

IN SHORT

Trust me

Not everyone believes Thomas W. Pauken, Reagan's choice to head Action, when he says he's "comfortable" with the autonomous status of the Peace Corps under the good-works agency's umbrella. Among the skeptics are senators Paul Tsongas, Christopher Dodd and Alan Cranston, who were nonetheless unable to prevent their colleagues on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee from voting 8-7 to send Pauken's confirmation on to the full Senate.

As former volunteers, Tsongas and Dodd would be particularly aware of the Peace Corps' sensitivity to any charges of a connection to U.S. intelligence operations overseas—and that's the problem with Pauken. In a private letter to Sen. Charles Percy, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, Cranston warned that "Mr. Pauken has not been candid about the extent of his intelligence work and connection from 1967 to 1973." Despite Pauken's protestations that the military just "happened to assign me" to intelligence in Vietnam, Cranston wrote, enlistment records show that Pauken requested the assignment. And during his 1968-69 stint in Vietnam, Pauken "was actively involved in 'covert' and 'clandestine' intelligence-gathering activities," according to the letter.

At the Senate hearings, former Peace Corps general counsel William Josephson testified that if Pauken wins the Action post, "for the first time, to my knowledge, the United States will have acted, however unintentionally, to lend credence to the false charge that the Peace Corps is an arm of U.S. intelligence." A Jack Anderson column warned that Pauken's confirmation "could jeopardize the safety of American volunteers abroad." And amid the grumblings at Action headquarters, there is a growing sentiment that the ties between Action and the Peace Corps should be severed as soon as possible.

Goodbye, VISTA

Some folks at the Peace Corps may want to split from Action, but VISTA—also under Action's wing—has no choice. "A decision has been made to phase out the VISTA program in fiscal year 1983," said a memorandum distributed this month to employees of VISTA and Action. As of Sept. 30, 1980, 4,800 VISTA volunteers were working in 2,000 communities across the country.

A rough draft of the memo, obtained by the Associated Press, referred to "the evolution of new ways of mobilizing citizens in voluntary services to their fellow Americans, and especially to the poor." The final version deleted the phrase "and especially to the poor." That was the only change.

Watch out, FoIA

The CIA has apparently decided that we already know enough—maybe too much. The *Washington Post* reports that the agency has sent a message to Congress proposing that it be granted a complete exemption from provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. In past years, the CIA has requested only certain specific exemptions to keep its operational and technical files secret—now it wants to slam all the drawers shut.

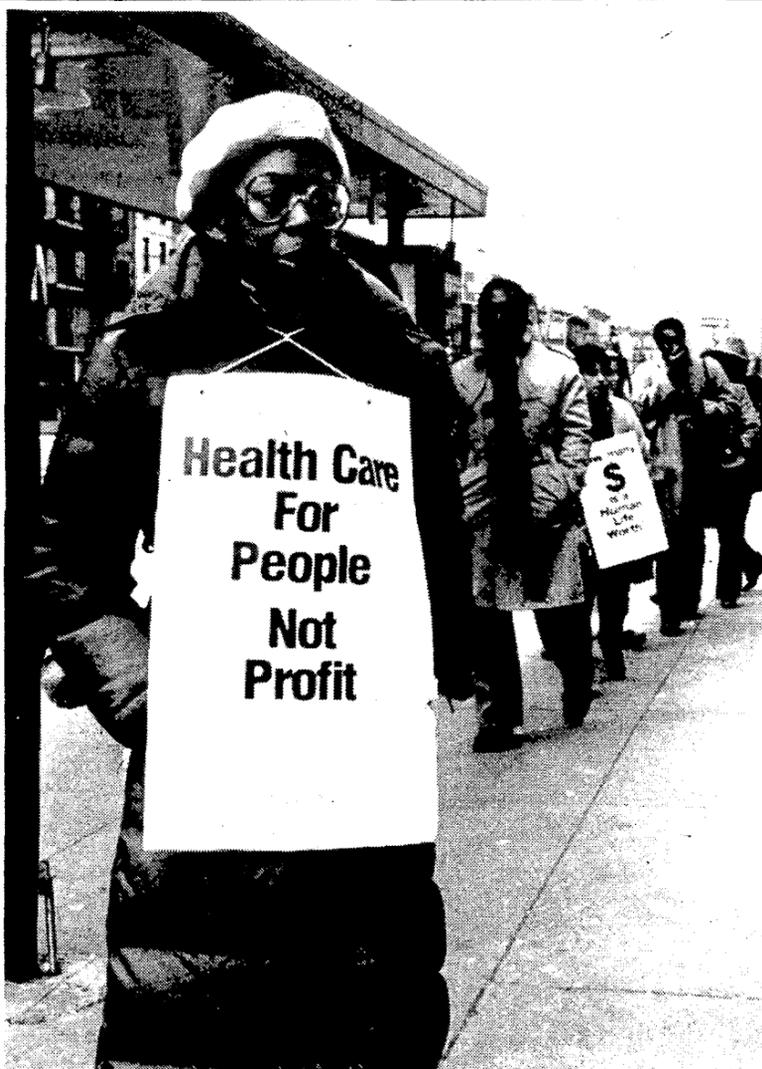
According to the Zodiac News Service, CIA deputy director Max Hugel has taken to arguing that requests under the FoIA are hindering the agency's ability to "perform its vital mission." Hugel also claims that the Act has only rarely produced information of public interest. Victims of CIA dabblings in illegal domestic spying and mind-control and drug-testing experiments might dispute this.

"I really must be going..."

On April 2, 500 residents of Chicago's 8th congressional district conducted the fifth and largest of the "people's hearings" organized by the Illinois Coalition Against Reagan Economics (ICARE). The star attraction at the meeting, held not far from *In These Times*' offices, was Rep. Daniel D. Rostenkowski, the powerful chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee and leader of Chicago's Democratic delegation in Washington.

For nearly two hours, the old-line Daley man withstood—and evaded—demands that he oppose impending cuts in welfare and unemployment compensation, food stamps, daycare, youth programs and energy assistance for the poor. "He refused to commit himself," said ICARE executive director Milt Cohen, "but he got the message strong and clear." No one from the ethnically diverse 8th C.D. could remember the last time Rostenkowski had shown up to hear his constituents' demands.

—Josh Kornbluth



Health-care workers picket Harlem Hospital in support of the CIR's ill-fated strike.

New York City to doctors: let your patients drop dead

NEW YORK—Last month, 2,500 interns and residents in New York City defied a court order and walked off the job for seven days. The doctors, all members of the militant Committee of Interns and Residents (CIR), were asking for guaranteed minimum staffing levels for physicians, nurses and technicians, as well as for an end to shortages of crucial medical equipment. These are guarantees that, to some extent, have been won in the past by doctors' organizations in Chicago, Boston and San Francisco.

That there exists a doctors' union at all underscores the changing face of American medicine. Increasing numbers of physicians (an estimated 40 percent of practicing doctors) now work as salaried employees of city or private hospitals or large private health-care organizations such as Health Insurance Plan (HIP). These are institutions run by managers, not doctors, whose interest is in the bottom line rather than in improving conditions in hospitals with no beds for critically ill patients, no blankets and long lines to get into the emergency room.

"There is nothing new or particularly innovative about what we are seeking," Dr. Jonathan House, the 33-year-old head of the union remarked one night during the strike. "What we want—a rational approach to staffing levels that the city itself believes is necessary—would allow the municipal hospital system to run in the black. Increased reimbursement by third parties—Medicaid, Medicare and private health insurers—would follow from more efficient health care of more people."

But the city bureaucracy didn't address that argument. Mayor Edward Koch and the quasi-public Health and Hospitals Corporation,

which he controls, were clearly scared of setting a precedent by allowing city workers to control workplace conditions. Koch feared that such a settlement with the CIR would have repercussions in his dealings with other, more powerful city unions like those of the police and the firefighters. He was pleased by the lukewarm support the doctors received from many of the city's labor leaders.

The city fined the doctors two days' pay for each day of the strike and threatened to withhold vital medical certification. After a tearful, stormy meeting, the CIR's 70-member strike committee voted to end the walkout after one week without achieving any of the guarantees it had sought from the city. A long strike, doctors reasoned, would have a disastrous impact on the union's limited financial resources.

—Eric Nadler

GM to warn of shutdowns

Under pressure from church groups and labor activists, General Motors recently agreed to publicize for the first time its policy on advance notice of plant closings, and to give at least six months' notice in advance of permanent plant shutdowns.

The decision was announced by the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, a branch of the New York-based National Council of Churches. It followed a month of negotiations between the nation's number one car maker and three church groups that had threatened to introduce a shareholders' resolution requiring such notification at

the next annual GM shareholders meeting. In return for GM's pledge to give the notice, the groups—which have purchased small amounts of stock in the corporation to enable them to raise such issues at annual meetings—agreed to shelve the resolution indefinitely. While such a resolution would have little chance of passing, it could embarrass the corporation and damage its public image.

Keith Rolland of the Interfaith Center called the agreement—publicized by GM in the April issue of its shareholders' publication, *Public Interest Report*—"a major step forward. It means the company can be kept more accountable to the public." He said the church groups that did the negotiating, as well as locals of the United Auto Workers, will monitor the company's adherence to the new policy.

Company spokesman insisted that there has been no change in GM policy, other than to state it publicly. "We've always tried to give at least six months' notice before a closing," one said. But in fact, workers at GM's New Departure Hyatt Bearing plant in Clark Township, N.J., were given only four months' notice when they learned last month that their plant would be closing down beginning this July unless a buyer is found. And late in 1979, GM laid off without any notice all 3,600 workers at an assembly plant in Southgate, Calif., for an indefinite period. Today 1,800 of them remain unemployed.

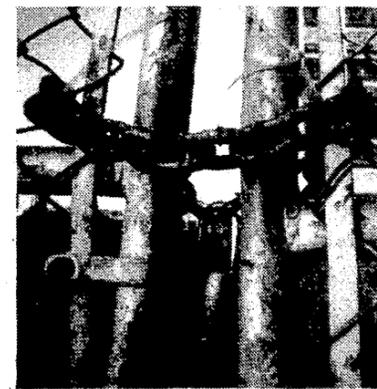
For years, the UAW has tried unsuccessfully to get GM, Ford and Chrysler to include policies of advance notice in union contracts. Short notice in a plant shutdown is doubly damaging to workers because in addition to losing their jobs and often losing credit for work-hours put toward a pension, they have no time to plan ahead financially for a period of unemployment. Nor do they have a chance to retrain for some new profession.

In many European countries, such as Sweden and West Germany, the state requires firms to give anywhere from six months' to a year's notice before moving or closing down a plant. The U.S. has no such laws.

The advance-notice policy, if GM makes good on its promise, will give much-needed added security to auto workers, especially in older plants. With GM and the other U.S. automakers posting record losses in 1980 and the sales outlook this year remaining unpredictable, there is a strong possibility of more plant shutdowns.

—Dave Lindorff

The padlocked front gates of a Chrysler plant.



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ELECTIONS

Sunbelt first in San Antonio

By Laurence Jolidon

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

SAN ANTONIO IS AN OLD MILITARY town. The missions came first, but the stockades and quartermasters' depots quickly followed, first under the Mexicans, then the tall, blue-eyed Anglos.

Some days on the downtown streets it seems every other person is in uniform. In or near this sprawling city of 800,000, now the country's ninth largest, are four Air Force bases, a massive Army post at Ft. Sam Houston, and thousands of military retirees who have shed their uniforms but prefer living close to the fort. When the Reagan administration talks of boosting defense spending, backs stiffen here, as though a general is about to visit the mess hall.

But San Antonio is also a teeming terminus of the new brown America—that third world of the Spanish-speaking within the nation's borders that grows more populous and more powerful each year. Mexican-Americans make up half the city's known population and an uncounted stream of undocumented workers swell the city's ghetto streets and its labor force.

And since nearly half the city's registered voters bear Spanish surnames—testimony to a growing political awareness—it was not that surprising when San Antonio this month elected Henry Cisneros as the first Hispanic mayor of a major U.S. city. The surprise was in the overwhelming multi-ethnic mandate he received, and the novelty was in his method: by adopting a pro-business, centrist stance the 33-year-old Cisneros attracted the support of affluent Anglos normally distrustful of ambitious ethnic politicians. He gained 62 percent of the vote in an eight-candidate field, taking more than half the vote in 10 council districts and burying his closest rival, businessman and Reagan supporter John Steen, who managed to gain only 36.4 percent.

"It gives me a base to work from," said Cisneros. The city's predominantly Anglo districts backed him with unprecedented turnouts for a Chicano candidate (37 to 55.5 percent of the total votes cast). And in predominantly Mexican-American precincts, Cisneros fever ran so high that turnout there was more than 80 percent higher than for the city council elections in 1979, when Cisneros declined to run for re-election to his council seat.

Democrats take heart.

Cisneros' surprisingly easy win to succeed three-term Mayor Lila Cockrell boosted morale among fellow Democrats in the state, who since Reagan's win last fall have had little to cheer about—least of all the tide of Texans returning from posts in the Carter administration.

"If nothing else," said one Democratic loyalist, "this proves that, in Texas at least, the Republicans were talking through their hats when they said that the whole country had turned to the right in November."

But such relief may be premature; Cisneros is not a stereotypical ethnic politician, much less a typical Texas Democrat. While he endorsed Carter last fall, he describes himself as "pragmatic" and a "neo-conservative" who firmly believes in using municipal government as a tool for aiding the city's economic development so that jobs and income will flow to San Antonio's depressed labor force.

While on the council, for instance, he pushed to make city land available to an electronics manufacturer in return for a pledge to employ a significant number of Mexican-Americans. But in his campaigns he has avoided the traditional Chicano rallying cries that focus on civil rights and social issues such as bilingual education. That has unsettled some of

his fellow Hispanic political leaders, who believe such issues are still of primary concern to the vast majority of Mexican-Americans in Texas. They live, after all, in a state where mistreatment of brown people at the hands of law enforcement officers seems only to ebb, never disappear, and where the state legislature was the only one in the nation to pass a law denying free public education to the children of undocumented immigrants. (The state is currently under federal court orders both to admit all children to public schools and to provide bilingual education throughout elementary and secondary grades.)

Mixed signals to business.

On the pocketbook and safety issue of nuclear energy, Cisneros favors San Antonio's remaining a partner in a controversial nuclear generating plant near the Gulf Coast that for the past few years has been a target of many anti-nuclear and community groups.

"It's great for the Hispanic community for Henry to get the mayor's job," said one Mexican-American political activist, "but he's moody and is perceived as willing to shift alliances to suit his political advantage. He will have to work very hard on his credibility with both Hispanics and the business community."

Part of the distrust the establishment community exhibits, of course, is traceable to the fact that Cisneros represents an ethnic group that Anglos in the Southwest have long viewed as lazy, ignorant and welfare-prone. Personally, however, the new mayor is a model of accomplishment. After graduating from college in

Henry Cisneros celebrates his decisive win over seven other candidates.

Though Anglos voted for Cisneros in large numbers, some fear his unpredictable "pragmatism."

Texas, he studied urban affairs at Harvard and was named a White House fellow during the Nixon administration. He now teaches urban affairs at the University of Texas at San Antonio, a job he says he will hang on to since the mayor's post pays only \$50 per month.

But he also sends the business community conflicting signals, some observers say. For example, he helped promote a major industrial park development to be built by an Hispanic group out of California, then moved to disassociate himself from the project when rumors began to circulate that he was just another ethnic politician all too willing to defer to persons of the same hue.

In short, what Cisneros refers to as pragmatism comes across in practice as unpredictability—and that worries any local city establishment. But one certainty is that Cisneros, articulate and altar-boy handsome, has become a national symbol, a high-profile ethnic presence in a minority that is moving rapidly toward claiming political and social influence in proportion to its numbers.

While some close friends and associates point out that Cisneros is now well-positioned to try for San Antonio con-

gressman Henry B. Gonzalez' seat, for now Cisneros has enough to do claiming the reins of a city trying to come out of the economic doldrums of the 1970s. More than a half-dozen companies are planning manufacturing plants in the city, and Cisneros says he is eager to talk with several other companies that have expressed an interest in relocating here. A widened tax base, he believes, accompanied by expanded job training programs, can bring economic growth that will "serve the best interests of all San Antonians."

Meanwhile, down the road.

In Austin, the course that economic growth should take in an urban, sunbelt environment was also an issue in this month's municipal elections. Attorney Bob Binder, a no-growth advocate who served on the city council in the early '70s, when a liberal majority held sway, ran well ahead of incumbent mayor Carole McClellan, a moderate bidding for a third term on a platform of "controlled growth." Binder, who will face McClellan in a run-off next month, has promised to work to extricate the city from the same nuclear power project that San Antonio is a partner in. McClellan favors staying in it, despite expensive cost overruns and quality control problems.

The combined effect of Binder's strong showing and the election to a council seat of political consultant Roger Duncan—another liberal who campaigned on an anti-nuke, no-growth platform—was to send shock waves through the ranks of developers who have flocked to Austin in recent years in response to the in-migration of a technical workforce akin to the growth of San Jose, Calif., in the '60s. According to one planning consultant, several new industries considering building new plants in the Austin area have already hired people to design their own independently-operated generating plants, just in case. And the major housing developers are said to have already turned their eyes, and calculators, toward the hills of adjoining counties. ■

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