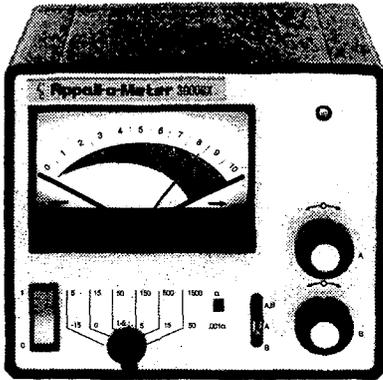


Appall-o-Meter

By David Futrelle



Process Makes Perfect **9.3**

Anthony Porter was almost killed by the state for a crime he didn't commit. He lingered on Illinois' Death Row for 16 years, until a Northwestern University journalism professor and his students investigated his case and proved his innocence. That doesn't mean there's anything wrong with the system—at least not according to Dave Urbaneck, spokesman for Illinois Gov. George Ryan, who seems to think the real blame lies at the hands of professor David

Proress, for not assigning the case to his students earlier than he did. "The process did work," Urbaneck told the *New York Times*. "Sure it took 17 years, but it also took 17 years for that journalism professor to sic his kids on the case."

Psychic-ed Out **8.9**

With psychic friends like these, who needs enemies? Bernardo Arroyo of Modesto, Calif., didn't accept a plea bargain in a drug case because a psychic had assured him he'd spend no time in prison. Alas, after throwing himself to the hands of fate (and waiving his right to a jury trial) before U.S. District Court Judge Oliver W. Wanger, Arroyo found himself facing at least 10 years in the clink—instead of the two years he would have gotten from the plea deal. "For an extra \$8,000, the psychic also offered to put a curse on the assistant U.S. attorney and the drug agents who investigated the case," USA

Today reported. "Arroyo apparently didn't want to spend the extra money."

Deadline **6.1**

Those who want to make sure posterity remembers them should take heed of a recent notice in the *Times* of London: "To be considered for inclusion



TERRY LABAN

to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, due out in 2004, please be aware that all potential participants must die no later than 31 December 1999, the closing date for the next edition."

Continued from page 5
Koromah's defeat—the RUF regrouped and re-armed. They launched a major offensive this past January that heavily damaged the capital, killed thousands of soldiers and civilians, sent tens of thousands of refugees scrambling to neighboring Guinea—where more than 100,000 already were from earlier fighting—and nearly ousted the Nigerians and the Kabbah government. By early February, however, the rebels—largely driven from the capital and its surrounding hills—were approaching the government for permanent peace talks.

In a pattern emerging in much of the continent, Sierra Leone has become a battleground for outside interests, each seeking control of the lucrative resources of the country. The Nigerians, for one, are well-known to have their fingers in the diamond fields, as does Taylor's National Patriotic Front. However, recent allegations of overt Liberian support for the RUF are probably unfounded, says Scott Campbell of Human Rights Watch, who visited the

border region last summer, though "the border is open for business and the Liberian military is doing little to stop it." Taylor recently announced he would accept U.N. monitoring of the border.



JEAN-PHILIPPE KSIAZEK/AFP

Young kamajors must grow up quickly.

Meanwhile, the British Foreign Ministry has been rocked by allegations that Peter Penfold, high commissioner for Sierra Leone, helped former British officer Tim Spicer, head of Sandline/Lifeguard (the name Executive

Outcomes took when it shifted its operations to England) bypass government restrictions on exporting arms and dispatching security personnel to Sierra Leone. Not coincidentally, Sandline shares a London address with Branch Energy, which holds a contract with the Kabbah government to mine diamonds in the country.

The permanence of the cease-fire is difficult to assess. As in Liberia—where ECOMOG helped bring fighting to a close in 1997—the West has turned over the Sierra Leone quagmire to Nigeria, despite its spotty peacekeeping record. The Nigerians have set a May deadline for the two parties to arrange a permanent settlement or see them leave—though few take them at their word. Many elements of the Nigerian military have profited handsomely from smuggling and looting during both wars. The war in Sierra Leone may not be over until the fat generals sing. ■

James Ciment is currently working on a book about Liberia.

Campus Crusade

By Mike Leon
MADISON, WIS.

Aggrieved by modern college life, a group of evangelical Christians at the University of Wisconsin is threatening the funding of student organizations at public colleges and universities across the nation.

In 1996, five Wisconsin students won a lawsuit against the university, arguing that mandatory fees taken out of their tuition and used to fund student groups they disapprove of violated their First Amendment rights. Among the groups targeted were Amnesty International, the Campus Women's Center and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Campus Center. Last August, a federal appellate court upheld the ruling. The university has appealed the case to the Supreme Court, which is expected to decide whether to hear the case in April.

The lawsuit has provoked outrage among student groups. "The plaintiffs threaten the ability to maintain cultural, intellectual and philosophical diversity," says Brad Manzolillo, a teaching assistant and member of the university student government.

Wisconsin Law School graduate Scott Southworth instigated the suit. Southworth, who now works for staunchly conservative state Rep. Sheryl Albers, says he was spurred by his religious convictions: "As Christians we are called to do the Lord's will. I was called to take a stand."

The overarching concern for Southworth and the other plaintiffs appears to be an ideological distaste for gays and lesbians and other groups that do not fit their conservative Christian dogma. "I would rather not pay for something that is directly against my beliefs," says plaintiff Rebecka Vanderwerf. "It's clearly spelled out in the Bible that homosexuality is wrong. I am not going to condone homosexuality, murder, theft or any sin. Going to Wisconsin, you are surrounded by all these liberal groups that advocate things you don't believe in. Why do I have to pay for them?"

Two religious right legal foundations are funding the plaintiffs, the Arizona-based Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) and the Virginia-based Northstar Legal Center. According to the plaintiff's attorney, Jordan Lawrence, the ADF—which is allied with such religious right organizations as Focus on the Family and the American Family Association—has contributed \$70,000 to the case.

Representing the university, the ACLU and the Wisconsin Department of Justice have argued that the fee system encourages student involvement and is vital to the university's educational mission. "The students here are not required to directly fund money to an organization they don't like," says Jon Furlow, counsel to the ACLU. "What they're doing is funding a pool, creating a public forum. The whole point here is to encourage and facilitate more rigorous speech on all subjects, regardless of their political or ideological view."

If the Supreme Court upholds the ruling, Wisconsin is considering either forming an ad hoc committee or letting the student body vote to determine which groups will face funding cuts.

"A bad decision by the Supreme Court will result in our not being funded," says Mandy Gennerman, a staff member of the Campus Women's Center at Wisconsin. "Everything we offer women will be eliminated. This would put student groups across the nation in the same kind of jeopardy." ■

Mike Leon is a freelance writer in Madison.



RIC GEYER/THE HEIDELBERG PROJECT

Etc.

Rainforest Crunch

Citing the need to "intervene immediately," on Feb. 11 the Brazilian government banned new clearcutting permits in the Amazon after the Environment Ministry reported a 30 percent increase in deforestation last year. According to data from a Brazilian satellite monitoring the region, 6,500 square miles of the rainforest were cleared. The Amazon rainforest has lost 205,439 square miles since 1978—more than 10 percent of its original size.

Stop that Smell

Rural North Carolina can breathe a little easier. On March 1, one of the worst states for corporate-farm pollution will become one of the first to implement odor-control rules for animal factories (see "Down on the Corporate Farm," March 7). The Associated Press reported that under a new law, the state must investigate odor complaints within 60 days. If investigators find a problem, factory farms are required to install proper odor-control equipment and reduce smelly, environmentally hazardous spray-field operations. In 1995, North Carolina suffered the biggest hog-waste spill on record: Ten million fish drowned in 25 million gallons of excrement.

Heidelberg Bulldozed

For 13 years, Tyree Guyton decorated a blighted block in East Detroit with bright polka dots and a hodgepodge of broken toys, rusty appliances and other relics of our throw-away culture. The Heidelberg Project became world-renowned street art, and tourists came from as far as Europe to visit Guyton's eerie maze (see "The Heidelberg Project," Oct. 4, 1998). But the city won its court battle against Guyton, and the project was demolished on Feb. 4. The project "started out with a social function—to keep crime out of the neighborhood by bringing the public in," artist Kim Humphries told the *Detroit News*. "It has grown beyond that. The artist should be respected, not squashed." **K.K.**

Never Mind the Bollocks

The hothouse world of Beltway journalism has been abuzz for weeks with the *contretemps* pitting two old friends against each other as a result of Bill Clinton's impeachment trial. In one corner: Christopher Hitchens, the investigative polemicist for *The Nation* and *Vanity Fair*, who unapologetically proclaims himself "a socialist, an atheist and a libertarian" and is the only radical of the left to make the roster of TV's talking heads with some regularity. In the other corner: Sidney Blumenthal, a notorious Clinton shill (and alleged White House spy) when he was a journalist at *The New Republic* and *The New Yorker*, who later joined Clinton's staff as a media strategist and spin doctor.

Just 24 hours before the Senate vote acquitting Clinton, Hitchens—at the request of the House managers—executed an affidavit making a perjurer out of his erstwhile chum Blumenthal (who, incidentally, was a Boston stringer for *In These Times* 20 years ago). In a videotaped deposition (parts of which were played for the Senate), Blumenthal denied serving as a conduit to reporters for Clinton's pretense that Monica Lewinsky was a "stalker"—a charge that, if proven, could have constituted witness intimidation and thus bolstered the obstruction of justice charges against Clinton. Hitchens' affidavit said that Blumenthal had indeed served up the "stalker" explanation at a March 1998 lunch with Hitchens and his wife.

As soon as Hitchens' affidavit became public, a firestorm of obloquy descended on the British expatriate's head. The *Washington Post* gave the story major play, with writer Christopher Buckley calling the feud "a Chambers-Hiss moment" and anonymous media figures proclaiming Hitchens *persona non grata* at dinner parties. Reams of over-ripe copy slugging Hitchens were churned out for a host of publications. However, given the Clinton camp's long history of trashing the women who've been the target of the Prevaricator-in-Chief's prapic attentions and Blumenthal's own reputation for journalist-bashing that

has earned him the sobriquet "Sid Vicious," few of Hitchens' attackers questioned the veracity of his affidavit. Instead, their ire focused on whether he should have given it at all.

Most of the criticisms maintained, as a *Nation* editorial put it, that there were "moral issues" like a "journalistic (and ethical) presumption against using pri-



vate conversations with friends for a public purpose without first obtaining permission."

Hitchens says that Blumenthal "never said our lunch was off the record; in fact, since at the time I'd been out teaching in California, he showed up with two thick file folders of briefing material [on the Clinton scandals] that he thought I should see, since he wanted to bring me up to date" on the latest White House spin. More importantly, Blumenthal's own lawyer issued a challenge to any reporters with knowledge of his client spreading the "stalker" story, releasing them from "any pledge of confidentiality." No moral issue there, I'd say.

The second major criticism of Hitchens is somewhat trickier. It claims, in essence, that since Clinton was a victim of "sexual McCarthyism," Hitchens should not have voluntarily cooperated with his prosecutors. Hitchens maintains: "I was asserting something *against* authority, in this case Clinton's shop and his use of state power to trash women. Clinton's is a world of soft-money corruption where women are the cherry on the cake. Of all the things said by the left apologists for Clinton, nothing is more despicable than the line that Clinton is a victim of a form of McCarthyism.

That's stupid and unprincipled, and defames the real victims of that inquisition, who were pretty nearly naked before the power of the state, which was engaged in an unconstitutional prosecution of their right to be revolutionaries. Neither is true for Clinton, Harold Ickes and the like." Quite right.

In any case, Hitchens argues that he already had written of the Monica-bashing lunch in the *London Independent* in September (albeit without identifying Blumenthal by name)—the story that provoked the call from the House managers. "I was asked to stick to a story I knew to be true, or dump it," Hitchens says. "I could call myself a liar or stick to the story." And, he adds, "I was a witness against Clinton, in my view, not against Sidney."

Now, I should say that I've been a friend of Hitchens since he first arrived on these shores, and I've written critically about Blumenthal (notably a *Nation* article on how he had tried to "out" the same-sex proclivities of a member of Ken Starr's staff to journalists). However, while I have no doubt that Hitchens thought giving his affidavit was an act of

Nothing is more despicable than the line that Clinton is a victim of a form of McCarthyism.

principle, it surely would have been more prudent for him—once he had been approached by the House's agents—instead to have quickly tapped out an op-ed piece revealing Blumenthal's perjury, which one of the dailies undoubtedly would have published. That was an error of political judgment. But it hardly merits the violent pummeling Hitchens has been taking lately.

Sadly, it is Hitchens who is being pilloried for telling the truth, while Blumenthal is elevated to martyrdom for trying to conceal it. As Hitchens notes ruefully, "Clintonism and its culture of lies poisons everything it touches, including this." ■