

---

# THE CONTINUING CRISIS

---



•July was baked to a cinder and discarded as the summer sun transformed America into the largest sauna chamber in the world. The concomitant drought made farmers even more idle than usual, though the federal government promised more opportunities to engage in the noble husbandmen's favorite pastime, lugging heavy federal checks down to the First National. The drought left migrant farm workers with practically no place to which they might migrate profitably. And even some of the pillars of American society were affected. Golfers were especially hard hit, as the sun seared their grassy proving grounds. Tennis players fled for the indoors, repelled by the sight of their own copious sweat. Nor were the nation's duck hunters spared. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife service reports that a record number of North American ducks have fled far into the northlands to escape the drought, meaning that population growth among them will be drastically reduced and that there will be fewer web-footed fowl in Southern nesting areas for duck hunters to blast hell out of.

•Evidence that history repeats itself was fulsomely provided in the Ukraine, where, at a sepulchral gathering for a gentleman who had croaked from drinking industrial alcohol, mourners imbibed more of the same, leaving ten at room temperature and eighty hospitalized. In Atlanta, Georgia, the Democrats nominated yet another prosaic governor of the humorless, goody-two-shoes variety to wrest the White House from the clutches of the Fortune 500 and the Eastern Bankers. After several days of high jinks by the Rev. Jesse Jackson, a Democratic National Convention, whose composition was heavily

ly fruit cake (only 38 percent were white males and many of them walked oddly), nominated Governor Michael S. Dukakis as its presidential candidate and Senator Lloyd Bentsen to help with the jokes. It is a gruesome ticket, expressive of a gruesome gathering. Much of the convention's oratory was devoted to the deplorable state of the American economy, then in its sixty-seventh straight month of growth with high employment, low inflation, and rising productivity. Cataracts of tears were shed for the enormities of American history; and the TV cameras fixed on weebegone visages of black delegates, Indians, Eskimos, Aleuts, people with runny noses, acne, incurable bad breath, bad teeth, atrocious wardrobes, and not one cheerful woman. What is more, considering that most of the men were middle-aged, a surprisingly large number had at least one idiotic cowlick sticking up. Finally, Vice President George Bush took a fearful drubbing. During his speech Senator Edward Kennedy roused the morons with repeated queries as to "Where was George?"—a line that lost its allure for him the following morning when Republican wags began to respond with "Where is Mary Jo?"

•The Consensus Press adjudged the confabulation very auspicious for the fall elections, insisting that the party's divisiveness was now consigned to the dark past and far away. This from the same press corps that insisted the Rev. Jesse Jackson never would covet the party's number two spot and always would be very polite. Possibly this time the Consensus Press is right, but the Democrats' dubious incantation, "unity from diversity," suggests disunity ahead, and the fact that they have given

the Rev. Jackson a campaign plane and one hundred more days on the campaign trail reinforces that premonition. Moreover, on July 22 *Pravda* published a very ingratiating profile of the Democrats' choice. Of course that might be owing to the fact that when the Soviets held their party congress earlier in the month it was only marginally further to the left than the Democrats' convention.

•An American patriot was given two years' probation and ordered by a New Haven judge to pay \$5,000 apiece to the Yale Coalition Against Apartheid and a local fire department. Dr. Elwood Bracey, 52, who bravely applied Prometheus' gift to unsightly and hazardous anti-apartheid shanties, which peace knaves had built on the grounds of Yale University's war memorial, will also be coerced into paying an unspecified sum to Yale if he is to avoid further trouble with what passes for the law in the Socialist Republic of New Haven. In Springfield, Illinois, burglars stole an \$800 set of false teeth from atop the stomach of a sleeping man, also making off with his camera, his wallet, and \$79 worth of food stamps. In New Orleans, Louisiana, delegates to the National Educational Association's convention, all glassy-eyed and devoted, approved a resolution exhorting school districts to provide counseling for students flummoxed about their "sexual identities." Miss Roxanne Bradshaw, secretary-treasurer of the NEA, testified that she knew a young girl who was so distressed about her sexual identity that she attempted suicide and now lies in a coma. Unfortunately, the NEA's resolution comes too late for a West Jordan, Utah woman who

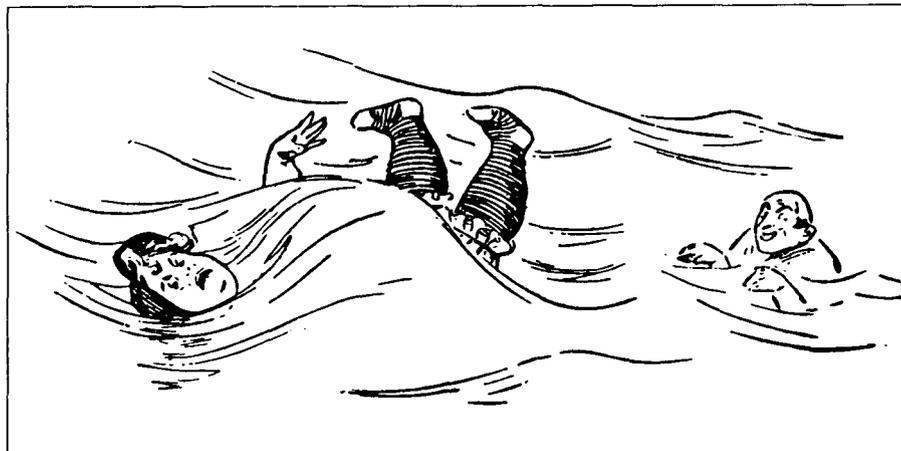
burned out her kitchen and nearly destroyed her home when she placed her underpants in the microwave and they ignited. The woman, whose name the authorities have withheld, claims she was only following the counsel of researchers from the University of Florida Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology on how to prevent yeast infection, but as every NEA delegate knows there has to be more to it than that.

•Mr. Stefan Edberg won his first Wimbledon title, and in New London, Connecticut, a mistrial was declared in the case of Mr. Richard Crafts who is accused of having murdered his wife and of disposing of her remains by using a wood chipper as though it were a gigantic Cuisinart. A queasy juror abandoned the deliberations. In Hayward, California, officials violated the sanctity of family life to prevent a Me Generation mother, Mrs. Mary Francis Bergamasco, from punishing her seven-year-old son by displaying him on the front lawn dressed as a pig and wearing a sign inscribed, "I am a dumb pig. Ugly is what you will become every time you lie and steal. Look at me squeal. My hands are tied because I cannot be trusted. This is a lesson to be learned. Look. Laugh. Thief. Stealing. Bad boy." All of which sounds very much like the logic and style of a late July *New Republic* editorial against boxing.

•Early in the month Attorney General Edwin Meese claimed vindication and announced that he was retiring to the Heritage Foundation and to the Hoover Institution. The Sandinistas expelled the United States Ambassador after harshly repressing a political demonstration. In Verona, Italy, two Germans were arrested after causing a traffic hazard by copulating on the side of a major highway, and Mrs. Anna della Vecchia has lodged a formal complaint against Tarzan and Sultan, two libidinous male lions residing at the nearby American Circus whose nocturnal amorous trysts with the circus's females have caused an unseemly racket though no arrests have been made. On July 19 what is loosely referred to as the government of Iran announced its intention to end hostilities with Iraq, just days after the venerable *Washington Times* reported that the

## Correction

In recent months this column has incorrectly referred to Governor Martin C. Dukakis of Massachusetts as Mary Lou Dukakis. This error was in no way meant to reflect on the Governor's relative obscurity or lack of stature. Our fact checkers simply were unaware of the Massachusetts miracle's consequence for world history.



Ayatollah Khomeini wears a small transistor radio around his dirty neck and watches Mickey Mouse cartoons.

•Governor Dukakis's former education adviser, aptly named Mr. Gerard T. Indelicato, was sentenced to two and a half years in the hoosegow for conspiracy, mail fraud, and tax evasion. Miss Geraldine Ferraro's son, Mr.

John Zaccaro, filed notice that he will appeal his conviction for selling \$25 worth of cocaine to an undercover agent. Miss Mildred Gillars, the American-born Nazi propagandist known as Axis Sally, passed on as did Mr. Richard Schulze-Kossens, an adjutant to the late Adolf Hitler. Miss Nico, one of Andy Warhol's film

stars, assumed room temperature for the last time, and Dr. Ely Perlman, the well-known New York City pollen counter, died of respiratory failure. Finally in San Francisco, California, an aroused citizenry is mobilizing against that infamous throwback of yesteryear, circumcision. According to the group's literature, "we

are still the only industrialized nation that routinely circumcises most of its baby boys. The implications—for sexual relationships, for issues of power, authority, and violence—are enormous." And the group, called The Victims Speak, promises foreskin restoration—O new Utopia!  
—RET

---

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

---

### Takeover Talk

In his article "The Selling of America" (*TAS*, May 1988), Irwin M. Stelzer expresses delight at the takeover mania. He rejoices at the profits that investment banks and lawyers are making as a result of corporate takeovers they have engineered. He thinks it's great that these types spend their days and nights "looking for deal-making opportunities and a chance to earn impressive fees." He seems not to understand that a strong economy depends on something more than deal-making.

The hostile takeovers of recent years have destabilized American business to an alarming degree. They have done enormous harm to well-established, sound companies and to many communities, managers, and workers. I wish that Mr. Stelzer would read D. George Harris's article "They Took Over His Company" in the May number of *Business Month*. Mr. Harris points out that "the takeover phenomenon hasn't done a thing for the American economy." He expresses the view of many responsible American businessmen, namely that the "iron triangle of takeover mania is the old story of speculators triumphing over investors. Corporate raiders aren't interested in corporate efficiency. Their aim is to make a quick buck and then move on to another company from which they can strip the cash.

—Anthony Harrigan  
President

*U.S. Business and Industrial Council  
Washington, D.C.*

### Irwin M. Stelzer replies:

Mr. Harrigan argues, first, that I do not seem "to understand that a strong economy depends on something more than deal making." Of course it does. But it depends, too, on such deal making—deal making which makes it possible for assets to be deployed in their most productive uses. Think, for a moment, about an economy in which the management of assets was perpetually frozen in the hands of those who happen to control them at any point in time. Certainly, the inefficiencies and

sloth that would result would be extraordinary.

He next complains that takeovers "have destabilized American business." Quite right. Again, think of a business environment in which there was a guarantee of stability and an assurance that, regardless of performance, business would remain in the same hands. Unhealthy, to say the least.

Finally, Mr. Harrigan worries about the debt taken on in the course of many takeovers. In my view, the owners of any business should be free to decide on the debt/equity ratios with which those businesses will operate. That is what stockholders do, in effect, when they decide to choose new managers to run their businesses, in the full knowledge that those new managers take on additional debt. So far, shareholders have decided wisely: companies that issued high-yield debt in the 1980-1986 period have grown faster, had higher productivity increases, and increased plant and equipment investment more rapidly than industry in general.

### Hummon Talmadge

In his recent review-essay "Hummon Talmadge of Georgia" (*TAS*, April 1988), Eugene Methvin argues that "to suggest the false while suppressing the true" is to lie as surely as doing in one's "mother with a rusty ax in broad daylight in a downtown department store" is to murder. By that definition, Mr. Methvin's own mother must be in as bad a shape as Lizzie Borden's. His admittedly "hostile" attack on the personal character and public career of Senator Talmadge is a venomous pastiche of inaccuracies and innuendoes unworthy of a distinguished conservative publication such as *The American Spectator*.

The inaccuracies begin in the first paragraph with Methvin's misstatement of my role in producing Talmadge's recent autobiography. The book was a collaboration based on my taped conversations with the former senator. In preparing for this project, I did a considerable amount of research in Georgia politics of the Talmadge era.

This included viewing videotapes of interviews Talmadge did with a couple of professors at West Georgia College. To say, as Methvin does, that I simply edited those videotapes is tantamount to saying that William Novak's collaboration with Lee Iacocca amounted to his editing Iacocca's television commercials.

"The tragedy of Herman Talmadge," according to Methvin, "is that he had so much political talent and such a devoted following that he might have moved mountains, and yet he accomplished so little." The truth is that much of the social and economic progress Georgia has enjoyed over the past forty years is the result of the foundation laid during Herman Talmadge's years as governor. The facts and figures to back up this assertion (which are too extensive to go into here) are detailed in Talmadge's autobiography. To quote Atlanta editor Ralph McGill, one of the patron saints of Southern liberalism, "I think Governor Talmadge has done a constructive job, that he has contributed greatly to Georgia's progress in every field save race relations."

Of course, the exception made in McGill's statement is the real crux of Methvin's brief against Herman Talmadge. There is no question that, like the vast majority of Southern politicians of his generation, Talmadge was a segregationist. That puts him on the losing side of history just as surely as Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis were. Perhaps in a hundred years it will be possible to view the segregationists of the mid-twentieth century with the same balance and detachment with which we now see the defenders of an earlier Southern way of life. Until that time, we can at least reject Methvin's implied argument that segregationist politicians such as Talmadge were, by definition, accomplices to Klan violence. (That is simply a variation of the argument that Reagan's opposition to affirmative action quotas somehow made Howard Beach possible.)

Although Herman Talmadge fought to preserve segregation during his years as governor of Georgia, the advances

the state made in education, health care, and other social services benefited both races. In fact, blacks probably benefited more because they had farther to come. For this reason, a few black leaders (such as Robert Parks of Cedartown) supported Talmadge in his first run for the Senate in 1956, and others (such as insurance executive Jesse Hill) followed suit during his campaign for re-election. In his final run for office in 1980, Talmadge had the active support of many blacks, including Martin Luther King's niece Alveda King Beal. While in office he was the first deep South senator to appoint a black aide to his staff. Indeed, by 1959 Talmadge was drawing fire from the segregationist press for stating on the floor of the Senate that the Brown decision was the law of the land.

If Mr. Methvin has read Talmadge's book closely, he knows that as a young man Herman Talmadge teamed up with the legendary civil rights attorney Austin T. Walden to defend a black man accused of murder in a barroom brawl with a white. (They got the charge reduced to manslaughter.) Years later, when Walden was trying a racially explosive case in Miller County, Governor Talmadge dispatched state troopers to provide him with round-the-clock protection. To be sure, the man who did these things was a segregationist, but he was not nor could he have been a supporter of racist violence.

Herman Talmadge's autobiography forthrightly confronts virtually every charge dredged up by Mr. Methvin and scores of others he fails to mention. It is no whitewash but a candid recollection and, yes, defense of a remarkable public life. In calling it an apologia, Methvin has stumbled upon a very apt historical analogy. When the smoke of controversy has cleared, it will be evident that Talmadge's critics have been playing Charles Kingsley to the senator's Cardinal Newman.

—Mark Royden Winchell  
Department of English  
Clemson University  
Clemson, South Carolina  
(continued on page 46)