

America's Craziest Billionaire

by Luke Boggs

Unless you are just back from a long stay aboard Russia's rapidly disintegrating *Mir* space station, you have probably heard about Ted Turner's plans to give a billion dollars to the United Nations—as if the world needed absolute proof that Atlanta's Captain Outrageous is more than a few cards short of a full deck.

Over the past quarter-century, Turner has built a lowly UHF television station into a global media colossus. Over the same period, he has built a similarly colossal reputation as America's most outspoken and, yes, craziest billionaire.

In the 1970's, the captain was amusing-crazy. As a sailor, he won the America's Cup. As owner of the Braves, he put people in the seats with outrageous stunts, like the time he pushed a ball along the basepath with his nose. Turner once greeted a high-profile free agent with a new number, 17, and a new last name, Channel. (The free advertising for Channel 17 did not last long.)

In the 80's, Turner was still nuts, but with a harder, meaner edge. When he was not launching CNN or dreaming up the Goodwill Games, he busied himself dismissing Christianity as a religion "for losers" and blaming the frosty relations between Castro's Cuba and the United States on his own government rather than his dictator buddy's lawlessness and brutality.

In 1987, I saw Turner give a rambling oration—clearly unscripted and unrehearsed—to a group at Georgia Tech. Just back from Cuba, he asked why the administration was giving Castro such a hard time. Reagan and his crowd, said the captain, were out of touch and too old to change. The time had come, he said, for fresh leadership and new ways of thinking—a curious prescription given Castro's decades in power.

In the 90's, Turner has been busy, marrying Jane Fonda, going toe-to-toe with Rupert Murdoch, being named *Time's* "Man of the Year," and selling his

media empire to Time-Warner. Along the way, he has said a lot of outrageous things. For example, ready to do his bit for the planet, Turner announced in 1995 that he did not always flush. "Sometimes," he explained, "I just go out on the front porch and take a whiz on the grass." After the Heaven's Gate suicides, Turner found a silver lining: "There are already too many people in this world. If a few crazy people want to get rid of themselves, it's a good thing." (Two decades ago, Turner was less concerned about population growth. In a 1978 *Playboy* interview, he said sexual frustration was a major force behind crime and violence: "Lots of sex for everybody, that's a solution to the world's problems.")

Only once in recent years has anyone seriously challenged Turner for the title "America's Craziest Billionaire." That challenge, of course, came in 1992, when a little Texan with a big wallet decided to do all he could to run George Bush out of office. (Remember when Perot said a "Republican dirty trick brigade" was plotting to spoil his daughter's wedding?)

With his latest move, however, Turner has seen Perot's craziness and raised him a thousand million. In the Billionaire Boys Club Race to the Edge of Sanity, Turner has left Perot eating his dust. In the army of crazed gazillionaires, Perot must now play buck private to Turner's five-star general.

Turner's U.N. gift rockets him high above the merely eccentric craziness of Perot into an orbit occupied by billionaires who have gone nuts with that which defines them—their money. For all his paranoid delusions, Perot has yet to go crazy with his own cash. Sure, he threw away a few million on his campaigns, but that's nothing. Turner is throwing away a thousand million.

Which brings us to a real conundrum. Which comes first, the money or the craziness? Is it the nuttiness of people like Turner and Perot that helps make them wildly successful, or does the sound of all those billions piling up just scramble their brains one day? We will probably never know.

Yet, there are people—think Bill Gates and Warren Buffett—at the other end of the Billionaire Sanity Continuum. I cannot help wondering if there is not some secret, some bit of wisdom they might offer that could help Turner and Perot find their way back from the brink.

Could Turner have possibly selected an organization less likely than the U.N. to give him his money's worth? I suppose he could have gone one step further and sent his billion to the spendthrifts in Washington. For all its lofty intentions, the U.N. is not much better. It is a ponderously inefficient, stubbornly ineffectual organization, dedicated to a purpose that it cannot hope to achieve.

Why not a billion dollars for medical research, to fight cancer, heart disease, or AIDS? Why not Harvard scholarships for 10,000 of the ghetto's best and brightest? Why not houses for 20,000 homeless families? Why not a nice decaf latte for every man, woman, and child in the country?

As we consider this grand gesture, doomed as it is to failure, remember that Ted Turner is first and foremost not a philanthropist but an entertainer. And it is as an entertainer that he shines brightest. So enjoy the laughs. That is all anyone is likely to get.

Luke Boggs writes from Alpharetta, Georgia.

How William Weld Mainstreamed Deviance

by Peter LaBarbera

Back when William Weld was still governor of Massachusetts—an office he quit to concentrate on his futile fight with Jesse Helms—his homosexual allies in the state were fond of calling him the nation's "most pro-gay governor." It's easy to see why. Like Nixon going to China, Weld blazed a new path for the Grand Old Party, infuriating social conservatives with his zealous advocacy of homosexual—even *gay youth*—"rights." His legacy raises stark questions about where "moderate" Republicans hope to take the nation.

To understand how far Weld pushed the pro-gay envelope in Massachusetts, one need look no farther than the schools. Under his stewardship, Massachusetts became ground zero in the movement to promote homosexual-affirming educational policies, and the state's "educrats" are now working with gay groups to export them to other school districts nationwide. In 1994, after Weld

created his precedent-setting "Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth," Massachusetts became the first state to enact a "gay rights" law for schools. The state now holds an annual "Gay/Straight Youth Pride March," sponsored by—of all agencies—the Department of Health, in concert with several homosexual activist groups. The taxpayer-subsidized rally is held on the steps of the state capitol in Boston, followed by a "gay prom" at—you guessed it—City Hall. After all, this is Massachusetts.

The Bay State's embrace of "gay youth" highlights a disturbing national trend: the use of schools as gay affirmation and propaganda centers, often without parents' knowledge. While social conservatives have focused on stopping the legalization of "gay marriage," homosexual activists and their allies have been diligently working in schools to advance their agenda of norming homosexuality. All across the country, young students are being confirmed as "gays" by older mentors and teachers. Homosexual activists proclaim their support for "GLBT? youth"—ostensibly gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and "questioning" kids—and talk effusively about the trend of teenagers "coming out" at younger and younger ages. The result of the "gay youth" sensitivity crusade has been a proliferation of horror stories, as parents get wind of one-sided, pro-homosexual "lessons" or even "gay pride" rallies at their child's school, often after the fact. Massachusetts probably leads the nation in this dubious department.

Take the case of Mike Chiusano of Beverly, Massachusetts, who was driven to parental rights activism four years ago when his daughter pronounced him a "homophobe" over the dinner table. It seems the younger Chiusano, then 14, had just emerged from four days of mandatory assemblies called "Homophobia Week" at Beverly High School. Her father didn't even know about the assemblies, which are now annual fixtures at schools all over Massachusetts (they are officially promoted by the state Department of Education). When Mr. Chiusano protested to the Beverly High administrators, his family became the victim of a harassment campaign, including a phone call to his wife from one zealot who threatened, "We know where your daughter lives." So much for tolerance.

Another "accidental activist" in the move to restore sanity in the schools is

Ed Beucler, a Cambridge resident who discovered on October 11, 1995, that his son, then a freshman, was required to attend a "coming out" rally sponsored by the "gay" student club at his school, Cambridge Ridge and Latin High School. (October 11 is the day celebrated by gay activists nationwide as "National Coming Out Day.") The only notice that Beucler and his wife received were the words "Coming Out Rally" on the school calendar sent home to parents. When the Beuclers complained to school authorities about the rally, which included a "transgendered" speaker, they were ignored for three months. Finally, they were asked to come in and discuss their concerns "and their son's progress"—infuriating Mr. Beucler, who saw no connection between the performance of his son, a straight-A student, and his concerns about the "gay" rally. Ultimately, Cambridge's superintendent said she would make no changes to the school's "Coming Out" rallies in the future.

Yet another atrocity came to light in March 1997, when the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette* reported that Douglas Matthews—the faculty advisor to the "gay-straight alliance" at Algonquin Regional High School—passed out a mind-bending "Questionnaire about Heterosexuality" to students in his freshman history class. The survey is used by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN—formerly the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Teachers Network) and other homosexual groups to expose alleged "homophobic" attitudes and turn the tables on critics who posit homosexuality as abnormal. It includes such questions as "What do you think caused your heterosexuality?" and "If you've never slept with a person of the same sex and enjoyed it, is it possible that all you need is a good gay lover?" Matthews' tendentious survey, which was not preapproved by the school, would never have seen the light of day had not two students secretly brought it home to their parents.

The melding of homosexual advocacy with education has caused an outbreak of incidents like the above in schools across the country. What is unique about Massachusetts is the state's funding of, and airtight alliance with, homosexual groups to carry it out. To advance their agenda, organizations like GLSEN devised a cunning strategy of encouraging the formation of pro-homosexual stu-

dent clubs in schools, called "Gay-Straight Alliances." Rallying behind a campaign for "Safe Schools," gay activists worked with state bureaucrats to promote the idea that there is an epidemic of suicides among homosexual youth—30 percent of youth suicides are by "gay and lesbian" youngsters, they claim—hence the need for gay-affirming outreach programs in schools. This claim is utterly baseless. One of the world's leading experts on youth suicide, Dr. David Shaffer of Columbia University, has dismissed the 30 percent figure as arising from "hocus-pocus math." But that didn't stop David LaFontaine, the gay activist appointed by Governor Weld to head the state's homosexual youth commission, from ominously declaring that "Gay youth suicide is like a hidden holocaust in America."

As part of the lobbying campaign for the Massachusetts school "gay rights" law, students stood on the steps of the State House and held up signs such as "Gays Make Up 30% of Youth Suicides." The strategy, though deceitful, is brilliant. After all, who could be against protecting "at risk" kids from verbal and physical abuse—even suicide? Kevin Jennings, a former history teacher and the founder of GLSEN, boasted of the propaganda line's success in a 1995 speech: "We immediately seized upon the opponents' calling card—safety—and explained how homophobia represents a threat to students' safety by creating a climate where violence, name-calling, health problems, and suicide are common," he said. "In Massachusetts, no one could speak up against our frame and say, 'Why, yes, I do think students should kill themselves.' This allowed us to set the terms of the debate."

Critics saw the classic "bait-and-switch" tactic at work: win political support by tugging at the heartstrings, then move in with homosexual propaganda programs that promote one-sided "gay rights" shibboleths to impressionable students while leaving them ignorant of the health risks (and moral critiques) of homosexual behavior.

Jennings and fellow gay activists have a champion in Bill Weld, whose nomination as U.S. Ambassador to Mexico was sunk by Senator Helms. Massachusetts' homosexual lobby threw its support to Weld in 1992, helping him to defeat feisty conservative Democrat John Silber. (Ironically, the quirky Weld later appointed Silber as chairman of the state