

EDITORIAL



SIMULATION.

Let's end the media and politicians' cruel crusade against drugs

A few days after President Bush announced his new drug war, William J. Bennett, his drug policy director, admitted to the Senate Judiciary Committee that in addition to the \$7.9 billion in federal money already called for in the Bush plan, the cost of new state prisons next year will "certainly" be another \$5 billion to \$10 billion. If built, these prisons will also almost certainly be filled—mostly with young blacks, Hispanics and poor white youth for whom selling drugs is the only way to realize the American dream they see on TV day and night.

And what will happen then? With these tens of thousands of drug pushers behind bars, will drug selling stop? Or will the foot soldiers of the drug army, put away by the administration's warriors, simply

be replaced by new recruits? And if they are replaced by new recruits, will Bennett then call for spending another \$5 billion to \$10 billion in 1991 to put them away, in turn, only to have them replaced by another wave of new recruits?

Media madness: The commercial media rant and rave about drugs, posturing politicians act tough on the evening news and—surprise—the polls show the people deeply concerned. That, in turn, causes the media to cash in even more on popular anxiety, and thereby to increase it. But none of this does anything effective to reduce either the need for drugs or the effective supply. Even if cocaine production and transportation is cut back—an iffy proposition at best—it will only be replaced by something else, just as cocaine replaced marijuana when the Carter and Reagan administrations cracked down on it.

Isn't it time to stop the bluster and posturing and to take a serious look at the problem as the social problem it is? Shouldn't our responsible political leaders cool it? We need some quiet time in which a rational approach could be discussed and a plan formulated to use the vast resources—now being thrown into yet another losing war—for a more constructive purpose. ■

Even the military now concedes the myth of of the Soviet menace

In a little-noticed assessment, mandated by the 1989 National Defense Authorization Act, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Admiral William J. Crowe Jr. offers official, if muted, confirmation of much that we have been saying for years about the alleged military threat posed by the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact to the United States and NATO. The two most striking conclusions drawn by the Joint Chiefs flatly contradict the rationale of American military policy during the Cold War, and especially during the escalated buildup of military strength during most of the Reagan administration. The first of these conclusions has been the basis of the peace movement's calls for nuclear disarmament for decades. It is that "neither the U.S. nor the Soviet Union would be able to win a massive nuclear exchange." Today, the Joint Chiefs say, "the devastation possible from a U.S.-Soviet nuclear exchange is well recognized by the leadership of both countries, which is a significant deterrent in itself." They, of course, do not draw the same lesson from this as SANE/Freeze does, but neither do they now talk about preparing to win a nuclear war.

The Joint Chiefs' other conclusion goes even further toward undermining the military buildup rationale. It is that "the primary Soviet concern ... is the security and integrity of the Soviet homeland," and that "since the late '40s the Soviets have demonstrated hesitancy to use military power to achieve their foreign policy goals," the most important of which has been "maintaining dominance over the land and sea areas adjacent to [their] borders," especially in Eastern Europe.

Telling truths: Having conceded that both sides have as their highest priority the avoidance of nuclear war, the Joint Chiefs turn to the prospect of conventional warfare in Europe. Here the Joint Chiefs inadvertently make their most telling admission, that there is little or no threat from the Soviets. In the event of a war in Central Europe, Crowe writes, "the Soviets generally assess a NATO-Warsaw Pact war as likely to escalate to the nuclear level." This assessment, Crowe concludes, "appears to be driven in large part by Soviet expectation that NATO is highly likely to resort to nuclear weapons to avoid the defeat of its forces on the Continent." But Crowe ignores the obvious implication that this gives the Soviets a strong motivation to avoid conventional war in Europe. For if they win on the ground, it will only lead to the nuclear war that they want to avoid at all costs.

Beyond that, Crowe hints at the most obvious weakness in the argument about the Warsaw Pact's greater conventional strength. His assessment of forces places them about equal. But he points out that Western forces "derive substantial warfighting advantage through maintenance of superior levels of morale, leadership and training." And he hints at the greatest Soviet weakness: the unreliability of its allies' forces, especially in an offensive war. In fact, the fatal flaw in the Joint Chiefs' assessment is that it considers the Warsaw Pact forces as a unified opponent of NATO. That's what enables Crowe to consider them equal. But while that might be true if the East were to fight a defensive war, it is patently absurd if they are thought of as aggressors. One need only look at the most recent developments in Poland and Hungary to see that this is so.

The Joint Chiefs, of course, do not conclude that since neither side wants nuclear war and since the Soviets offer no threat of aggression in Europe, we should cut back drastically on armaments. They are, after all, true welfare queens. But Crowe's amazingly honest assessment surely provides a most respectable basis for such cutbacks. It's time Congress took the hint. ■

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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(ISSN 0160-5992)

Published 41 times a year: weekly except the first week of January, first week of March, last week of November, last week of December; bi-weekly in June through the first week in September by the Institute for Public Affairs, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647, (312) 772-0100.

Member: Alternative Press Syndicate

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This issue (Vol. 13, No. 35) published Sept. 20, 1989, for newsstand sales Sept. 20-26, 1989.



LETTERS

Socialism as social control

YOUR EDITORIAL, "COMMUNISM'S CRISIS, SOCIALISM'S OPPORTUNITY" (*JTT*, Aug. 30) makes the point that the reform process in the Soviet Union and in some of the Central European countries is not a vindication of capitalism. Though this is certainly the case, the editorial does not help overcome socialism's own crisis—the inability to identify what, in today's world, socialism means.

In any future economy, a mix of market and plan will have to be employed since each has advantages and costs associated with its use. Markets gain efficiency and growth for society, but they produce inequality and unemployment. Parts of the economy that are planned can achieve equality and predictability but, in all likelihood, with accompanying lagging productivity.

The combination of plan and market that is chosen is fundamentally important in shaping any future society. There is, however, no technically correct answer to the issue of how much of each should be used. That decision is strictly a consequence of the preferences of the decision-makers.

I suggest that the word "socialism" be reserved for societies in which the choice of the mix of market and plan is subject to democratic decision-making. In this way "socialism" would refer to the social control of the direction of the economy and society. In socialism, popular democracy would command the economy rather than the reverse, as presently prevails in both corporate capitalism and the planned economies.

Jay R. Mandle
Bryn Mawr, Pa.

Real ideas, please

THE ISSUE OF NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE Arts (NEA) funding is more complex than artists contend in their reactions to the recent congressional action (*JTT*, Aug. 2).

Let me relay the story of our community college art gallery. It is located in the library because the library is open and staffed longer than other areas of the campus, allowing the art department a display area without the expense and trouble of separate staff.

A year ago last spring I glanced at the photography exhibit being mounted, declared it was "racist and sexist" and objected to it being in the library where I and other women have to work. The photography was of excellent quality. The photographer is African-American. Several striking portraits of local African-American men whose names graced their pictures were interspersed with nudes of an anonymous Caucasian woman displaying her well-developed muscles. The arrangement that prompted my reaction was of two African-American men, one looking left and the other right, on either side of the woman, who sat with legs spread wide in a provocative and aggressive pose.

My objections were called "censorship." During the month the exhibit remained in place, I would look up from the reference desk to see a Caucasian man standing with his nose in the photographed woman's crotch, or children standing below the photo gawking, or an African-American male stu-

dent pointing to the photo laughing and whispering while his girlfriend said aloud, "You're dirty"; or a group of laughing African-American athletes wandering by and giving the photo a flick of the hand to set it swaying.

The photographer coyly declared that the model was wanting only a "record of her muscular development as her weightlifting training proceeded," not even acknowledging any meaning to his exhibit.

Subsequent exhibits of paintings and drawings in the gallery included four-foot-square oils of a naked woman's butt, whose only artistic merit was accurate depiction; five-foot-square turkey carcasses; and line drawings of buildings so dull one could only wonder incredulously how draftsmanship had gotten elevated to "art." To all these I remained silent, having no wish to expend more energy or judgment and be labeled "censor."

Then, this spring, a marvelous thing happened. The art department looked to the city arts commission for funding for its gallery. The chairman of the commission, having seen the carcasses and then the lines, said bluntly that if the persons responsible for choosing the exhibits wanted financial support, they would have to demonstrate an improved quality in their selectivity.

Not surprisingly, no one heard the word "censor" applied to this woman of discriminating taste.

In short, who provides the money does get to have some say in how the money is spent.

I recoil, knowing the horrors suffered by Mandelstam, Solzhenitsyn and Ratushinskaya, for example, to hear comparisons to totalitarian governments just because public funds are being cut off for certain exhibits that, in truth, sound vulgar. But who is to decide how government funds should be distributed among artists and institutions? That is the question, and leaping to the front with cries of "censorship" will not solve anything.

Perhaps NEA funds, rather than being used for the support of individual artists, could be distributed to high schools for art programs. In Seattle, arts programs were cut back and teachers laid off last year, provoking bewildered, hurt and angry demonstrations from high school students who had valued their excellent music and drama instructors. A cogent University of Washington reporter pointed out the Catch-22 that has been created by a new university admission requirement of some arts courses in high school and the simultaneous elimination of local high schools' arts programs.

Public funds are needed to support the arts, but how should merit be judged and

what is the best use of the allocated monies? I would like to see more real ideas put forth, and fewer mere reactions.

Kate Bradley
Redmond, Wash.

No no-strike clauses

DAVID MOBERG'S SPLENDID ARTICLE (*JTT*, AUG. 30) calls for: 1. Legislative rather than collective bargaining solutions to problems like health care; 2. Changes in federal labor law to protect the rights of workers in non-union shops and of associations or other non-union groups that may represent only a minority of employees; 3. Additional changes in federal labor law to prohibit the hiring of permanent replacements during strikes and, perhaps, to trade off the union shop and dues checkoff for "unlimited rights for secondary boycotts, sympathy strikes and other acts of solidarity"; 4. A broad conception of industrial democracy that would give workers a voice in investment decisions; and 5. Establishment of worker safety committees in all workplaces, whether unionized or not.

To these important proposals I would like to add one more.

Moberg's article praises the militant direct action of the Pittston miners and their allies under the leadership of United Mine Workers (UMW) President Richard Trumka. However, it appears that at least some Pittston miners are disappointed that the UMW and Trumka have not continued the sympathy strikes that swept the coal fields in June and July, especially after Trumka's statement of early July that he was willing to go to jail. Moreover, the AFL-CIO has instructed its state federations and central labor councils that they should not engage in actions that "conflict with the legal obligations imposed by the court on the UMW or by existing labor agreements with AFL-CIO affiliates."

I think that indicates that even the best national union leaders (like Trumka) are not going to support all-out direct action by the rank and file so long as unions have contracts that contain no-strike clauses.

I suggest that any candidate for national union office who seeks our support be asked to make a commitment that he or she will not negotiate or approve any contract containing a no-strike clause. Three points about this proposal:

1. This is not a proposal that requires a change in national labor law. There are no-strike clauses in contracts because unions agreed to them, not because the law requires it.

2. This proposal is a logical extension of the strategy of "running the plant back-

ward," that is, letting the contract with its no-strike clause expire and engaging in direct action under the protection of Section 7 of the National Labor Relations Act;

3. This proposal would not necessarily lead to more strikes. There are situations where the rank and file's interest is to stay in the plant, and it is higher leaders who start or prolong a strike. The point of principle is not to have more strikes, but that control over the decision whether or not to use the strike weapon—during the life of the contract as well as when the contract expires—must be put back into the hands of the rank and file. Workers won't strike unless they feel very strongly.

I would be interested to know what readers think about this idea.

Staughton Lynd
Niles, Ohio

Spread it on the ground

ROD BENSON'S "LEARNING TO USE FEWER CHEMICALS on the Farm" (*JTT*, Aug. 2) rightly points out that sustainable agriculture could bring together "farmers trying to make a living" and "consumers wanting safe food"—as well as environmentalists who seek to reduce contamination of water and soil by the overuse of agricultural chemicals.

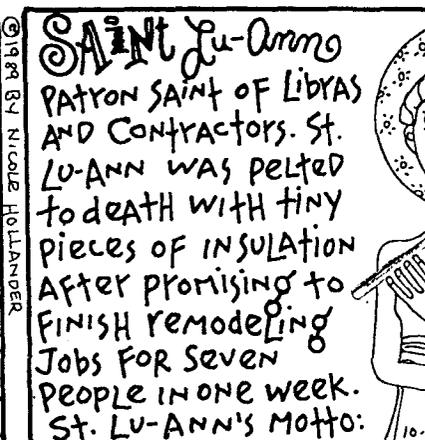
At one point Benson uses the phrase "low-input sustainable agriculture"; later the term "less-intensive agriculture" comes up. If "low input" means low in fossil-fuel-based chemicals, if "less intensive" means less reliant on non-renewable synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and fungicides, then both terms make limited sense.

But we need to understand that sustainable agriculture may be very intensive and very high-input in other ways. If a farmer, instead of spraying poisons, tills his field frequently to keep down weeds, then he may have low or no input of herbicides, but he could have a rather high input of fuel to run the tractor.

If a farmer, instead of simply pouring on ammonia-based nitrogen fertilizer to grow his wheat or corn, enriches his soil with manure from a herd of livestock, then he may have low input of chemical fertilizer and a low input of money to buy the chemical, but a high input of manure and a high input of his own labor. He must move the animals to spread the manure, feed the animals to produce the manure, and so on. Thus, "less intensive" chemical use almost always means "more intensive"—or at least, more attentive—management of the land.

Wilbur Wood
Roundup, Mont.

SYLVIA



by Nicole Hollander

