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# C O R R E S P O N D E N C E

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## To the Editor:

More than a letter to the editor would be needed to correct the misleading and misinformed comments of B. Bruce-Briggs in your June-July issue. To refute his article, "Needless Fuss about Land Use," would require a much longer commentary. But I do think that Bruce-Briggs' facile "put-down" calls at least for a protest.

"Needless Fuss" is a supercilious polemic which tries to discredit ideas through ridicule: presented in exaggerated or distorted form, these ideas are then countered by "common sense" or "simple arithmetic." The article undertakes to show how silly, how trivial, the so-called land-use issue really is when exposed to the hard reality of facts. But Bruce-Briggs is highly "selective" in his choice of facts, ignoring the evidence that explains why land use is the nation's most important environmental problem.

For example, he declares that: "Viewed from a historical perspective these demands for strengthened government land use controls would seem to be almost revolutionary." But in fact, from a historical perspective, it is the conventional American concept of ownership that is revolutionary, running contrary to an older Anglo-Saxon tradition and to the laws of most ancient and modern states. Bruce-Briggs is correct in observing that: "For several hundred years Americans have taken for granted that they had the right to do pretty much what they pleased with their own land...." This included the right to destroy the productive capability of land, to use it to the detriment of neighbors, and to manipulate its market value for speculative gain. Such attitudes were feasible only in a pioneering society with abundant land and a poorly-developed sense of community as contrasted with unqualified personal interest.

The land-use attitudes of pioneer Americans did not prevail in England prior to colonization, nor have they done so in most of the rest of the world. Their inappropriateness in an urbanized, high-technology America is daily becoming more apparent—but the old pioneer ideas have been built into the economy and the transition to a more appropriate land-use ethic is unavoidably painful. Social attitudes lag notoriously behind life's changing circumstances. Yet the conditions under which land is owned and used are, and always have been, distinguishable from the mere fact of land tenure. Throughout American history the police power and eminent domain have been available in theory to protect the public interest in land use. Thus it is not explicit historical property rights that are threatened by land-use con-

trols, but rather relatively recent and self-interested interpretations of what the rights of land-owners "ought to be." Mr. Bruce-Briggs is right in suggesting that, in the United States, public opinion has traditionally supported no more than minimal public controls over land. He is very wrong to suggest that "there has been little public debate as to whether land use is indeed a national problem." There has in fact been a great deal of debate. But debate is hardly needed to establish the fact that land use has become a major popular concern throughout the nation. From Maine to Hawaii any sampling of newspapers would readily show that land use is a major, and often *the* major, issue in many, perhaps most, communities—large and small. Millions of ordinary citizens from Ramapo, New York to Petaluma, California to Boca Raton, Florida, have been making a "fuss" about land use.

Upon examining these controversies, the root cause seems to be people getting in each other's way—differing interests claiming "rights" in the same limited areas. The simple percentage arithmetic which Bruce-Briggs invokes to "commonsensically" deflate alarms over land use have very little relevance to actual issues or controversies. To argue, for example, that Americans "can have just about all the land they want" is to carry abstraction beyond any practical meaning. An American can have no more land than he can obtain by purchase, gift, or fraud. He can't have what others won't sell. *Where* land is situated makes all the difference. The skeptic should compare how much land he can buy on the coast of California or Florida with an equal amount (plus or minus mineral rights) in South Dakota.

There are many different reasons why Americans want land, and location is highly pertinent to most of the uses they have in mind. For example, the controversy over the Greater Miami, Florida airport arose because many people, and several government agencies, had incompatible plans for the same area. Airport boosters and the Federal Aviation Agency wanted an airport on land that conservationists and the National Park Service considered essential as a fresh water reservoir for the Everglades National Park, and that speculators and farmers wanted drained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for development and agriculture. Market economics could not resolve the issue in the absence of government policy decisions. Moreover, all Americans, and more particularly those paying Federal income tax, had a stake in the nation's investment in the Everglades National Park which development or drainage in the

peripheral area would have impaired.

Americans can't have "just about all the land they want" if *where* they want it makes a difference. Most Americans seem to want land in or near that 1.15% of urbanized land which Bruce-Briggs cites to show that the pressure on land is highly localized. Competition for the best sites for various uses has enormously increased the price of land in all sub-urbanized areas. In the rural remainder, the amount of land actually available for purchase (and attractive to most people) shrinks to a fraction of the total when one subtracts publicly-owned land, private land unavailable for purchase, and land unsuitable for occupancy or investment. The high mobility and relative affluence of Americans puts a high premium on attractive recreational and second-home sites. For example, land-use control has become a popular issue in Vermont, overcoming traditional aversion to government regulation, because a second-home influx from megalopolis has been perceived as threatening the environmental and social integrity of the state, and has given rise to numerous conflicts over changing patterns of settlement and land use.

Bruce-Briggs confuses population densities and crowding. The two concepts are not invariably related. The footnote consigning experiments with rats to the wastebasket of erroneous analogies is itself a misconstruction, if it refers to the studies of John B. Calhoun on the ecology and sociology of the Norway Rat. Calhoun did not pack his rats into tight spaces. The crowding that reached pathological proportions in those experiments was not a consequence of absolute unavoidable densities, but rather a consequence of rat behavior in an environment with unnaturally restricted parameters. There were limits to space in Calhoun's pens, as there are also practical limits to the space available to residents of Southern California. To argue that "no one has ever made a credible case that any of our urban problems are exacerbated by crowding" is to ignore realities as obvious as urban traffic jams, and a large documented literature on human socio-pathology. One might note Stanley Milgram's studies reported in *Science* (1970) on the adaptation of people to circumstances of very numerous and heterogeneous populations in areas of high density, for example in New York City. Milgram found that high-density urban life in American cities created an interpersonal overload that led to behavioral adaptations that many people would describe as sociopathic or anti-social. But high densities can exist without "crowding," or intolerable interpersonal overload, provid-

ed that there is an orderly and mutually considerate distribution of persons and their activities. This suggests planning of some kind—at least mutual premeditated forbearance—behavior not easily achieved in cities as they have developed in America.

To say that almost all Americans want suburban sprawl because many want a single-family house with land, is like arguing that almost all Americans want lung cancer because many enjoy smoking. It is not true that sprawl is the price of suburban living. Prior to mass use of automobiles and expressways, American suburbs clustered along commuter railways. Suburbs adjacent to Boston, Chicago, New York, and even Los Angeles were relatively compact (as compared to now) prior to the second quarter of this century. The leap-frogging over open farmland to random siting of tract-housing and factories across the open countryside has more to do with the economics and politics of land development and transportation than with the preferences of most people. Sprawl defeats what many Americans have sought in suburban living and accounts for grass-roots efforts in many communities to contain or prevent the disorderly and ultimately uneconomic destruction of the countryside by indiscriminate subdividing.

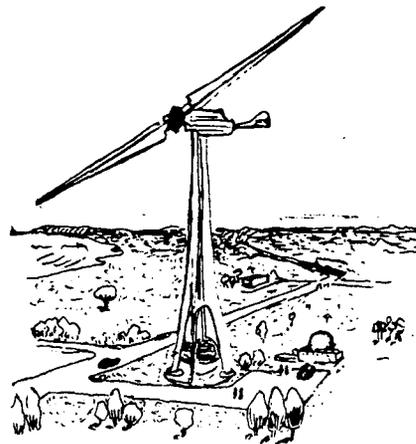
Bruce-Briggs' argument that the low densities of American metropolitan areas make "air and water pollution...negligible to the point of being, for all practical purposes, nonexistent" is comparable to arguing that the earth is for all practical purposes flat. For some purposes, flatness is a workable assumption, but not for many. Similarly, the proposition that low density means negligible pollution has very limited practical validity and as a generalization is absolutely untrue. There is plenty of evidence to correct Mr. Bruce-Briggs' apparent lack of information on this point. For example, in the famous Trail Smelter Case an international arbitration awarded compensation to American farmers for damages caused by industrial emissions originating in a thinly settled area of Canada. The desert holly in Death Valley is now suffering damage attributed by scientists to smog seeping over the mountains from the Los Angeles Basin. The Swedes complain of acid rain from sulphates and particulates carried across the North Sea from Great Britain. Some of our least dense cities, such as Los Angeles and Phoenix, have among the worst air pollution, because, as densities diminish in America, trips by automobiles increase. Comparable densities in India generate much less air pollution because most travel proceeds on motorless vehicles or on foot. I am not advocating Indian life-styles, but observing that in industrialized, automotive America, low densities do not necessarily result in negligible pollution.

Not surprisingly Bruce-Briggs invokes the pseudo-issue of "ducks versus people" to discount one set of human values in

favor of another. This ploy is always good for laughs at the expense of "environmentalists," employing phrases such as "those whose concern for mosquitoes overrides concern for humanity," or those who prefer "sea gulls to people," as if these were the real preferences at issue. He objects to the protection of wilderness areas from overuse because "most human beings seem to feel that people are more important than animals and the overrunning of wilderness areas indicates that better use is being made of them by man." This statement disregards the concept of the "carrying capacity" of land for various purposes. It disregards the not uncommon need of people to prevent themselves from inadvertently destroying what they are attempting to preserve.

Underlying wilderness protection, Bruce-Briggs finds "an ugly strain of narrow class interest." The social origins of founders and members of some of the leading conservation organizations "indicate a serious attempt by the prosperous to ban the rabble and preserve the wilderness for themselves." No evidence is presented to support this allegation. At the very least, an honest analysis would present a comparison of the social origins and incomes of officers and members of conservation organizations with membership in associations for mental health, family relations, multiple sclerosis, responsible government, and civil liberties. In most cases, the people involved would probably be above average in education and income. But would this imply class bias? Paraphrasing Mr. Bruce-Briggs, it is interesting to observe how often laissez-faire self-styled conservatives metaphorically walk backwards into Marxist rhetoric. The "class bias" of environmentalism also reveals itself to the author through public officials who want to discourage ordinary people from having houses and cars, but who themselves live in "nice big houses" in "posh" low density suburbs. But is a bias in favor of alternatives to the automobile through public transportation a bias against the handicapped, and those too young, too old or too poor to own automobiles? Efforts to reduce the necessity for routine mass use of automobiles does not deny the automobile to ordinary people, but may well prolong the period when they may enjoy the advantages of the automobile at fuel costs they can afford.

If increases in building costs are putting the free-standing private house beyond the reach of low-income buyers, the advocates of land-use controls are hardly to blame, and neither are the federal agencies whose mortgage and insurance policies have encouraged mass low-cost tract housing. The monotonous stretches of "Levittowns" that are also a part of suburbia may seem desirable to people who flocked to them from deteriorating inner cities. But we cannot be confident that their children will regard their environment as ideal. Experiments with unconventional types of



## The Lion That Beeped

ERDA and NASA have awarded \$7.1 million to build the largest windmill ever constructed, a 1.5 megawatt electric generator powered by two fiberglass blades spanning 200 ft, all mounted on a tower 150 ft tall.

Just look at those figures again: \$7.1 million for a monster on a 150 ft tower to give a crummy 1.5 MW, barely enough to power 500 homes. The investment is an astronomical \$4,733 per installed kilowatt, about 10 times that of a conventional power plant.

That in itself need not be bad; research is always expensive.

What is bad is the PR barrage by the mice that roar about this lion that beeps. ERDA reportedly claims that it is designed "to test the feasibility of wind energy in meeting the nation's fuel shortage," and *Business Week* quotes, or more probably misquotes, a Lockheed spokesman as saying that by 1995 "wind energy can supply almost 19% of the electric power demand."

Will someone please lend the bird-brained boys of *Business Week* a pocket calculator? To attain 19% of even the present generating capacity, and even if the wind blew at 18 mph everywhere all the time, you would need 63,333 of these beeping lions — windmills here, windmills there, here mills, there mills, everywhere windmills, *Business Week* is going nuts, eea, eea, yo.

Excerpted from the October 1976 issue of  
**ACCESS TO ENERGY**

a pro-science, pro-technology, pro-free enterprise monthly newsletter, now in its fourth year of technical enlightenment, opposition to government interference in free markets, and refutation of environmental superstitions. Published by Dr Petr Beckmann, professor of electrical engineering at the University of Colorado (independently of the University or any other institution), and written for laymen (yet Ph.D.'s renew their subscriptions, too).

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If Pulitzer prizes were given on an unbiased basis to outspoken and authoritative journals, one certainly would be given to Access to Energy. This newsletter is an incisive, tell-it-as-it-is journal that is fast developing a nationwide following.

Anthony Harrigan in SENSING THE NEWS

Access to Energy is the best single concise source of up-to-the-minute facts — facts to confound the anti-science, anti-technology, anti-free enterprise demagoguery of the eco-freak doom-criers. More than that, it is fun to read! LIBERTARIAN REVIEW

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housing arrangements have taken place throughout the country and the experimenters are usually the relatively young.

The attack upon environmental protectionists as self-serving elitists has been a favorite strategy of radical egalitarians. Its effectiveness rests on the implied assumption that the only class biases that are ugly are those of the relatively well-off or well-educated. These critics rarely mention biases among other classes that could deny an opportunity for people to enjoy unspoiled nature. But do not all classes and conditions of mankind have biases? The notion that environmental quality is only of concern to a privileged few does not square with the evidence of public opinion polls during the last decade, nor with legislators' impressions of popular preferences. Large numbers of urban-dwelling Americans own no land and may never do so. Is it not in their interest to protect their access to forests, beaches, and meadows, and in so doing to safeguard these environmental assets which large numbers of users, in the absence of protective ground-rules, might innocently destroy through mere pressure of usage?

The implication that class-biased selfishness is behind the efforts of "a leading western-based club" (Sierra?) to keep young blue-collar workers and their motorcycles out of wilderness areas, confuses the off-road vehicle issue and unfairly distorts the motives of environmental protection groups. There are many well-to-do white-collar motorcyclists including business executives and college professors. But would it be in the public interest to jeopardize the values of wilderness to all other persons on behalf of cyclists who may

take advantage of many other areas for recreation? The conservationists include themselves in the restrictions they advocate for everyone in the interest of preserving the integrity of the environment for all people including generations yet to come. To this extent their "bias" is neither "ugly" nor "narrow." A motorcycle rally in the fragile ecosystems of our southwestern deserts or alpine meadows could destroy in one afternoon, and for all foreseeable future time, an environment that was thousands of years in the making.

To argue that it is "excellent that our waterfronts are 'cluttered' with vacation resorts for how else can a maximum number of Americans enjoy the water?" is to disregard the excellent examples of planned waterfront development that optimizes a finite resource for a diversity of popular interests. Orange County, California has provided at Dana Point on the Pacific Ocean opportunities for more people with more interests in the water than could be accommodated by unplanned cluttered developments. Evidently a substantial number of Californians did not believe that unplanned development of the coast was excellent or they would not have adopted by popular initiative Proposition 20 establishing state responsibility for land use on the coast. Nor would the United States Congress have enacted the Coastal Zone Management Act had it agreed that subdivisions and cluttered resorts maximized the values of the coastal areas for most people. On the contrary, the effect of cluttered development, in depriving many Americans from access to and enjoyment of the coasts, was a factor prompting this piece of national land-use legislation.

If Bruce-Briggs' article reflects true convictions, it then also reflects a disastrous lack of understanding of the natural sciences, of the American conservation movement, of agriculture, of public health, and of public law—among many other things. How else can one explain the assertion that "No agricultural expert seriously doubts that we could increase production fifty percent with existing technology on existing lands, if there were sufficient demand." On the contrary, I think it doubtful if one could find many agricultural experts who would agree with this statement and even those would surely have serious reservations about the costs of such an increase and the ability to sustain it over time.

The author's belief that "simple arithmetic is adequate to put the land use problem in perspective" may explain his total misconstruction of the issue, of its causes, its real and not distorted arguments, and of the motives of persons working for scientifically-informed, long-range land-use planning consistent with the interests of society as a whole, now, and in the future. The relationships of people to land are not simple, and have become especially complex in an advanced technological society such as ours. It is easy to assert that "complex studies are unnecessary" if one has no comprehension of the complexities of the real world. Thus, the author could hardly say that "no land use creates a pollution problem" if he understood the dangers created in many communities by toxic substances seeping from so-called sanitary landfills or of the

*(continued on page 39)*

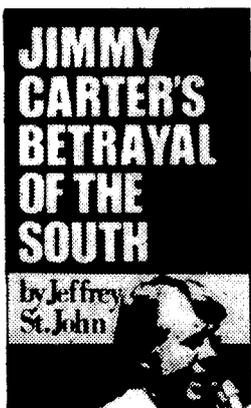
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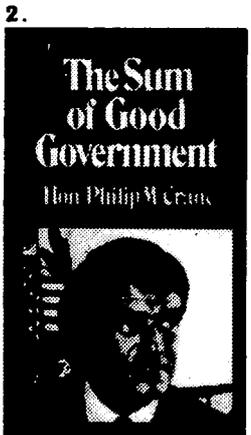


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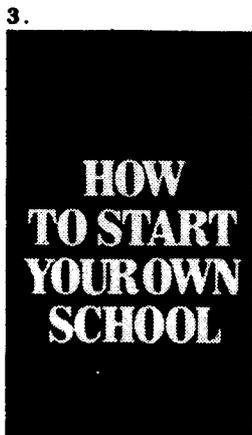
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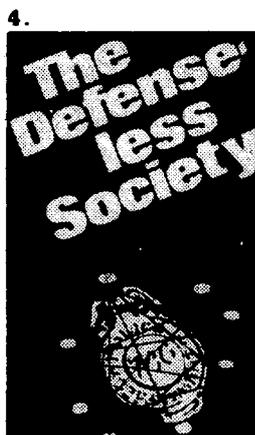
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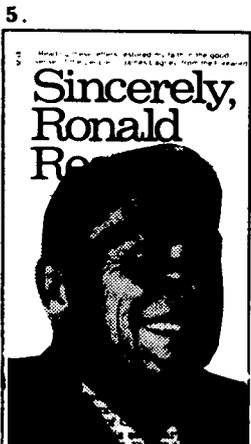
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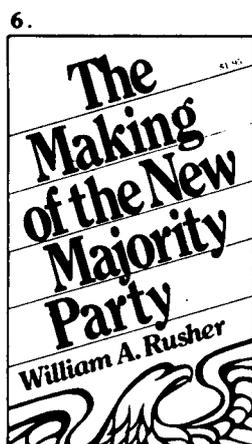
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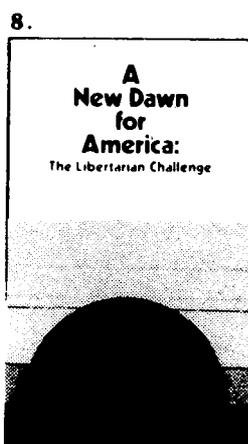
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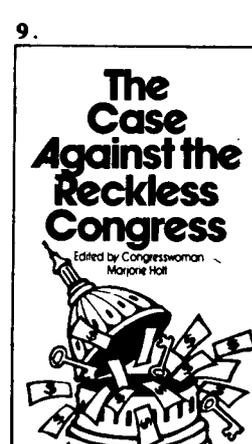
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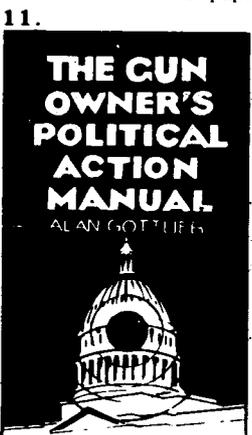
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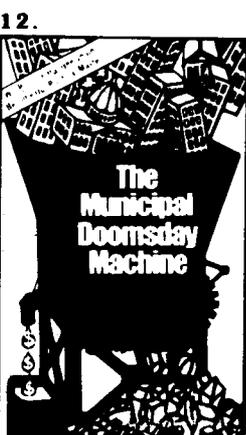
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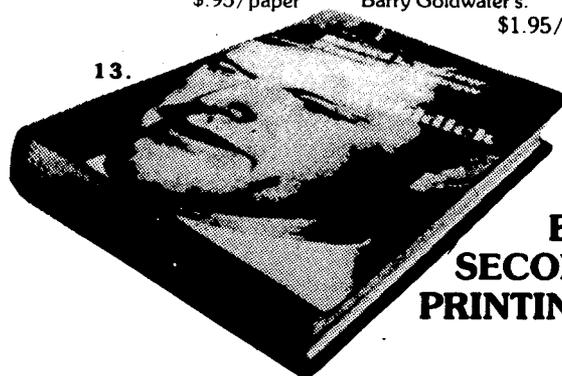
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**New York Times**

Miss Letty Cottin Pogrebin writing under the pen name Letty Cottin Pogrebin uses the Socratic method to devastating effect. Such a mind! Such a body!:

With so much real suffering in full view, why has news-media attention been lavished on the inevitable pockets of dissension in the women's movement itself? After ten years of consciousness-raising, hearings and legal battles, why are some people still debating whether or not injustice exists? During hard times (war, reconstruction, depression, unemployment) why is it always women who are asked to step aside in favor of men, no matter what the real need of the individual may be?

Nobody had to teach blacks how to recognize racism, yet millions of women are still unable to identify sexism. [March 18, 1976]

**The Nation**

Apodiabolosis, as practiced by the world-renowned humanitarians at *The Nation*, for over a century the voice of the ethically besotted:

...in letting Butz go for what he called a "gross indiscretion" (meaning: it's all right to think that way, but not to say it out loud), the President lavished such words of praise on him as "decent," "good," "courageous," and said he remained "a close personal friend." If any further evidence were needed as to the essential vulgarity of Ford and his administration, it is there in that smarmy language.

[October 16, 1976]

**Chicago Tribune Magazine**

As invincible to reason as she apparently is to Valium, Madame Shirley MacLaine heaves up another screed on political economy and mysticism:

Anyway, I think the sex talk is a diversionary tactic from the real issue, which is economics. The real thing is that the system we're living under is unfair, not just to women but to everybody. And the women's movement—which talks about things like equal pay—has not joined that issue. The very notion of capitalism makes exploitation necessary. That's why I'm not involved in this election. I don't know what they're talkin' about. All the candidates seem to be fearful, probably because the changes that have to be made in this country would be so harsh, so drastic, no one wants to tackle them. Except the people. [June 6, 1976]

**Time**

Mrs. Ida Mae Howland sounds the tocsin against grayness and decline in *Time's* "Forum." Wake up America:

As Chinese, Koreans, Indians and, of course, Mexicans victimize this republic yearly by their arrival, *Time* blithely suggests that these people are valued additions to our gene pool. This is an infamy.

This nation was established in 1776 as a white republic. You and your irresponsible cohorts want to bastardize it into a miscegenationist grayness that will lead it to an inescapable decline. [July 26, 1976]

**Harper's**

Mr. Bjorn Kumm, aptly named reporter for the world renowned Swedish gazette *Aftonbladet*, cheerfully offers a specimen of Swedish casuistry, the kind that stimulates prodigies of thought in his imbecile homeland:

The Third World is not much of a threat, I am afraid, and I feel deeply distressed by this fact. Attacking the idea of Zionism through UN resolutions or even through occasional hijackings and airport massacres is not the result of some Machiavellian, world-wide, totalitarian conspiracy. What has happened in Munich, at Lod Airport, in Cairo, and Bangkok over the past few years is the outcome of terrible frustration and weakness in Third World nations and states, some of which, like Palestine, are so weak that they do not even exist. Terrorism—which has claimed fewer lives in a decade than one day of traditional, regular warfare—is the poor man's, the poor country's last desperate attempt at stopping the big powers and their much more efficient and brutal methods of imposing their will. [September 1976]

**Mother Jones**

A confession of the utmost moment, from a palpable, olfactible, audible, and unreadable jackass, Robert Lipsyte:

We need an End to Masculinity—a revocation of that illegitimate birth certificate that imprisons the biological male in a web of burdens and responsibilities that limits his options as a human being almost as severely as his sisters have been limited by sexual discrimination.

The traditional oppression of women, as murderous as it is, can be frontally assaulted. It's happening. For many women righteously storming the castle, the battle will provide a fulfillment almost as rich as equality. But men have no such accessible enemies. We are our enemy: other men and parts of ourselves....

I measure myself only against other men. The size of my bank account, the size of my penis, the imagined size of my obituary when it finally shouldn't matter anymore.

[September/October 1976]

**Harper's Weekly**

The public announcement of "a single, 35-year-old male in perfect health," published in *Harper's Weekly*, a self-proclaimed "Journal of Civilization":

I am a single, 35-year-old male in perfect health. However, my so-called natural, intrinsic, sexual drives, urges, and appetites have long proven themselves to be useless burdens which shall never realize their supposedly hedonistic manifestations. Therefore, I wish to channel these energies elsewhere. But first, I would appreciate hearing from any individuals and organizations who may be able to recommend to me any medical, naturopathic, or mental procedure, be it surgery, chemotherapy, medications, will power, meditation, diet, etc., which shall result in a complete elimination and permanent suppression of my sexual urges. Randell Thomas, 202 So. Franklin, Wenatchee, Washington 98801 [April 5, 1976]

**Chicago Tribune**

Vietnam's wonderful symbiosis of "military authority" and "a liberated attitude," as elucidated by the Rev. Jesse Jackson, in a discourse full of hope:

I believe we should look to the Third World for an answer. The message from there is clear: Through the proper use of money and a positive attitude, we can stimulate self-development and give the people a vision. It has been fascinating for me to observe what has happened in South Vietnam in the past year. The new Saigon leaders have spent little time talking about the Americans who carpet-bombed and defoliated their country. Instead they have concentrated on rebuilding, putting people to work, inculcating new values and attitudes. They did it with military authority and a liberated attitude. [April 18, 1976]

**New York Times Magazine**

The pious and profound Francine du Plessix Gray renders a remarkable account of Christian endeavor in the late 1960s and chronicles the theological deliberations that obtained:

As a member of a small New England chapter of Clergy and Laity Concerned About Vietnam, I had worked closely with activist churchmen in the 60's, written manifestoes, marched, fasted, sat in with them. At the Mobilization that brought half a million Americans to the Capitol in the fall of 1969, I'd walked a stretch of road with Boston supporter Harvey Cox, chanting, "All we are asking is Give peace a chance," with the mesmeric monotony of a rosary. "What's the absolute opposite of far out, Harvey?" I'd asked during a pause in the singing, searching for some title. "Way in, I guess," he'd mumbled, and passed me a hunk of his hot dog. [June 27, 1976]

**Washington Star**

After years of illusory tumult over busing Mr. Arthur S. Flemming, exalté of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, manfully steps to the microphone and launches this stunning revelation:

...where there is initial hostility it disappears very quickly because of the fact that the community, the school administrators, the teachers, and the students begin to realize that first of all, they're having the opportunity of participating in the implementation of the Constitution of the United States and in the second place they begin to realize that there are very significant benefits that flow from this particular process. [September 15, 1976]

**Commonweal**

The state of economic education in the land of the Jesuits:

Indeed, many of the Postal Service's problems would disappear in the morning, if just one or two of the \$100 billions being pumped into the military this year were diverted to help solve its problems. [June 18, 1976]