covered in the present statute. The other question is about the authority that was given to DPS in 1981 to secretly break into homes and businesses to install eavesdropping devices.

Sen. Kent Caperton, D-Bryan, who heads the Criminal Justice Committee (created this session by Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby at least partly to circumvent staunch wiretap opponent Sen. Oscar Mauzy's Jurisprudence Committee) says he was "a little surprised" to see the wiretap bill pass through the House so easily. He promises "a full day of hearings" on the questions of pen register use and covert entry.

Caperton, who fought the covert entry provision in the senate bill in 1981, says he still has misgivings about continuing the provisions this year. He also says the DPS pen register practice "is a form of wiretapping."

Sen. Bob Glasgow, D-Stephenville, who was a strong supporter of the wiretap bill in 1981, says he also objects to the unrestricted use of pen registers by DPS. He says he is not convinced they are necessary tools of policework. Glasgow says covert entry is probably necessary in some instances but that there need to be some restrictions put on it. Glasgow is on Caperton's Criminal Justice Committee, as is Sen. Craig Washington, D-Houston, who says he is against wiretapping altogether. The other committee members are Bob McFarland, Ray Farabee, Ted Lyon and Tati Santiesteban.

Col. Adams and the DPS are sure to be on hand soon to calm the fears of the few skeptical senators. The pen registers, the senators will be told, are merely harmless devices that decode the clicks on the line to tell DPS what numbers are being contacted from a suspected drug peddler's phone. When pressed, the Colonel will allow that, yes, some of the pen registers have a switch that enables the device to pick up the actual conversation as well as the dial tones. But the switch cannot be activated without a special set of keys that are kept under strict security at DPS headquarters in Austin. He will

assure senators that no DPS officer, operating, of course, under the strictest professionalism, would use a wiretap without the court's permission.

And as for covert entry, he will soothe that worry, too. In four years, the DPS has not even used its power to break and enter. Finally, he will say, all these practices have been found by the Supreme Court to be constitutional and not in violation of Fourth Amendment protections against unreasonable search and seizure.

There are some questions that may go unanswered, however. What is to stop an overly inquisitive DPS snoop from clipping together a couple of wires after the pen register is hooked up in order to hear what is being talked about on the lines? How will we ever know whether such a violation happens once, twice, or fairly often? Suppose information of interest to DPS but not relating to drug trafficking is overheard and passed on to law enforcement agents. Suppose in the process of covert bug installation DPS officers find papers and effects the homeowner had preferred to keep private. How are we to be sure that police officers, because of some vaunted "professionalism," are not likely to give in to the sometimes irresistible urge to snoop and pry in ways not sanctioned? Isn't it too soon to forget that some of the highest police agents in the land — presumably the most "professional" — were involved in spying on political "subversives" as little as a decade ago? Is it too far-fetched to wonder if our local professionals might some day try similar schemes?

There are these and many other questions. So far we know at least this: 44 times in the last four years a judge in Texas has approved a DPS wiretap. No requests have been turned down. A total of 2,542 persons were overheard; 164 were arrested; 56 convicted. Of the 25,340 conversations DPS officers listened in on, a small fraction — nine percent — were judged to be "incriminating."

This is how wiretapping has begun in Texas. There is no telling where it will lead and where it will end. **D.D.**

## Credit-Card Prisons

By Geoffrey Rips

**T**he privatization of this state's prisons will become a major issue as the legislature contemplates its money woes and court-mandated prison reforms. According to Charles Sullivan of Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants (CURE), Texas Board of Corrections member Harry Whittington's opposition to privately-owned prisons "was a big reason why [he] was not re-appointed by Governor Mark White."

It is Sullivan's contention that we're going to move into credit-card prisons [so called because the state "doesn't pay up front but pays it off over a period of years"]. There's going to be a move

this session. He's [White] setting it up." According to Sullivan there are a number of corporate interests pressing for privately-owned prisons in this state. They include E. F. Hutton, Merrill Lynch, Brown and Root (interested in prison construction), and the Corrections Corporation of America, whose executive vice president, Donald T. Hutto, was warden of the Ramsey Unit in Huntsville during the 1960s, when the building tender system, later outlawed in federal court, was at its strongest.

In his public pronouncements, Mark White has said moving to privately owned and operated prisons is an important option for the state, but he

has not committed himself to the singular pursuit of such a goal. In November 1984, he did meet in New York with Merrill Lynch officials to discuss funding possibilities for such a project. White explained the meeting by telling a December 20 press conference that it is "important that the governor of the state search out the lowest cost ways of accomplishing the responsibilities we have and solving the problem." At a subsequent press conference, White said he was trying "to maximize the alternatives for our legislators to determine how they can go about it [writing the prison budget] in the least cost fashion. One of those . . . and it's just a possibility, [is] having private investors build the facility and for the state to, in a sense, pay per diem for the number of people who are actually using the facility. That way we don't have to put \$40 million up front that we don't have. We get the use of the expanded facilities. We don't have overcrowding . . . we will help solve the overcrowding problem and not have early releases. All of those things are good, and those are alternatives that the legislature heretofore has never had to deal with. They do now."

Hershel Meriwether, an aide to White, told the *Observer* that the governor's office is studying a number of options for resolving the problems in the state prisons. "There are a lot

of different ways in which one can take advantage of private sector involvement," he said. These include private financing options, lease-back options, and contracting for special projects,

## Lone Conscience

Austin

**R**EPUBLICAN lawyer and businessman Harry Whittington does not look like a social reformer. But, sitting in his law office atop the Vaughan Building in downtown Austin, Whittington revealed a burning passion for the reform of this state's prison system and a stirring compassion for the inmates of that system.

After Governor Mark White failed to re-appoint Whittington, originally a Clements appointee, to the board of the Texas Department of Corrections, a cry went up across the state, from Democrat and Republican alike. Charles Sullivan of CURE said, "I don't know if we can find a man like Harry Whittington, who worked so hard for prison reform. I don't think the four of them together [White's new appointees] could match his work."

According to Sullivan, Whittington was a lone conscience that managed to turn the TDC board around on a number of major issues, including the establishment of a separate unit for mentally retarded prisoners. He was also the leading advocate for the hiring of Ray Procnier as the new director of the TDC.

Whittington's law offices include one room for his law practice and another for his prison work. As a member of the TDC board, Whittington found himself spending most of his time on prison work. In the course of this work, this socially-prominent lawyer became a leading advocate for this society's untouchables.

"I think we've got a long way to go to get the public oriented to what goes on in our institutions," said Whittington a few days after the announcement that he would not be re-appointed to the TDC board. "Maybe we should get young people to work in institutions like prisons, rest homes, to acquaint them with the problems in our society and with problems that occur in their own families. We're losing a sense of social responsibility we used to have."



Photo by Alicia Daniel

Harry Whittington

Regarding life on the TDC board, Whittington said it was "a very difficult, almost impossible job. Their choices are to get additional funds from the legislature, reduce the size of the prisons, or operate illegally. They have responsibility and personal liability over what happens in the system with no control over who comes in or goes out. . . . Being over there on that powder keg is not a comforting feeling, knowing you've got major problems in dealing with human life. Realizing the responsibility you have frightens you. It almost got to be full-time with me. It more or less gobbled me up with involvement I hadn't planned on.

"The state's going downhill in treating our people. With all our resources, I'm embarrassed to say, it's been going on a number of years . . . . We've been proud of how cheaply we've been able to do it. The mentally retarded and the mentally ill in there need a lot of attention. I see a pretty bleak forecast for how our public looks on those people. [It's impossible] knowing you have those people and not going to lengths to help them somewhat. The public doesn't care about people like that until it's their own."

Harry Whittington's insight and compassion will be missed in future deliberations of the TDC board.

G.R.

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such as health care. Meriwether said the governor's office is preparing reports on these possibilities for consideration by the Texas Department of Correction (TDC) board and possibly for an interim legislative committee investigation. Governor White, Meriwether said, "wanted to get the ball rolling for planting a seed for looking for alternatives."

**T**HIS MONTH a 175-bed detention center for undocumented workers opened in Laredo. It will be operated by the Corrections Corporation of America for the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). A similar detention facility is being run in Houston by the same company for INS. The *New York Times* reports that the Corrections Corporation of America also operates a federal prison in Fayetteville, North Carolina, and a 325-bed jail in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Another private firm is building a \$20 million, 715-bed maximum security penitentiary in Pennsylvania.

According to Charles Sullivan, the private prison industry is hoping to make inroads in Texas' vast prison system to use as a bellwether for expansion into other states. Private prison advocates are well-placed among Mark White's friends and contributors. In addition, former Secretary of State John Fainter represents investors interested in private prison prospects.

But there are problems inherent in the privatization of the prison system, problems best articulated by outgoing TDC board member Harry Whittington.

Interviewed in his Austin law office, Whittington said, "I have expressed some reservations about it. I don't know whether this is the kind of authority that can be delegated to a profit-oriented company. The shareholders look to you [to make money]. The care and treatment of people is a responsibility that shouldn't be delegated by the state because you lose accountability to the families of those people and to the people of the State of Texas.

"If you have an inside contractor, there is another layer of authority. . . .

Even if it were cheaper, I'm not in favor of it. It would delegate to somebody absolute control over another person's life. That's not the kind of thing that should be delegated. We would be abdicating our responsibility to take care of these people, and we would lose contact with the people [we are responsible for]. . . . If things get tough, they [could] just contract them away."

Whittington's reservations extend beyond the state's responsibility to considerations of the kind of contractual relationship a state would enter into with a private contractor. "What if they default on the contract?" he asked. "Do you close the prison? In the long run, it might be a contract you couldn't break, but in which you wouldn't get the services [called for in the contract].

"I don't see how you could draw a contract tight enough to have what I want to see in it. The character, compassion, the type of people [hired to work in the prisons] would be important to me. I don't know how you could put all that in a contract." □

## Agency Moves Against Unions

By Bill Adler

*Austin*  
**T**HOUGH THE STATE of Texas has never been bashful about its distaste for organized labor, rarely do we find an agency leader as explicitly and outspokenly anti-union as D. W. Bond, Jr., of the Texas Department of Human Resources (DHR).

"If we have unions in Texas for state employees," Bond has warned, "then every decision, every move you make is questioned. If we have unions, clients will not get services on a timely basis. The management of this agency does not need unions to help us run our business."

Bond, an assistant commissioner of personnel management for the Department, hammered this message home at a March 1983 management seminar that happened to be infiltrated by a supervisor with pro-union sympathies.

Bond since then has gone a step further in his campaign to snuff out the flames of unionism by hiring an Ari-

zona-based firm with a history of "union avoidance" work.

DHR awarded the innocuously-named Sun Belt Employers Assn., Inc., two contracts worth nearly \$20,000 last year to conduct an "employee relations survey" and, subsequently, to develop what the agency calls its "Coaching for Excellence" program. The program began March 1 and is scheduled to last

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***Sun Belt, Inc., claims to represent "a totally new concept in human resource management."***

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through August. (State contracts exceeding \$10,000 require competitive bidding; DHR dodged this bullet by drawing up two contracts with Sun Belt — one for \$9,700 in May and the other for \$9,090 in November.)

"They were personnel type communications specialists," Bond explained in an interview in his spacious office at

the new DHR state headquarters in north Austin. "Their purpose was to get better communication going between supervisors and employees."

Members of the Texas State Employees Union, CWA, AFL-CIO, who are organizing primarily non-supervisory workers throughout state government, sharply contradict this benign portrayal, charging that the \$640-a-day-consultants are subtly waging a state-subsidized anti-union campaign.

"Hiring Sun Belt is a blatant slap in the face because of their self-proclaimed anti-union record," said Paula McClain Mixson, a union steward and program specialist in the state office. "If management really cared about employees, they'd be listening to the union instead of shutting their ears to any suggestions bearing the union label and doing everything in their power to dodge the issues."

**S**UN BELT SHUNS the term "union buster" in its brochure, instead employing behavior-modification jargon peppered with references to the firm's reason for being. (In a brief telephone conversation from Sun Belt's Scottsdale, Arizona offices, Executive Vice President Michael J. O'Donnell politely but firmly declined to be interviewed, saying only: "Our company has a policy that any sort of information released has to come from the client.")

Sun Belt claims to represent a "totally



new concept in human resource management," which, the brochure trumpets, will result in "greater growth potential with increased control over your capital and human resources. . . ."

And how do they deliver these goods? By providing a "unique systems approach . . . that provides you with . . . preventative labor/strategy development, union avoidance campaigns and attitude assessment [read: are workers pro- or anti-union?] surveys."

The brochure further states that one may wish to hire Sun Belt "because aggressive labor unions have the staff, finances and determination to put organizations at a disadvantage knowing that many employers do not have resources to counter their thrust."

DHR's Bond says Sun Belt's "experience in the public sector" is what won the firm its state contract. "We were just focusing on what our employees' problems were and how to straighten them out. It had nothing to do with any union avoidance work they may do."

Asked if he were aware of the company's anti-union track record when he hired Sun Belt, Bond said: "No, not at first. But I do know that almost any management consulting firm does union work these days, so I wasn't surprised."

A happy coincidence for Bond perhaps, but was he also ignorant about the outfit he retained in 1980 to conduct "education" sessions for DHR supervisors (TO, 11/14/80)?

At \$800 per session, DHR hired Frank Parker of the Fort Worth-based Management Center of the Southwest, Inc., to instruct twelve all-day classes. Bond at the time told the *Observer* he hired Parker, a disaffected former vice president of the Texas AFL-CIO, to teach middle- and upper-level managers "how to answer employees' questions about unions." Parker described his work as "anti-union . . . you certainly couldn't call it pro-union."

While Bond may insist that DHR contracted with Sun Belt for other purposes, the company itself, in its printed sales pitch, makes no such attempt to veil its mission. L. Nelson Umble, an industrial psychologist late of Bendix, founded the firm in 1977 "out of a need to provide corporations with preventive labor programs." Along with affiliates in other parts of the country, the corporation gained nationwide recognition in its ability to successfully counter union organizing activities (see box).

For DHR's needs, Sun Belt has concocted Coaching for Excellence to

## Sun Belt Comes to Texas

SUN BELT Employers Association, Inc., is part of a network of some 300 anti-union consulting and law firms dedicated to thwarting organizing drives and breaking unions that have won elections — a \$100 million a year industry, according to the AFL-CIO. The AFL-CIO, with its monthly RUB Sheet — Report on Union Busters — disseminates information about the tactics of such firms.

Though the AFL-CIO files on Sun Belt are sketchy, the activities of Sun Belt's California-based affiliate, West Coast Industrial Relations Assn., Inc. (WCIRA), are well-documented. Sun Belt's president, L. Nelson Umble, serves as a consultant for WCIRA.

WCIRA is known for its "ventilation" meetings — captive-audience sessions similar to those led by Sun Belt's team of Umble, Mike O'Donnell, and Art Parker with DHR workers last May. Such meetings, the RUB Sheet states, generally have these characteristics: they occur during working hours; there are eight to fifteen people at each meeting; early meetings are gripe sessions, where employees are allowed to "ventilate" all their problems, complaints and frustrations.

In one recent case against WCIRA, an administrative law judge ordered the company to "cease and desist" from (among other things): spying on union activities; denying employees the right to be considered for job promotion because of union activity; paying off employees to induce them to vote against a union; and coercively interrogating employees as to why they wanted a union.

In its own publication, Sun Belt lists some 50 satisfied customers — of its own, and of WCIRA. Texas customers include Lifemark Corp. of Houston (which has since been bought out), Midland Memorial Hospital (whose personnel manager said he was unable to locate any record of having hired the firm), and TECOM, a government services contractor in Austin.

TECOM called on Sun Belt several years ago to assist in contract negotiations with the International Association of Machinists at a Phoenix plant, company president Tom Collins said. Collins said he was "unsatisfied with their performance and terminated the contract." He declined to elaborate, saying only that the company ended up hiring the San Antonio law firm of Foster and Cheslock, whom he would "recommend without reservation."

Things went better for Sun Belt in its dealings with Phelps-Dodge Corp., whose Arizona copper mines have yielded the nation's most prolonged and expensive strike in recent years. The strike began in July 1983, when 2,200 members of the United Steel Workers of America agreed to accept a three-year wage freeze but not the elimination of the clause that provided cost-of-living adjustments (COLA).

Phelps-Dodge refused to go along and demanded an end to COLA and other contract benefits. It was then, according to USWA Local 616 President Angel Rodriguez, that Phelps-Dodge brought in outside counsel.


"They were pretty smart and pretty sleazy," Rodriguez said. "Because most of the community is Hispanic, they brought in their own Hispanic guy to hold meetings with the workers."


The union has already spent more than \$10 million in strike benefits and has recently opened a "corporate campaign" against the company — meaning, among other things, that the union will put pressure on banks that lend money to Phelps-Dodge.

But some observers believe the strike has failed, due in part to the company's — and its consultants' — efforts to provoke the walkout. The union is now decertified as bargaining agent for the workers. Because a decertification election was held more than a year after the start of the strike, federal law permitted only current employees — strikebreakers — to vote, thus excluding the strikers' voice.

B.A.

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"serve as an internal mechanism to open lines of communication, recognize outstanding employees, and make DHR a more enjoyable place to work," states Commissioner Marlin W. Johnston in this month's edition of *We*, DHR's house organ.

The program stems from Sun Belt's May 1984 employee relations survey that found a "widespread perception that the workload of the department is much too large for the number of people assigned."

This revelation is well documented by now: studies by the governor's office in 1980 and 1982 found excessive workload to be a primary factor in low employee morale and high turnover. The agency's response was to institute what the union's Mixson calls "more paper-shuffling and time-wasting in a token attempt at appeasement." It could, says Mixson, "generously be looked upon as less than substantive and more realistically viewed as irresponsible and evasive."

The Coaching for Excellence manual offers some interesting insights about Sun Belt's and DHR's carrot-and-stick approach to labor relations. Its "employee recognition program," for example, rewards an "employee of the month" in each of several divisions with a certificate of commendation, plaque, lapel pin, or perhaps a "Memo From The Commissioner."

This particular aspect of the program is headed by Verna Mainprize, regional administrator for the Houston area, who herself has shown a marked insensitivity to the agency's most critical internal problems. Following an employees' demonstration last fall to call attention to their large workloads and the resulting inadequate services to clients, Mainprize told a *Houston Post* reporter she didn't think "the workers' caseloads or the length of time food-stamp recipients must wait are excessive."

**T**HAT MIGHT NOT ring true to Betty Dollens, a 39-year-old income-assistance eligibility worker at DHR's North Main Street office in Houston. Dollens decided in March 1984 that she would no longer take work home at night and on weekends — as she'd been doing the previous year due to increased paper-work demands — because a doctor advised her to spend more time with her attention-starved three-year-old son. Dollens, a single parent, soon found she was unable to keep up with her workload. The following June her supervisor put her on probation because, Dollens says, "I was no longer getting ten hours worth of work done in the standard

eight-hour day."

In July, unable to sleep and beset with crying spells, Dollens sought the opinion of a psychiatrist, who diagnosed her problem as "acute anxiety" due to work-related stress. The psychiatrist stated that Dollens was unfit to work but could recover in three to six months.

Dollens, a five-year agency employee, left work as advised but was refused sick-leave. She says she had no choice but to use her accumulated annual leave time — about five weeks. Once that ran out, management found a solution to Dollens' problem: they fired her.

Betty Dollens, a Texas State Employees Union member, filed a grievance, charging that her work-induced illness was unjust grounds for termination. In January she won her case and is currently awaiting reinstatement in another social work position.

Union organizer Anna Elwood says Dollens' case is not unique; in the past six months two other income-assistance workers in Houston have suffered similar breakdowns.

"The workload at DHR endangers workers and clients," says Elwood, a former DHR employee. "What we've got here is a situation where the monitors are beginning to outnumber the caseworkers, where new assistant program directors and assistant regional administrative jobs are created at the expense of additional [frontline] staff. Turnover is increasing. Workers are having to absorb vacant caseloads. Clients are not receiving their benefits.

"Management responds by giving away \$20,000 to some union-busters and getting back a program that encourages 'healthy' competition to speed up work when employees are already stretched way too thin."

Dollens' case underscores the need for substantive changes in management attitude and working conditions at DHR — more front-line staff, paid overtime, a fair grievance procedure, issues that Coaching for Excellence doesn't begin to address — as well as the importance of a strong union to back up employees against modern-day hired guns.

"Whatever happened to paying for excellence?" asks Paula Mixson. "We'd rather see our agency leaders out working with the legislature and the public to make them understand that life as a state employee is anything but a bed of roses, that we need better pay and relief from oppressive workloads, and that, in the absence of oil and gas revenues, refinancing the state is inevitable. That would be real teamwork, not just another dump p.r. gimmick." □

# Of Meese and His Men

By James Ridgeway

Washington, D.C.

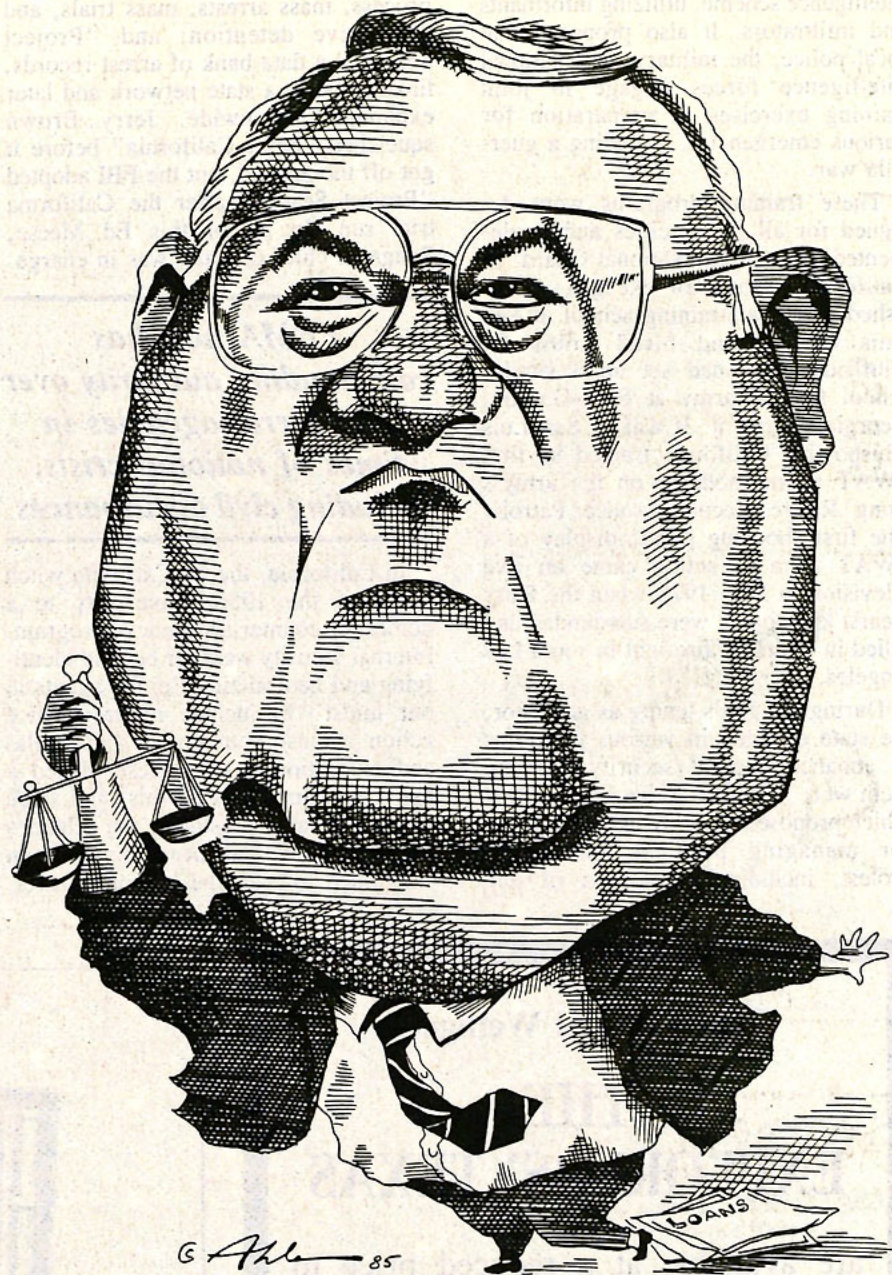
**T**HE SENATE'S confirmation of Edwin Meese as attorney general launches an oppressive new era in American law enforcement.

While the Meese hearings concentrated on his questionable financial dealings, cronyism, and lack of personal ethics, the senators never pressed the president's counselor about his 20-year obsession with law and order at the expense of civil liberties and freedom of speech. Why does Meese want to become attorney general, and what does he plan to do on taking over the Justice Department?

The answers to these questions are to be found in Meese's own political history in California, where he served as Governor Reagan's chief of staff, starting in 1969. (Meese also said during the confirmation hearings that he supervised the California National Guard and served as Reagan's cabinet-level coordinator for the state's law enforcement, criminal justice, and corrections systems.) During the Vietnam War it was Meese, more than any other individual, who organized the modern system of internal security to crush political dissent.

Later, as President Reagan's counselor in Washington, Meese was the man behind the scenes, adapting California's Vietnam-era experiment on a national level to the seemingly placid social conditions of the 1980's. In place of student radicals and black militants, drugs and terrorism are the catchwords of the new program. Just below the surface lies potentially explosive politi-

*James Ridgeway's chronicles of the Age of Reagan are a regular feature in the Observer.*



Drawing by Dorothy Ahle

cal unrest: the farm depression, prolonged war in Central America, the Liberty City riots, etc.

To give one recent example of the hidden hand of Ed Meese:

When students began refusing to register for the draft in growing numbers, Meese pushed selective prosecution of the leaders as a way of intimidating others. He successfully supported introduction of the so-called Solomon Laws (named after Gerald Solomon, the conservative Republican congressman from New York), tying federal student aid and job training funds to draft registration. Finally, in an unprecedented move, Meese organized cooperation between the IRS, Social Security, and state motor vehicle records agencies so that registers could be more easily identified and forced to register.

**T**HE ORIGINS of Meese's involvement with counter-insurgency go back almost two decades to the height of the civil rights and antiwar movements.

Soon after the Detroit riots of 1967, Lyndon Johnson asked the CIA, FBI, and the Pentagon to help put a stop to violence in the streets. The FBI expanded COINTELPRO, and the CIA expanded CHAOS — both domestic spying programs. In addition, the military created a special task force to work with the Kerner Commission, which had been established to analyze the cause of riots which began in Watts in 1965.

The Pentagon task force proposed a new five-point program code-named GARDEN PLOT: the National Master Plan for Civil Disturbance Control. It, too, called for a massive

intelligence scheme, utilizing informants and infiltrators. It also proposed that local police, the military, and national intelligence forces engage in joint training exercises in preparation for various emergencies, including a guerrilla war.

These training programs were designed for all major cities and implemented through the National Guard. In California, Governor Reagan established a special training school at San Luis Obispo and hired Louis O. Giuffrida, who had set up a similar school for the army at Fort Gordon, Georgia, to run it. It was at San Luis Obispo that California trained its first SWAT team, modeled on the army's Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols. The first shocking public display of a SWAT team in action came on live television in May 1978 when the Patty Hearst kidnappers were surrounded and killed in a furious firefight in south Los Angeles.

During Reagan's tenure as governor, the state engaged in various programs to enhance internal security. Among them were "Project: Safer California," which proposed an array of mechanisms for managing political and social protest, including suspension of due

process, mass arrests, mass trials, and preventive detention; and "Project Search," a data bank of arrest records, linked first to a state network and later expanded nationwide. Jerry Brown squelched "Safer California" before it got off the ground, but the FBI adopted "Project Search" after the California trial run. In all of this Ed Meese, Reagan's chief of staff, was in charge.

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**FEMA now has  
commanding authority over  
all federal agencies in  
times of national crisis,  
including civil disturbances.**

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In California, the McCarthyite witch hunts of the 1950s gave way to a domestic counterinsurgency program. Internal security went far beyond identifying and neutralizing "pinko agents in our midst" to include military-police action against homegrown "guerrillas and revolutionaries." Meese played a major role in achieving this, and since Reagan became president, the schemes developed in California have been elaborated on at the national level.

Consider the following:

Shortly after Reagan took office, Meese, as counsel to the President, brought his old friend Giuffrida, by then a lieutenant general in the California National Guard, to Washington to take over the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). FEMA was created by President Carter in 1978 to streamline functions of federal agencies in the event of natural disasters, catastrophic industrial accidents, fires, etc.

But Giuffrida had more ambitious ideas, and with the support of the White House rewrote earlier executive orders to elevate FEMA to commanding authority over all other federal agencies in times of national crisis, answering only to the President. Floods and hurricanes were shoved aside for the more challenging task of laying plans to cope with social unrest, "civil disturbances," and creating a mechanism for the federal government's participation in day-to-day law enforcement.

The first public inkling of Giuffrida's handiwork came last July from a horrified reporter at *The Spotlight*, the right-wing Liberty Lobby's weekly. Citing "two patriotic army officers," James Harrer revealed a top-secret

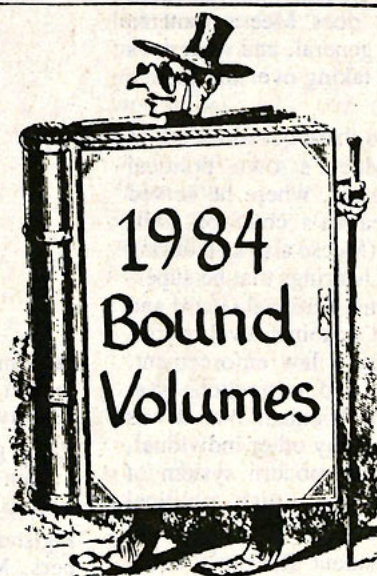
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Giuffrida master plan called *Rex 84*, which called for the government to imprison illegal immigrants and political dissidents on military bases in times of unspecified national emergencies. At least 100,000 people were to be held in "concentration camps" in New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Arkansas, according to Harrer.

FEMA denied the *Spotlight* report, and said actual plans for a "war emergency situation" were classified. "I can't get into the details," a FEMA spokesman said. "These are the scenarios. They have nothing to do with reality." Defense Department sources, however, acknowledged that *Rex 84* was linked to two military exercises under the code names of "Night Train 84" and "Global Shield," designed to increase preparedness for fighting a nuclear war. FEMA later said one scenario foresaw 400,000 immigrants rushing across the border in a six-hour period.

### ***Alabama has developed a state plan for martial law patterned after FEMA's federal plan.***

Next came the revelation by Jack Anderson that General Giuffrida had set himself up at FEMA as a potential military dictator in the event of unspecified emergencies. This plan, in the form of "standby" legislation now before Congress, would suspend the Constitution and Bill of Rights, allow the government to confiscate real estate or personal property, nationalize industry, freeze wages and prices, and outlaw strikes. What makes civil libertarians quake at this proposition is Giuffrida's refusal to say what constitutes a national emergency.

Another initiative by General Giuffrida was the creation last year of a National Emergency Training Center in rural Emmitsburg, Maryland. This enterprise, established on the grounds of the old National Firefighters' Academy, was until recently, administered by Fred Vilella, a retired army lieutenant colonel who served as Giuffrida's chief of staff at San Luis Obispo. The Emmitsburg center is modeled after the San Luis Obispo facility, replete with counter-terrorism and intelligence training.

Not surprisingly, in his tenure at FEMA Giuffrida has sought to involve the National Guard in contingency planning. In California, the Guard was crucial to meshing the security operations of the military and police. Today,

under Reagan, the Guard is increasingly important in overall national defense planning. Currently, over 10 states are engaged in unprecedented maneuvers in Panama.

The question now confronting planners at the Pentagon is who will fill in for the Guard at home in the event of mobilization. And Giuffrida has an answer: under his plan for martial law, now before the Congress, he envisions the creation of "state area commands (STARCS)" to direct armed volunteer "state defense forces." These forces would be thrown into action in the event of civil disturbances.

The model for STARCS is something Giuffrida's men laughingly refer to as "The Night of the Animals," the New York blackout of July 13, 1977, which precipitated rioting and looting. So far, 16 state defense forces have been formed, but the plan calls for such units in all 50 states. Alabama has even developed a state plan for martial law, patterned after Giuffrida's master federal plan.

The National Guard also has become increasingly important in the Reagan administration's drug-enforcement program, administered by Meese as the new attorney general. At Meese's prompting, Reagan already has ordered the Pentagon to cooperate with the Coast Guard and the DEA in interdicting cocaine and marijuana traffic on the high seas. The administration has sought to link traffic in both drugs to Cuba and Nicaragua. So important do Meese and Reagan view this mission that AWACS surveillance

planes have been deployed to assist in the operation.

At home, the National Guard has engaged for the first time in routine drug-enforcement actions in 33 states, including aerial surveillance, ground search, and destruction of drugs. In California, the National Security Agency's U-2 planes search for grass, and when they find a patch, National Guard helicopter units swoop in to make the bust.

None of this should suggest that the Reagan administration is of one mind about General Giuffrida's plans. In fact, former Attorney General William French Smith had written strong letters of complaint to both Giuffrida and to national security adviser Robert McFarlane. Secretary of Defense Weinberger grew apoplectic on reading Jack Anderson's account of Giuffrida's plans for martial law. And there is said to be a rumbling of resistance from FBI Director Webster. No matter. Meese has stood foursquare behind his old friend.

In all probability, the function of Ed Meese as attorney general will not be to launch inquiries. Rather, he will put the machinery in place so that when the moment occurs the state can overwhelm the fragile liberties guaranteed by the Constitution. This is the danger that was ignored by the Senate.

And on the right, where there is little love for either Smith or Webster, the feeling is that Giuffrida would make an excellent FBI director in a "dream team" with Meese as attorney general. □

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# Underground

(Continued from Cover)

Nor did anyone question the mission of a pickup cruising down a highway farther north. It was raining hard, and the people in the truck had to speak loudly to be heard over the heater and swishing windshield wipers. A few miles back, they had entered a church parking lot where a station wagon was parked. The church's pastor had given the underground railroad permission to use the church grounds for these meetings but didn't want to know how or when the connections were made. A young Salvadoran man stepped out of the station wagon, carrying all his possessions in a small cardboard box, and hopped into the truck. He could have been any U.S. Hispanic teenager in his blue jeans, t-shirt with KAYPRO printed across the front, blue visor, and ski jacket. He looked very young. As the truck pulled out of the parking lot, he amused himself by shaking his Coca-Cola and spewing it into his mouth. When they stopped for a cup of coffee, he had vanilla ice cream.

Ice cream and fizzing cokes may be a normal part of most U.S. teenagers lives, but war and killing are not. Arturo had recently escaped from the Salvadoran army, which he had been forced to join after being kidnapped while visiting San Salvador with his father, an architect's assistant. Because Arturo had completed the ninth grade, an impressive level of schooling in a country in which 50 percent of the population is illiterate, he was considered good officer material.

He couldn't tolerate the army. The violence sickened him. ("I became very sad," he said, "and I could tell other men were sad, too, but we were not allowed to discuss it.") He fled the country during his first leave, crossed into Honduras, traveled toward Guatemala, and ran out of money. He returned to El Salvador. He knew communications in the Salvadoran military were poor, and as he crossed army checkpoints he gave his name and army identification number, explaining that he was returning from leave. In fact, his

leave had expired and he was now a deserter.

Those who refuse to participate in El Salvador's military are considered subversives and are usually tortured, often killed. Arturo reached his home, got money, and set out again. This time he quietly slipped past the military guards stationed throughout the country, crossed the border, and trekked across the western edge of Honduras. From there he entered Guatemala, then Belize, then Mexico. At last he reached the United States where he was absorbed into the sanctuary movement and relative safety.

From South Texas, drivers for the underground railroad took Arturo to Austin, where finally he could rest for a few days. While under sanctuary protection, a refugee is never left alone; someone stayed in the safe house with Arturo at all times, and when he ventured into the community, two friends always went along.

After a few days, he resumed his journey.

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***In 1985, the U.S. will allow 72,000 refugees to enter its borders — 50,000 from East Asia and 1,000 from all of Latin America.***

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They drove him to a town in north Texas. A new driver met him there and took him through Oklahoma and Kansas and on to a point in the northern part of the country where a Guatemalan couple operates a kind of school for refugees. Arturo stayed there a few weeks, learning basic English phrases and how to deal with the problems of being a Central American refugee in the United States. He then was shuffled south again, back to Texas. A sanctuary has taken him in and will allow him to live under its protection for an undetermined length of time. He may stay for as long as he likes. And, if he so chooses, the sanctuary will further protect him as he publicizes his story.

This would be dangerous for Arturo, but many Salvadorans escaping their country's violence believe that if only they can explain what they have endured in the past few years, if only they can convince the North American public to listen, then the United States will stop supporting the Salvadoran army and prolonging the misery in their country. Arturo was a member of the regular Salvadoran army, not a part of a right-wing death squad, yet he repeatedly

witnessed brutality and violence inflicted on Salvadoran citizens. He would like to publicly describe his military experiences. He would like, for example, to explain how he learned to shoot cannons.

One day the commanders led his battalion, a heavy artillery unit, into a quiet rural area in which campesinos lived. The soldiers stationed themselves on the side of a mountain, aimed their weapons at peasants' huts on the other side of the valley and beyond the opposite mountain, and fired. They could not see their targets, but they knew their shells flattened the tiny houses, and they knew them to be occupied by large families. The commander told the soldiers that subversives were spotted in this area, so the huts were suitable targets. Arturo resisted and was given a choice: fire at the huts or take your gun and shoot yourself.

Another time, Arturo was stationed in a port village when a large truck arrived carrying men, women, and children, all bound with rope. Their hands were tied behind their backs, then tied to their ankles. They randomly had been tossed into the truck and lay piled on top of one another. The military commander called them guerrilla sympathizers and ordered the soldiers to transfer the frightened people onto a boat. When this was completed, the boat chugged out into deeper water, where one-by-one the people were shot and dumped over the side.

Finally, just before he left El Salvador, Arturo at night heard screams of people tortured in his military camp. He spoke of the *matanza*, the slaughter, a word which traditionally has referred to the Salvadoran government's 1932 butchering of 30,000 peasants, but which finds new meaning in the Salvadoran vocabulary today.

Despite the election of the so-called moderate President Duarte in El Salvador, there is no sign that the civil war in that country will end soon. Aerial bombings have increased, killing and displacing large numbers of civilians. The displaced are likely targets of further violence.

**I**n 1985, the United States will allow 72,000 of the world's 10.6 million refugees to enter its borders. Of these, 50,000 will come from East Asia, compared to 1,000 from all of Latin America. Why so many Asians and so few Latin Americans? What about the refugees from El Salvador?

Richard Casillas, district director for the San Antonio region of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service

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*Dana Loy, development director for the Observer, wrote this article on assignment. Some names of people and places have been changed.*

put it this way: "When we left Vietnam, we had to leave behind many people who fought side-by-side with us. Did you see the pictures of those people trying to climb on the helicopters? We owe it to them to allow them to come here.

"Are you going to equate them with these thugs from El Salvador?" he asked.

The sanctuary movement is "advocating a state of anarchy as it relates to immigration law," he continued. Some of these sanctuaries are not sanctuaries, in the religious sense of the word, but drop-houses, he said, and "I'm not going to call them sanctuaries. To do so would be sacrilegious."

Many religious people wouldn't agree. The governing bodies of the American Baptist Church, the American Lutheran Church, the Disciples of Christ, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the United Church of Christ, and the United Methodist Church have announced their support of the sanctuary movement, as has the American Friends Service Committee. The Catholic Church also is active in the movement; Catholic workers at Houston's Casa Juan Diego deny that they break any law when they provide shelter to refugees.

But Verne Jervis, Washington-based assistant director of public affairs for the INS, called people in the sanctuary movement "self-proclaimed smugglers" and asked why the underground railroad doesn't use its funds to work within the

legal system.

"The railroad does work within the legal system," a railroad activist told me. "Why doesn't the government act within the legal system?"

He said the government breaks the law by deporting Salvadoran refugees who are subject to personal and political persecution in their country. "It's clearly a politically motivated decision not to admit these people," he said. "Helping people who are being tortured and killed is not against U.S. law."

Forty to fifty thousand civilian non-combatants have died in El Salvador's violence since the civil war began in 1979. It is estimated that between 300,000 and 500,000 Salvadorans now live in the United States. Another 500,000 are displaced within El Salvador, and 250,000 take refuge in other Central American countries. Because Salvadoran refugees in the United States have difficulty proving individualized persecution in their country, most are not considered eligible for political asylum, and don't even apply. Last year, of those who did apply for political asylum, only 2.5 percent received it.

More appropriate for them is extended voluntary departure (EVD), a temporary status offered to people fleeing the violence in their homelands. Refugees from Poland, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Lebanon, and Uganda currently are eligible for EVD, and it

should be offered to Salvadorans as well. Some members of Congress, including Massachusetts' Joe Moakley, support EVD for Salvadorans, and in 1983 the Congress passed a non-binding resolution which said that Salvadorans should not be deported to El Salvador until conditions in that country permit them to reside safely there.

But non-binding resolutions are just that, and until the Administration actually changes its policy, it is up to U.S. citizens to help the Salvadoran refugees. The underground movement is able to shelter tragically few of these people, and to do so involves high personal risk. Transporting them involves even greater risk.

In lighter moments, underground activists theorize that if a small group of refugees were to wear iridescent plastic vests and arm themselves with long, pointed trash sticks, they could simply walk past the border checkpoints, stuffing litter into big plastic bags. Or the activists could pack 30 or 40 refugees into a 30-foot yacht and hook it onto a shining Lincoln Continental. The railroad could breeze through the inspection area.

These are the kinds of whimsical ideas that get tossed around after a long and risky railroad trip — after they've passed several law enforcement officers, noticed that the brake lights suddenly aren't working, or that someone seems to be following their car. □

## ● POLITICAL INTELLIGENCE ●

### Hi Ho, Silber!

✓ Among the many lurid rumors making the rounds at the University of Texas at Austin concerning that school's next president is the speculation that former UT Arts and Sciences Dean John Silber is being seriously considered. Silber, often embattled president of Boston University and recent loser of U.S. Secretary of Education job to his protegee William Bennett, has in recent years made headlines as a member of the Kissinger Commission on Central America and as a financial-aid buster for those male students who would not register for the draft. Silber was forced out of UT by then-Regents Chair Frank Erwin after a series of battles, in which Silber usually championed the forces of light against Erwin's darkness. But Silber also had his dark side, supporting ROTC on campus and the ousting of Larry Caroline. With Silber's move closer to the Arctic Circle, his dark side

seems to have all but eclipsed any light shown while in the Sun Belt.

If Silber is being considered, it would, of course, make a triumphal return and be his ultimate vindication. But many longtime UT faculty members are moaning and groaning about the possibility of a neo-conservative Silber wreaking Reaganesque vengeance on the last vestiges of liberal thought remaining on the Austin campus.

### Earley Worm Gets Bird

✓ State Rep. Robert Earley, D-Portland, tried to worm through a prayer-in-the-schools resolution while the House was sleeping by hiding it among the kinds of House resolutions that commend someone's sister-in-law for being the runner-up to the Poteet Strawberry Festival queen for three years running. But Earley was asking the House to recommend that Congress adopt a Constitutional amendment allowing prayer in school. He asked that

the rules be suspended so that his resolution could be considered without going through the usual committee hearings, etc. That's standard operating procedure for the other bills that came up during the time Speaker Gib Lewis allotted for such things.

Amid the din that usually accompanies such proceedings, Earley's request for suspension of the rules for his resolution was passed on a voice vote. The 25-year-old legislator with form-fitting hair had almost slipped it past them. But before Lewis could call for the voice vote on the resolution itself, Rep. Juan Hinojosa, D-McAllen, was at the microphone to alert his colleagues to what was being perpetrated upon them. It's the kind of thing that could hurt in future elections, and most of the legislators would never know what had hit them. After Hinojosa's alert, Lewis persuaded Earley to withdraw the resolution to send it through proper channels. Earley, meanwhile, was receiving

bad reviews from his colleagues for the grandstand play he almost pulled off at their expense.

## Gramm Bites the Hand That Feeds Him

✓ As we all know, Sen. Phil Gramm hardly ever *ever* disagrees with President Reagan. This he made clear in his memorable campaign for the Senate. So probably there were no gasps of surprise in farm families across Texas when Sen. Gramm voted against the Senate's bailout program for hard-pressed farmers. It was well-known that Reagan was against such farm programs, and indeed the next week he vetoed Congress's emergency farm bill. Farmers may now await Gramm's "comprehensive farm bill" that he promised while campaigning in West Texas. (Gramm told the Lubbock Rotary Club Oct. 17 that he would spearhead such a bill in Congress. His opponent, Lloyd Doggett, said later that Gramm didn't know the difference between a shorthorn and a shoehorn.)

Three of the ten Texas Republican representatives voted in favor of the House plan to aid farmers, going against the Republican leadership. They were: Beau Bolter of Amarillo, Mac Sweeney of Wharton, and Larry Combest of Lubbock. All Democratic members of the Texas Congressional delegation voted to help the farmers.

## Ambitions

✓ At least three statewide offices are sure to be hotly contested in 1986 — the Governor's, the Attorney General's and the Agriculture Commissioner's — and already there are two dozen names being batted around.

Taking it from the top, the Governor's seat is the first object of Republican desire. Republican Party chairman George Strake has been mentioned most often, but he now says he is losing interest. Instead, according to one report, he is trying to get a reluctant former Speaker of the House Billy Clayton to run as a Republican. There is, apparently, the spectre of T. Boone Pickens, the oil mergerist, for Governor. Somehow, the name of Ronald Reagan's former White House producer and director (now Secretary of the Treasury) James Baker popped into the newspapers last month as a potential Republican candidate, though he may be grooming himself for a U.S. Senate run in 1988. Closer to home, if not reality, two former state senators — Mike Richards of Houston and Bill Meier of Hurst — have said they might like to

run. South Texas rancher Tobin Armstrong and Amarillo businessman Wales Madden have been mentioned.

On the Democratic side the present Governor is assumed to be running. But at least one Democrat — state Rep. Pete Patterson of Paris (Brookston, really) — is threatening to run in the Democratic primary.

✓ The big variable in the Attorney General's race, of course, will be the lingering effects of Jim Mattox's five-week trial. Though the A.G. has now been acquitted, the Republicans may not let the matter die.

Contemplate for a moment, if you will, the horrific possibility of J. E. "Buster" Brown for Attorney General. The Republican senator from Lake Jackson has been talking about the race since last summer and is busily playing up his "tough on crime" image in the Senate this session. State District Judge Roy Barrera, Jr., of San Antonio is mentioned as a possible Republican candidate, as are Collin County District Judge John Roach, state Sen. Bob McFarland and former state Rep. Roy English, both of Arlington, and former Texas Secretary of State David Dean.

Leading the list of potential Democrats are former U.S. Rep. Kent Hance and state Sen. Kent Caperton of Bryan. Sen. Ray Farabee of Wichita Falls and Sarah Weddington have been mentioned.

All of the state legislators mentioned for Attorney General and Governor are postponing official announcements until the end of the session — May 27. Strange things could happen in June. For example, if Buster Brown continues to talk himself up, he could decide to run for Governor instead of Attorney General. The *Fort Worth Star Telegram* portrayed Brown last month as enchanted with a napkin on which someone had written "Gov. Buster" as he sat at an Austin restaurant and speculated on his chances.

✓ Right-wingers of all stripes will be anxious to take a shot at Jim Hightower's job as Ag Commissioner. North Texas farmer and Lyndon LaRouche follower Noel Cowling became the first to announce, Feb. 19. He called Hightower a "radical environmentalist" and criticized the Ag Department's recent pesticide regulations. State Sen. Bill Sarpalius of Amarillo has been posing for the Farm Bureau this session in preparing for an expected run at Hightower (though he may do an about-face and take on Republican Congressman Beau Bolter

for his seat), and Rep. Robert Saunders of LaGrange, another troublemaker on the pesticide front, is thought to have similar ambitions. These conservative Democrats would be wise to be wary of serving as cannon fodder for conservative interests, who could run a Saunders or Sarpalius against Hightower in the primary in order to deplete his funding and deliver a few low blows before taking him head-on with a well-financed Republican in the general election. Hightower has warned potential opponents, "If you want to take me on, you better strap yourself to the saddle."

## High Comedy

✓ "I am not an announced candidate but whether I run or not, I'm going to do whatever I can to show the people of this state that Hightower is wrecking the Department of Agriculture," said Sen. Bill Sarpalius of Amarillo.

One thing that was on the senator's mind was Jim Hightower's live-in relationship with a woman-not-his-wife. Hightower's companion, Susan DeMarco, also works for the Department of Agriculture for a stipend of \$1 a year.

"In Hightower's case, he's got his girlfriend on the payroll that he lives with and has been living with her for several years," Sarpalius said. "This kind of stuff I think a majority of Texans do not support." The senator filed a bill against this kind of stuff.

The bill prohibits a state official from hiring or appointing a person who "cohabits" with the official — cohabit meaning "to live together in the same dwelling with another adult of the opposite sex in a relationship that resembles a husband and wife relationship." An aide to Sen. Sarpalius said the bill was not aimed at Hightower. A homosexual group in Amarillo claimed Sen. Sarpalius as their ally, noticing the way his bill protected their own cohabitations by specifying only "opposite sex" relationships.

Observed one West Texas Democrat: "The only difference between Hightower and other politicians is he doesn't, in addition, have a wife back home."

✓ There was so much obscenity news last issue (*TO* 3/8/85) that we neglected to discuss a bill sponsored in the Senate by, well, . . . by Sen. Bill Sarpalius. The bill would allow each county in Texas to come up with its own obscenity standards. As it is now, the courts use

(Continued on Page 28)



# 1985 Reader Survey

Dear Reader,

We need your help. By completing this questionnaire, you can contribute information which will enable us to attract more advertisers. Additional advertising will give us the funds needed to print more pages in each issue of the *Observer*, increase our circulation, and provide a stronger progressive voice.

As you can see from some of the questions, the editors will read your replies with interest, too.

Please take a few minutes to complete the survey, tear or clip it out, and mail it in the attached postage-paid envelope. Your answers will remain anonymous, and we'll publish the results in a later *Observer*.

What is your zip code (first 3 digits)? \_\_\_\_\_

In what year did you first start reading the *Observer* (even if you have lapsed occasionally since then)? \_\_\_\_\_

Approximately how many others usually read or look through your *Observer*? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your age? ( ) under 18 ( ) 45 - 54  
 ( ) 18 - 24 ( ) 55 - 64  
 ( ) 25 - 34 ( ) 65 or over  
 ( ) 35 - 44

What is the highest level of formal education you've attained?  
 ( ) Some high school ( ) College degree  
 ( ) High school graduate ( ) Some postgraduate work  
 ( ) Some college ( ) Postgraduate degree

Are you currently taking high school, college, or graduate courses? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your occupation, profession, or the nature of your work?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate your household's annual income before taxes:

( ) less than \$10,000 ( ) \$25,000 to \$29,999  
 ( ) \$10,000 to \$14,999 ( ) \$30,000 to \$39,999  
 ( ) \$15,000 to \$19,999 ( ) \$40,000 to \$49,999  
 ( ) \$20,000 to \$24,999 ( ) \$50,000 or more

Including yourself, how many persons live in your household?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Of that number, how many are under 18? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you: ( ) Female ( ) Male

Are you: ( ) Single ( ) Married ( ) Living with a partner

Can you, in a word or two, characterize your political orientation (whether in terms of conventional or unconventional categories)?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

How regularly do you vote?

( ) nearly always  
 ( ) usually  
 ( ) sometimes  
 ( ) rarely  
 ( ) never

In 1984, did you contribute money to the campaign of a political candidate? \_\_\_\_\_

To a social action group? \_\_\_\_\_

In 1984, did you volunteer time to the campaign of a political candidate?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

To a social action group? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you more likely to support businesses that advertise in the *Observer*?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

In a typical month, how many of the following do you and members of your household purchase?

Books \_\_\_\_\_ Records or audio tapes \_\_\_\_\_

Approximately how many times each month do you and others in your household:

	number of times
go to the movies .....	_____
eat dinner in a restaurant .....	_____
attend theater, ballet, or concerts .....	_____
attend art exhibits or openings .....	_____
drink beer .....	_____
drink wine .....	_____
drink other alcohol .....	_____
go camping or hiking .....	_____
go jogging for exercise .....	_____
go to aerobics or exercise class, or do some other workout for exercise ...	_____

About how much in a year do you and others in your household spend on the following:

clothing \_\_\_\_\_  
 home furnishings \_\_\_\_\_  
 works of art \_\_\_\_\_

What kinds of art? ( ) prints ( ) paintings and drawings  
 ( ) textile arts ( ) sculpture ( ) photographs ( ) other

Do you or a member of your household own a personal computer?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

If you don't own a computer, are you or anyone in your household thinking of buying one? \_\_\_\_\_

Approximately how many times in a year do you and others in your household:

rent or lease a car \_\_\_\_\_  
 travel to other countries \_\_\_\_\_  
 travel to other states \_\_\_\_\_

Approximately how many times in a year do you and others in your household travel to these Texas cities? (Enter number of trips on the line next to each city. Exclude commuting to work.)

Austin \_\_\_\_\_ San Antonio \_\_\_\_\_  
 Dallas \_\_\_\_\_ Galveston \_\_\_\_\_  
 Houston \_\_\_\_\_ Panhandle \_\_\_\_\_  
 El Paso \_\_\_\_\_ The Valley \_\_\_\_\_  
 Lubbock \_\_\_\_\_ Gulf Coast \_\_\_\_\_  
 Ft. Worth \_\_\_\_\_ West Texas \_\_\_\_\_

Midland-Odessa \_\_\_\_\_

How many times did you and others in your household travel via commercial airlines during the past year? (Round trip flights count as one trip.) \_\_\_\_\_

If any of these flights were to the cities listed in the question above, please circle the names(s) of the city or cities to which such commercial air trips were made.

Please circle the section of the Observer that you turn to or read first, and then make a check by the departments that you regularly read:

- \_\_\_\_\_ cover article
- \_\_\_\_\_ political intelligence
- \_\_\_\_\_ editorial
- \_\_\_\_\_ reviews
- \_\_\_\_\_ dialogue
- \_\_\_\_\_ social cause calendar
- \_\_\_\_\_ afterword

What other newspaper and general interest political magazines do you read regularly?

Following is a list of topics which can be found in the *Observer*. Please indicate your degree of interest in reading about such topics in the *Observer* by checking the appropriate column:

	interest level		
	low	moderate	high
state government .....	_____	_____	_____
national government .....	_____	_____	_____
military issues .....	_____	_____	_____
Latin America .....	_____	_____	_____
nuclear weapons .....	_____	_____	_____
environmental issues .....	_____	_____	_____
feminist issues .....	_____	_____	_____
labor issues .....	_____	_____	_____
investigations of corporations and business in Texas .....	_____	_____	_____
agricultural issues .....	_____	_____	_____
urban issues .....	_____	_____	_____
community organizing .....	_____	_____	_____
film reviews .....	_____	_____	_____
music and live theater reviews .....	_____	_____	_____
book reviews .....	_____	_____	_____
poetry, fiction, short stories .....	_____	_____	_____
personal profiles .....	_____	_____	_____
humor/satire .....	_____	_____	_____
international news .....	_____	_____	_____
minority rights .....	_____	_____	_____

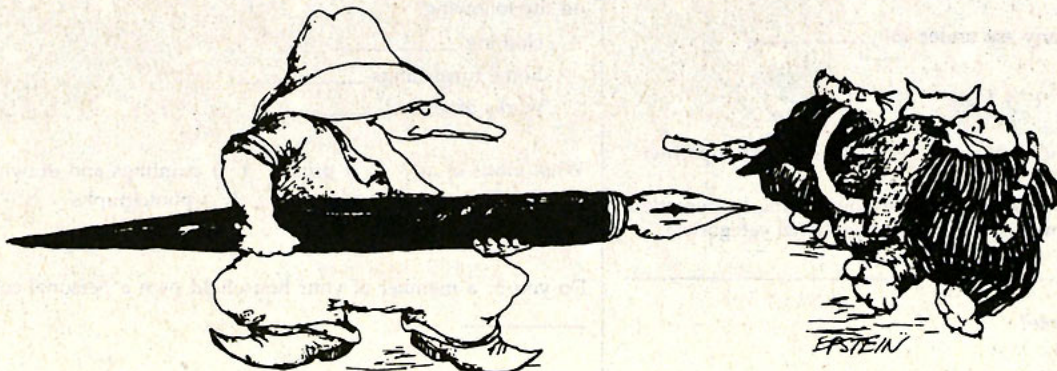
Have some subjects (whether or not listed above) received too little attention in the *Observer*? \_\_\_\_\_

Which? \_\_\_\_\_

What's the most important story from your part of Texas that the *Observer* ought to cover? \_\_\_\_\_

Are there questions we have failed to ask that you wanted to answer?

What's your answer?



# Poniatowska's Mexico

By Louis Dubose

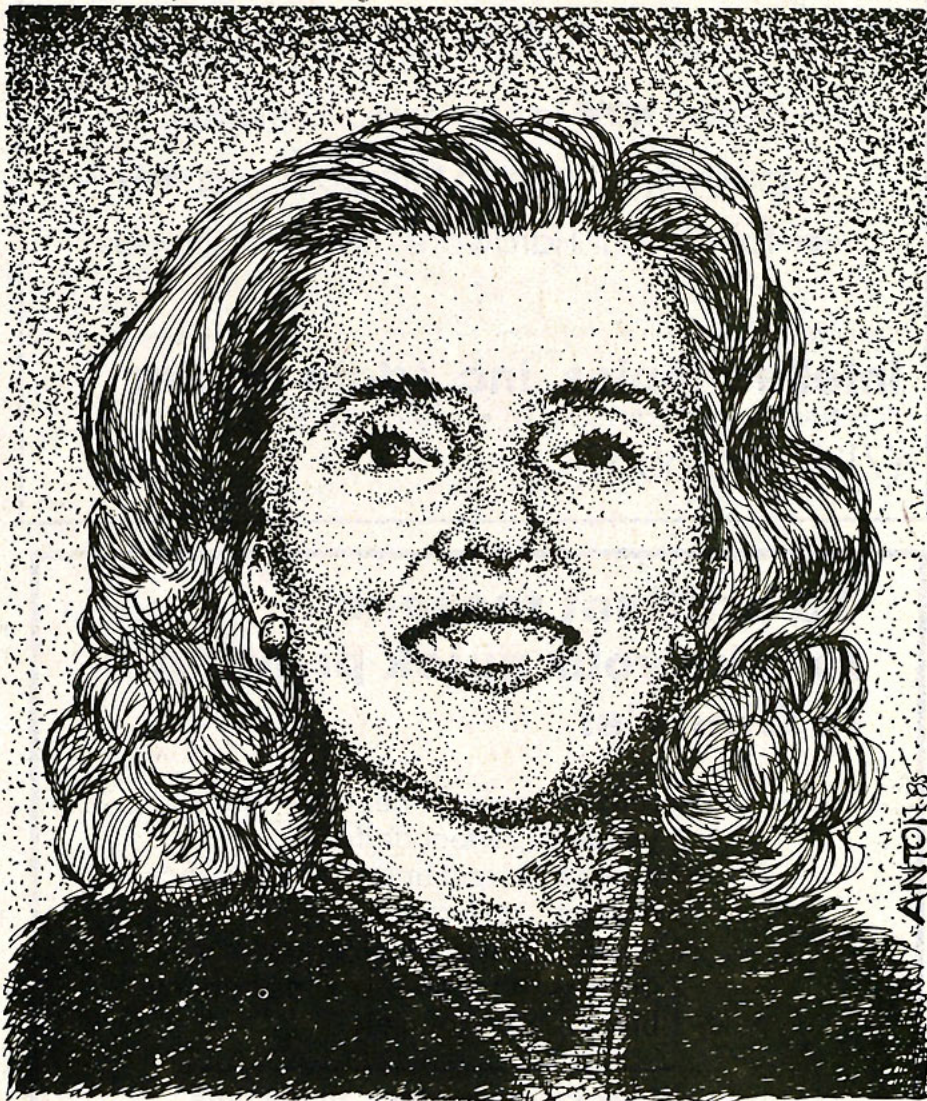
MEXICO CITY — or Angelopolis, as Elena Poniatowska named it in her 1981 collection of essays, *Fuerte es el Silencio*. An unlikely description of a place considered by many as our worst social and ecological micro-environment. A city of 17 million crowded into a valley 7,500 feet above sea level, where 11,000 tons of metals, dust, and bacteria pour into the air each day, where the government no longer hazards to guess how many Mexicans — and Central Americans — arrive daily; this is a city of angels?

But Elena Poniatowska, as a journalist, essayist, and fictionist, has never seen things quite the way everyone else does. While most describe this city's unwashed — the growing and mostly indigenous population of the unemployed — as a social problem, Poniatowska describes them as *ángeles*. Angels from "Toluca, Querétaro, Ixtlahuaca, Hidalgo, Atlacomulco and even Oaxaca . . . the provinces that provide us vegetables also provide these proud women, with long tresses and diffident smiles . . . They arrive eyes downcast, in their Indian trot . . ." Some will find work as maids, most will find a place on one of the city's curbs and sell pecans, strawberries, mangoes, chiclets, dolls, or flowers. Even after they've fallen — like the monumental statuary *Angel de Independencia* on Reforma, once felled by an earthquake on a Sunday morning in April 1957, providing Poniatowska with a point of departure in her essay — they remain in Poniatowska's eyes, at least, beatific. To untrained eyes they're unlikely angels. But read *Silencio*, then walk Mexico City. From the soot-black statuary angels, with wings extended and stone eyes fixed on the brown sky, to the curbside angels with arms extended offering kleenex or flowers, the city will never seem quite the same.

This *Angelopolis* was one of several topics considered in a recent interview

Louis Dubose is a freelance writer living in Austin.

in Poniatowska's Mexico city home, situated on one of those colonial plazas — this one within walking distance of one of the city's best browsing book-



Elena Poniatowska

stores — where you can almost forget the urban monster that Mexico City has become. But no, I am reminded, as the door is opened then quickly bolted. And when I leave, it will be with an escort to the metro; this city, I am told, is no longer safe after dark.

Poniatowska has just returned from Boulder, Colorado. In two days she will leave for Australia — a writer's trip. She will be working on forty pages to be included in a publication for the

International Conference of Women to be held in Nairobi.

The whole affair, she tells me, is so crazy. "All the arrangements by long distance from Oxford, England . . . women from underdeveloped countries will visit and write about developed countries, and women from developed countries will go to underdeveloped countries. And I picked Australia. I could have gone to Switzerland or Spain, but I'll go to Europe again. What reason will I ever have to go to Australia?"

Elena Poniatowska is best known to North American readers as the author

of *Massacre in Mexico (Noche de Tlatelolco)*, her 1969 collection of interviews with survivors of the Mexican Army's attack on student dissidents on the eve of the 1968 Olympic Games. Born in Paris, in 1933, she began writing as a reporter in Mexico City in 1954. Later, as a journalist of dissent — or perhaps advocacy — she at times overstepped the recognized limits of what is considered by the Mexican government to be "acceptable criti-

Mark Antonuccio

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cism." In recent years, she has taken to publicly criticizing incumbent presidents on issues of substance.

I ask for a reaction to the recent electoral disputes between the dominant

Institutional Party of the Revolution (PRI) and PAN, the 30-year-old minority Party of National Action. Is it surprising that in the northeast, in Coahuila, PAN is violently reacting to what they consider electoral fraud?

Poniatowska describes the incidents in terms of a class struggle rather than an electoral dispute.

"Many of the new middle-class members of PAN have for years been members of PRI, not for ideological reasons but because it was the dominant party. But they have really been hurt by the economic crisis. For years they have worked hard, well, they opened small businesses, acquired things. And now they have lost almost everything with the economic crisis. So it's natural that they join a party that is opposed to the PRI, a party identified with the

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*“. . . three years into a six-year term and Miguel de la Madrid is already acting as if all he wants to do is keep things from getting any worse until after he leaves office.”*

interests of the United States. They're not joining PAN because of reasons of ideology, at least not entirely. They join because it is an acceptable option to PRI. These are very frustrated people, and, when they consider that their election was stolen, well, they are going to react."

Will PAN grow into a major electoral force? Perhaps this is the beginning of legitimate political pluralism in Mexico.

"I don't think so. PAN, to me, seems like a very conservative minority party whose appeal is, well, mostly to older conservatives. It is a party with much appeal to bankers. How do you see it? Is this the party that is the future of Mexico? No. This is a party that is Catholic and right wing, a party of old people."

Here, Poniatowska is kinder to the Catholic minority party than she was in *Domingo 7*, a collection of interviews with seven candidates for Mexico's last presidential election. "Their members in the past have been bankers, empresarios, businessmen: Eustaquio Escandón, Juan Sánchez Navarro, Anibal Iturbide, who with his little mustache looks as if he had stepped from a page of Proust. Their women wear the traditional three strings of pearls — like the queen of England . . . PAN,

at least they were always the party of decent people, of people who attend mass not just on Sundays, who give to charities, who speak French . . . "

It is somehow difficult to see them as the future of a country like Mexico. But who would have envisioned them taking to the streets of Monclova, closing the bridge at Piedras Negras?

**W**HAT THEN of the other end of Mexico's political spectrum? Can Poniatowska, who perhaps has a copyright on this question, explain the factionalism of the Mexican left?

"No. But even in journalism, here the left is divided. First *Excelsior* [a Mexico City daily], then a faction from *Excelsior* started *Proceso* [a biweekly magazine], then from *Proceso*, *Uno más Uno* [a daily tabloid], and now from *Uno más Uno*, *Jornada* [another daily tabloid].

"Well, there are divisions over ideology and issues, but it is difficult to explain, difficult to understand . . ." The United Mexican Socialist Party, [PSUM], she adds, "has realized some

success in building a coalition of leftist parties." With which group, then, is PRI most concerned, the left or PAN on the right? Which do they fear?

"Fear? Neither. The PRI is firmly in control. And it seems that they will remain in control. The minority parties are, and will probably remain, minority parties. Yet, in spite of their power, they can not seem to solve the problems of this crisis. Two, well how many, three years into a six-year term and Miguel de la Madrid is already acting as if all he wants to do is keep things from getting any worse until after he leaves office. And people are already speculating about the next candidate [PRI's presidential candidate for the 1988 election]. Who will it be, Silva Herzog, or who? But that is not so important; what is important is that less than halfway through his *sexenio* [six-year term], de la Madrid is ready to hand power over to his successor."

And what will happen, if on one fine election day, everyone votes for the candidates of the minority party?

"Well, nothing. That is, nothing will happen. It's been argued that it has

happened, in places . . . and PRI has continued in power. There will be conflicts, but PRI is the dominant political force in the country."

Is there, in Mexico, a great demand for representative democracy, for legitimate competition among political parties?

"No, I don't think so. There is not a tradition of two-party competition, like the competition between Democrats and Republicans in the United States." She repeats that much of the demand for political participation is a result of class dissatisfaction: the middle class has been hurt badly by the protracted economic crisis.

And the Mexican government continues to define the limits of political dissent. "Since 1968," Poniatowska explains, "there has been a powerful neutralization of political life in Mexico."

The army's attack on the students at Tlatelolco, and their use of extralegal armed gangs in June 1971, changed utterly the political landscape of the country, Poniatowska explains. "Political dissidents were killed, and

## The Elections

**L**ILUS goes downtown. She takes her sea shells and beads of a thousand colors. She will make a necklace. She's going to buy a long string to thread them on. She will wear them on her neck, around her waist, braided in her hair, wrapped around her ankle . . . But there is a demonstration.

*Chole!* Why not keep the same president and end this mess? But no. It's a meeting of many *Siete Machos*, and one of them is shouting: "The will of the people . . . the future of Mexico . . . our natural resources . . . our welfare . . ." And Lilus thinks about the people. Where are they? The people are selling lottery tickets, calling out in English over there on Madero and San Juan de Letrán, buying *pulque* in the *Colonia de los Doctores* and lighting candles at the Villa de Guadalupe. Lilus isn't very patriotic, and she knows it. At school there are some who paste up posters and others who tear them down. According to this, there is great merit in pasting and unpasting. For

*This is the fourth chapter of Poniatowska's novel, Lilus Kikus (Mexico, 1954, Ed. Los Presentes). Translation by Louis Dubose.*

Lilus it was enough to ask one high school boy how did they paste the propaganda, and he answered: "With the tongue, slobbering fool." That night, Lilus dreamed, with remorse, that she had a big pink tongue, and that with it she was pasting enormous posters. The next morning she awoke with her mouth open and her tongue dry.

Lilus falls in with the *Siete Machos*. Some look on with that "We will save Mexico" face and sweat a lot. They are men of good will. Others are just standing, waiting to see what will happen. At times they take out their copies of *Pepín* and they're lost in "Rosa the Seductress." These are men of uncertain will. There are women, too. Some fat and others skinny, they know a lot about the law, that is, of *braceros*, of refugees and of *The Jackal of Peralvillo*. Among themselves they discuss and comment: "Ay, what a horrible horror! Listen Doña Rurris, with these men that act like apes. All they do is follow their noses. Last night I saw that jackal's face on my husband." "Doña Felipa, how awful." With the refugees, their verdict was that they go away to the State, the way they behave here.

Suddenly, a wave of movement shakes the crowd of those of good will and those of uncertain will.

Everyone begins to talk louder. There are a few shouts and Lilus decides that she'll shout too: "¡Que viva Don Cástulo Ratón!" And bang boom! she is shoved from behind. Several of the *Siete Machos* lift Lilus Kikus, tense but patriotic, into the air.

An hour later they take her testimony and Lilus, a little withered, answers in a trembling voice: "Well, since I know that at school they've done such things, I thought the least I could do was shout a little shout."

Lilus heads home, and on the way, it occurs to her that if they had beaten her a little harder, at best, they would have put her in the hospital. Don Cástulo Ratón would have come later to visit her, in a black car, to give her a medal: "Virtuti Lilus Kikus."

The papers would publish her picture with the headline: "Lilus Kikus charms the public." And in the society page: "A pretty Lilus Kikus, sparkling in a tidy dress, protected her party from horrors. We know that she's loved in industrial quantities. . . . But not even this would have been important.

Lilus is disillusioned. Nothing ever works itself out completely. . . . □

others were imprisoned . . . *Noche de Tlatelolco* [Massacre in Mexico, Viking Press, New York, 1975] is still read, but now it's not the younger brothers but rather the sons and nieces and nephews of those who were at Tlatelolco in 1968. This is another generation, and particularly in the University . . . they want to know what happened, who were the assassins, what were the circumstances."

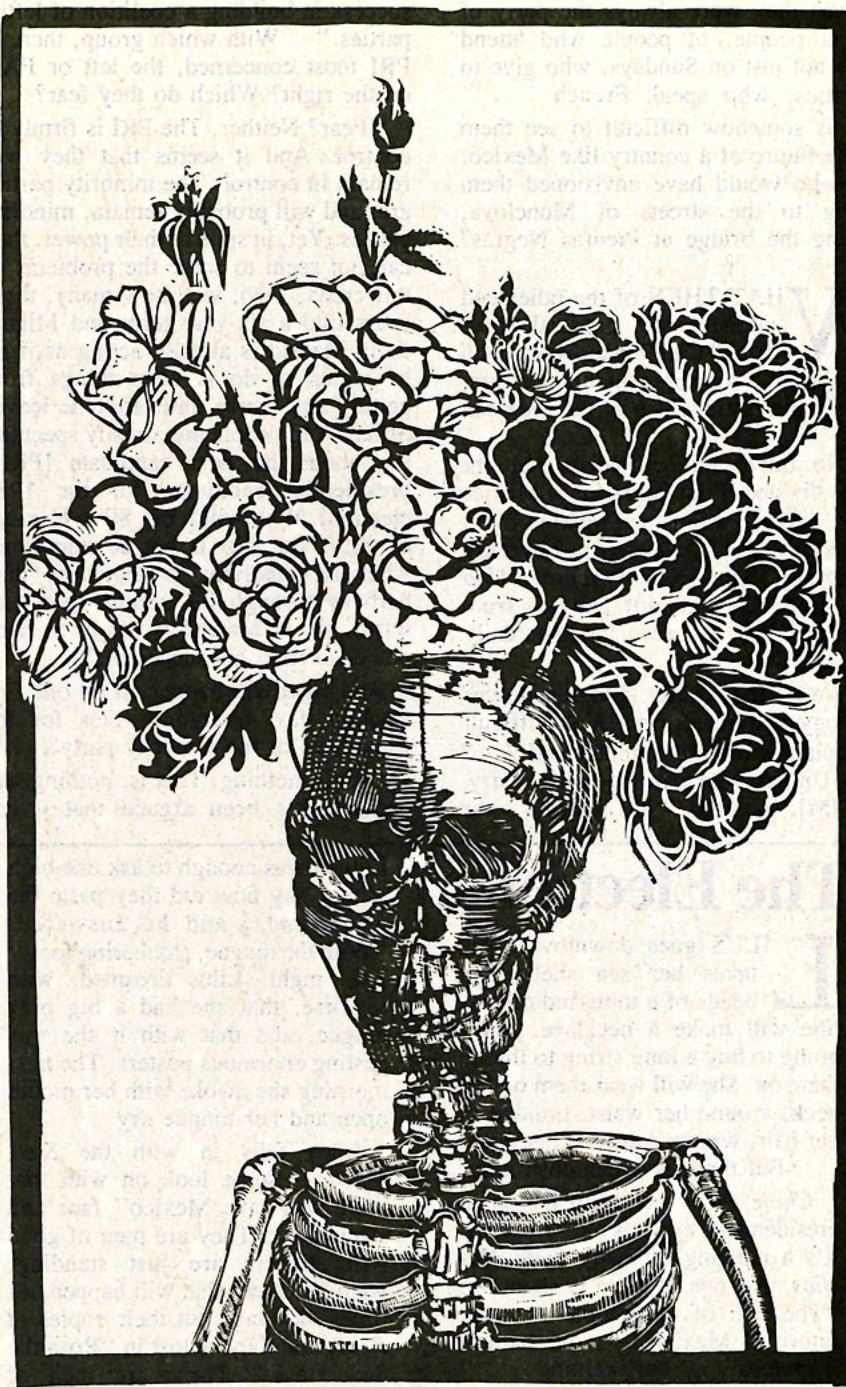
There have been more recent "warnings," and Poniatowska cites one: "There are still some journalists who dare to criticize, to denounce; like in the case of Buendía. [Manuel Buendía, a columnist for the Mexico City daily *Excelsior*, and one of the most highly regarded and influential journalists of the Mexican left, was shot to death by a paid assassin on May 20, 1984.] We see the assassination of Buendía as very symptomatic. It has been made to appear a factional thing. But the killing of Buendía was obviously a political assassination. So this, for the community of journalists, is a very, well, I think that it's a very rude warning. No?"

**E**LENA Poniatowska has written of two Mexicos, one before and one after Tlatelolco. For her, and for many other Mexicans, what she calls, in a dedicatory page, *Año de Tlatelolco* was a watershed year in Mexican politics. Few are so naive as to believe that life, public and private, was better then. But many consider those years before political dissent was silenced as a time when, by collective political action, advocacy journalism, and "public dialogue with the government," life in this republic might be improved. 1968, then 1971, and the years that followed proved a hard lesson in political and economic reality. Poniatowska dedicated her 1969 novel, *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío* to her brother Jan, who at 21 died in an automobile accident in 1968, and, "to all the boys who died in 1968: Year of Tlatelolco."

After 1968, something important in Mexico's public life was lost, Poniatowska claims.

"Politically, yes, there was a big change, a big change. Above all among Mexico's youth. Those who went to prison, or saw friends and leaders imprisoned — for them, the city was theirs, a city that they had taken, a city whose streets they had walked, and now, this Mexico, *¿De quien es?* Who does it belong to? Who? No one knows."

There is in that at least as much realism as romanticism. Perhaps it was at the funeral of José Revueltas, the



"Calavera San Ygnacio" by Eric Avery

novelist who spent two years in prison for embracing the student's cause, perhaps not. But somewhere, between that summer and fall of 1968 and today, something of the soul of this city and country was lost. □

**Note:** Elena Poniatowska lives and writes in Mexico City. For several years she has been working on a biographical novel about the life of Tina Modotti. Poniatowska describes it as her personal favorite among what she has written and has no idea when it will be completed. To describe Elena Poniatowska as a feminist writer would be to force her writing into a narrow category where somehow it just wouldn't fit. But she

has pointed the way in making women subjects rather than objects of Mexican fiction. At this time only one of her titles, *Massacre in Mexico*, is available in English, though her work has been translated into several European languages. *Hasta no verte Jesús mío*, a 310-page story of Jesusa Palancares, a woman "born in Oaxaca, who fought in the Revolution, who went to the capital and was employed as a servant and worker, who spoke with the dead and spoke with those she could find living in the middle of the century" will be translated into English by Magda Bagin. First released in 1969, it is now available in its 23rd printing (Ediciones Era) in Mexico.

# The Disappeared

## Habeas Corpus

**W**HO HAS THE BODY? We have filed a request. Where is my son? Where is my husband? Where is my brother? What happened to him? They came to get him at dawn, ten armed men who wouldn't identify themselves, and since then I don't know anything about him. I heard on the street the sound of brakes. Each day we hear it more, in the early morning, that sound of brakes. It's a car without plates. Look at this, I have his picture, yes, he's sure a good-looking man, and young, yes, and yes, always smiling. They came looking for him, only for a few routine questions, at least that's what they said, routine questions; I hired a lawyer but there's not much he can do; I at least would like to know where his body is so that I can go and put some flowers on it — I'm not asking much now, I don't ask more than that — to know where he was left

In Latin America there are many awakened in the middle of the night, startled. Mothers think about their prisoner. Did they put his face to the wall? Will he smile bravely like he always did? Any noise in the street is suspicious, the slam of a car door, the start of a bus. What will it be like? Who will it be? What will happen? The "operatives," as they call them in Argentina, carry out their work right in the middle of the street, in front of neighbors who don't intervene, who don't move a muscle, for those being taken away, who won't even extend a hand to touch their's, they who stand frozen with mouths open, never asking: "Where are you taking him? What do you want with him? What are you going to do with him? . . ."

*How do I protest when I don't read and no one listens to me?*

**I**N THE MEXICAN countryside, soldiers arrive and simply take the *campesinos* away. For them, not even a leaf stirs. Only

*These selections are excerpted from "Los desaparecidos" from Poniatowska's Fuerte es el Silencio (Mexico, 1980, Ediciones Era). Translation by Louis Dubose.*

recently, families have begun to denounce the disappearances of men and women who don't know the alphabet and who one morning or another simply do not wake up in their beds, don't make tortillas, don't walk out into the yard. The neighbors gather the hungry children, they try to take care of the empty shack, they look after the pig, and the chickens, if there are any. From a house once alive, the adults have vanished like smoke. The children, with those large eyes of the poor, as Rosario Castellanos would say, hopelessly watch the road; if anyone returns, it will be the soldiers to terrorize the neighbors, to remind them that if they get involved, they will go the same way. One fine morning they will no longer be. The death that catches up with all of us sooner or later will catch them somewhere away from home, in a place where there's no one to provide a Christian burial. And the poor, among their few pretensions, want to know where they're going to be left lying.

Most of the Mexican political prisoners are youths (in Latin America it is dangerous to be young), their ages range from 18 to 30 years, their economic class is very low. *Los desaparecidos* from among the *campesinos* are, for the most part, illiterate and because of this they don't know the law and have no legal recourse. They take no legal action, although this would be, as in the rest of Latin America, systematically violated. We all know that every government, even the most democratic, persecutes its political opponents. In the case of the *desaparecidos* in Mexico, most are involved in guerrilla movements; they're dissidents, and on many occasions, to explain their disappearing, it is alleged that they died in a confrontation with the army. Nonetheless, their disappearance turns them — and their families — into victims and confers upon the government — responsible or not — the role of persecuter. Their disappearances, besides being illegal, are an infamy of which few are aware. If Rosario Ibarra de Piedra hadn't started a campaign of protest and education, to this day we would be unaware of the problem. We would have only a vague and easily

dismissed notion of how, in cases of political opposition, democratic rights in our country are trampled.

*Are all the desaparecidos Guerrilleros or Political Militants?*

**T**HE MAJORITY of the *desaparecidos* in Mexico are from proletarian or rural backgrounds; the number of students is small, and of professionals, minimal. Are all of the *desaparecidos* in Mexico *guerrilleros* or political militants? Of course not. Not even in Argentina, where opponents of the Junta tried to organize and arm themselves: *los Montoneros*, the Party of the Poor; nor in Uruguay: the *Tupamaros*; much less in Mexico where such power is held over the masses that only with difficulty can you say: "This mouth is mine," poor, poor, poor, poor, poor, people who reach the lower middle class, more concerned with consumer goods than ideals of liberty. Revolutionary outbreaks — after the revolution of 1910 — whatever kind they were, have been simply suffocated by the police and by the army. Rubén Jaramillo, a Morelian like Emiliano Zapata, was assassinated in 1962, together with his wife Epifania — visibly pregnant — and his three children, one week after he was embraced by the then-president of the Republic, Adolfo López Mateos. Genaro Vázquez Rojas was hunted like an animal, chased on foot for months, his memory degraded in the newspapers with color photographs of women, mistresses' houses, drunken sprees, gluttonous meals. And we all know that the largest search ever organized by the army was a campaign against the rural *guerrillero* Lucio Cabañas. Rubén Jaramillo was considered the Zapata of his day and, although the Emiliano Zapata of 1910 has his statue cast in bronze in many states in the Republic, the Zapatas of the forties, of the fifties, of the sixties, and of the seventies, or anyone who would wage a similar fight is pursued and hunted down like a bad dog. His only acceptable condition is death. And dead, he is declared alive, it's said that he even rides in the mountains, that on cool, fragrant nights you can hear the hoofbeats of his white mare. Alive, all that awaits him is the flash of a machinegun. □

# The Fight Continues

*American Income Life Insurance Company wishes to share with Observer readers this letter from George McAlmon to Bernard Rapoport, which is printed with the writer's permission.*

Dear Bernard,

Four more years of encroachment by the financial-political cadre, given the current attitudes of people, will cause more than a surge of nouveaux pauvres — attitudes indifferent to other's grief or well conditioned by official lies and concealment. Constitutional rights and liberties will be lost. We should be prepared. The pendulum swings to one side and then back to the other. Sometimes, if it swings too far, the apparatus fails and the pendulum doesn't return. This may have happened. Democracy, as the founders of our country knew, will not survive when a few gain inordinate power. Excessive control has now moved to the very rich who of course also direct the public corporations and banks. Workers have been terrorized by unemployment. The decent politicians are intimidated. The media, especially TV, sedate and regularly support the ongoing rape of American workers' families and democratic movements abroad.

Social liberty survives on tolerance and compromise. The studied design to divide people by promoting specific positions of religious or emotional intransigence is utterly evil — a campaign planned to irrationalize the public, our friends and neighbors. Where are the patriots who cherish freedom and reason as well as office?

Another term will complete the occupation of the Supreme Court, Courts of Appeal, and all federal social control agencies, including the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Federal Communications Commission, Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Commission on Civil Rights, and National Labor

Relations Board. Expect increased violation of human and civil rights by the F.B.I. and C.I.A. Expect some of us to be black-listed, fired and jailed.

Management of news and official appearances with public molding in the habit and fashion of national conformity has been partially achieved. There will be less subtle restraints on the media. Advertisers (cadre fans) will intervene in news reporting. Court decisions and the F.C.C. (TV-Radio) will hinder and threaten. An anesthetized public, after indoctrination by an obedient media, can itself turn on any medium to enforce conformity.

Justices will accelerate the erosion of the Bill of Rights.

Be ready. We are headed into a TV and computer age with harassment and isolation of dissenters — an age of electronically prodded obedience.

Any organized opposition, including labor unions, protest movements and their leaders, is an inevitable target.

Within four years the cadre may have consolidated enough control through the production and staging of information, when combined with the power of the executive departments and its evident will, to perpetuate its dominion. The democratic game may be over — all the chips will have been won.

There is around a touch of the maquis mood.

Now that covers most of the recent *good news*, and in another letter sometime we'll tell the bad news. I guess we're just depressed, but I feel better just mentioning the risks.

Do we give up?

No way — let's stay together, back-to-back and just fight better. QUE SIGA LA LUCHA.

With our best wishes always,  
George McAlmon



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BERNARD RAPOPORT  
Chairman of the Board and  
Chief Executive Officer



# Understanding the System

By Louis Dubose

FIFTEEN CHAPTERS into *Distant Neighbors*, Alan Riding devotes a paragraph to Mexican political novelist Luis Spota. I was somehow hoping that he would. Not because Spota, who died in January, never achieved the respect of the Mexican intellectual community, though his ten titles over the past fifteen years have made him the most widely read author in the country. Rather, because Spota, through his fiction, realized what Riding describes in his subtitle: *A Portrait of the Mexicans*.

It is in his chapter on Mexican culture that Riding includes Spota, almost allowing him a place among the other Mexican writers who write "literature," even suggesting that foreign diplomats read him as a "primer to understanding the system at work." Maybe U.S. Ambassador John Gavin has read him. One can only hope.

Like Spota's work, Alan Riding's portrait is vivid and all-inclusive. Perhaps more appropriately, it can be considered a mural. Everyone is represented. Anchoring the center is the PRI, the dominant political party that institutionalized a revolution. On the right, vigorous and growing is PAN, the conservative and Catholic Partido de Acción Nacional, at the moment under seige in the border city of Piedras Negras. On the left, a motley of quarreling acronyms so divided by personality and the minutiae of ideology that not even the foreign policy of Ronald Reagan — Reeghan as they say — can unite them. There are peasants petitioning for land their Revolution promised them 75 years ago, the Mexican Catholic Church searching for its soul, the bloated and corrupt government monopoly Petróleos Mexicanos, every Mexican President since Juárez — who corresponded with Lincoln — and ancient labor leader Fidel Velázquez,

Frequent Observer contributor Louis Dubose is a freelance writer living in Austin.

who some claim corresponded with Juárez. Clustered about and peering from behind these, and others not here mentioned, are followers, acolytes, and ideologues.

Riding, who recently left Mexico City after six years as *New York Times*

## DISTANT NEIGHBORS: A Portrait of the Mexicans By Alan Riding

Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1984, 385 pp., \$18.95.

bureau chief, begins with the obligatory study of the Mexican character. Here he looks to the authors who made this type of chapter obligatory: Samuel Ramos and Octavio Paz. An interesting and appropriate beginning: the sort of psycho-linguistic study that works so well as an examination of the Mexican soul. Then come two chapters following the standard division of Mexican history: pre-Cortesian Mexico to the Revolution and the Revolution to Modern Mexico.

With his background in place, Riding moves fast to the subjects that make his work: the motors that move and shake Mexican society — forces that keep the country together while they seem to work toward tearing it apart.

Central among these is, of course, money. In so many words, Riding reminds those of us who would limit our reading to Ramos, Paz, Vasconcelos, and the rest, that psychology, poetry, and history don't tell all. If we are to understand Mexico, we probably should begin with the financial section of whatever we read each day. Political machinations, corruption, stolen elections, ruminations of Mexico City literati, all the workaday news, will serve only to supplement what must be the heart of what we should know about this country. For Mexico, an hour of reckoning is at hand. Its terms are economic.

MEXICO'S post-war economic model, as Riding sees it, has failed, limiting traditional options that have served to maintain political stability, which, in this country, is always a corollary of economic growth. The "stabilizing development" that started with President Miguel Alemán (1946-1952) encouraged foreign investment, promoted industry and agribusiness, and provided Mexico with economic growth sufficient to meet the marginal necessities of an exploding population and the avaricious demands of politicians and bureaucrats.

Riding considers the twelve years under presidents Luis Echeverría and José López Portillo as a time when Mexico, through a series of imprudent decisions, forfeited its economic future. Looking at Echeverría and López Portillo, Riding sees neither statesmen nor economic managers. Each president amassed huge personal fortunes while they sold, or at least mortgaged, the soul of their country. By the late 1960s, when Mexico was caught between decreasing revenues and increasing demands for spending in health care, education, and food and transportation subsidies, the government might have increased taxes and looked to remedy several structural flaws in its economy. Echeverría happened upon another solution, perhaps the only one that would allow him to preside over a *sexenio* (six-year term) of economic growth.

When in May of 1973, the Finance Minister Hugh B. Marágin announced that the Treasury was empty he was abruptly fired, to the words: "I'll name somebody who can find the money." The new minister, José López Portillo, found the money by borrowing abroad, and forty-two months later as President, he inherited the economic mess that his policy has produced.

Between 1970 and 1976 the public sector's share of foreign debt increased 450 percent to \$19.6 billion (a modest beginning toward today's \$97 billion), and private foreign debt doubled to \$4.5 billion. Echeverría signed off with an announcement that the peso would be devalued; it dropped immediately from twelve-and-a-half to 29 to the dollar. During his final three weeks in office, he declared emergency wage increases, expropriated private farms in Sonora, and tried to pressure President-elect López Portillo to suspend all foreign currency trading until inauguration day.

By the time López Portillo took office, few options were left to him.

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When Mexico's oil reserves restored the confidence of foreign bankers, however, López Portillo pressed on with "a fiesta of borrowing and spending." The private sector fell in with him, and, when prices and demand for oil dropped, Mexico was left to renegotiate debt services that oil revenues were to have covered. López Portillo never recognized the end of Mexico's economic boom and never slowed government spending. His desperate parting shot, an attempt to control capital flight, was the nationalization of private banks. He left his country with the Third World's largest foreign debt, the peso trading at 135 to the dollar, and 0.2 percent annual growth against an inflation rate of 100 percent. Personally he had fared much better; after six years in office José López Portillo was a very rich man.

With economic policy in the hands of the austere International Monetary Fund, President Miguel de la Madrid began his *sexenio* acting on one of a few options left to him. He declared a "moral renovation" and warned that it was not only the petty corruption of policemen and civil servants who supplemented low wages with the *mordida* (or bite paid in lieu of fines or fees) that must end. Elected officials who had dipped into the huge currents of public monies created by Mexico's oil wealth and government spending would also be prosecuted.

As de la Madrid took office some believed that he would move directly against López Portillo. But the de la Madrid administration settled for Jorge Díaz Serrano, former director of Petróleos Mexicanos, who was charged with embezzling \$34 million on the purchase of two tankers, and former Mexico City Police Chief Arturo Durazo. On an official salary of \$65 per week, Durazo had built a \$2.5 million mansion in Mexico City and acquired large real estate holdings in Mexico and

the U.S. Others have been prosecuted, but Riding argues that Mexico remains a country where "corruption has been corrupted" and not even large-scale public graft works right any more. In the past, when the country was governed by professional politicians, pilfered monies were often distributed to local political bosses. By this downward trickle, at least part of the public's money was returned to local economies where it might have done some good. With a generation of technocrats in power, large-scale graft has become something of an accumulative force in an economic system lacking in mechanisms of distribution.

*Since 1968, Mexican presidents have exercised enormous power, all at considerable cost.*

Prolonged economic crisis is beginning to wear thin the fabric that holds Mexican society together. The middle class, during the '70s, envisioned continued upward mobility; now they have lost most gains made ten years ago. *Campesinos* recognize that their government will not fulfill the promise of the Revolution and redistribute the nation's farmland. Riding claims that the government is now trapped by the "agrarian myth" that it created. President de la Madrid concedes that only 4.7 million of 101 million hectares of land subject to expropriation remain to be distributed. He has also warned against the common practice of squatting on private land; Riding wonders about the government's part in the assassination of "several dozen" agrarian reformers in 1984.

Urban poor live at the margin of Mexican society, and their number swells as peasants leave the land. No tables or charts are included, but Riding cites statistics sufficient to underscore the magnitude of Mexico's poverty. Among super-marginalized peoples, anthropologists have discovered "generational holes" — years during which no children survived. Like growth rings on trees, the absence of human life that might have been serves as a chronicle of social crisis. And we are reminded that not one president since Cárdenas has made the redistribution of wealth "the centerpiece of his administration."

All of this, as Riding sees it, bears heavily on the Partido Revolucionario Institucional, which has governed Mex-

ico without interruption for 56 years. "The PRI," Riding writes, "has won every election for President, senator and state governor since its formation in 1929 and has frequently resorted to fraud to avoid defeat in elections for the Chamber of Deputies and municipal mayoralties." They have resolved the question of succession through a unique ritual — nowhere better described than in Luis Spota's *Palabras mayores* — by which the outgoing president designates his successor. The party's power and political stability rest on the understanding that the President is all-powerful. In fact, "the President can enjoy absolute power as long as he does not wield it absolutely. . . . Rather, behind a monolithic facade, he must share power with the country's key interest groups — the bureaucracy, traditional politicians, the media, organized labor, the private sector, the army, the intellectual left and the Church."

Since 1968, when President Gustavo Díaz ordered brutal suppression of the student movement by his army, Mexican presidents have exercised enormous power, all at considerable cost. Confidence of various interest groups has been seriously undermined and, with it, trust in the president as a negotiator. The middle class is defecting to the more conservative Partido de Acción Nacional, and the government, we are told, can no longer afford to compete for their vote by the transfer of resources from "social welfare, rural development, and even industrialization to the maintenance of currency stability, consumer spending and urban improvement." Nor can the government afford to be caught tampering with elections, a traditional electoral procedure, but one not executed nearly so well by today's technocrats as by the regional political bosses who governed Mexico in the past. Obviously stolen elections, Riding warns — as PRI and PAN square off in Piedras Negras — are likely to result in violence. All of this at a time when a threat to the country's central authority "could suggest the disintegration of the country as well as the system."

**I**S MEXICO, then, as many have argued, poised for revolution or at least radical reform? This is the conclusion toward which we are led. But Riding seems to muddle toward several incomplete conclusions. Yes, the system of government that has been an exemplar of stability in Latin America is close to disintegration. The economy must endure an IMF-imposed monetarist revolution, though growth is desperately needed. The army, by tradition loyal to

the government, is in the midst of a crisis of identity as aging generals of the revolution are replaced by younger, better-educated officers. And eager PANistas stand poised to declare any close election a fraud.

But wait, there are considerable augurs of stability, we are told. Riding cites nationalism that is irrefutable because it is undeclared, hidden greatness that remains to be uncovered, and the strength of the Mexican character. Bewildered, but not convinced, we are assured: "What will survive is Mexico."

But *Distant Neighbors* is descriptive and not prognostic. And when it describes, it describes well. Riding's description of the Mexican family is in itself a fine essay. His examination of Mexican culture, high and low, is full of fact and insight. Here he obviously has made the best of twelve years (six as bureau chief) of newspapering among

the best journalistic and literary circles in the capital. And the Mexico city to which he devotes one chapter remains a fine and fascinating place, where the "worst of underdevelopment has combined with the worst of overdevelopment."

Nothing here is terribly new, but it is all here, remarkably current and finely written. Several chapters include textually redundant statements, but these serve as complete essays for those not inclined to read through 380 pages on a distant neighbor.

Several years ago, a Mexican lawyer and socialist activist suggested that I read an author who might provide some insight into the country's political and economic system. "Read Kafka," he said, never cracking a smile. Probably not bad advice; to which I would add, read Riding.

I hope that John Gavin has. □

# Requiem for the Land

By Pete A. Y. Gunter

**W**ATCHING a bulldozer scrape off the last remnants of native East Texas forest, or driving across the well-cropped grasslands of the high plains, or pondering the sprawl of live oak and cedar across a hill

## THE EXPLORERS' TEXAS: The Lands and Waters By Del Weniger

Eakin Press, 1984, Austin  
224 pp., \$24.95.

country plateau can turn out to be dangerous occupations: dangerous for one's curiosity. Sooner or later the thought is bound to cross one's mind: I wonder what this was like originally, before lumber companies and developers, roads and plows? One struggles to imagine some green, primitive Eden, rich with game, woods, clear waters — and an occasional Noble Savage, living parsimoniously.

*Pete Gunter is a professor of philosophy at North Texas State University and author of a book on the Big Thicket.*

The trouble with this image is its vagueness. The different parts of Texas were always different; and, apart from the pictures of tall grass and clear water and herds of regnant, shootable game, we really do not know much about early Texas. Prior to 1860, the point at which Del Weniger concludes his researches, photographs are few; mapmakers were not biologists; sodbusters and cowboys did not keep diaries. Not surprisingly, authorities disagree. Practically the only way to find out about aboriginal Texas is the one pursued in *The Explorers' Texas*: to search out the accounts of those early explorers who kept records, and, painstakingly, compare them with each other and, point by point, with the country they traversed. The end result should be a surprisingly plausible image (or collage of images) of a vanished world.

It is important to point out at the beginning that this is no mere academic exercise. The animals and vegetation that exist in a region before the coming of "Civilized Man" are a good index of what is best suited to survive there. That is, they tell us what a region is "naturally," what it will tend towards

if left to its own devices. This in turn tells us to what extent we have depleted and impoverished the land and, inversely, what we ought to do (or *not* do) to bring it back, as nearly as is practicable, to its original character. In ecology as in politics, history provides benchmarks.

So what was Texas like before the axe, the plow, and the goat? The answers the author gives will surprise many. The most surprising answer is that, while most of what is now central and east Texas contained prairies (as opposed to "plains"), Texas prairies were never treeless. Rather, they were liberally sprinkled with islands of timber ("mottes"), with lone trees, with bushes and undergrowth. The general impression this left on early travelers was that of a park-like, rolling, rather charming landscape — something to think about, now that most of those same landscapes are barren, treeless, and dusty.

The condition of the original Hill Country is equally interesting. There is a legend — fostered mainly by biologists drawing on late 19th century recollections — that the Hill Country was originally a grassland, where a rancher on horseback could, from the vantage-point of a high hill, see all of his cattle at once, or even wolves foraging through the tall grass. Many a rancher or shepherd, reflecting on the years 1880-1900, could recall such a scene. But Professor Weniger shows, devastatingly and beyond question, that the turn-of-the-century Hill Country reality was the result of the wholesale denuding of the Edwards Plateau by stockmen, farmers, lumbering operations, and fire. The scalped condition of the land was not natural and has been followed, predictably enough, by the re-emergence of live oak, elm, and mesquite cover:

We must picture these hills as covered, when first found, with much of the same sort of twisted and stunted live oaks as we find on them today.

Equally, the pre-1860 Hill Country contained vast swaths of cedar brake. In the midst of this diverse forest cover explorers concurred in reporting, besides dwarf live oaks and cedars (junipers), occasional pines, magnificent streamside woods of pecan, oak, elm, and cypress (already disappearing by the 1850s, so that today's Hill Country stream cypresses are almost without exception second growth.)

Whoever, then, wishes to scalp the Hill Country to return it to its original pristine grassland condition will have to go against the grain of incontrovertible evidence. Prairie strips and bare hills there always were in this region. But

by and large it was a land of trees.

If this were so, someone will ask, how could the Hill Country, from the earliest days, have supported so large a population of cattle and sheep? Here the author makes his third discovery:

We propose here as a fifth element in the situation our own conclusion that, rather than antagonists opposing the original grasses of the Hill Country, the trees were and are still the best promoters and even conservators of the grasses. The only plants of big blue-stem I have ever been able to myself find in the present Hill Country were all growing in the midst of such dense thickets or thorn bushes that even the goats couldn't get to them . . .

If this sounds like mere speculation (How, by the way, did the author manage to get where even goats cannot go?), Weniger points to a small plot of virgin cedar brake where his ecology classes do field work. Most of this plot is shaded, and grass is abundant everywhere. But it turns out that *there are more grass plants per unit area in the shade of the cedars than in the unshaded places between them*. It does not take a doctorate in plant ecology to see why. Cedars accumulate and hold leaf mulch and moisture and provide protection from drying winds and subtropical sun. The grass that grows where cedar brakes are cut, Weniger concludes, survives only until the soil is swept away. The moral is clear: Don't strip the cedar off steep Hill Country slopes, and don't suppose that trees are always the enemy

## PI . . .

(Continued from Page 16)

a statewide standard. Sarp's bill was passed by a Senate Committee Feb. 19 by a 4-2 margin. We now anxiously await the full debate on the Senate floor.

✓ The dean of senate liberals, Oscar Mauzy of Dallas, has been the subject of speculation lately as to what is in his political future.

Arnold Hamilton of the *Dallas Times Herald* reported in February that efforts are underway in Mauzy's predominantly minority district to unseat the 18-year veteran and replace him with a black candidate. While praising Mauzy's record, black leaders say the time has come for Dallas to elect its first black senator. Jesse Jones, a black activist who ran against Mauzy three years ago, is preparing another campaign, and former Reps. Eddie Bernice Johnson and Lanell Cofer are mentioned as possible candidates. But the most likely contestant is Rep. Paul Ragsdale. Ragsdale makes it

of grass.

There is more to *The Explorers' Texas* than these three discoveries, important though they may be. There are careful, almost tortuous, analyses of the character of Texas rivers, from source to mouth. (Often they were muddy — or, upstream, dry.) There are lyric appreciations of beaches whose sands were originally clean. There are point by point accounts of forests, stretching along now-treeless streams or of cached, unexpected woodlands in West Texas brakes and valleys. The fine scholarship and engrossing narrative of *The Explorers' Texas* are complemented by beautiful binding, good color reproductions, and nicely turned out pen and ink sketches. It is a rare book indeed that is of interest to the biologist, the historian, the environmentalist — and the bibliophile.

Given all of the above — and more that can be said in the same vein — one finishes *The Explorers' Texas* in a somber mood. Between mid-grass prairies and the semi-desert they have become; between clear flowing waters and today's dead or dying springs; between wooded creeksides and what are now arroyos of bare, eroded clay, the contrast is too great. *The Explorers' Texas* begins as a triumphal march into a new land; but it ends as a requiem. But that is the inescapable lesson, as useful in ecology as in politics. We have nothing left to learn from triumphal marches. □

no secret he wants the senate seat, although he said in 1981 he would not run if Mauzy sought re-election. Mauzy says he still likes his job and hasn't decided whether to run again.

✓ Don't miss the prayer breakfast with Alabama Senator Jeremiah Denton April 15 in Fort Worth. He'll be there to pray with the Texas Oil Marketers Association at their annual convention.

## Workers' Delight

✓ In Houston, 350 county workers showed up for work one day in late February and were all asked to submit to an unannounced urinalysis test. County Commissioner Bob Eckels, who ordered the procedure, said, "My people were delighted with the opportunity to show that they were not using narcotics. We have, I think, the safest and the best team, and they're proud to be able to stand up and show it." Many of Eckels employees are drivers and heavy equipment operators. Eckels said he intended to use the tests periodically. □

# SOCIAL CAUSE CALENDAR

Notices of future events must reach the *Observer* at least three weeks before the event.

## CENTRAL AMERICA WEEK ON TV

The Emergency Response Network, a national organization working to reverse U. S. policies in Central America, will sponsor programs on public access cable TV during Central America Week, **March 17-24**. Programs range from a locally-produced presentation of Teatro Vivo, a Guatemalan theater troupe, to documentaries including "The Pope: Pilgrim of Peace?" which looks at the Pope's visit to Nicaragua. The Austin ACTV schedule includes: **March 22** - Teatro Vivo, 7 p.m.; Alternative Views: El Salvador/In Rebel Territory, 8 p.m.; Mis Amigos, an interview with Ernesto Cordova and Hernando Matte, 9:30 p.m.; Adios Guatemala, 11:30 p.m.; and, Dawn of the People, 12 midnight; and, **March 23** - Americas in Transition, 12 noon; Nicaragua, 12:30 p.m.; Alternative Views: El Salvador/In Rebel Territory, 1:30 p.m. Call ACTV, (512) 478-8600 for program notes.

## ROMERO COMMEMORATION SAN ANTONIO

The Mexican American Cultural Center, 3019 W. French Pl., San Antonio, will have a commemoration for Archbishop Oscar Romero, **March 23**. Call (512) 732-2156 for more information.

## ARCHBISHOP ROMERO MEMORIAL SERVICE

The Interfaith Task Force for Central American Refugees and the Austin Emergency Response Network will have a memorial service commemorating the assassination of El Salvador's Archbishop Oscar Romero **March 24**, Cristo Rey Catholic Church, 2109 E. 2nd St., Austin, 6:30 p.m. Salvadorian refugees will present their testimony regarding conditions in their country and participants will remember the martyrs, named and unnamed. For information call (512) 474-2399.

## SULLIVAN FUNDRAISER

Charles and Pauline Sullivan, Director and Administrator for Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants (CURE), will be moving to Washington, D.C. in July to expand CURE to a national organization. A fundraiser to raise start-up money for this project will be **March 26**, 4-7 p.m., \$10 per person. Contact CURE, (512) 476-4762 for place. CURE will also lobby legislators for criminal justice system reforms **March 26**, Capitol Rotunda, 9 a.m.

## RUTH STEPHAN POETRY SERIES

Naomi Shihab Nye will read her poetry **March 27**, Academic Center Room 344, UT-Austin, 12:15 p.m., as part of the Ruth Stephan Poetry Reading Series sponsored by the Undergraduate Library and College of Liberal Arts.

## OBSERVANCES

**March, 24, 1980** — Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador was assassinated.

**April 1, 1813** — Eliza McCoy, missionary to the Putawatomic Indians and Texas philanthropist, was born.

**April 2, 1870** — Victoria Claflin Woodhull, first woman candidate for U.S. President, announced her candidacy.

**April 3, 1944** — U.S. Supreme Court ruled that blacks may vote in Texas primaries.

**April 4, 1968** — Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.

**April 10, 1919** — Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata was assassinated.

## READING SERIES

The UT-San Antonio reading series will continue with fiction writer Joe Coomer reading from his works about life in Appalachia **March 28**, Teaching Gallery, UTSA campus, 4:30 p.m. Call Jeri Robison, (512) 691-4550 for details.

## TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY LECTURE

"Technology and Society: Promise and Peril," the 1985 Texas Lecture on the Humanities by New York Public Library President Vartan Gregorian, will be **March 29**, UT-Austin Law School Auditorium, 7:30 p.m. Free. For information, call (512) 473-8585.

## SAN ANTONIO NEWS

The Interchange, a communication network for peace and social justice in San Antonio, has announced the following San Antonio events. **March 29**: Suya Afetosamente: A One Woman Show, Guadalupe Theatre, 1302 Guadalupe St., (512) 271-3151. **March 30**: Joint Effort Coffee House and album recording, Colonial Hills United Methodist Church, 8 p.m., (512) 225-6913; and the New Age School auction and fair, New Age School, 217 Pershing, 11 a.m.-6 p.m., (512) 822-0461. In addition, Mabel's Community Table, a non-profit food co-operative, continues to offer nutritional bulk food and packaged products to members at close to wholesale prices, St. Paul Community Drug Store, 1156 E. Commerce, (512) 734-6836.

## PASEO DE MARZO PARADE

Centro Cultural Aztlan will sponsor its 13th annual Paseo de Marzo parade **March 29**, through downtown San Antonio, beginning at 12 noon. The parade pays homage to Hispanic American soldiers. Call (512) 733-7928 for details.

## NEWCOMB POTTERY EXHIBIT

"Newcomb Pottery: An Enterprise for Southern Women, 1895-1940," an exhibit of ceramics and other crafts made at Newcomb College, Tulane University, New Orleans, will be at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, **March 30-May 26**, Masterson Junior Gallery. Newcomb College was one of the major centers of the Arts and Crafts movement which evolved as a reaction against the standardization of products and the dehumanization of workers brought about by the Industrial Revolution. The struggle for women's suffrage and education was embodied in the ideals of the movement, which stressed handicrafts and the joy of creating beautiful, useful objects. For details contact Carolyn Valeck, (713) 526-1361.

## BLACK ART AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

"Black Art and the Civil Rights Movement: Challenge to the Mainstream" will be presented **April 4-30**, Houston Public Library, Downtown Branch, as part of the University of Houston's "After the Avant-Garde" series. The series of events, including a photography exhibition, panel discussion, and performances by John O'Neal, founder of the Free Southern Theater, will assess the impact of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s on Black artists. For information call (713) 749-4260.

## HOUSTON PICKERS AND POETS IN CONCERT

Six Texas singer-songwriters whose musical genius blossomed in Houston in the '60s and early '70s will stage a unique reunion **April 6**, the Music Hall, Houston. Jerry Jeff Walker, Guy Clark, Rodney Crowell, Michey Newbury, Townes Van Zandt, and Kay T. Oslin will perform their style of progressive country musical poetry at the benefit concert for Pacifica radio station KPFT. Call (713) 799-9555 for ticket information.

## FREEZE ALERT

The San Antonio Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign is asking folks in that area to write Congressman Albert Bustamante, Congressional District 23, 1116 Longworth HOB, Washington, D.C. 20515, asking him to vote against funding for the MX weapons system. "Stop the MX; freeze and reverse the arms race; build an economy of jobs with justice."

# POEMS

By Ken Fontenot

## A SHRIMP BOAT IN ARANSAS

The boats return with their shrimp.  
Dreams get wasted. Money goes fast.  
Gasoline is high. Prices are low.  
How can anyone make a living?  
I come from Louisiana  
but now I feel like a Texan.  
Think of all the people  
who have to leave their homes,  
and go to other states for work!  
The old man sits in his boat. Aransas.  
A pipe. A son. Three dogs. Chickens.  
He works on his own nets. Fixes his own motor.  
His wife knits. If *he* is not happy  
then she *is*. If he has lost his cat,  
she has gained her son. She prays.  
He does not. *If the Lord wants me,*  
he says, *I'll be right here.*  
My aunt was a shrimper from Grande Isle,  
Louisiana. I think I was 10.  
In her small boat a gnat flew in my ear.  
It hurt. I told her. She took a long draw  
on her Camel and blew smoke in my ear.  
Oh, Aunt Bessie, *that* got the gnat out.

Ken Fontenot lives in Austin, where he is in the UT PhD program in German. A Cajun native of New Orleans, Fontenot last year won the Academy of American Poets Prize from UT.

## SHE OF THE BLACK CAJUNS

Her arms were sticks. No watch would fit them.  
She let me place my thumb and middle finger  
around her arm, the tips touching easily.  
She let me put on her fingernail polish.  
She let me cup my hands fully around her waist.  
Her hands felt as if they were always in dishwater.  
She was no good at marbles.  
She was no good at pulling a trigger.  
Her mother canned figs.  
Her mother let me hide under her huge dress.  
Once we were playing with matches.  
Somehow the barn burned down.  
We never said a word, not even in confession.  
When the grown-ups said they just couldn't figure out  
what happened, we glanced at each other,  
and felt little twinges inside our bellies.

## AGAIN I THINK OF MARIA McGEE, DAUGHTER OF VALENTINE AND LILLY

The trees are the wind's interpreters.  
Either they whisper or they sing  
in the language of wind. The owls know  
the tree has said *take care of yourself*.  
Goodbye. Goodbye. The mouse prays  
in the owl's beak, having run its last mile.  
I can't sleep without Tofranil. Nine years now  
since my mind ran farther than my feet,  
and the attendants, cigarettes lit in their mouths,  
released my wrists and ankles from the cuffs.  
Somehow, some of us go wrong. It's not seasonal,  
like Spring maddening the animals.  
It's not common as the heartbeat,  
the blood pulling in all directions.  
It's not like the flu, ephemeral and beneficent.  
It's the ticking, ticking of a clock, always there.  
I dream of my mother rocking me.  
The Trailways bus to Eunice, Louisiana.  
*Momma, I have to tee tee.* No bathroom.  
She unzips my khaki pants, short and starched.  
She takes the cellophane wrapper of her Lucky's.  
*Go ahead, cher.* She guides my baby bird carefully,  
so as not to spill. She dumps it out the window.  
Where have you gone, o woman of my joys?  
The rain fell all night,  
and you closed each of my eyes with a kiss.

## AFTERWORD

## Confessions of a Yuppie Dropout

By Regina Segovia

**A**T OUR LOCAL shopping mall  
there is a half-moon of brick,  
a stage for toddlers. It caps a  
blue tile waterfall. Benches wide enough

Regina Segovia is now a freelance writer  
living in Port Neches.

for grandma's backside, mothers,  
strollers and shopping bags form a  
gallery.

It was Tuesday, 10 a.m.; I had joined  
the audience, but I felt like an imposter.  
A reporter in mother's clothing. As I  
watched the show I thought about my  
job. Just one month before, I would have

been sitting at my desk, facing a blank  
Video Display Terminal, trying to create  
a budget.

In the years I had worked as a reporter  
my son had grown from a soft and  
gurgling baby into a complicated and  
demanding 4 year old. A day had not  
passed that he hadn't asked me to stay  
home with him. I had missed so much.  
His first sentence. His hurts and happi-  
ness had been played out to a series of  
strangers. So one day when he asked,  
I gave him an answer that surprised us  
both. I said yes. I quit my job.

That day at the mall I studied the women around me. Women with gaudy plastic strollers encouraging and scolding their toddlers as younger babies napped or snacked. As a young woman, even as a girl, I had vowed the housewife's lot was not for me. I carved an education and career designed to avoid that role at all costs.

Now I was among them, posing as one of them. As I looked at their faces, I wondered what they would think if they knew. I wondered for the thousandth time if I had made a mistake. How could I have left a job that allowed me to ride into the cutting edge of a hurricane, track an oil spill as it slipped down the Gulf Coast, and follow the heretofore male domain of labor negotiations?

I had traded that for Cookie Monster and Big Bird. Bobby interrupted my musing to tell me it would snow. He stated simply that he had thrown a penny in the fountain and wished it; so snow was on the way.

I told him I had heard his wish, but I said it just wasn't logical. It doesn't snow on the Gulf Coast. He studied me for a moment and then, quoting a Christmas special we had seen months before, sagely stated that even a miracle needs a hand.

The next day it snowed for the first time in decades. We woke at dawn because I knew the sun would quickly melt the light dusting of powdered sugar from our palm trees. There was a ceremonial dance in the living room. We bundled up and rushed out, camera in hand, to record Bobby's wish on a penny snow.

My son told everyone we saw, from the garbage man to the 7-11 clerk, that it was his snow. We met a woman, her red-tinted hair popping from its "do," as she put the finishing touches on a miniature snowman she had built on the hood of a pick-up truck. She crowned him with a cowboy hat and tied a bandana around his neck. It was as exciting as a front-page byline. A magic morning.

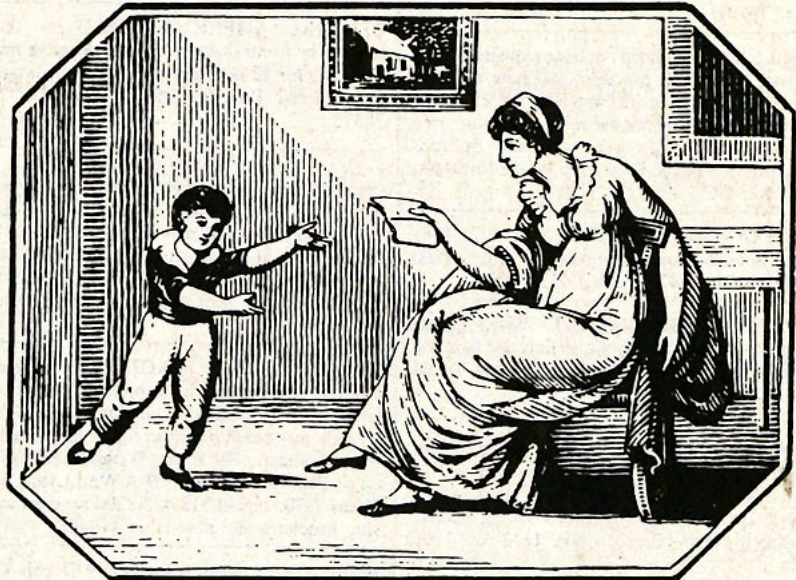
My generation has the idea that everything is possible, which is different from our parents' notion that anything is possible. The problem is, we haven't figured out a way to expand the hours between overtime and bedtime so that children, dogs and husbands and wives can all be unconditionally loved and nurtured. My favorite pop theory was the one promising a million moments lost in a day could be made up in quality time.

We read about women who jog through pregnancy, have the child on

Friday, and return to work on Monday. But after the baby arrives, the jogging stops, unless you count the mad rush out the door every morning. And prepared childbirth cannot prepare a woman to leave her infant baby in the care of strangers. Our conservative editorial writer, after the birth of his own son, wrote an impassioned piece about a society and economy that could not seem to find a place for babies, in this case his. This bastion of rationality had seen the pain in his wife's eyes, an equally sane school teacher who had to leave her baby and return to work.

manage it is by doing the things I remember my own mother doing. We shop at discount stores, use coupons, and install our own tile. We live in a modest house my husband bought ten years ago. We live outside the glamour and glitter of yuppiedom, foregoing designer labels for time to be together.

When I miss my work, which I do on occasion, I think back to a November afternoon. I am standing in front of the best daycare center in Port Arthur. I had been on an interminable waiting list but had pulled my son out after one week. A young girl had pulled my son's ear



**I**T WASN'T easy to quit — no easier than it had been for my mother to start working. In 1955, when she became a mother, it was understood to be a full-time job. In 1980, when I became mother, I was convinced my career could not be interrupted. In fact, I believed I had to work to justify my existence. I convinced everyone I knew, and many I didn't through my writing, that it could be done.

In December 1984, I told some close friends I was quitting. "What will you do all day?" they asked incredulously. I told them that it might have seemed possible to strap a baby on my back and stun the world with my ability, but it hadn't quite worked out that way. No one had been all that impressed, and we were all tired.

It was hard to step off the rung on the ladder I had managed to occupy. On the way down, I saw the years of sweat and persistence. I wondered if the mysterious "they" who make all the decisions would allow me back on later.

Then there's the question of money. Quitting only recently became an option for me, one not open to single parents or those whose family expenses exceed single incomes. The only way we can

because he stepped out of line. I remembered screaming something about 3 year olds standing in line. When I had come to pick him up he ran to me sobbing. By the time we got to the car we were both in tears. I had to be at work by 7 a.m. It was 6 p.m. Grandmothers were thousands of miles away. There was no support system. No hotline to call. No Equal Rights Amendment that would have forced the newspaper to pay me what they pay male reporters. Superwoman began to fade.

But beyond the reforms that need to be instituted there is something else. It is illustrated in the reaction of one of my former editors to my decision to quit. "With all of your ability, Segovia, to end up a housewife in Port Neches, Texas." As if it were a fate far worse than death.

I choose to mother. Wasn't it all supposed to be about choices? I have watched a fountain performance. I have rushed into the snow and believed it magic because of the faith of my little boy. By 5 p.m. we would have missed it all. There are some things only a mother will do. So please, excuse me, while I watch the rhythms of a boy at play. □

# • CLASSIFIED •

## BOOKS

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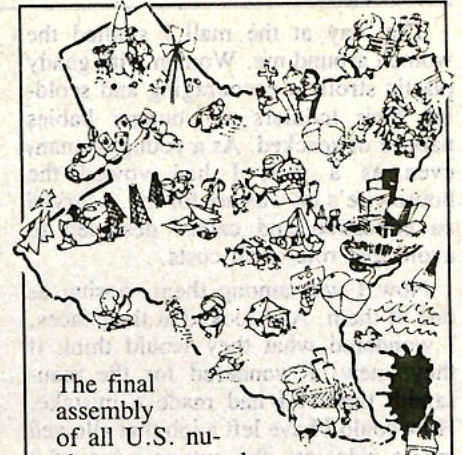
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