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# EDITORIALS

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## ZOO SEX

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr

The present pother over AIDS is comparable to no other problem in American history. It is a health problem as tuberculosis was once a health problem, but now it has been transmogrified into a civil rights matter with quasi-religious overtones. In addressing tuberculosis a century ago, one was addressing an illness particularly prevalent among tenement dwellers. Nonetheless, authorities addressed the matter boldly and intelligently without fear of political harassment. Consequently, measures were implemented to reduce the disease even before suitable drugs had been developed. For instance, overcrowded living conditions were ameliorated. Hygiene was improved. Diets were changed.

Today any discussion of AIDS is sheathed in euphemisms, as one must constantly duck the recriminations of homosexual-rights moralizers whose strictures are like nothing so much as those of their archenemies, the Bible-pounders. Recommendations from health authorities must pass the solemn judgments of sexual pontificators, ideologues, and quacks. As time passes the disease spreads. Rarely is it discussed candidly or intelligently. This fall the question facing the public is whether schools should bar young

AIDS victims. Various ideologues say no. New York's Mayor Koch proffers a qualified yes. Utterly lost from view is the grim acknowledgement that these children will soon be dead and that while many of America's 13,000 AIDS sufferers contracted the disease by disregarding proper hygiene, these children suffer because adults have frequently absconded from their responsibilities for maintaining public health.

AIDS is not a civil rights problem. It is a public health problem associated with promiscuous sex, specifically promiscuous homosexual sex. Over a decade ago health authorities recognized that such zoo sex posed a serious health problem. That was when researchers discovered a high incidence among homosexuals of hepatitis-B, theretofore a virus uncommon in America. At that point public health authorities should have refused to allow homosexuals to donate blood, for their blood raised the risk of hepatitis-B's spreading to the general public. Nothing was done then, and when AIDS made its appearance in the homosexual community shortly thereafter, homosexual groups thwarted attempts to question potential blood donors about their "sexual orientation." Apparently, an individual's right to remain silent regarding questions of sexual hygiene takes precedence over a blood recipient's right to sound medical care.

Similarly, when officials in such

cities as New York and San Francisco tried to shut down homosexual bathhouses, which are veritable breeding swamps for AIDS and other homosexual-related diseases, homosexual-rights moralizers brought these efforts to ruin. As many as one million Americans are AIDS carriers, and researchers believe that 10 percent of these unfortunates will come down with the disease and die. Some homosexuals have seen the light and demand that AIDS be treated as the public-health menace that it is, but others frustrate proper policy and turn the matter into soap opera. They balk at attempts to quarantine the disease. They reproach the government for not spending money for cures.

Actually, vast amounts have now been allotted for AIDS research. In the past four years annual government appropriations have climbed from \$5.5 million to over \$120 million. Yet any notion of a cure being within our grasp is utterly fanciful. The AIDS agent is

a virus and, as with most common viral diseases, cures remain elusive. Vaccines are more plausible, but the AIDS virus is prone to constant mutation. Any vaccine developed today would in all probability be ineffectual tomorrow owing to changes in the viral strain.

AIDS is but one of an unedifying congeries of serious diseases prevalent among promiscuous homosexuals. A year ago, Patrick Buchanan, then a syndicated columnist, now head of White House communications, and Dr. Gordon Muir, a medical researcher, published an essay in these pages listing nearly a half dozen dangerous health problems, such as "Gay Bowel Syndrome" and hepatitis non-A non-B, spreading from the homosexual community to the general public. These problems ought to be addressed intelligently. America is now in the absurd position of treating exhaled smoke from cigarette smokers as more dangerous than viruses and parasites of proven deadliness. □

## MYSTERIOUS RETICENCE

As Ronald Reagan, who has vanquished so many liberals, comes out yet again to battle their paladins on Capitol Hill and in the bureaucratic foxholes, one of the mysteries of the Republic must be the scarcity of commentaries and books admiring or even noting his accomplishments. In the United Kingdom there are, at this very hour, over half a dozen books out assaying Prime Minister Thatcher's accomplishments or blunders. In America, I doubt there are that many different presidential postcards available, though the Reagan Administration is markedly more historic than the Thatcher government, its break with the past being bolder. And Mrs. Thatcher appears almost monotonous when placed next to Ronald Reagan, an ex-actor, judged a political has-been in 1977, and now our oldest President.

We have, admittedly, the *obligato* campaign books, but all are tedious and insipid. Some Washington observers argue that the dullness of these books and the paucity of other Reagan books is owing to the size of the 1984 landslide and to the fact that in his campaign Ron said very little about his policies and his *Weltanschauung*. The explanation will not wash.

Electoral squeakers are not the only elections that fetch the imagination and quicken the pulse. The Roosevelt election of 1936 was a stupendous landslide, and on the campaign trail the great Roosevelt said little that was daring or memorable. The election evoked, however, vast commentary. It marked the end of the old Republican order and the rise of a new perspective on

Adapted from RET's weekly Washington Post column syndicated by King Features.



merican constitutional politics. The Roosevelt campaign hummed along lawlessly, but few campaigns have attracted more literary attention, and to this day many of us recognize James Farley's jest: "As Maine goes, so goes Vermont."

No such jests mark the 1984 landslide, nor will you find as many books written about RR's first five years as were written about FDR's, though the Reagan Administration represents a similar disjunction with the past. After overcoming such fantastic figures as Gary Hart, Jesse Jackson, and George McGovern, the Hon. Walter Mondale

headed possibly the most liberal ticket of the century, only to blow up in a puff on election day when the voters opted for one of the century's most conservative tickets, Reagan-Bush—not the equal of the fabulous Coolidge-Dawes ticket of 1924, but admirably conservative nonetheless. What is more, the Reagan Administration's policies have been bold departures from the social engineering that had reached an apogee with affirmative action, from spiraling taxation, and from the passivity of the Carter foreign policy. Still, books, articles, and even television commentaries on these amazing events are scarce.

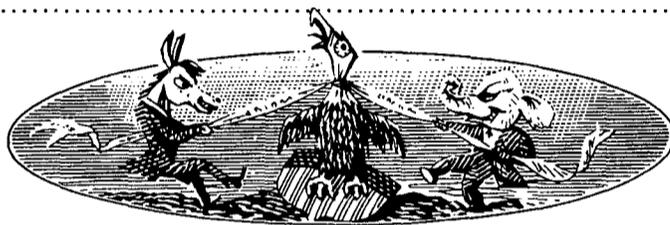
What makes this a mystery is that

the Reagan Administration could make such a gripping legend. Radicals could bring together all their fears of impending doom: starvation in the streets, upheaval amongst the masses, suddenly comes America's Marxist Dawn! But radicals have contemplated the Reagan regime for five years and are too fearful now to write of such calamity and rebirth. Conservatives, too, could turn out a tolerable legend: a septuagenarian Prince Charming, a pretty and stylish First Lady, liberty renewed, the American eagle soars anew—a Camelot for clock-stoppers! Yet conservatives seem speechless. In Washington they fret over jobs and live with the melancholy knowledge that few of

their colleagues read, so why write about Ronald Reagan?

The real question is why the consensus commentators in the middle do not write interesting books about the last five years of Reaganism. Instead they write sleep-inducing tomes such as Jack Germond and Jules Witcover's aptly titled *Wake Us When It's Over*. Is this owing to a massive loss of imagination, or has it to do with their source in the Oval Office? Perhaps Ronald Reagan does not want books and articles written about him. Upon close inspection, there always has been a mysterious reticence around Ronald Reagan, and it intensifies the closer one gets to him. □

## CAPITOL IDEAS



### ARABESQUE

by Tom Bethell

The American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee is or purports to be one of those civil rights groups that we hear so much about, forever accusing the rest of us of insensitivity or worse. It was founded by James Abourezk, the former senator from South Dakota, in response to "stereotyping, defamation and discrimination directed against Americans of Arab descent." There was another founder, called Jim Zogby, but he seems to have disagreed with Abourezk, and then he left to become vice chairman of Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign. The ADC (as it is called) is now Abourezk's baby, with no trace of Zogby remaining.

I decided to attend ADC's annual convention, held this year at the Washington Hilton on Connecticut Avenue. Many interesting speakers were scheduled to appear, either in person or by satellite hookup. Here is a partial list, and ask yourself as you read what these people have in common (what is the defining characteristic of the group): former undersecretary of state George Ball; Tom Brokaw of NBC; Washington mayor Marion Barry; *Nation* columnists Alexander Cockburn and Christopher Hitchens; Congressman David Obey and former Congressmen Pete McCloskey and Paul

Findley; folk singer Pete Seeger; Yassir Arafat, the well-known Palestinian, and Vanessa Redgrave, the actress.

Surveying this list, I found it hard to believe that all these people were appearing at the Hilton because they were exercised about the negative stereotyping of Arab-Americans; for example, such "documented instances of harassment" as the claim that on the week of June 16-22, in the thick of the hostage crisis, a radio talk-show host in San Francisco referred to Shiite Muslims as "camel jockeys" and "rag heads," as a result of which he "was forced off the air for one day but was back the next and refused to apologize."

No, there had to be something rather more pressing on the minds of this well-dressed throng pouring into the Hilton ballroom to have lunch and hear network anchorman Tom Brokaw speak! Israel, I submit, preoccupied

them rather more than the tent-and-camel stereotype. This hypothesis gains in plausibility when one recalls that the star speaker at last year's gathering was Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam, who arrived with six bodyguards, promised that Jerusalem would be the center of World War III, and was hailed with a thunderous standing ovation.

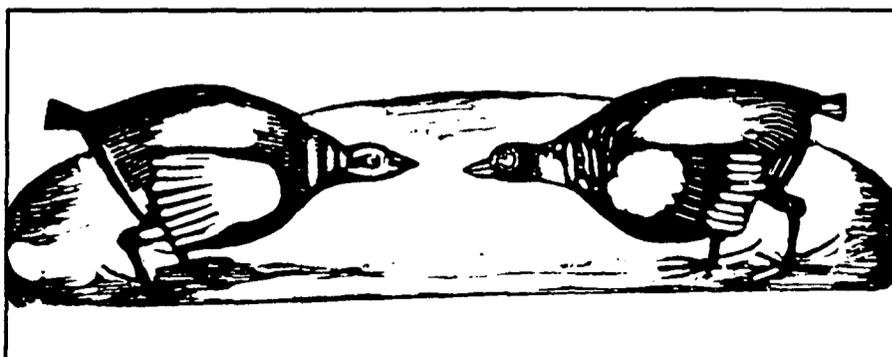
Abourezk I have known for years and I have always thought him a genial fellow, although I would say one of the least victimized people I have met in Washington. He was already seated at the dais so I said hello and told him that he did not look particularly discriminated against to me. "Well, I'm not," he said, "but my clients are."

On behalf of his clients, the ADC took out three full-page ads in the *Washington Post* in June—the week the foreign aid bill came up for a vote—objecting to the high levels of U.S. aid to Israel. These ads alone (and there

were others across the country) cost Abourezk's clients \$100,000, so they must be rich even if they are oppressed.

Brokaw spoke decorously, although scarcely concealing his hero-worship of Hafez Assad, the Syrian dictator, whose strongman status in the Middle East has earned him enormous respect in the U.S. media. And since it is this year's fashion, Brokaw was also deferential toward the Soviet dictator Gorbachev, whom he described as being "not just a hostage to the past." It seemed odd in a way that we should be sitting there so respectfully as this youthful newsreader gave us his *aperçus* about international relations—testament, of course, to his ability to decide, at least in part, where to cast the spotlight of attention, and where *not* to cast it. (The media is a collection of spotlights, not floodlights. The general idea seems to be to get all the spotlights aimed at the same place, such as South Africa. This creates an intolerable glare, an aura of crisis, and a sense of mission in the press corps: They know when that happens they are not merely describing events but helping to make them happen.)

Brokaw spoke longingly about the prospects for "successful peace negotiations" in the Middle East—success here to be thought of as the Administration bringing pressure on Israel to undermine its own security. Brokaw saw that such pressure and therefore



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