

Red in the Face

In your interview of American Indian Movement founder Russell Means (Aug.-Sept.), Mr. Means states that the term *redneck* is denigrating to his color and that the persons commonly called rednecks are really *pink-necks*. Obviously, Mr. Means shares the widespread notion that rednecks are called rednecks because poor rural whites tend to spend a lot of time working outdoors. Actually, the origin of the term has nothing to do with sunburns or skin color.

According to local folklore, *rednecks* first appeared in Mississippi during the rise of a populist politician. James K. Vardaman, governor of Mississippi (1903-1911) and senator (1911-18), was the first Mississippi politician to capture the imaginations of rural farmers. His supporters wore red bandanas around their necks in a gesture of solidarity. Vardaman activists soon came to be known as rednecks. Since these original rednecks tended to be poor rural whites, the term redneck became associated with members of that culture.

Dan E. Rogers
Hattiesburg, MS

Voluntary Censorship?

REASON Editor-in-Chief Marty Zupan is correct when she observes that voluntary decisions of convenience stores to remove sexually explicit publications from sale are not the same as government censorship (Editorial, July). But one should not underestimate the chilling effect on small businesses of government pornography commission warning letters and state prosecutions under local pornography laws. Most such businesses cannot afford to fight the

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government in court and can be frightened away from selling publications that government officials find offensive. The decision by a business to remove a publication is still voluntary. Nevertheless, government pressure is close to being a loaded gun pointing at a business person's head.

Gerald Schneider
Silver Spring, MD

Ms. Zupan replies: We've received several letters on this. I didn't have room in the editorial—but obviously should have made room—to note that Southland Corp., the owner of 7-Eleven stores, said that it had made its decision to pull *Playboy* and such from the stores' shelves because customer surveys had shown a marked decline in tolerance of their carrying erotic publications. Whether or not the pornography commission's attempt at intimidation also played a part in the decision, we don't know. Southland denies it; we may have our doubts. But it remains a fact that civil libertarians were attacking the Southland decision before the porn commission's letter to erotica dealers had been made public. They find such decisions illegitimate when they don't support the cause (pornography) but laudable when they do (nonunion-picked grapes).

A Little Is Better Than None

Your article on the La Perla project in Guatemala ("An ESOP Fable," Aug.-Sept.) was very interesting. La Perla has indeed offered an important opportunity for employees to become owners. The article suggests that the Solidarity Movement in Central America is also promoting worker ownership. That is somewhat misleading. The Solidarity movement does encourage workers to own stock in their companies, but it performs a number of other functions as well as a kind of employee benefit society. The actual amount of stock held by workers in their own companies in Costa Rica, where the movement is strongest, is still very small.

There is hope, however. Here in the United States, where the employee-ownership movement is better established, the

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letters

typical worker in the typical employee-ownership plan accumulates \$31,000 in stock over just 10 years. That is almost three times as much as the typical family accumulated in non-home-equity financial assets at retirement in 1984. Capitalism needs more capitalists, and employee ownership is the best way to do it.

Corey Rosen
National Center for Employee Ownership
Arlington, VA

Taking a Stand on Rand

I was pleased to read Stephen Cox's review of Barbara Branden's biography *The Passion of Ayn Rand* (Aug.-Sept.), but I was disappointed that more attention was not given to the book. Rand's novels have been a source of philosophical and romantic inspiration to millions of people, including many REASON readers. And now Ms. Branden has set forth a work, in its own way equally inspiring, showing that much of Ayn Rand's life was led with the same principles that her characters Howard Roark and Dagny Taggart lived with. We also find that Rand's personality permitted, especially in her relationship to husband Frank O'Connor, a self-deception which both extended and limited her influence over those around her.

With humorless resolve, Rand either loved or hated what she found; she made many snap judgments. In one of them, Rand told Branden, "When I saw the first few pages of that short story which you started and didn't finish...it was those pages that convinced me that you're going to be a great writer." *The Passion of Ayn Rand* fulfills that prediction. It is a book your readers will find revealing and enchanting.

J. D. Daniels
Pawtucket, RI

Aerial Anarchy

John Doherty's review of *Blind Trust* (June) overlooked an obvious point regarding airline safety vs. airline profits. Airline accidents are seldom the result of a single event but rather a combination of events compounding into disaster. Material failure, bad weather, pilot fatigue, pilot inexperience, and maintenance problems can, in the wrong mix, turn an otherwise manageable situation into an accident.

Cutthroat air fares (a result of deregulation) and the profit motive are tempting airline managers to cut costs everywhere. Pilots are flying increasingly longer and harder days with minimum rest. Pilot-in-

command positions are given to inexperienced pilots. Maintenance items that used to be repaired overnight are now deferred for weeks. These are all the ingredients accidents are made of and are all attributable to cost-cutting for the sake of profitability.

No airline executive thinks that the way to make money is to crash airplanes, but they are under pressure to make money somehow. Cost-cutting is their answer. Witness Continental Airlines since mid-1983. Beware the deadly combination!

Wyatt Baxter
Renton, WA

Mr. Doherty replies: Profit equals Revenue minus Expense. Profits can be increased by cutting costs or increasing revenues. In practice, businesses try to do both, constantly seeking maximum profits. If managers conclude that reducing an expenditure will result in even greater loss of revenue, they won't cut the expenditure. If air travelers think an airline is unsafe, that reflects in a loss of revenue. So airlines spend money to provide safe travel. The profit motive requires this, and deregulation has intensified the pressure on airlines to be safe. Pre-deregulation, airlines didn't worry much about others moving onto their turf. Now there are lots of hungry companies waiting to pounce on any weakness—including public perception of unsafe operations.

But this theoretical debate could go on forever. If Mr. Baxter's point is valid, nonprofit operators should have better safety records, and there should be a correlation between financial health and safe operations. Neither is the case. State-owned airlines operated as cost-plus utilities have worse safety records than America's profit-seeking airlines. The Air Force, where cost isn't usually a factor, crashed a transport 100 miles from where I sit, partly because the crew had to be on duty for 24 hours. And there's the safety situation at nonprofit NASA to consider, along with the FAA's incredible inability to implement safety-enhancing technology.

Mr. Nance could have shown a correlation between financial health and safety, but he didn't because the correlation doesn't exist. And what about bankrupt Continental? As much as I despise Frank Lorenzo and his gang of pickpockets, the fact remains that they've flown through bankruptcy without accident—as has Braniff. The "profit motive leads to unsafety" theory predicts they should have had accidents.

The real-world record is clear. Profit seekers are safety seekers.

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Real Doves Don't Ban Tests

Robert W. Poole, Jr.

In August 1985, on the 40th anniversary of Hiroshima, Mikhail Gorbachev announced that the Soviet Union had halted all nuclear weapons tests and invited the United States to do likewise. Despite exhortations by columnists and arms-control advocates, the Reagan administration has thus far ignored Gorbachev's offer.

At first glance, such a stance appears nothing more than mindless hawkishness. After all, both the United States and the Soviet Union possess enough nuclear weapons to destroy each other as functioning societies. Why continue testing so as to continue building more of these horrible instruments of mass destruction? Besides, unlike other forms of arms control, where cheating is a major problem, nuclear explosions are hard to hide. If the Soviets were to cheat, it's unlikely they could hide the fact, and we could resume testing, too.

Would that the world were so simple! In fact, if your concern is with minimizing the threat of mass destruction posed by nuclear weapons, then you should favor continued nuclear testing, not a ban. The reason has to do with the evolution of nuclear weapons and guidance systems over the past 40 years.

The nuclear weapons of the 1940s and '50s were crude, brute-force devices. They are often referred to as "city busters" because that is all they were good for. The delivery systems, initially manned bombers and later on the early ballistic missiles, were so inaccurate that the warheads were made very large—in the multi-megaton range—to compensate. That way, a miss really was as good as a mile, but at the price of awesome destruction.

By the '60s, guidance-system technology began to improve dramatically, and warhead sizes began to decrease. Today's U.S. ballistic-missile warheads are typically in the range of several hundred kilotons, and while the Soviets still have many warheads larger than a megaton, their warheads' average size has been steadily dropping as well.

But even today's newest ballistic missiles are still only accurate to within a thousand feet or so. The real breakthroughs in guidance have occurred with cruise missiles. These tiny, jet-powered weapons have "active" guidance systems that can home in on a specific target (rather than simply being aimed and lobbed, as ballistic missiles are).

Cruise missiles can be made accurate to within tens of feet, rather than tenths of miles. So they require warheads substantially less destructive than ballistic missiles or bombers. That, in turn, means they can be used against a military target without wiping out the adjacent city and its population.

Most of the present U.S. nuclear arsenal consists of large, old, inaccurate weapons—especially the bombs carried on B-52 bombers, the warheads on Minuteman II land-based missiles, and the warheads on the Poseidon sub-launched missiles. Should nuclear deterrence ever fail, and a war break out, the use of those weapons (and their Soviet counterparts) would wipe out cities and risk causing nuclear winter. The use of cruise missiles would not. It is imper-

ative—morally imperative—that the old weapons be retired and replaced with smaller, accurate weapons usable against military targets.

A comprehensive nuclear test ban, however, like a nuclear freeze, would make it impossible to carry out this essential modernization. Nuclear-warhead design is an iterative process, like every other form of technology. New designs and modifications of existing designs must be tried out to see whether they work before being put into production. A test ban would therefore preclude the very modernization that can make the world safer.

However much we might wish it, nuclear weapons cannot be disinvented. And until a robust set of defenses against nuclear attack is actually in place, we dare not risk giving up some form of nuclear retaliatory force. But we can and must make progress toward a world where mass destruction is no longer the basis of our nuclear policy. A "build-down" to small, accurate warheads is an important step in that direction. It will only be possible if we can continue to test new high-tech warheads as they are developed.

Tempted to Aid? Just Say No

By Virginia I. Postrel

It was peer pressure. Everybody's doing it, Bob told Ron. If you want to be popular, you've got to do it, too. And Ron wanted so much to be popular. Did he say no, like Mommy always says to? No, he said yes.

And now you and I and the rest of American taxpayers are paying \$50 million to help the Soviet Union buy wheat from U.S. farmers. Ronald Reagan, "the leader

of the free world," couldn't stand the pressure from Robert Dole, the leader of a bunch of Kansas farmers. To buy the farmers' votes, he sold out to the evil empire.

He even admitted it. "The truth is I didn't make this decision for them [the Soviets]. I made it for the American farmer," he said. The subsidized sale is "just a temporary policy," declared Reagan. "We're not out as a matter of policy to continue