

12-1997

TIPS, Volume 17, No. 4, 5, & 6, 1997/1998

Wolf P. Wolfensberger
Syracuse University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.unmc.edu/wolf_tips



Part of the [Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Wolfensberger, Wolf P., "TIPS, Volume 17, No. 4, 5, & 6, 1997/1998" (1997). *Training Institute Publication Series (TIPS)*. 70.

https://digitalcommons.unmc.edu/wolf_tips/70

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Wolfensberger Collection at DigitalCommons@UNMC. It has been accepted for inclusion in Training Institute Publication Series (TIPS) by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UNMC. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@unmc.edu.

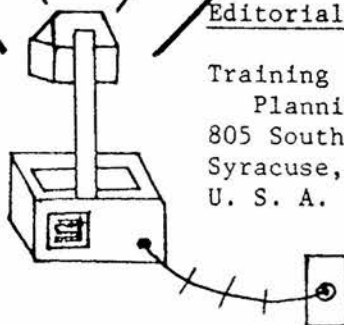
TIPS

Editor / Publisher

Wolf Wolfensberger
Professor
Division of Special Education
and Rehabilitation
805 South Crouse Avenue
Syracuse University
Syracuse, New York 13244-2280

Editorial Address:

Training Institute for Human Service
Planning, Leadership & Change Agency
805 South Crouse Avenue
Syracuse, New York 13244-2280
U. S. A.



Vol. 17, Nos. 4, 5, & 6,
Dec. 1997, Feb. & Apr. 1998

TRAINING INSTITUTE
PUBLICATION SERIES

Syracuse, New York
13244-2280

While we are behind in bringing out this issue, it will cover the usual December topics at some length, plus miscellaneous others, and do so as a triple issue. This will bring us up-to-date.

Poverty & The Poor

*Of all philanthropic giving, less than 10% ends up being given to the poor in direct help (Newsweek, 29/9/97).

*There are locales where one can buy little coupon-like cards that one can give to beggars on the street which they are supposed to be able to redeem against food. These schemes are designed to make sure that beggars do not use money given to them for anything other than food. However, it occasionally happens that when the beggars go to the local coupon redemption center, they may be told that it has run out of food. This is another example of life-wasting of devalued people (information acquired in Australia in 1997).

*Former US Labor Secretary Robert Reich made the observation that a lot of people who work underground or on the ground level tend to be lowly people: restaurant workers, cab drivers, security guards, parking lot attendants, cashiers, etc., not to mention farm laborers and loggers. In contrast, people who work high above ground, and particularly on the top floors of buildings and high-rises, tend to be very privileged. These tend to be bankers, corporate lawyers, top executives, computer moguls, consultants, etc., whom he calls "sky workers" (New Yorker, 9/97).

*In order to balance its year-end budget, the state of Washington simply deducted \$6 from the benefit checks of every one of its 84,000 handicapped citizens on its benefit rolls in December 1997 (Source item from Katie Dolan).

*The county in which Syracuse is located took \$780,000 that had been allocated for social services and gave them to the sheriff's department in order to run the local jail (SHJ, 7 Jan. 98).

This once more goes to show that the authorities view poor people pretty much the same as they do prisoners, i.e., as being more or less interchangeable. Imagine the outcry if such a huge chunk of money had been taken out of any number of other project categories (e.g., the school budget) for this purpose.

*One of the poorer counties in the US has one of the highest rates of obesity in women, underlining the peculiar high correlation in the US between female poverty and obesity.

*According to some people, sexual irresponsibility (what we formerly would have called promiscuity) is the surest predictor of welfare dependency, ill health and criminality among the poor (Newsweek, 26/7/93). Relatedly, some people have said that there are three "simple" rules for avoiding poverty: finish high school, beget no child outside of wedlock, and have no child before 20; 79% of people or families who violate all these rules are poor, while only 8% of those are who conform to them (Newsweek, 22/12/97).

*In Spain, 1/5th of the population now lives in poverty, many of them formerly productive middle-class citizens (NC Register, 13/10/96).

*In eastern Germany, almost one-quarter of young people have been receiving some kind of welfare, in part because they cannot find jobs and in part because of their alienation (AW, June 97).

*There was a big uproar in Germany when the government tried to prevent foreign laborers coming into the country to do harvest work on the farms, and instead wanted farmers to employ unemployed city people. The farmers protested most vigorously, claiming that the typical unemployed city people would not even last a few days in this kind of work, which is probably true (AW, 13/8/94).

*There is a great deal of evidence that a lot of social policies designed to be of benefit to poor people and racial minorities have actually increased the degree of dependency in these populations. Even some leading civil rights advocates (e.g., James Meredith, in Newsweek, 6 Oct. 97) have said that many "black" leaders and their Caucasian allies actually have a vested interest in the failure of these policies.

*According to Newsweek (26/5/97), generations of unnuanced welfare policies have engendered a mindset in many poor people that permanent and multi-generational welfare benefits are rightfully theirs, and getting any kind of a job is interpreted as "selling out to The Man," which is a nightmare of a welfare mentality to the degree that it is true. Martin Luther King's widow is also scandalized by this. She pointed out that King's major demands in 1963 were about employment, and the slogan of a 1963 march was "Jobs and Freedom" (Nwk, 23/1/95).

*Downward envy: Why middle Australia hates the poor. The Weekend Australian Review, November 2-3, 1996, pp. 1-2. This article says that the same type of welfare mentality has taken root in Australia, though the rich there, as in the US, are also subsidized, but in less visible ways than welfare checks.

The Gulf Between The Haves & Haves Not

*In 1995, a mere 358 people in the world possessed as much wealth between them as the annual income of the poorest 45% of all humans--and by 1996, the former had increased their wealth to

52% (Casa Cry, 11/97). It is almost beyond comprehension to learn that the combined income of the world's seven richest people could wipe out poverty for a quarter of the world's poor.

*In 1996, 6% of households in the US were "millionaire households," and their number was predicted to increase to 18 million by 2005 (Newsweek, 16/6/97). Similar trends are occurring in many other countries, including Canada (SHJ, 26/12/97).

*While a typical American pays about 12% of his wealth every year for taxes, wealthy people spend only about 2% (USN&WR, 9 June 97).

*Even as income kept rising in the US, the poverty rate did not change (AP in SHJ, 29/9/97). The economic gap between rich and poor in the US is now bigger than it has been in 50 years.

*Not only is money extremely unevenly distributed in the US, but so is land, with 75% of the land being owned by 5% of landowners (CASA, 12/96).

*Here is the kind of development that contributes to a dividing of society. The bus system in our Syracuse area increased its management staff by 500% and gave it a 33% raise during the same time span as it reduced its bus driver staff by 17%.

*A conference on "welfare privatization" was held in Washington, DC, in 3/97, for which the registration fee was \$1,300 (Casa Cry, 8/97).

*In the US, over 96 billion pounds of good food is thrown out each year, and municipalities actually spend over \$1 billion each year to dump such food (Casa Cry, 1/98).

*Barnet, R. J. (no date; probably 1996). The global war against the poor. Washington, DC: Servant Leadership Press. This little booklet details the growing disparity between rich and poor throughout the world, and between rich and poor nations. It explains how the global economy acts to transfer wealth from the poor of the world to those who are already well off, and how the spread of the culture of Western modernism, with its emphasis on technologization and hedonistic consumption, is contributing to this. The booklet (42 pages) is available for \$2.50 from The Potter's House Book Service, 1658 Columbia Road NW, Washington, DC 20009.

*While Western countries increased their wealth greatly between 1970-1990, many countries of the Third World actually experienced a decline, if one counts the degradation of their soil, the loss of their forests, the increase in their population, etc. Three-quarters of sub-Saharan countries, and many Latin American ones, have suffered a decline in per capita income (BR, 4/97).

*Despite extreme poverty and homelessness in Brazil, 478,000 of its citizens (apparently women) manage to sell Avon products door to door as "beauty consultants" (Nwk, 17/7/95). Even poor women will pay well to be more beautiful, which is the powerful motive upon which Avon preys.

*Some people have begun to talk of a "secession of the successful," as the uppers move ever more away from the lowers. The current separation of American society into an upper and a lower class could have the profoundest long-term consequences, possibly even leading to some kind of

ongoing bloodshed that will not be controllable, such as we have seen in northern Ireland and a number of other countries around the world.

*Everybody who has been reading TIPS knows that we are absolutely opposed to all forms of violence, for any purpose or by any means. However, on the other hand, having once been hawks, we can appreciate some of the things that bring people to violence. For instance, considering the increasing separation of the higher and the lower social classes, and the oppression of the latter by means of post-primary production economy strategies, some people have begun to say that it is time to wage class warfare and start setting up the guillotines. Of course, the problem is that unlike at the time of the French Revolution, the privileged class these days is so large, and so many members of the oppressed classes nowadays tend to be so stupid. It all would be so much simpler if only the tax rates that prevailed in the 1950s were reintroduced, because they were highly redistributive in nature.

*There have always been people who have pointed out that a vast inequality of wealth in a society is not compatible with democracy. Thus, democratic nations that are dividing increasingly into rich and poor strata can probably expect to see their democratic institutions deteriorate, and the democratic system eventually crumble.

*Only 25% of US federal entitlement funds are tied to financial need. Households with annual incomes above \$100,000 actually are getting more federal subsidies than those earning \$10,000 (Casa Cry, 1/98).

*The amount of money that welfare recipients steal from the government in the US pales in comparison to the money that health care providers have been stealing from the government, namely, an estimated \$23 billion in 1997 under Medicare alone. In 1997, the US government hired 200 additional investigators to uncover such provider fraud (AARP Bulletin, 9/97). One pharmacist near Syracuse was indicted for bilking the government and private insurers out of \$4 million with fraudulent prescriptions (SHJ, 15/1/98).

*In the US, the number of billionaires increased from 49 to 150 between 1986-1996. As of 1997, a billion dollars yielded at least \$2 million interest a week (Newsweek, 29/9/97).

*"The Worship of Mammon" by Thomas Hood goes as follows.

Gold, gold, gold, gold!
Bright and yellow, hard and cold,
Molten, graven, hammered, rolled,
Heavy to get, and light to hold,
Hoarded, bartered, bought, and sold,
Stolen, borrowed, squandered, doled,
Spurned by the young, and hugged by the old,
To the very verge of the churchyard mould.

*Bellamy, E. (1996). Looking backward. New York: (Originally published by Ticknor & Co., Boston, in 1888, under the title Looking backward: 2000-1887. With a new introductory note for the present edition.) This is one of the many works of the utopia genre. A Boston man goes into suspended animation in 1887, and is revived in the year 2000. The following passage is a marvelous description of a person of conscience who has looked at oppression, and is profoundly

moved by it, and then at a banquet, he vainly tries to get the members of his own privileged class to see themselves as the oppressors that they are.

"I have been in Golgotha... I have seen Humanity hanging on a cross! Do none of you know what sights the sun and stars look down on in this city, that you can think and talk of anything else? Do you not know that close to your doors a great multitude of men and women, flesh of your flesh, live lives that are one agony from birth to death? Listen! their dwellings are so near that if you hush your laughter you will hear their grievous voices, the piteous crying of the little ones that suckle poverty, the hoarse curses of men sodden in misery, turned half-way back to brutes, the chaffering of an army of women selling themselves for bread. With what have you stopped your ears that you do not hear these doleful sounds? For me, I can hear nothing else."

'Silence followed my words. A passion of pity had shaken me as I spoke, but when I looked around upon the company, I saw that, far from being stirred as I was, their faces expressed a cold and hard astonishment, mingled in Edith's with extreme mortification, in her father's with anger. The ladies were exchanging scandalous looks, while one of the gentlemen had put up his eyeglass and was studying me with an air of scientific curiosity. When I saw that things which were to me so intolerable moved them not at all, that words that melted my heart to speak had only offended them with the speaker, I was at first stunned and then overcome with a desperate sickness and faintness at the heart. What hope was there for the wretched, for the world, if thoughtful men and tender women were not moved by things like these! Then I bethought myself that it must be because I had not spoken aright. No doubt I had put the case badly. They were angry because they thought I was berating them, when God knew I was merely thinking of the horror of the fact without any attempt to assign the responsibility for it.

'I restrained my passion, and tried to speak calmly and logically that I might correct this impression. I told them that I had not meant to accuse them, as if they, or the rich in general, were responsible for the misery of the world. True indeed it was, that the superfluity which they wasted would, otherwise bestowed, relieve much bitter suffering. These costly viands, these rich wines, these gorgeous fabrics and glistening jewels represented the ransom of many lives. They were verily not without the guiltiness of those who waste in a land stricken with famine...

'With fervency I spoke of that new world, blessed with plenty, purified by justice and sweetened by brotherly kindness, the world of which I had indeed but dreamed, but which might so easily be made real. But when I had expected now surely the faces around me to light up with emotions akin to mine, they grew ever more dark, angry, and scornful. Instead of enthusiasm, the ladies showed only aversion and dread, while the men interrupted me with shouts of reprobation and contempt. "Madman!" "Pestilent fellow!" "Fanatic!" "Enemy of society!" were some of their cries, and the one who had before taken his eyeglasses to me exclaimed, "He says we are to have no more poor. Ha! ha!"

"Put the fellow out!" exclaimed the father of my betrothed, and at the signal the men sprang from their chairs and advanced upon me.

'It seemed to me that my heart would burst with the anguish of finding that what was to me so plain and so all-important was to them meaningless, and that I was powerless to make it other. So hot had been my heart that I had thought to melt an iceberg with its glow, only to find at last the overmastering chill seizing my own vitals. It was not enmity that I felt toward them as they thronged me, but pity only, for them and for the world.

'Although despairing, I could not give over. Still I strove with them. Tears poured from my eyes. In my vehemence I became inarticulate. I panted, I sobbed, I groaned... The tears were streaming down my face, and I quivered in every nerve.'

*Punch published a poem on Britannia's poverty in 1859, which included these lines.

"... for aught save Mammon worship there were few hearts to care,

For aught but Mammon-service there were few hands to spare;
Still the pale slaves grew paler, the task-masters more stern,
Few there of wise [sic] had time to love, of ignorant to learn.
Death sat at the gaunt weaver's side, the while he plied his loom;
Death turn'd the wasting grinder's wheel, as he earn'd his bread and doom;
Death, by the wan shirtmaker, plied the fingers to the bone;
Death rocked the infant's cradle, and with opium hushed its moan.
Nor in the city only did the Spectre hold his place;
In the village and the hamlet, too, he showed his constant face:
In the foul sty where sire and son, mother and maiden slept,
Where the infant round its playground, the dunghill, crowed and crept."

*In the 1947 musical, "Finian's Rainbow," there is a song, "When the Idle Poor Become The Idle Rich":

When the idle poor become the idle rich
You'll never know just who is who or which is which.
Won't it be rich when ev'ryone's poor relative becomes a Rockefellertive
And palms no longer itch--what a switch!
How will we determine who's underneath? And when your neighbors are upper-class
You won't know your Joneses from your As-ters.
Let's toast the day, the day we drink that drinkie up,
But with the little pinkie up,
The day on which the idle poor become the idle rich.
When a rich man doesn't want to work, he's a bon vivant,
But when a poor man doesn't want to work
He's a loafer, a lounge, a lazy, good-for-nothing jerk!
When a rich man loses on a horse, isn't he a sport!
But when a poor man loses on a horse he's a gambler, he's a spender,
He's a low-life, he's a reason for divorce.
When a rich man chases after dames he's a man about town,
But when a poor man chases after dames he's a bounder, a rounder, he's a rotter
And a lot of dirty names.
When the idle poor (etc.)
No-one will ever see the Irish or the Slav in you, for when you're on Park Avenue
Cornelius and Mike look alike.
When poor Tweedle-Dum is rich Tweedle-Dee this discrimination will no longer be.
When we're in the dough and off of the nut,
You won't know your banker from your but-ler.
Let's make the switch; with just a few annuities
We'll hide those incongruities
In cloaks from Abercrombie Fitch,
When the idle poor become the idle rich.

*One of the so-called beatitudes in the Bible is "blessed are the meek." Of Americans with annual incomes of less than \$30,000, 61% believe it, while only 36% of those do with incomes of more than \$60,000 (Harper's, 3/96).

*While the rich are very oppressive as a class, many individual members actually lead exemplary lives of financial responsibility and material stewardship. A study of millionaires in the US showed that many of them live on a mere \$60,000-\$80,000 a year, and that many are very frugal in their consumption habits. Half of them live in middle-class, blue collar or rural areas, buy modest cars, and hang on to them. Of course, this is why many of them ended up as millionaires in the first place. The study showed that there was a huge difference in behavior between people of high earnings vs. high wealth, in that most people with big earnings have little wealth because they spend it all, while some people with modest earnings who spend wisely accumulate considerable wealth. One frugal millionaire said about people who make much money but have little, "big hat, no cattle" (USN&WR, 9 June 97). The same study also showed that at least so far, it has been quite easy to become a millionaire. All it took was to save and invest a small but reasonable proportion of one's income regularly, and by about age 60, one would be a millionaire.

*Dorothy Day once said, "Yes, the poor will always be with us... But I am sure God did not intend there to be so many."

The Transfer of Wealth Upward

So often, what widens the gap between the rich and the poor are any mechanisms that systematically transfer wealth upward.

Taxes are not inevitably a means of transfer of wealth from the lower to the upper social strata, because after all, taxes can also be used the other way around--as they were in the US during the 1950s. Thus, one has to examine what it is that gets done with the tax money collected by the government, and to what degree--if any--it gets transferred downward or upward. In Western societies, some is transferred down, and some up, which complicates things so that they are difficult to sort out.

*In the US, the working poor contribute a vastly disproportionate share to the Social Security tax, namely 6.2% of income, while for the rich, the percentage may be miniscule because only the first \$65,400 of income is taxed (Time, 18/8/97).

*Among the elderly in the US, the richest 1% of couples pay an average of 7.9% of income in taxes, while the poorest 20% pay 12.5% (Casa Cry, 11/96).

*The US IRS has been transferring wealth upward by targeting low-income people vastly more for collection of taxes than the rich. The more money one has, the less likely one is to be audited (SHJ, 14/4/97). People with less than \$25,000 were twice as likely to be audited in 1995 as those with \$100,000 (Newsweek, 6 Oct. 97).

*People sometimes are incredulous when we say that there are many mechanisms and dynamics at work in our society which make elderly people poor (see the 12/96 issue of TIPS). People who have some measure of awareness of this phenomenon often think that this happens when elderly people have high medical bills. However, there are many other such mechanisms, and here is just one subtle example thereof.

Many elderly people abandon the abode where they have resided during their mature years, divest themselves of many physical belongings, and move into apartments. In itself, this is often unwise because it constitutes a high-risk discontinuity in familiarity, neighborhood, relationships, etc. However, that is not the point here. The point is that they often move into apartments in apartment buildings--often high-rise--with the intention of residing there for the rest of their lives.

In many cases, such apartment buildings are in downtown or other business areas. In past years, entrepreneurs have often converted such apartment houses into luxury, high-rent, or condominium dwellings. Living generally on fixed incomes, many elderly people cannot afford to pay the higher costs or rents of such dwellings, and are forced to move again or to engage in all kinds of financial gyrations in order to remain, such as cutting down on food, taking up mortgages or loans, and so on. Relocation itself can be costly, not to mention the additional discontinuities it involves.

*Charles Keating, a major actor in the US S&L bank scandals that transferred ca. \$500 billion--mostly upwards--was let out of prison after less than 5 years of his 12.5 year sentence (on 90 counts) in a so-called luxury prison (dubbed Club Fed), and still asserted that he was "completely innocent." The other S&L hoods got little or no time, and most of them are still rich (Time, 3 Feb. 97).

*Pension funds (reported on before) continue to be prime targets of corporate *de facto* thieves, not only in the US (e.g., Newsweek, 24 & 31/3/97), but also in certain other countries, including Canada (e.g., Time, 19/5/97). France has siphoned the entire pension fund of its public telecommunications corporation into the national treasury in order to pretend it has a lower deficit than it has (Time, 9 June 97).

*A relatively new transfer mechanism is to pay corporate executives unimaginably large salaries, bonuses, stock options, etc. The Disney CEO got \$196 million all at once, while Disney paid another executive \$90 million just to quit (Newsweek, 17/3/97). The executives of the Fortune 500 companies increased their income 50% between 1996-97, and the income discrepancy between them and the workers is 5 times higher than it already was 30 years earlier--and continues to increase (Time, 28/4/97).

*One transfer in the US is for governmental units from cities on up to give buildings and land to private owners for stadiums, concert halls, etc. The owners then pay themselves huge incomes (e.g., Newsweek, 30/6/97).

*The transfer schemes sometimes boggle the mind. The State of NY sold the infamous Attica prison to a taxpayer-owned public corporation (the Urban Development Corporation) for \$580 million. Citizens must now pay taxes for 20 years to pay off this money after already having paid taxes years ago to build Attica in the first place. The state then uses the \$580 million "profit" for pork barrel projects that often benefit the upper classes (SHJ, 14/10/97). Other transfer schemes we are not even able to understand (e.g., Newsweek, 3 Feb. 97).

*No wonder that wealth transfers are not transparent as in ancient days, when tyrants simply grabbed people's possessions. The US tax code is 7,000 pages long, on top of which come state and local tax codes. The increase in complexity of the US tax code is forcing ever larger numbers of citizens to pay tax preparers--which is itself yet another transfer of wealth upwards (Newsweek, 21/7/97).

*In 1995, one of the richest counties in the US--namely Orange County, California--declared bankruptcy after having put its huge wealth into worthless investments. The bankruptcy meant that bond holders--many of them ordinary citizens, and investors in mutual funds--lost their investments. In essence, this was yet another transfer of wealth from the ordinary citizenry to the extremely rich citizens of Orange County (Newsweek, 10 July 95).

*The US government plan to settle with the tobacco industry has been called "a Marshall Plan for lawyers" (Newsweek, 30/6/97).

*The US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is supposed to help repair damage done by natural disasters to facilities such as schools, hospital and homes. Instead, the money often goes to repair yacht slips, golf resorts, luxury beach clubs and other recreational facilities used mostly by the very rich. The Office of the Inspector General reported that since 1989, a quarter of a billion in tax dollars has gone to the repair of such facilities.

*Financier Milton Friedman once referred to economic systems that were "socialism for the rich and free enterprise for the poor" (Newsweek, 30/6/97).

Homelessness & the Welfare Helter-Skelter Shelter System

*Homelessness has exploded in countries around the world that did not used to have much or any, one example being the former Soviet Union. While solitary men have always furnished the majority of homeless people in the Western world, in recent years, juveniles have made up an increasing proportion.

*A peculiarity is that many Russians have fled Russia in efforts to escape poverty, have come to the US, and have promptly joined the poor and even homeless population there. In some US soup kitchens, signs have begun to be posted in English and Russian, believe it or not (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 26/12/96). However, it is probably vastly preferable to be poor and homeless in the US than in Russia.

*In the rather appropriately named Love Park in Philadelphia, people taking their lunch break had been giving food to homeless people who frequent the park. The city figured that this attracted poor people and made one of the showpiece sites of Philadelphia unattractive. After years of pleading with diners not to "feed the homeless," the city passed an ordinance that banned everyone from eating in the square (AP in Syracuse Herald-Journal, 5 June 1997; source item from Ann Costa). If city officials had known history, they could have assumed beforehand that this is not going to work very well. By the way, this reminded us of "do not feed the pigeons" campaigns.

*A Calif. man was arrested 92 times for giving sandwiches to homeless people. Because of the "three strikes and you are out" law, he faces a life imprisonment sentence (Casa Cry, 6/96).

*In several major German cities, homeless people are putting out a newspaper which they sell on the streets, in restaurants and on public transport vehicles. The people who sell these get to keep about half of the price of the newspaper. Most people would not buy these newspapers for their content, but view the arrangement as a better alternative to either homeless people begging, or giving alms to them. In fact, many more people appear to buy these newspapers as a favor to homeless people than would be willing to give alms to them. Perhaps the salesmanship by the homeless people projects a more positive and enterprising role than the beggar role.

*The German city of Bremen has fallen back on a 500-year-old way of dealing with the homeless: fine them, because if they cannot pay the fine, they can be incarcerated and thereby gotten off the street.

*Wealthy Westchester County in New York State has very quietly been shipping its homeless people to New York City, spending more than \$400,000 to that purpose during about two years (AP in SHJ, 6 Feb. 95).

*A fascinating imperial verbal game that turns the connotations of the word "homelessness" virtually upside down is to call it "urban camping," which refers to sleeping or perhaps even cooking in public spaces when one has no other place to go, and which is illegal. This harks right back to the repressive laws against poverty in England (ca. 1500-1850) that often amounted to a death penalty for being poor.

*In New York City, the Mafia runs single-room occupancy-type hotels from which it makes fantastic profits as the city Department of Homeless Services sends people there at \$100 a night. One such facility has 95 rooms, meaning that close to \$10,000 is taken in every day. The manager was paid \$123,000 p.a. Thus, this arrangement was a transfer of tax funds from the public to the Mafia over the bodies of homeless people. Ironically, one of these facilities, a former motel, has the name "Angels by the Sea" (CBS TV "60 Minutes," 27/4/97).

*In Syracuse, there has been an outbreak of TB (with at least two deaths) among the homeless in 1997, spread among them in a crowded homeless shelter with poor ventilation. We had known one of the two men for about 23 years; he had been living for much of this time in a homeless shelter. It turned out that the people who ran the shelter where he slept (and where he had probably caught TB) had known all along that he had active TB, but did nothing about it nor told anybody else. He regularly attended a free breakfast program for the poor without anyone there being told that he had TB; and almost every day, he spent hours sitting in a downtown cathedral (using it as a place of rest, not worship) where he may have spread TB germs. He himself refused to accept any restriction on his behavior or movements, or to seek and maintain treatment. There may be so much of this going on that one day, there may be a severe backlash not only against people with TB, but also those who are suspected as being potential carriers, and those parties who are complicit in spreading it.

*In early November 1996, close to All Souls Day, a requiem mass was said in the Episcopal cathedral in Atlanta for all the homeless people who had died during the preceding year. This was the 8th year in which this was done, and it is an event great with meaning to homeless people, their friends and advocates (source information from Doug Mouncey).

*A Toronto City morgue was exorcised from the bad spirits of its previous use by an Indian spiritual healer, and converted into a 38-place women's shelter (Toronto Star, 10 May 97; source item from Judith Sandys).

*The mother of all hobo songs! We always try to include "hobo songs" and poetry in the December issue, but are often short of them, and very few people have helped us find any. But glory be! We found the mother of all hobo songs. It is "Where Is My Boy Tonight?", sometimes called "Where Is My Wandering Boy Tonight?", written anonymously in 1877 and reproduced below. It became the most emotional hobo song in the early hobo era which can be said to have begun after the 1873 financial crash and lasted until ca. 1900, to be rekindled by the Great Depression.

Chorus: O where is my boy tonight?
O where is my boy tonight?

for I love him, he knows;
O where is my boy tonight?

1. Where is my wand'ring boy tonight,
The boy of my tend'rest care,
The boy that was once my joy and light,
The child of my love and pray'r?
2. Once he was pure as morning dew,
As he knelt at his mother's knee;
No face was so bright, no heart more true,
And none was so sweet as he.
3. O could I see you now, my boy,
As fair as in olden time,
When prattle and smile made home a joy,
And life was a merry chime!
4. Go for my wand'ring boy tonight;
Go, search for him where you will;
But bring him to me, with all his blight,
And tell him I love him still.

*Here is another passage from a hobo song of a later era.
Now if a woman gets the blues, Lawd,
she hangs her head and cries,
But if a man gets the blues, Lawd,
He grabs a train and rides.

*A hobo poet, Harry Kemp, who had jumped many a train, wrote this song (source item from Peter King):

Singing the song of their traffic
As they ride like ships in a gale:
For ships in the wind lift music
Of a song that is all their own--
And, chanting down grooves of metal,
To a modern symphony grown,
The rhythmic cars have voices
That the man who rides them knows.

*Of the lure of the roving life, Robert Service wrote (source item from Peter King):
Haunting, taunting, that is the spell of it;
Mocking, baulking, that is the hell of it;
But I'll shoulder my pack in the morning, boys,
And I'm going because I must;
For it's so-long to all
When you answer the call
Of the Wan-der lust.

*Hobo Jokes. There is also a literary genre of hobo jokes. One 1936 joke book had collected 60 of them. To convey what these are like, we present 3 of these.

1. "You seem to be an able-bodied man. You ought to be strong enough to work."
"I know, mum. And you seem to be beautiful enough to go on the stage, but evidently you prefer the simple life."
"Step into the kitchen, and I'll see if I can't stir up a meal for you."
2. "What are you doing there, Bo?"
"I'm writing a letter to my brother out in Leavenworth."
"Go on, Bo: you know you don't know how to write."
"That don't make no difference; me brother don't know how to read."
3. "Well, make it short," snapped the housewife as she answered the knock of the ragged individual at her back door.
The tramp took a deep breath, and blurted:
"Will you, ma'am, give me a drink of water, because I'm so hungry I don't know where to stay tonight?"

*Hobo history. Peter King found a hobo history for us, from which we extracted the following tidbits.

In hobo culture, careful distinctions were drawn between hobos who would work here and there, including for meals; tramps who would migrate about the same as hoboies but refused to work, and bums who neither migrated nor worked. This also explains why tramps and bums were much more likely to commit crimes, usually of a petty nature. Bums were likely to be the habitual customers of skid row missions. Of course, the hobo who succumbed to liquor might descend into bumship.

The places where hoboies used to gather were usually located next to the rail track, just outside of town, and near running water, and were called hobo jungles because they were usually "in the weeds." Among the rules at hobo jungles was that wasting of food was not allowed, and in order to "get something you had to bring something."

There are a great many theories where the word hobo comes from, and unable to resolve them, one of them ended up calling himself a haut beaux in pidgin French, which could be rendered as "high beauty."

About 25,000(!) hoboies were killed on the rails by trains or railroad police between 1901-1905 alone, and a yet greater number were injured and maimed. Some railroads maintained private tramp graveyards in which they secretly dumped the nameless dead.

*In 1996, there was an international convention of tramps in Argentina. However, a veteran 82-year old hobo sneered at today's tramps, and said that the old ones liked tobacco and liquor, weren't fussy about what they ate, and were not concerned with a healthy lifestyle, while today's tramps are "idealists and vegetarians" (Globe & Mail, 3 Oct. 96; source item from Doug Mouncey).

Crime

*Even Japan has been overswept by a crime wave, contrary to its tradition.

*Reportedly, a million women and 400,000 men were "stalked" in the US in 1996 (Time, 28/7/97).

*A University of California psychologist has argued that the way to reduce crime is to reduce "birth complications," claiming that these cause brain traumas that in turn cause people to be violent in later life (Science, 11 March 94). This is very typical of the simple-minded reductionism that is currently very popular in certain circles, including shrinkery.

*One lone juvenile graffiti artist in NY did \$1 million in damages to statues, buildings and subway cars. Graffiti crime is said to be a typical entry crime into more serious offenses (AP in SHJ, 15/12/94).

*The security "industry" has been predicted to be a "growth industry" for many decades to come, with a huge anticipated profitability. This includes seminars such as the "Gift of Fear seminars" given by the author of a best-seller book on personal security, called The Gift of Fear (Time, 28/7/97). Already, there are now more private security guards in the US than public police officers (B&C, 7/97).

*The problem with home alarm systems is that less than 1% of alarms are actually set off by emergencies, and all the rest are false alarms. Where public safety officers are supposed to respond to such alarms, they would hardly be able to do anything else.

*Sign of the Times! Hard to believe, but first having developed their own police forces, some universities have also begun to establish their own private SWAT teams. Next we know, they will have helicopters and tanks.

*To our amazement, we learned in 9/97 that for \$140, anybody can buy a stun gun that not only disables someone upon contact, but that can also spit out 2 missile-like probes at somebody as far away as 17 feet, and that administers an electric shock that will throw a person to the ground and disable (most likely, convulse) them for up to 15 minutes. You would think that every street criminal would want to buy one of these so that they no longer have to mug merely little old ladies, but anybody.

*Considering that every day, hackers are hacking at thousands of computer systems in the US alone, and that some computer systems find evidence of attempted entry by hackers every single morning, it is obvious that there are an awful lot of bright people out there who simply do not have enough to do. On the other hand, hacking keeps them off the street, where they might commit old-fashioned kinds of crimes.

*There now is a computer crime police that is being kept very busy. Its functionaries report that "you can steal a lot more with a computer than with a gun" (Newsweek, 9 June 1997).

*White collar criminals are less inclined to say that "the devil made me do it," and more likely to say, "I asked the ethics office/committee, and they said that it was not forbidden" (Newsweek, 13/2/95).

*A columnist in Time (14/7/97) observed that if certain acts that are being committed all the time by corporations were committed by private individuals, they would be serious crimes. Therefore, it was proposed that if anybody plans to commit a dreadful crime, they should first incorporate themselves.

*When police use force to break into somebody's home, this is euphemistically referred to as a "dynamic entry."

*In the US, the police may violently and unannounced break into someone's residence and hold guns to people's heads there. One other party that can do this are private bounty hunters--something "foreigners" will find very foreign. And while 49 of the US states require barbers to be licensed, only five require bounty hunters to be licensed (Time, 15/9/97). But one other party that can break in on people are police-accompanied shrink-types, which is why we have to understand the methods of involuntary psychiatric commitment as being a form of bounty hunting for the shrink service system.

*One of the many problems of the US criminal justice system is "the rise of aggressive criminology among cops," which is incomparably more severe and problematic than old-fashioned precinct-level graft. Entire gangs of police actively collaborate--or even compete--with drug dealers. Such developments have been noted in some of the biggest of the US cities. Some police gangs will raid drug lords and then keep the money that they find. One narcotic unit of 124 members in Los Angeles was found to have 45 thusly involved cops. Critics talk about institutional corruption, and a law enforcement world gone mad (Newsweek, 19/12/94).

*One of the hard dictums about the police culture is that whatever means you give to the police, they will not only use it, but will certainly also use it abusively, and apparently there is nothing that one can do to totally prevent this. For instance, police have sprayed pepper spray directly into the eyes of peaceful protestors sitting chained on the ground, even though they are not supposed to use it against people in restraints. Pepper spray has even been painted with brushes onto defenseless people's faces (React, 5 Jan. 98).

*There is a certain kind of fracture of the arm which hospital emergency room personnel call "nightstick fractures" because people typically get them from instinctively holding up their arms when they are being beaten by police officers with their nightsticks. It is amazing how much of this brutality is going on without being well-known (Discover, 7/97).

*We were very mystified when our Syracuse newspaper revealed that the police had arrested 21 drug dealers in a single drug sweep, because looking at the list of names and addresses, we discovered that the addresses of four of the 21 were jails and prisons. Imagine the police coming into a prison and proclaiming to a prisoner: "We place you under arrest; anything you say, etc., etc." But it turns out that this is a regular thing, and that arresting people already in detention is a good way to give the appearance of "doing something" about drugs or crime. After all, one could "arrest" a prisoner a thousand times a day each day for the rest of his prison term. If it happens in Syracuse, then it must also be happening elsewhere.

*The police in New Zealand have been urged by their highest officers to think of criminals as "not just offenders who must be caught" but to think of them, as well as of the victims of crimes, as "clients" or "customers." Police sergeants should think of themselves as "team leaders," and 15 police chiefs in various police districts are being reinterpreted as "managers" (NZ Herald, 6 Aug. 97). This speaks both to the world-wide trend toward interpreting all sorts of non-business enterprises as businesses, and the realities of a PPP economy.

Punishment

*Things aren't being helped by courts making it almost impossible to convict a malefactor. The highest court of NY State ruled in 10/97 that even a freely-given confession is inadmissible evidence if it was made without a lawyer present. Of course, by this ruling, lawyers are also creating jobs for yet more lawyers in what we call a PPP pattern.

Here are several examples of why people lose faith in the court and justice system and become radical about crime. A man in New York City whose license had been suspended at least 22 times so that he never had a valid driving license in 27 years simply kept on driving and driving in a drunken state until he ran down and killed a family of 3 and severely injured 2 other of its members (AP in SHJ, 3 May 95). In another instance, a man charged with 6 kidnappings and 6 murders was diagnosed to have a severe heart condition and prognosticated to die very soon, whereupon the judge turned him loose to go home and die. Instead, the man went to another city and got himself a \$400,000 heart transplant paid by Medicaid--and disappeared underground (AP in SHJ, 3 Aug. 94). In yet another case, a school custodian set a fire in the school where he worked, and when confronted, signed a letter of resignation. He then changed his mind and sued for reinstatement with back pay--and won in court (AP in SHJ, 31/10/96).

*A man, an eight-time felon, released early from prison, promptly raped a 3-year-old girl. The jury was so disgusted with the early release that it recommended a 30,000-year sentence.

*A man with 633 citations on his driver's license was caught driving yet again--without a license. It is people like these who eventually kill someone with their cars.

*A Calif. man who embezzled \$61 million (the largest corporate embezzlement in US history!) was sentenced to a mere 5 years (of which he will probably serve much less) (AP in SHJ, 7 Oct. 97).

*A jury in NY State spent 4.5 months in a relatively trivial libel trial, hearing evidence. By mid-December, contemplating loss of the Christmas and New Year's feasts, the jurors had enough and announced, "we quit," which was very unusual and resulted in a mistrial.

*The insanity defense has always been fraught with pitfalls and problems. Currently, one of these is the following. Certain people plead the insanity defense for very serious crimes, and if the defense is accepted by the jury, one of two things may happen. (a) The accused is acquitted "by reason of insanity," in which case (a1) the person may either be released if it is also ruled that the person is now no longer insane, or (a2) the person may be sent to a mental institution--perhaps even one for the criminally insane--if it is deemed that the person is still insane. However, historically, mental institutions have often released people thusly remanded to them after relatively short periods of time, and sometimes even without informing the court. Sometimes, such persons then committed another crime. (b) Such persons are ruled guilty, but nonetheless sent to the mental rather than prison system. In that case, they may be sentenced to an indeterminate term until they can prove that they are no longer either mentally disordered or dangerous. The problem here is that sometimes, people are kept for as little as a year before they are ruled to meet the two requirements, which means once again that even after an extremely serious crime, they may be out again within a year.

In 1996 or 1997, the California Protection and Advocacy system went to court to have people convicted of crimes and then classified as mentally disordered offenders released. It challenged the original mental diagnosis of a woman prisoner, as well as the claim that she is dangerous (their

newsletter of Spring '97.) The problem is that if such a challenge succeeds, juries will be extremely reluctant to ever again allow any insanity defense in the future, because regardless of what they do in response to such a defense, the offender could end up free again in short order. This is yet another example of how legal rights "successes" can profoundly distort and undermine all sorts of other societal contexts.

*A man killed his girlfriend but was declared in 1987 to be mentally incompetent to stand trial because after the killing, he had shot himself in the head and suffered a brain injury. A few years later, he was discovered taking a pre-med college program. The murder victim's mother rather commonsensically inquired how it was possible that he was able to go to college if he was not competent enough to stand trial (AP in SHJ, 6 Nov. 97).

*More ships of fools. For years, the communities of San Diego and La Mesa in California would each send the prostitutes they arrested in their area across the line into the other city (Newsweek, 6 Feb. 1995, p. 24).

*An 11-year old girl in Texas was forced to baby-sit alone at her grandparents' unlicensed day care operation, and beat to death one of her charges, a 2½-year old child. Amazingly she was convicted in two consecutive trials, and sentenced to 25 years of prison, and could have been sentenced for up to 40 years. This all reminds us a bit of the days in England when small children were hanged for stealing a bread roll (SPS, 18/2/97).

*A Filipino lawmaker said that the death penalty would not reform rapists, while amputating their penises would.

The Jail & Prison Scene

*Even as the US has been building ever more prisons, and become the most imprisoning country of the Western world, economic oppression as well as the rise in decadence keep producing more people who are violent, predate, or are involved in drugs than the prisons can hold. This is one reason why the proportion of time served per length of sentence has been going down.

With many predatory and violent offenders serving only a small percentage of their official sentence in prison, one response by frustrated citizens in the US has been the creation of a web site called Parole Watch on which one can learn which violent offenders are about to be released in the state of New York. The information is coded so that one can retrieve names by offense, e.g., one can call up all convicted rapists about to be released, kidnappers, burglars, etc. (Source material from Ann O'Connor).

However, as long as so many crimes are being committed by people within days after being released from prison, there will be strong support for imprisonment.

*Few people are aware that between 1992-1994, what used to be the military camp of Fort Dix, New Jersey, has become the largest US federal prison.

*The main jail for Maricopa County (Phoenix), Arizona, consists of a tent city of 600 prisoners (AP in SHJ, 18/11/96).

*The Liverpool jail in England, with 1,400 inmates, is supposedly the biggest in Europe; this seems to be rather good news considering how big they can be in the US (CW, 1/97).

*Home confinement with a radio tracking device attached to one's body is said to be the hottest answer to prison crowding (CBS "60 Minutes," 2 Nov. 97), but the private firms that are supposed to keep track of the prisoners normatively seem to fail to do so. The criminals are very amused by this and simply go out and commit more crimes, or cut off the radio devices that they are supposed to carry on their bodies. Initially instituted for people who had committed minor crimes, this has escalated to where now, even career criminals are put on such home equipment.

*Simply by deporting back home 86 illegal immigrants from Colombia who had committed felonies, NY State saved \$20 million--and 86 prison places for legitimate home-grown felons. Apparently, there have been close to 100,000 illegal immigrant felons in US jails and prisons recently (AP in SHJ, 29/8/96), which could turn one against illegal immigrants.

*AP carried a story (SHJ, 21/1/97) of how the construction of a new prison brought outright prosperity to an Oklahoma town that previously had been on the skids, the same as in many other new prison towns across the US. Communities all over Illinois have been competing tooth and claw to have the state build a prison in their area, and as incentives have offered such things as free land, free houses, free landscaping, access to utilities, free water towers, proximity to airports or interstate highways, and even a free shooting range on which to train prison employees (news item from Howard Blackman, 6/97).

*With ever more people, including more women, being imprisoned, ever more children have, have had, and will have, one imprisoned parent (sometimes their only parent) (AP, in SPS, 3 April 96).

*While there have been detentive facilities for juveniles ("reformatories," "houses of correction," etc.) since the 19th century, the increasing criminality and violence among ever younger youths has led to the development of more secure juvenile prisons, such as a "kiddie prison" in Illinois (Newsweek, 22/1/96).

*People who deal with juvenile corrections tend to say that if they get youths into correctional facilities at age 16 or later, it is too late. Another conclusion widely shared is that facilities for more than about 50 youths are hopeless. This has to be understood against a backdrop of thousand-place reform schools in some US states (SHA, 19/1/97). Based on SRV principles, we would not be surprised if the experts eventually learned that even 50 is vastly too large.

*According to some reports, on account of new prison construction, prison crowding has actually abated despite the steadily growing size of the prison inmate population (ET, 8/96).

*This may be relatively old news, but it is still very interesting. In the early 1990s, the state of New York transferred about 900 prison inmates to four of its many prisons in order to concentrate them in large enough numbers (over 50%) to become eligible for a federal "Child Nutrition Program" which is a form of school lunch program that pays \$2.55 per day per prisoner under 21. However, concentrating that many young prisoners together was well-known to create a great many problems, and caused much prison fighting, and one wonders whether the state might not have lost money on this hare-brained scheme (AP in SHA, 3/3/91).

*About 6% of all inmates in state and federal prisons in the US--i.e., 75,000--are female. As one prison official put it, "a lot of these women are here because of their bad taste in guys." An astonishing fact is that one in every 16 women entering a US prison is pregnant, and 75% of female

inmates are already mothers. About a third of women prisoners are in for drug offenses, a quarter of them have engaged in violence and are in at least for the second time, and a third of those who are in for homicide had killed a husband or boyfriend. In prison, women are vastly more likely than men to mutilate themselves. One woman prisoner said that time in prison stops, but not on the outside (Source material from Nancy Rampulla).

*It is difficult to understand why the majority of guards in women's prisons in the US should be male, which is certainly a set-up for sexual abuse (Life, 10/97; source item from Nancy Rampulla).

*Being strip-searched is mortifying to men, and even more so to women, especially if male officers participate. This is why strip-searching is sometimes inflicted as a punishment or form of torture. One woman in Britain who is apparently a political prisoner who had never been charged with a crime was strip-searched over 75 times (SHA, 6 April 97).

*We saw an ad in our local paper (SHA, 9 Feb. 97) for "The kind of job that has good benefits, a real health insurance program for you and your family, a retirement plan that will be there when you need it and, best of all, a stable work environment where you can plan your future..." Amazingly, the ad was recruiting guards for NY State prisons! Also amazing is how unconscious so many people can be.

*A promotional flyer distributed in 8/97 by the New York State Dept. of Correctional Services proclaims on its cover, "Corrections is People," and shows 8 persons, including a cook, a priest, a guard, and a maintenance laborer. It turns out that the brochure was meant to recruit workers--mostly guards--and nothing was said about the hundreds of thousands of state prisoners being "people." What unconsciousness, and irony!

*One problem with both police forces and prison personnel is that a relatively high percentage of them are psychopathic or criminal elements themselves, as incident after incident over hundreds of years has revealed.

Guards in the new (opened 1988) Corcoran Prison in Calif. have been egging prisoners on into fights with each other--and when the fights got out of hand, they shot at them, killing 8 and wounding scores. In a single month, there were 70 such fights. All this has been covered up from the top down. In other prisons, guards encourage yard fights (CBS "60 Minutes," 30/3/97).

*A most peculiar thing has been happening at the local jail in Syracuse. It seems that almost all of its 270 deputies are sick or crippled, or at least claim they are: 80% had a doctor's certificate saying that they had physical problems; and at any one time, up to 15% are out on injury claims. The jail in Syracuse has had a very bad reputation, and perhaps such a place attracts crooked workers, or it makes workers sick, i.e., the very people who act cruelly toward the prisoners become victims of their own cruelty (SHJ, 6 Dec. 97).

*A court ordered the US state of NC to equip each of its 13 prisons with a set of drums, 3 guitars and 5 frisbees. Tennessee got rid of cable TV and ice cream machines in its prisons (Time, 4 Sept. 95). A Colorado judge required prison officials to furnish a satanist prisoner with a black robe, a gong and incense, lest his religious rights be violated (Newsweek, 26/12/94). Things like that will turn the population against prisoners.

*There is a myth that prisons are full of people who have been sent there for drug possession, but virtually all drug offenders behind bars are there for drug trafficking (FT, 8/96). In addition, they had on the average a long record of all sorts of other crimes, most notably in the categories of robbery, burglary and violence, which helps explain why so many prisoners are mean. A study of a large sample of the Wisconsin prison population found that on the average, a prisoner had committed 12 crimes (excluding all drug crimes) during the year before they were imprisoned, and a similar finding came from a New Jersey prison sample (FT, 8/96).

*According to CBS "60 Minutes" of 9 Nov. 97, there is more drug dealing being done from the inside of maximum security federal prisons (via collect phone calls) than on the outside. It is amazing to learn that prisoners are free to use the phone every day, and that some prisoners call drug contacts in Colombia four times a week. One prisoner was earning \$100,000 a year from these phone deals. The head of an Afro-American drug gang, Gangster Disciples, with 50,000 members in 35 states, keeps running a drug empire out of prison where he has been for 22 years. The gang kills about 75 people every year, even though 5,000(!) of its members are in Illinois prisons alone (Newsweek, 5 Feb. 96; Time, 19/5/97). Obviously, imprisoning someone these days does not put them out of operation. Another prisoner in NY stole \$1 million in securities over the prison phone (AP in SHJ, 1 Nov. 95). Things like these could make one want to take away their satanist paraphernalia.

*Inmates splashing or smearing guards with feces or urine (or both) is called "serving" them on the US East coast, and "gassing" them on the West coast, and is considered to be a badge of honor. Every time an officer gets served, all the inmates cheer. States have responded by passing special laws against this, making the "throwing of bodily fluids or wastes" a felony. One could easily see how this is yet another of an infinity of laws about everything bad that anybody might think up. From a very safe distance, spokespersons for the American Civil Liberties Union call this a "non-issue" (AP in SHJ, 20/8/97).

*A wonderful new control device has been invented, called the stun belt. It is a belt which is secured around a person (usually a prisoner) so that the person cannot remove it, and contains an electric charge which can be released from a distance with a radio signal, upon which the bearer of the belt is zapped with 50,000 volts for eight seconds, which throws the person down and convulses him uncontrollably in an epileptic-type seizure. Even though the person could bang himself up very badly, the manufacturer proudly claims that the shock itself does not inflict any "permanent damage" (CW, 8/97). We would think that this device would restore a great deal of order and compliance in prisons, and perhaps make a prisoner think twice about "serving" a prison officer. We only wish professors were also allowed to use it on inattentive or mouthy students.

*A novel, The Billiard Table Murders, features Netherworld Prison in which the warden subjects the inmates to 16 hours a day non-stop entertainment. We would prefer the stun belt.

*In 1971, prison history was made when there was an insurrection by the prisoners at the Attica State Prison in New York State. When the insurrection was put down, 39 people were killed, all but 4 of them by state police and prison guards. A lawsuit was then filed on behalf of the prisoners, but a judge who has been presiding over the case for more than 20 years has managed to block any resolution of it, apparently hoping that all the former prisoners affected will die and render the case moot.

*In Syracuse, prisoners in the local jail have been doing about \$10,000 worth of damage each month to the sprinkler system alone. One favorite method is to set off sprinklers by hitting them with shoes, which also sets off the fire alarms, and brings the fire trucks onto the scene (SHJ, 15/9/95). This sort of thing could turn taxpayers against prisoners. We would take away the shoes of sprinkler-hitters.

*As of 1989, the jails of Arizona were holding more mentally disordered people than hospitals and mental facilities were (Cox News Service, in SHJ, 2 Feb. 89, p. A7), testifying to the redefinition of mental people into menaces and criminals.

*After having spent most of her life in a horrible institution, a mentally retarded Australian woman with epilepsy ended up living in the community "with support," but her identity was apparently not understood. She was given "support workers" in an "independent apartment" when she really needed practically full-time presence and help of workers. When the hours of her support were cut back, she got into trouble, and each time she got into trouble, her response--and that of the courts--escalated, so that eventually she ended up in a prison, where everyone agreed she did not belong, but there was no other place for her. She eventually died "of natural causes," apparently a result of a seizure. There is controversy over whether the medical care she got at the prison, including supervision of her seizure drugs, was adequate. But even if it was, it is clearly a case of long-term, systematic deathmaking. By the way, in 25 years, no one else has died "of natural causes" at this prison--which implies that all other deaths had been from assaults or some other violence! (Age, 12 April 97; source item from John Armstrong).

*Indiana had sent so many mentally disordered people to prison that suddenly, when they have served their sentences, they are overwhelming the community mental health system that had forgotten all about them (Indianapolis Star, 20/1/98; source item from Joe Osburn).

*In the US prison system, there is a growing number of older and debilitated inmates. Both because of their previous lifestyle and the toll taken by prison life, they tend to be in much poorer health than their age peers. Prisoners in their 50s tend to have health problems that ordinarily one would expect of people in their 60s and 70s. Interestingly, while ordinary citizens have no guaranteed health care, prisons are mandated to attend to the medical care of prisoners, whatever the cost, though they do not do this very well. This largely accounts for older prisoners costing about 3 times as much to imprison as the typical adult inmate. One response has been the recent development of so-called geriatric prisons (MM, 3/97).

*Contrary to what is commonly assumed (according to at least some interpretations), about half or more of prison operations spending in many US states is on inmate medical and rehabilitation services, rather than on security (FT, 8/96).

*While countries are turning increasingly to using prisons privately run for profit, and some prison firm stocks increased their value 10-fold in just 3 years, such prisons increasingly begin to have the same problems as public ones. The ones in DC have been said to be close to those of the "dark ages" (Newsweek, 7 Aug. 97).

*Despite the massive cross-transferring of prisoners (about 100,000 a year), discussed in previous TIPS issues, the US federal government has persistently denied that it transfers prisoners as a punishment. Prisoners themselves have begun to call this "diesel therapy."

*The Massachusetts prison system transferred 300 prisoners to Texas prisons (presumably on a contract basis, to save money) in the middle of the night, without first informing its own top administrators or the legislature (CR, 10/96).

*When prisoners of conscience in the US refuse to take psychiatric mind drugs in prison, their sentence is often lengthened, or their time-off for good behavior gets cancelled (LA, 9/97, p. 47).

*When Dietrich Bonhoeffer was imprisoned by the Nazis, his family managed to convey short and cryptic messages to him by sending him books (which was permitted) in which a single letter on every other page, starting from the back, was very lightly marked with a pencil so that a message could be spelled out by stringing all these letters together. Nowadays, books with hard spines or covers are ordinarily no longer allowed in prisons, but this or some similar method might still be feasible if one could succeed to convey paperbacks, or books without spines and covers, to a prisoner.

Judicial Killings

*Once one knows that the word "gala," as in "a gala occasion" or "gala dance," comes from gallows, one no longer wants to be part of gala anything. Gala day was the hanging day at Tyburn Hill in London, also called the "hanging fair" or sheriff's ball at which the victim "danced in the air" (Newman, 1978).

*The death penalty is permissible for mentally retarded offenders in 71% of US states with death penalties (Newsweek, 16/6/97).

*After a man had spent 10 years on death row in Illinois, it was discovered that he had been framed by four police officers and three prosecutors (Globe, 14/12/96).

*Executions have become so routine, particularly in US states such as Texas, that there are hardly any protestors anymore. Particularly when there are several executions in a week, the protestors get worn out. A few years ago, there might be hundreds of protestors putting on quite a show outside the prison every time.

Also, people used to be executed either at dawn or late at night, but Texas now executes its condemned prisoners early in the evening, with a prison warden explaining, "I don't know too many people who like to stay up after midnight. People have to get up and work the next day" (NY Times, 25/5/97; source item from John O'Brien).

*When terrorist bomber Timothy McVeigh was sentenced to death in 6/97, church bells were rung in Oklahoma City. We have never heard of any previous occasion where church bells were rung as a sign of joy for a death sentence or an execution. They were sometimes rung in a slow, mournful rhythm when the condemned were taken to execution, as at Tyburn Hill.

Morality in Society & Public Life

*Conscience is a strange and poorly-understood thing. In Nazi Europe, people with apparently sterling character did not oppose the Holocaust but even benefited from it, while a Nazi fellow traveler, gambler, exploiter and womanizer (Schindler) risked his life to save 1,200 Jews. Obviously, big sinners can still have a live conscience, while many people who lead a superficially

righteous life are soul-dead. Commonly, this phenomenon can be observed also among the lowly street people. So many are terribly ridden by carnal vices, and yet so many have an acute sense of sin and cannot quit crying over their failures. So many privileged people are like the priest and Levite in the story of the Good Samaritan who pass by the wounded man.

*In former East Germany, roughly one of every 50 adults worked in some way for the secret police, even if only as unpaid informer (Time, 15/9/97).

*Dorothy Day reportedly said that "what is morally right can never be politically wrong, and what is morally wrong can never be politically right." However, we recently discovered that she was actually quoting the English social reformer William Wilberforce (1759-1833; Christian Horizon, 1997, No. 53).

*There has been an increasing tendency in American society to refer to moral decisions as political ones, rather than the other way around. For instance, efforts to ban the abortion drug RU-486 have been called political, as has the presidential ruling to limit research on human embryos. Perhaps in a society which cannot acknowledge the legitimacy of any transcendent spirituality and morality in public life, political constructs are the highest ones that people can deal with, and they become to them the language of morality.

*Newsweek columnist Meg Greenfield (22/9/97) said that government has less and less to do with governing, and is more and more becoming "performance art" dealing with images. Of course, the public actually likes this because it is externalistic itself, and judges politicians by imagery rather than on substance. Once again, the old truism comes through: people get the kind of government they deserve.

*One writer said that the scandal is not how many public officials break the laws (as many do), but how many immoral acts by public officials are legal (Newsweek, 28/10/96).

*Even after Vice President Gore's sister died from smoking, he kept accepting campaign contributions from tobacco firms.

*In the last few years, more state legislators in the US than ever before have been indicted, convicted or imprisoned for various offenses.

*More local communities than ever before in NY State history have had to borrow money to pay their bills. Many local officials are simply not competent to deal with fiscal management, and a great many local governments engage in quasi-dishonest money games that channel funds to patronage (SHJ, 19/6/97).

*The 1997 legislation that allegedly will balance the US budget is believed by a majority of the US population to do no such thing, and by a yet greater majority to have been only a cynical political trick. We think that they will probably be proven right (Time, 11 Aug. 97).

*We were amused to learn that 92% of the much trumpeted projected US federal deficit reductions comes from assumptions (e.g., about the economy), while only 8% comes from actual limitations of expenditures (Newsweek, 12 May 97).

*Yet another manifestation of moral schizophrenia in America is that at the same time as Americans are piling up unprecedented levels of consumer debt, they insist that governments should balance their budgets for moral reasons, and are willing to vote for constitutional amendments to that effect (Newsweek, 9 Dec. 96).

*There is a federal air pollution monitor at a street corner in Syracuse. The way the city avoids getting into trouble because of pollution is by simply rerouting traffic whenever the pollution index at that corner gets near the critical point: Problem solved the imperial way.

*In response to the growth of corruption in international business, an organization has been founded for combating corruption in the world. The organization claims that about a third of the indebtedness of the poorer countries is due--directly or indirectly--to corruption, and that in many countries, further economic development will be impossible unless corruption is curbed. Germany is said to lead the world in bribing foreign government officials, which is not only legal but even tax deductible. The organization has challenged corporations to voluntarily sign anti-corruption pacts (A Berlin newspaper of 9 Feb. 97).

*There are various mutual funds that interpret themselves as affording their customers "socially responsible" investing. At least a number of them invest in pro-abortion enterprises which presumably qualify as being socially responsible. At the same time, some such programs will eschew investments in firms that violate "animal rights."

*Business firms, investment firms, banks, retirement plans, and other financial institutions are so complicatedly interlinked in a very non-transparent fashion that someone in the hinterland of the US with an individual retirement account could conceivably be earning interest on a brothel run by gangsters in some Asian or Third World country (Newsweek, 1 Sept. 97).

*We predict that if the law profession does not get a hold of itself, some sort of popular uprising against it will do what they arrogantly fail to do.

Religion in Society

No amount of separation of church and state can prevent de facto, if not even explicit, religious notions from penetrating into human services. In fact, superstitions may even be presented as valid service technologies, as has happened in the case of "Facilitated Communication." This is why people in human services need to be aware of religious trends in society.

General/Miscellaneous Points

*While most of us think of paganism as being polytheistic and/or worshiping of unlikely gods such as cows or trees, the Austrian ethnologist and linguist Wilhelm Schmidt, in a 12-volume series, showed that among the most primitive cultures studied by anthropologists, the conception of God is remarkably exalted, not unlike what Aristotle taught, namely as being a pure spirit, singular in number, omniscient, good, and who rewards the good and punishes the evil in an afterlife. These beliefs have been found in all corners of the world, and must have been arrived at independently. Frequently, God is even referred to as "our Father." Animism, magic and fetishism tend to show up in proportion to a population moving to a settled agricultural or herding stage from earlier primitive lifestyles (FI, 10/91).

*Peter Kreeft has made the point that all the ancient paganisms tended to have three things in common, regardless of what they were: a sense of transcendancy (usually including some kind of divinity that was outside the human being); a sense of piety (that usually included worship and often also sacrifice); and a sense of moderation or temperance (i.e., that there was such a thing as enough and too much). Kreeft said that now for the first time, a new modern paganism has arisen that rejects all three. It is centered on the human as the source of all morality, and denies any objective and absolute morality that is within the nature of things; it is pretty much bereft of a sense of worship; and it has no sense of moderation. Morality is considered situational and pragmatic which, in turn, implies that there are an infinite number of gods (as many as there are humans), and therefore an infinite number of moral systems and moralities.

*Many cultures have no indigenous word for all sorts of moral and religious concepts that we take for granted. For instance, missionaries in South Africa found that some of the languages there had no concept for either sin or holiness, and translated the former as "cow dung" and the latter as "a nice fat ox or cow" (Christian History, 1997, 16(4), issue No. 56, p. 37).

*Apparently, any spirituality that brings serenity, and does not promote sensualism, is good for health, as studies appear to show.

*Bad news for modern man. "The lama sends word he will see me now....I tell him about the pain my divorce causes me. He nods, asks a few questions, then says, 'Born lonely, die lonely, everything in between just a dream.' He continues, 'Any time you feel bad, you pray.' I want to object that I will be praying ceaselessly, but obviously that is the point." Andy Yale, Global Depression.

*One of the best-recognized (92%) symbols in the world are the 5 linked rings of the Olympics. Second (88%) are the McDonald's "Golden arches" and the Shell petroleum symbol. Way down (54%) was the cross (SHI, 2 Sept 95).

*It is a peculiar paradox that non-Christian Japan has adopted a great deal of Christian iconography. One sphere in which this has happened is in non-Christian marriage ceremonies. In the new electronic pet rock of 1997, the Tamagotchis, when the version made for the Japanese market "dies," a cross and head stone appear on its minute screen, while those made for the American market sprout wings and return to their "home planet," showing that the Japanese think that New Age iconography has more appeal in the American market than Christian icons (Newsweek, 9 June 1997).

*In the Christian Bible, Christ says that no one can serve the masters of God and Mammon (money) at the same time. A survey found that about 2/3 of low-income Americans believe it, but less than 1/2 of those earning \$50,000+ do.

*There is a spiritual teaching tradition in any number of religions that people who try to gain knowledge that humans should not possess, or even try to grasp higher knowledge that is beyond them, risk going insane, falling into false and crazy religions, or get struck dead. One author believes that this is what is happening with some of the cults that embrace crazy notions, drive their members into insane unreality, and even into mass suicides or murders.

*Reeves, T. D. (1996, October). Not so Christian America. First Things, No. 66, 16-21. This is a summary of evidence on religion in the US today.

*We are not sure what to think of a business with the name "Christian Exterminating Service (Honest and Dependable)."

Decline in Traditional or Explicit Religious Beliefs

*Dietrich Bonhoeffer, martyr under Nazism, certainly was insightful. From prison, he wrote in 1944, "We are moving toward a completely religionless time; people as they are now simply cannot be religious anymore. Even those who honestly describe themselves as 'religious' do not in the least act up to it, and so they presumably mean something quite different by 'religious'." (CH, No. 32).

*A US federal judge ruled that US currency may continue to carry the motto "In God We Trust" because it has no religious significance but only historic, patriotic and ceremonial ones (SHJ, 10 Dec. 94).

*In new Bible translations, there are no more father or son God, no more "lords" or kingdoms, no more right hand, and not even any more darkness (it might remind readers of "darkies"). In fact, these new Bibles are a whole new religion.

*An orthodox Jew spent a year at the Harvard Divinity School and then wrote a book about it, The Search For God at Harvard, from which one can only conclude that the only thing people are searching for there are careers, liturgical whimsy, gay lovers, or psychological fulfillment.

*Funeral directors report that an increasing number of Americans have to deal with the death of a family member without having any faith or liturgy that has been handed down to them or that they have been practicing that they can draw on. This has caused a rise in funerals conducted with what one might call secular religious rituals, such as asking mourners to tuck the body into the casket before the final closing, having mourners tell stories about the deceased, and having them write things to or about the person and put the writings into the casket (Newsweek, 22/9/97).

*While 28% of Americans worry "a lot" about money, and 21% about their health, only 8% worry about ending up in hell (AP in SHJ, 28/8/95).

*A high school choir director in Albuquerque was suspended because a Christmas concert which he had directed contained too many Christmas songs (Source clipping from Ann O'Connor).

*In order to please Americans in large numbers, a religion these days virtually has to be sappy, as underlined by the popularity (long No. 1 in the ratings) of angel TV shows such as "Touched By An Angel." Above all, a religion must not undermine people's "self-esteem," which implies that it cannot make a big thing of sin, sinfulness, repentance, penance, restitution, etc. (Newsweek, 6 Feb. 95).

*The contemporary film Breaking the Waves de facto presents religion as evil, and obscenity as religion, as approvingly noted in Time (2 Dec. 96).

Religious or Cult Crazes

*While there is a difference between superstition (covered later) and crazily religious practices, the borderline between these can get blurred. We are not always sure on which side

belong currently popular beliefs and practices such as shamans, telepathic healing, healing by massage from a distance, life force manipulation, trance dancing, post-life regressions, versions of herbalism and aroma therapy, reflexology, aura reading, spirit walking, Tantra toning, crystals, pyramids, intuitive soul painting, magnets, meditative drumming or chanting "roaring in the Holy Spirit," and more and more (e.g., Time, 20/10/97).

*As Newsweek put it (20/10/97), "the pop-guru business is certainly flourishing." E.g., pop health spirituality guru Deepak Chopra sold 130,000 copies of one of his books in a single day. He says himself that he "satisfies people's spiritual yearning without making them worry about God and punishment." His lectures draw 1,000 people and more at \$35 a head, and he charges \$25,000 for a talk (of which he gives 50 a year). The vast majority of his disciples are women(!), and most of them are professionals, showing how little defense intelligence and education are against religious gullibility.

*The latest externalistic pseudo-religion craze is a yuppie version of Kabbalah (from which the word cabal comes), originally a medieval Jewish mysticism with some links to medieval astrology. Contemporary versions have been embraced by Elizabeth Taylor, Barbra Streisand, talk show hostess Roseanne, pop idol Madonna, etc., which should tell us something.

*We recently realized that the kind of chanting that is emitted by imitation Buddhists in certain cults these days is a cult equivalent to "speaking in tongues."

*A "women's circle weekend" was described as follows. "We began with a foot massage and then, in a circle, we each in turn spoke, saying, 'I matter, I affirm self. What I am, I have a right to be,' and then some affirming/growth statement such as 'The loving and caring in me reaches out to you, and you, and you.' It was really moving." This was so much something one would expect these days that a Catholic news medium published it, unaware that it was a spoof by a critic of radical feminism (FT, 5/97). When no one laughs at the real thing, this is what happens.

Idolatry

A weak, sappy or vague religious cultus is very different from an idolatry, i.e., from enshrining as divine something that is not--often, something humans have made themselves, such as science. To innumerable people, technology in general, or a particular technology--clearly a human product--is an idol. A prime example these days are computer-related technologies. Of course, when even science, technology, computers, or whatever are elevated--de facto or explicitly--into idolhood, then those who manage the idolatry become its priests: scientists, computer gurus, etc.

*We know of people who keep their computer on all the time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year. It is almost like having a perpetual light lit before the tabernacle in Jewish temples and Christian churches. There is little credible practical explanation for this practice, so there must be an ideological--i.e., religious--one, and we think it is that the computer has, in fact, become an idol, and that the shrine must never be closed.

*Time ran a cover story (16/12/96) on religion on the Internet. It appears that the Internet is shaping people's faith rather than that their faith is shaping how they should view and use this particular communication medium. Also, virtual communities on the Internet are increasingly being equated with real ones.

Also, people are not only making claims that computers are live, but also that the Internet is live--"...the Net itself has become conscious," says science fiction writer William Gibson, who coined the term cyberspace--and even that the Internet is God. "People see the Net as a new metaphor for God" (Turkel), "God is the distributed, decentralized system" (Turkel), and "(the Net) may regard itself as God. And it may be God on its own terms" (Gibson). People are said to experience signing on to the Internet as a "transformative act," like a religious experience. This has led to the claim that God perself is changing, that God is "a process evolving with us. If you believe in an eternal, unchanging God, you'll be in trouble."

We also encountered a claim that "there is no race..gender..age..or infirmities..there is only the Internet." This is like making the Internet the peace-bringer to the world.

*In the novel 3001: The Final Odyssey by atheist and church-hater Arthur Clarke, humans have evolved with the help of technology so that they have eliminated war, and nobody eats meat, uses bad language anymore, or believes in God, and the name of God is the only obscenity left. The few people who have any strong religious beliefs are classified as failures of child-rearing or as insane.

*Many people refer to watching shows like ET and Star Wars as a "seminal moment" (Spielberg) in their lives. One said, "God, this is spiritual, isn't it?" (Newsweek, 20/1/97).

Newsweek (24/3/97) reviewed the film "Kissed" as being part of a (new?) genre of cinema religion, bringing "perversion as salvation." Other films in this genre are "Sick" and "Crash." "Sick" plays on masochism via "scenes of self-mutilation for strong eyes and stomachs only." "Crash" "has no plot to speak of. It's a cinematic tone poem of collision and coitus." It was chosen best picture of 1996 by a French cine-bible that called it a "religious masterpiece." "Kissed" treats "the ultimate taboo of necrophilia...with delicacy and tenderness." Gosh, why can't we have films that treat Jew-killing like that? Show Himmler in a way that makes us appreciate his ethical dilemmas, and leads us closer to salvation, etc.

*For 80 years, the proportion of scientists (the majority) who do not believe in God has been relatively unchanged. Disbelief is highest among astronomers and physicists, and lowest among mathematicians (NC Register, 20/4/97).

*To many people, science or a branch of science (e.g., physics) is religion, in which case one should almost call it something like scientism. Science guru/high priest Carl Sagan made a list of "irrationalities" that included astrology, witchery, spoon-bending, ESP, spiritualism, false memories--and prayer (Newsweek, 31/3/97).

*The notion that humans will be able to defeat death has kept going through cycles of popularity since it was first promulgated in a big way in the early 1970s. We have to understand such claims to immortality as an idolatry of the human, and more specifically of human intellect as expressed through medical science and technology

*One can now buy reincarnation or resurrection accounts in Liechtenstein banks, so that when one comes back, one won't be poor.

*The atheist novelist-philosopher Ayn Rand once said (according to a 1991 book about her by her student and intellectual heir Leonard Peikoff): "I had decided that the concept of God is degrading to man..." "Since they say God is perfect, and man can never be that perfect, then man is low and imperfect and there is something above him--which is wrong."

*A commentator in the American Scientist (7/97) equated the attacks of constructivists on science with creationism, both being a "threat to science and reason."

*We are not too surprised when we learn that a blind person has made extraordinary achievements in certain domains that do not require extensive reliance on vision. However, Geerat Vermeij from the Netherlands became the world's greatest expert on sea shells, in the study of which color often plays an important role. In his 1996 autobiography, he admitted that he was far along in graduate school before he came to understand that "people with strong religious convictions could be as thoughtful and benevolent as anyone else" (Science, 18/4/97).

*There are so many peculiar phenomena all around us of which one hears little or no interpretation, even though at least some of them must have very profound meaning. One of these is the fact that the identical gesture of standing with arms raised up to the heavens, possibly with the pointed-up hands engaged in some kind of moving or shaking gesture, is encountered almost exclusively in two subcultures in the west: Pentecostal (including charismatic) Christians, and juvenile (and sometimes not so juvenile) rock (and similar music) concerts, mostly of the more decadent kind. One very plausible interpretation is that the concert participants are engaged in their form of worship of a decadent music culture and all that goes with it (e.g., alienation from parents and life in general, drugs, suicide), while the same gesture among the Pentecostals is an explicit gesture of worship, though some cynics have called it "running up one's spiritual antennae."

*"We're more popular than Jesus Christ now...Some of the pop stars I like are more important to me than God...I would hope we mean more to people than putting money in a church basket and saying 10 Hail Marys on a Sunday" (Leader of the Oasis band, Newsweek, 21/7/97).

*Apparently, fan clubs of entertainers on the Internet compare themselves to churches. One entertainment star totally unknown to us is worshipped on more than 50 Internet sites, including one called the "One True Church For the Worship of Jennifer Aniston" (EI, 10/96).

*People dressed in Star Trek uniforms come by the thousands to hear Star Trek actors talk, paying \$25 to get in, \$60 to shake "the hand," etc.--as if any of it were real!

*More people in the US gather to watch major football events (e.g., "Super Sunday") than for any other events (Newsweek, 20/1/97).

*In Germany, it used to be customary to give children going to their first holy communion some enduring object of value, usually of a religious nature, which the child would cherish for life. Now, it has become quite common for children to receive a pager as a first communion gift--though whether received on this occasion or another one, an amazingly large proportion of German youths have one (AW, 31/5/97).

*A Jewish-American writer has claimed that the Holocaust has become more important to Jewish identity than God, Torah or the State of Israel (ET, 8/96).

Superstitions

*Superstitions are a form of religious belief. We believe that the fact that the human is inherently and unchangingly homo religiosus means that there always have been, and will be, superstitions. However, they increase dramatically during times of societal stress and upheaval, as

they did in Europe during WWII. In turn, this means that the current explosion of superstitiousness is a sign that people are under severe stress. The popularity of fictional mythological characters, such as Xena, the warrior goddess, is probably one expression of superstitiousness in contemporary format.

*After earlier having rejected the Catholicism in which he had grown up, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes, became a convert to spiritism after the stresses of World War I in which he lost a brother and a son. In large part because of his efforts, the spiritualist societies in Britain doubled between 1914-1919.

*For two centuries, atheism, secular humanism or agnostic scientism were the main alternatives not only to orthodox Christianity, but also to religion in the usual sense in general. We now seem to have entered an era in which this is no longer the case, but where increasingly people who oppose traditional morality are claiming some sort of supernatural sanction, or at least some kind of spiritual one. Examples are new ageism, religions associated with space travel, peculiar forms of Eastern mysticism which never flourished in Eastern cultures, people who report seeing Elvis statues that shed tears, and even satanism. Even atheists often speak in a spiritual idiom, as exemplified by all sorts of materialistic feminist movements.

*The combination of shallow religiosity and gullibility of Americans is such that 60% of them believe that there is intelligent life in outer space, undoubtedly strongly influenced by watching space fiction shows. Furthermore, on no evidence other than entertainment media exposure, they vote 3.5:1 that extraterrestrial life is more intelligent than humans, and by an almost 6:1 margin that such life forms are friendly to humans (AP, in SHJ, 16/12/97). Of Americans, between 65-80% believe in UFOs, and 34% believe that intelligent aliens have visited earth. Why? Almost entirely because of a half-century of TV science fiction shows! (Time, 23/6/97).

*Strangely enough, New Age-type beliefs and practices have become particularly common among clinical psychologists and social workers, and especially female ones.

*Psychic hotlines have been mushrooming, becoming a \$1 billion a year business (SHA, 28/9/97), not to mention other forms of psychic consultations. However, one book by an anorexic author says we are all psychic, and calls herself a "practicing intuitive."

*Australia's search and rescue authorities have officially approved a policy of calling in clairvoyants to help find missing people (Sunday Mail, 20/7/97).

*A 1997 trade show on New Age products drew about 5,000 participants (Time, 30/6/97).

*Being religiously inspired by watching space shows is not quite the same as absorbing superstitions from entertainment, and enjoying it because of its superstitions. This seems to account for the popularity of quasi-magic/quasi-religious TV programs such as "The X-Files" and "Millennium."

*Not surprisingly, many people ascribe all sorts of mystical meaning to the year 2000, even though the number is an artifact of using the decimal system.

*One can now e-mail or fax a prayer to the wailing wall in Jerusalem.

Religious Intolerance

*Even as TV promotes superstitions and unexplicated religions, it subtly tries to undermine traditional religion. The "Nothing Sacred" program is merely one such example. Commonly in history, subtle religious persecutions precede explicit and bloody ones.

*In any number of recent TV shows and movies, the Christian character, priest, or minister has been depicted as a moral or sexual hypocrite, a rapist, a psychopath, an irrational fanatic, etc. (e.g., SHJ, 6/6/91). More and more people, including even non-Christians, are making the point that it is not tolerated anymore in society to defame Afro-Americans, Jews, other ethnic or racial groups and minorities, women, or the handicapped, but that one may still defame Christians and especially Catholic Christians and Catholicity generally. In fact, if what we have been teaching is true--namely, that society needs deviant people and will create or enlarge one or more deviant groups if it loses one or more other deviant groups as its scapegoat--then it stands to reason that much of the defamation that formerly was directed to the above groups will now be directed at other groups, and Christian-bashing and Catholic-bashing may greatly expand.

The Interface of Religion & Human Service

All sorts of Weltanschauungen underlie human service practices and schemes, on the clinical, planning, funding, regulatory, etc., levels: philosophies, theories about human nature, religions, high-level economic theories, etc. This is why one can never claim that worldviews are irrelevant to services, and why one needs to diligently try to discover which ones underlie (a) one's own service ideas or practices, (b) those services one is paid to perform. It is thus interesting that someone recently has identified four fundamental principles underlying "neoconservatism" (FT, 10/96, p. 7): "(a) Life and politics are infinitely complex, so beware of utopian schemes and large-scale ventures in social engineering; (b) Human nature is mixed, and the political order cannot be arranged on the assumption of altruism (as Reinhold Niebuhr put it, 'Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary'). (c) Man is a social animal, which is to say that communities make claims on individual autonomy and that 'freedom is an essential good, but it must serve the larger end of societal virtue'. (d) Ideas rule the world, and 'a society that does not have the self-confidence to defend its principles will fall prey to the forces intent on subverting or altering those principles'."

*It is interesting to contemplate that there are zillions of workshops and training courses being given in human services that look at issues on the secular level, and a tiny percentage look at human service-related issues from a Christian perspective. Why is it that one does not see workshops and training events that look at human service-related issues from the perspective of other religions or unequivocally explicated ideologies? For instance, why is no one giving workshops on something like "A theory of human services derived rigorously from materialistic assumptions"? Or why does one not even encounter events that take Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and so on as their starting point? Actually, doing this from a Jewish perspective should be relatively easy if one starts with orthodox traditionalism, because so much has already been written on the topic. Instances we seem to be getting of any of the above are some of the New Age events that unfortunately are not very coherent and rigorous in their progression from basic assumptions to specific implications.

*It has been argued (BRMM, 9/97) that the practice of medicine cannot be anything except inherently religious because it deals in a most fundamental way with questions of life and death; and furthermore, health, injury and disease have very large correlations with behavior--and, with very

few exceptions, behaviors that have traditionally been viewed as ethical are those that have the highest relationships to health and longevity.

*We suddenly realized during a workshop in 1997 that there were eight topics on which participants had some kind of obsessions, very wounded spots, or value commitments that were or approached idolatries. Roughly in order of "touchiness," these were: attachments to high technology, attachments to computers, faith in prescription psychoactive drugs, libertarian sex, attachment to legality and morality of abortion, looking at guardianships only from the perspectives of the involved adults rather than from the perspective of the welfare of the children, faith in "Facilitated Communication," and attachment to politically correct language about handicapped people. Very likely, many of these concerns are the same ones one encounters at other events these days, though some of them are likely to cycle in and out of importance across time, as exemplified by the Facilitated Communication craze which, of course, did not exist ten years earlier, and which probably everybody will disavow ten years hence.

*An article in a Time Fall '97 special issue on medicine documented several instances where patients began to refer to their physicians as "God" because they had succeeded in apparently successfully removing a brain tumor.

*As mentioned, many shrinks are de facto superstitious. The intrusion of superstition into human services is also underlined by a "self-advocacy" conference that took place in Michigan that featured two sessions on astrology. What this means is that hapless retarded people are being indoctrinated in superstitions by superstitious human service types.

*Someone did a study that--mirabile dictu--found that "incense and music can enrich worship experiences for severely mentally retarded people" (AP, in SHJ, 9/9/95).

*To our surprise, and by accident, we learned that there are at least 25 diseases and bodily afflictions named after saints, starting with St. Agatha's disease (mammitis) to St. Zachary's disease ("Dumbness"). We have heard of some of these before, such as St. Job's disease (for syphilis), and we had known that St. Mathurin was a patron saint for mentally handicapped people, but we did not know that St. Mathurin's disease referred to "idiocy." Also of interest are St. Fiacre's disease for hemorrhoids (not exactly image-enhancing for the "gay" culture), and St. Avidus' disease for deafness.

*We have been predicting this: Minnesota now has licensed pagan ministers to visit its state prisons (ET, 5/97).

*According to a report on the CBS Evening News (16/12/1997), Texas has opened its first "Christian prison." The inmates have been moved here from other prisons, and all have professed to have a conversion to Christianity during their imprisonment. The men continue to work, but they also attend Bible classes and prayer meetings, all led by volunteers. In striking contrast to the oldest rule of prison culture, "Never squeal on a fellow inmate," these inmates are encouraged to report the failings and shortcomings of each other, though in a manner consistent with Christian teaching. Reportedly, the inmates do not mind this because it helps them stay on the straight and narrow. As one commentator put it. "We've tried everything else and it doesn't work [to reduce recidivism], so we might as well try this." Maybe all-Christian executions will be next.

Philanthropy

*By and large, wealthy Americans tend to give money to wealthy institutions rather than to the poor (NC Register, 21/12/97).

*In Syracuse, agencies that receive used clothing donations often throw them away because such clothing is running out their ears and they don't want to be bothered with sorting, storing, etc.-- and yet in Fall 1997, a Quaker-sponsored group sent a truckload of used clothes from Philadelphia to Syracuse to be handed out free by a Catholic parish.

*Telemarketers for "charitable" organizations may end up with most of the money they raise. In NY State, one rakes in 84%, another 65%. In the Syracuse area, none keep less than 20%. Amazingly, of the 10 organizations there that contracted with professional telemarketers, 8 were police or firefighters "benevolent" organizations (SHJ, 23/11/96). In Mass., a professional fundraiser kept all of the \$113,000 raised for the National Trust For Historic Preservation (SHJ, 21/11/95). In France, a fund for cancer research funnelled \$190 million of its donated monies to graft (Science, 18/10/96).

*Many US "charities" pay their executives very well. Even local executives commonly earn above \$100,000 a year, and yet more commonly close to it.

*For several years now, big science has seen itself threatened financially, and one article/editorial after another has come out in science journals (e.g., Science) on how to keep enlarging the science allocations. One major theme has been "education of the public," with the idea that if the public only knew "what we are doing," it would surely give "us" more money. The arrogance of the science culture is such that it does not occur to it that the public might allocate less to science if the public were smarter. Another theme is that science should de facto try to steal the money that philanthropic foundations are now giving to other causes (education, charity, etc.)

The Family & Children

This topic will be treated in a series of subheadings.

Hatred of Marriage

*In modernistic liberal circles there prevails what amounts to hatred of the family institution, in part expressed by efforts to redefine it in novel ways. In such circles, the destruction of the family is virtually celebrated as a liberation. We believe that even on a purely empirical basis, one can assert that when the family collapses, so does society.

*The book Personal History by Katharine Graham has been interpreted as "the story of a daughter to wife to widow and finally to woman," implying that one does not become a woman until one is freed from family relational roles (FT, 5/97).

*In late 1996 or early '97, Esquire magazine ran a bold-face cover line, "divorce is good for you."

*The legalization of two kinds of marriage license in Louisiana, the now common no-fault and a new covenant one, has brought forth a torrent of vituperation from the liberal and PC sectors.

One feminist essayist (who is divorced herself) for the NY Times has asserted that divorce is an "American value," and that the new provision is an attack on feminism. Another feminist who has written Cutting Loose: Why Women Who End Their Marriages Do So Well, interpreted divorce as a true liberation for women and an opportunity for personal growth, especially if they are/were in a "suffocating union" (Time, 18/8/97). And even though "choice" has been the watchword first of the abortion lobby, and more recently of the assisted suicide/euthanasia lobby, feminist abortion advocate Katha Pollitt interpreted this law as "forcing couples to make a choice," of course implying her displeasure that the choice of a covenant marriage was available, which made the currently prevailing no-fault divorce options look bad (NC Register, 9/97). The vast majority of couples so far have been choosing no-fault divorce marriages.

*Some women legislators have been trying to introduce bills that would attach "domestic violence" warnings to all marriage licenses (much like the warnings attached to cigarette packages and bottles of liquor) even though a child is most likely to be physically abused by a single mother, and sexually abused by the mother's boyfriend or second husband (FT, 8/97), showing how hatred of marriage is attended by deception.

*Novelist Shirley Jackson has been described as "the master of marriage as mayhem and murder" because of the way she dealt with this topic in her books. Among her titles were Life Among the Savages and Raising Demons. Two of her now grown-up demons have published a new collection of her stories (e.g., "drown him, poison him, push him in front of a car," smack the heavy glass ashtray over his head) that should warm the hearts of marriage-haters (Newsweek, 13/1/97).

*The heroes in so many recent movies have been single mothers, with implied or explicated messages that their men were cad.

*There are university faculty members in departments that have "family" in their names who are in a state of warfare against the family; some of them are people with an anti-family feminist agenda (e.g., CP, 1996, p. 1123-1124).

*The US National Institutes of Health declared in 1996 that the words "husband" and "wife" are now "offensive" when used in the workplace because they are not "inclusive" enough, which the words "partner," "domestic partner" or "significant other" would be (NOR, 1/98). It appears as if marriage is on the way to replacing homosexuality as "the love that dare not speak its name." Not surprisingly, new Bible translations are also in the making in which all "husband" and "wife" words are replaced by "partners."

We also suddenly realized in 11/96 that a lot of people--shrink-types included--also no longer talk about spouses but "relationships." As one shrink columnist wrote (SHJ, 22/11/96), "if your alcoholic mate won't stop drinking, leave the relationship." It doesn't sound like much more than a relationship with a neighbor, a colleague at work, or one's pet--in fact, one would probably be more tolerant of the pet's aberrations.

Breakdown of Marriage

*In the US, as far back as 1870, it was always wives who were much more likely to seek divorces than husbands (CH, 1997, No. 55).

*Psychiatrists have by far the highest divorce rate (50%) among physicians. It sounds like the blind are leading the blind. Pediatricians and pathologists are at the bottom with 22%. The overall rate for all physicians is 29%, which is still well below the US average of close to 50% (N.E.J. Med., 13/3/97).

*According to forecasts, American families will grow even yet smaller between now and 2010; it is predicted that less than 30% of children will have two parents at home (Newsweek, 21/4/97). The PC crowd can probably hardly wait.

*Gordon Dubois told us in 1/97 that increasingly, family cases are heard in court where virtually every family member comes with their own attorney: the father, the mother and each of the children.

*Somebody called the widespread practice of extramarital cohabitation "premarital divorce" (Time, 18/8/97).

*Here is a classical story of the contemporary marriage. A sociologist professor describes hers: "He was a widowed father of nine and I the divorced mother of four when we met at Parents Without Partners 16 years ago. Of the 13 children between us, only his four oldest were out of the house and on their own. The other nine children ranged in age from 4 to 19. ...We knew that combining our two households was not a good idea. Too many kids reared with different parenting styles. Two religions. Two income levels. Too much age difference (he is nearly a generation older than I)... So we became a weekend family of sorts, courting one another while surrounded by kids. Eventually the kids grew up, and six years ago we married... But still the bonds are fragile." And now, one of his daughters, already divorced, remarries: "Like many other couples starting over, they have children—his daughter, her two girls. Their honeymoon will be brief. Then it's instant family. Mothering and fathering children they've known a short time. Two last names on the mailbox. Two girls in the house, a third there every other weekend. Child-support payments going out and coming in. One child's mother across town, a father a state away. Children confused over loyalties to the parents they live with and those they visit. The couple pulled in opposite directions by the wants and needs of their kids and their own need to form a successful, intimate marital relationship... In their home, who is the real parent? Who sets the rules? When does the mother relinquish some of her parenting role to her husband? When does the stepparent step in; when does he or she back off? How much time should the visiting child spend alone with her father and how much time with her new family? Then there's the question of what they call one another. If a child calls her stepfather 'Dad,' does this take something away from her real father? When children speak about their parents, whom are they referring to? When parents say 'our children,' should they explain the relationship?" (Newsweek, 29/7/97). And what will become of the third generation?

*According to some scholars, the family institution may have declined the farthest in Scandinavia, especially Sweden and Denmark. Scholars have attributed this to galloping individualism (3/96 Abstract from Kristjana Kristiansen).

*In the US, three times as many people lived alone in 1996 as did in 1940, and the percentage of households that had married couples with children dropped from 40% to 25%. In other respects too, data trends indicate that the US is increasingly becoming a nation of loners, or as we would say, decommunitized (SHJ, 28/11/96).

*Someone has said that among the winners of the sexual revolution where "divorce advocates" such as lawyers, shrinks, social scientists and news media advice columnists (FT, 8/96).

*The incoherence of Americans in respect to values was dramatically brought out by a Yankelovich poll taken in 5/97 which showed that on the one hand, Americans believe almost 2 to 1 that it should be made harder for married couples with young children to get a divorce, and almost as big a margin was opposed to the government making it harder for people to get a divorce (Time, 18/8/97).

*"The family has been the fundamental social unit throughout much of human evolutionary history. For countless generations, most people were born, matured and died as members of extended families. However, human beings are not the only animals that form such social structures. Some of the most outstanding examples can be found among birds, of whom nearly 300 species form social bonds that are unquestionably recognizable as family units. In most cases, the family appears to play a crucial role in the socialization and survival of the individual.

"The significance of the family to the development of the individual is not lost on biologists, who are inclined to ask whether certain social interactions between family members might be better understood in an evolutionary framework. Given the intensity of the interactions within a family, it is natural to expect that natural selection has shaped many of the behaviors that emerge. Could the same forces that act on birds act also on the human species? Such questions are controversial but compelling" (Am. Scientist, 3/95, p. 148). Another scholar said that "all societies that survive are built on marriage."

The Undermining of Parenting

*On the same 1996 day the US House of Representatives passed a bill that defined marriage as a legal union between one man and one woman (accompanied by the majority whip stating that "children do best in a family with a mom and a dad"), it also voted to uphold the right of minors to obtain contraceptives without parental consent (FI, 9/96), thus undermining parental authority.

*In 1996, the Israeli Supreme Court ruled that a woman estranged from her husband could take their frozen embryo out of storage and have it implanted in a surrogate mother against the husband's wishes.

*Chicago Bulls basketball player Dennis Rodman married himself (Time, 6 Jan 97). Much less hassle this way. (Does he get marital benefits from himself?)

Working Parents

*More than half of America's 1-year-olds are spending their days with someone other than their mothers (Discover, 10/97).

*When animals that are normally raised by their mothers manage to grow up after having been raised by someone else, such as their peers, they are invariably disturbed or abnormal, not only mentally but also health-wise (Discover, 10/97).

One study has also shown that rats that were not lavishly licked by their mothers (the rat version of fondling) did not fare well in adulthood, either healthwise or socially. (The effects of licking by fathers could not be studied, since rat fathers resemble human fathers in doing less of this sort of thing than mothers, underlining that men are rats by nature.) Already, questions have been

raised what implications this has in the face of the fact that more and more children are being farmed out by their parents to strangers for much of most days (Science, 12 Sept. 97).

A parallel body of research points to the fact that normatively, children have been carried about by their mothers or older sisters, much as is the case in the monkey world, while in modernistic societies, children are increasingly put on surfaces or in wheeled carriers, such as strollers. This is problematic insofar as scientists do agree that the human infant is born--so to speak--"unfinished," especially neurologically, and modernistic childrearing methods put parents in conflict with their babies. If infants are normal, they communicate their needs quite well, indicating that they want to be picked up and carried, as by reaching up, and by calming down when they are picked up even if they had not first reached out (American Scientist, 11/97).

*A critic of the 1997 White House Conference on Child Care said that nothing was said there about what is best for children, and that the big topic seemed to be child day care, which is mostly a "women's issue" (Indianapolis Star, 9 Nov. 97; source item from Joe Osburn).

*Some child day care centers get as much as \$8,500 for infant per year, and people are glad to pay it (Time, 23/12/96).

*Women who have babies relatively early have a 30% lower rate of breast cancer. This is yet another embarrassment to the culture that seeks to postpone child-bearing to the later years of women's natural (i.e., not prolonged by drugs) child-bearing years (Science, 14/7/95).

Parental Loss of Control

*In 1/97, we were told that in one Massachusetts community, one-third of all police calls are from parents who are calling the police in against their own children because they are incapable or unwilling to exercise normative parental discipline toward them, or because their children have gotten totally out of control. It is interesting to note that first, the schools took over ever more functions of the parental role, and now the police are expected to do so.

*Children are sometimes taken from parents who cannot control them, but then they are sometimes sent to a place--like a group home or group foster home--that also lets them run free on the streets, hooking up with drug dealers, committing crimes. So what is the point? From one such home near Syracuse, police picked up run-aways almost every day, and one day, 9 children ran away the same day (SHA, 24/9/95).

*We ran across an ad in which parents who obviously had failed in their child-rearing were trying to hire a private drill instructor for their wayward teenage son. The person was expected to have "successfully acquired military lifestyle practices, including the benefits of personal and living spaces neatness, proper sleep and nutrition." His duties included "monitoring and restricting visits from friends and school mates" (Source item from Nancy Rampulla).

*A teenage girl said that she was very glad that both her parents were working because "it gives me a sense of independence," meaning she was beyond their supervisory gaze and could do what she wanted (Newsweek, 2 June 97).

Impact of Family Breakdown on Children

*In that part of the animal world in which it is normative for the young to be reared primarily by their mothers, those young who--for some reason--lose their mothers usually fare poorly, and a very large proportion of them die. In some animal species (e.g., among monkeys), a form of peer rearing may substitute for loss of a mother, but in all such instances, these "children" show some kind of defective behavior and even defective biochemistry, which often in turn suppresses the immune system (Discover, 10/97, p. 76).

*Some people were claiming that over half the children in the US will reach age 18 without having had experienced consistent adult supervision and guidance, and that this is happening not merely to the children of the poor and in the ghettos (B&C, 1/97).

*Major perpetrators of physical child abuse in the US are single mothers, and their boyfriends or second husbands are at or near the top in likelihood of committing sexual abuse on a woman's previous children (ET, 8/96). An American child is 100 times as likely to be fatally abused if it lives with one or more substitute parents than it is with two biological parents. (In Canada, the ratio is 70:1.) Nonfatal abuse is for some curious reason lower (Time, 15/94). Perhaps a consort's relationship to the other consort's child is more-or-less all-or-nothing: love the child, or beat it to death.

*An episode in the Chicago area is very indicative of where things are going in child welfare in modernistic countries. In 2/94, 19 children were found quasi-abandoned under abject conditions in a Chicago apartment. One of the children had cerebral palsy and had been exposed to dreadful physical abuse. By and by it turned out that they were the out-of-wedlock children of six women (five of whom were sisters), all of them dysfunctional, and several being on drugs. While the courts dealt with the situation, another nine children were added to the 19: some who had not been in the apartment when it was searched, and others whom the mothers continued bearing out of wedlock. When the children were placed into foster care, the mothers and their lawyers went on the warpath to get them back. In time, there were 28 children, six mothers, 22 fathers, 22 attorneys, and dozens of social workers, counselors and therapists involved. One of the claims of the mothers was that it was the police who had trashed their apartment and set them up. Another of the defenses used by the mothers was that they were "victims of poverty." Some of the older children were so afraid they would be sent back to their mothers that they would go into hiding when case workers visited. Despite the strength of the case against the mothers, it took three years to terminate their parental rights (one surrendered them by saying, "I am not ready to grow up at this time") and to get the first child adopted. Twenty-two others may yet be adopted, but five were deemed to be too old by 1997. One bit of good news was that one foster mother quit her nursing job in order to be able to take in five siblings. Newsweek (24/3/97) reported this as a hopeful vignette; we see it as a disaster.

*The public guardian for Cook County in which Chicago is located had, as of early 1997, authority over 46,000 abused and neglected children, and a staff of 125 attorneys working for his office (Newsweek, 24/3/97). Such figures are so large and abstract as to almost make the individual tragedies behind them unimaginable.

*We learned (SHJ, 18/12/97) that there is an entire underground in the US that helps children, and usually one parent as well, to go into hiding from one or both parents, for reasons appropriate or inappropriate. This underground is a bit like the witness protection program in that it provides the fugitives with new names, disguises, forged identity papers, and falsely registered

vehicles. This underground even has safe places abroad. Apparently, most of the fugitives are women and their children who allege sexual or other abuse by the father/husband. One fascinating fact is that many women claim that courts discriminate against them in child custody disputes, while men claim that the courts discriminate against them. Probably anybody these days who isn't getting what they think they are entitled to feels discriminated against.

*Many parents who seek a divorce pay to have their children shrunk. "This means that they have been told how to feel and what to think about themselves by psychologists who are paid by their parents to make the whole thing work out as painlessly for the parents as possible. This, it seems, is a part of no-fault divorce. If ever there was a conflict of interest, this is it. There are big bucks for therapists in divorce....Psychologists are the sworn enemies of guilt. And they have an artificial language for the artificial feelings with which they equip children. Prosthesis for spiritual amputees, which unfortunately does not permit them to get a firm grip on anything" (Allan Bloom, in 1985, FT, 1/97).

*Children of divorced parents have long been known to eventually have above-average divorce rates themselves. Now we learn that children who lived through more than one parental divorce are 4 times as likely to have multiple marriages themselves (Time, 25/8/97).

*There is evidence that a child suffers fewer deleterious consequences if its father dies (the old-fashioned situation) than if the parents split up (the modern way), or if an unwed mother raises her children by a man who never assumed the husband or father role.

*The debate about "fatherless America" has such intense ideological undertones that social science scholars who hold opposing ideological positions are scarcely able to talk calmly and objectively to each other about what the research evidence is (e.g., CP, 11/97, p. 1045).

*As recently as 1996, a book on divorce concluded that there was no difference in negative outcomes between adolescents of happily married and unhappily married parents, while girl adolescents from divorced families living with their mothers had twice as many negative outcomes, and boy adolescents four times as many.

*Divorce was never a topic of children's books until circa 1970. Then books with divorce themes began to pour forth from the presses by the thousands, in all sizes and shapes, and for every age group. For the youngest, they came in picture and even coloring book form, and for older ones as dictionaries and advice manuals on how to deal with lawyers, judges and therapists. Hand-in-hand came children's books on parental abandonment and the appearance of stepparents, and in some cases on the divorce between the parent and the temporary stepparent. Then, of course, there are innumerable stories of grown-up children of divorced parents. While the liberal culture interpreted divorce in terms of liberation and self-actualization, children themselves thought about it as heartbreak and disaster, including nightmarish stepparents, often told in children's own writings and in their letters to children's columns. Interestingly, children often speak of a parent "divorcing us," not just a spouse (Books & Culture, 9/97).

One of the things that happens not infrequently in a broken marriage is that the party that ends up with the child or children resents the offspring because they are "stuck with them."

One other impact is that many children find themselves having one bedroom in each parent's dwelling, and experience an awful lot of packing, getting in and out of cars, saying good-bye and hello, and unpacking.

*The human service sector has a vested interest in broken families, because family breakdown showers a cornucopia of service needs upon them. A good example is the book Birth of the Other (1994), in which it is made very clear that endless shrinkery by therapists is seen as the answer to children growing up without one or both parents. Once again, the astounding unconsciousness about themselves and their work by people who claim primacy on the issue of consciousness is staggering.

The Low Valuation, Junking & Exploitation of Children

Some items under this heading are evidence of Kinderfeindlichkeit, on which we have reported before, and which means "enmity towards children," including resentment toward child-making.

*Explorers in Africa during the last century found that in some of the tribes, one of the worst thing that one could say about a woman was that "she has no children and never will get any." Married women who had been childless for some time might then get so despondent at such a taunt that they committed suicide (Christian History, 1997, 16(4), issue No. 56, p. 37).

*Among the countries where the birth rates are below the population replacement level are Spain, Hong Kong, Russia, Germany, Italy, Greece, Australia, Bulgaria, Slovenia and Romania (Science, 2 May 97). Trends in this direction are at work in many other countries. This is one reason why some countries, without actually declaring it as a public policy, have de facto become immigration countries, such as Germany, or else there would be dramatic population declines and consequent losses in international and economic power.

*In our cultural iconography, green means "go" and red means "stop." Thus, what is one to think of a device that tests a woman's fertility, and shows a green light when she is not fertile, and a red light when she is? Clearly, the message is that one should have intercourse (go) when she will not conceive, and not (stop) during her fertile period. We were therefore amazed to read that Catholic "British Church leaders hail" this new device because it makes the natural family planning method easier, instead of objecting to the mind-set that interprets conception and pregnancy as a "no-no," rather than welcoming them as "a blessed event."

*A young woman in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, had three children who had been taken away from her because of her drug abuse in the form of glue-sniffing, two of them showing signs of prenatal damage. Pregnant with her fourth child and still sniffing glue, a family service agency tried to force her into a drug abuse program to protect her unborn, but the courts said that she was free to sniff all the glue she wanted to (Dialect, 2/97).

*People in the school system in the US say that children are coming to them unsocialized and with bad behaviors at ever earlier ages. The problems they used to see in older elementary school children they now see in kindergartners. Problems can be as basic as having to teach children to eat with a spoon.

*In 10/97, there certainly was Kinderfeindlichkeit week on TV, with "The Devil's Child" being shown, and "The Village of the Damned" which is the film version of a science fiction novel in which a cohort of alien children implanted into earth women try to unscrupulously take over the world. The fact that "Medusa's Child" was shown shortly thereafter did not help any, even though it was on a different topic.

*More and more evidence points out that the construct of parental "quality time" with children has been a conscience-solving hoax (e.g., cover story!) of Newsweek, 12 May 97)--and the kids are kicking back, conveying the message "we don't like this arrangement." Parents are even running out of time for basics such as feeding and bathing. The last-ditch defense of this 2 working parents lifestyle seems to be "fathers, do more," which would not work even if they did as much as the mothers, who are down to an average of 6.6 hours of child care per week! In The Time Bind, a sociologist said that "quality time becomes an office appointment. One wouldn't want to be caught goofing off" (Newsweek, 28/4/97).

*At gambling casinos in the US, parents commonly leave their children unattended in their cars in the parking lots. For protection, one 12 year-old was given a pistol by his parents as they went inside to gamble (Newsweek, 21/10/96).

*A woman who takes care of several children of working parents in her own home reported that when she calls parents and tells them their child is sick, they get more or less belligerent. Many are not holding any vacation or similar days-off in reserve for such occasions (Newsweek, 11/11/96).

*Apparently, some pedophiles have discovered that on the one hand, single mothers of boys have difficulty supervising their children and, on the other hand, are receptive to men interacting in kindly and supportive fashion with their boy(s). Accordingly, some pedophiles scan the personal ads in order to identify single mothers, and then try to become acquainted with them in order to gain access to their children (SHA, 8 June 97).

*In US racial ghettos, some parents are so afraid that their children will get misled or hurt that they keep them in "lock-downs," i.e., cooped up in the house or apartment (Newsweek, 23/1/95).

*The county in which the Training Institute is located has about 470,000 inhabitants. As of 1992, 100 lawyers in the county were functioning as guardians of one or more children whom the courts deemed abused or neglected. Again, child junking is a lawyer's goldmine, considering that anybody else paid to be a guardian would probably do as well--if not better.

*As many as 1.3 million children reportedly run away from home each year in the US. Some flee abuse, many others have grown up decadent and seek full autonomy to practice decadence in all its forms, and their parents are often glad to be rid of them. This is happening at ever earlier ages. In Hollywood, which attracts empty externalistic youths, there are ca. 3,000 homeless kids every night, and 10,000 in the county altogether. The death rates of these children is astronomic (Time, 21/11/94).

*Progress sometimes brings with it regression. No sooner had the oppressive apartheid regime in South Africa come to an end when South African women felt vastly freer to get rid of their unwanted children and to abandon them to the care of the state. Furthermore, greater freedom of movement within the country has resulted in the break-up of many extended families which traditionally used to take in unwanted and abandoned children. Altogether, child abandonment is estimated to have more than tripled since about 1990. Interestingly, just as they do in the US, many people in the South African child welfare system are trying to prevent the adoption of "black" children by "non-black" families, and they even have the nerve to claim that such children would be better off as wards of the state (Newsweek, 14/4/97).

The Child Welfare/Foster Care System

*While about 500,000 children in the US await adoption, only about 5% have gotten adopted each year. A new 1997 law will try to double the adoption rate (AP, in SHJ, 20/11/97). Some people have called the foster system a "government prison" for children (Time, 12 Sept. 94). Once a child is removed from the family, the case may linger in bureaucratic limbo, with infrequent reviews and unresolved disposition (Newsweek, 14/4/97).

In one case, a Caucasian San Francisco couple agreed to foster a three-day-old crack-addicted "black" infant who had been abandoned on a skid row, and for more than a year thereafter, the couple never had a single contact by the county child placement service. But when they filed a petition to adopt the girl at age 14 months, immediately the social work department tried to remove the child from their care (Time, 14/8/95).

*In New York City, children waiting for foster placements sometime sleep for a week on cots or on the floor in child welfare offices because there is no available placement for them. Sometimes, very dissocial teenagers are kept close together to infants and young children, creating a great deal of problems (SHJ, 3 Dec. 97).

*The 1995 book by Gay Courter on the US child placement system, entitled I Speak for This Child, "vividly depicts the lunacy of a system that conspires against the very children it's supposed to protect," in the words of a Newsweek (20/2/95) reviewer.

*Many foster homes are de facto private for-profit child group homes, and some child shelters are institutions operating on a staff shift system, like hospitals.

Adoption

*We have been pointing for years to the declining competency of people to beget, give birth to, and raise children. A striking example of this is a couple who moved heaven and earth to adopt a child and even went to Russia in 5/97 and adopted two of them from orphanages--and promptly began to beat up on them in the airplane on their way back to the US, even before they had gotten home.

*One reason why about 10,000 American couples and single parents a year have adopted a child from overseas is because the US child welfare system puts obstacles in the way of transracial adoptions, and because the adoptive parents fear that their domestically adopted baby will be taken away from them years later, as happened in the infamous "Baby Richard" case. However, an estimated half of the children adopted from abroad have very serious developmental and medical problems. While some such adoptions do not stick, and some parents give their child back (usually to die soon), there are a very large number of very heroic stories of parents dealing faithfully with very serious problems. Also, some parents adopting from abroad are subject to de facto harassment by the US child welfare system that is very quick about placing child abuse charges against them, so that such parents try to maintain a low profile (Newsweek, 16/6/97).

*Finally, there is an incentive instead of a disincentive for adopting children, in the form of a US tax credit that could be as high as \$6,000.

*It is almost only female adopted children who later try to find their birth parents, and only women who try to rediscover the child they gave up for adoption.

Miscellaneous Other Items on the Family or Children

*Grist for the mills of the men haters. The Austrian poet Franz Grillparzer (1791-1872) and a woman were betrothed to each other for over 50 years, until he died--which he did after having had several affairs.

*Many employers now give marital benefits to homosexual "partners"--but not to cohabiting unmarried heterosexual ones--which seems like gross discrimination to us.

*The ratio of men killing girlfriends and wives, to women killing boyfriends and husbands, is about 3:2. While there are about four or five of the former kinds of killings a week in the US, it is ironic that only cases involving top celebrities such as O. J. Simpson draw attention, but when they do, they draw it exceedingly big.

*Research is beginning to pile up that strongly suggests that in mammals, the process of birth primes babies for attachment to their mothers and for suckling, which bodes very ill for the high proportion of babies delivered by Caesarean (APA Monitor, 12/97).

*A recent finding is that breast-fed babies are smarter than others--on the average, 8 IQ points by age 8, which is a huge population effect.

*In Germany, the state may refuse to register certain names that parents want to give their children. Names that have been turned down in recent years include "Peace Disturber," "Beer Hall," and "Whoopy," the latter because somebody discovered that the English phrase "to make whoopee" translates in German into "letting out the sow" (AW, 13/3/93).

*While the Democratic party convention in Chicago in 9/96 kept harping phonily on child welfare and family values, the opening night's song was from "Rent," a musical which aggressively rejects middle class values and gives a positive slant to a drag queen with AIDS. Vice President Gore gave a tear-jerker speech about his sister's death from lung cancer, never mentioning that he himself continued to raise and sell tobacco on his farm for years after she died. Pollution was not said to poison the environment but "playgrounds," crime was interpreted to be bad because it "shatters children's lives by violence," and E. coli bacteria did not simply kill people but "children."

*It is hard to believe that there are about 3,000 child beauty contests in the US annually, in which about 250,000 children are enrolled every year, and that this is a billion dollar business. This culture is aimed primarily at little girls, sexualizes them at a very early age, and surrenders itself to the externalistic and mindless media culture. We see a strong parallel between the baby pageant culture and the baby athletic performance culture that seeks to send 13-year-olds to the Olympics, with its "female athlete triathlon": eating disorder, delayed bodily maturation, and premature osteoporosis.

*Children of Asian-American parents tend to excel in school even though their parents score high on factors that in other families predict poor school performance (Syr. Record, 5 Dec. 94).

*The subtitle of a book by comedian Dave Barry is How to Make a Tiny Person in Only 9 Months, With Tools You Probably Have Around the Home.

The Collapse of the Culture of Modernism & Its Social Institutions

The Collapse of the Democratic Process

*We share with the founding fathers of the American republic the belief that democracy must be considered the exception to the norm of governing arrangements, achievable only under rare favorable conditions. It is very fragile, and the foundation for it in the ideology, civic competency, and sharing of common values by the population must be unceasingly nourished--which is not happening in the centrifugal, self-centered cultures of modernism. Psephology (based on the Greek word for voting) may become a lost discipline, to say nothing of all the other awful consequences.

*There is a growing sentiment among very sane and rational people that the US government is no longer legitimate, and that therefore, citizens are no longer bound to be obedient to it. Expressions of this sentiment are found not only among extremist patriot, right-wing and paramilitary groups that sometimes seem a bit "tetched," but also in perfectly rational and deep-thinking intellectuals. For instance, one major statement along these lines was formulated by Richard John Neuhaus, the editor of First Things, and has stimulated an intense debate. A similar statement

under the title "We Hold These Truths," was published in July '97 and signed by 40 prominent Christian leaders from many different denominations and organizations. Neuhaus published the debate on the issue in a recent book, The End of Democracy? The key thrust of its argument is that the judicial system has begun to be the de facto ruling force in this country, and has imposed innumerable decisions which have never been voted on by the citizens, which citizens have not approved of otherwise, and which have in fact often actually been overruled in various kinds of votes and through various legislatures on all levels of the country. In other words, the USA is no longer a democratic republic. The problem has also manifested itself on all levels of the US court system, in that state courts too have struck down law after law passed by the representatives of the people and concordant with citizen wishes. We believe that all these developments are merely yet other signs of the movement of the US towards some kind of totalitarianism.

*Other pundits (e.g., Kevin Phillips, in Arrogant Capital) "merely" accuse Washington of being corrupt, bloated, arrogant, and destructive, but not yet illegitimate.

*Even the otherwise liberal but imperial Syracuse Herald-Journal that has displayed great faith in government finally editorialized (3/3/98) that unless citizens started to set up guillotines on the government mall in Washington, congressional leaders would not become responsive to the people.

*In the US Congress, few legislators understand--or have even read--the bills they vote on. Sometimes, a legislator will come up with a 2000-page proposal at 2 a.m. during a session, and get it voted on by members too groggy to think or care. In state legislatures, such as in NY, budgets of \$40 billion may be passed during the night with hardly any debate, and with the majority of legislators never having seen the budget bill before that night. In other words, the decisions are not made democratically, but by an extremely small number of long-time political bosses.

*For 200 years, free speech was a cornerstone of the US political system. But recently, there has been a major movement in Congress to restrict citizens' free speech about government and officeholders. These laws are supported by the pro-abortion lobby so that citizens would not be able to comment on the pro-abortion position of officeholders and candidates. Pro-abortion radicals would rather have abortion on demand than democracy! In 1997, 186 House members had already

endorsed such laws. If such laws do not pass now, there will be recurring efforts to do so later. This would be a major nail in the coffin of US democracy.

*In the 1960s, 70% of Americans trusted government. By the early 1990s, it had sunk to about 20%

*We can certainly understand why people are turning to radical movements these days. For example, a leader of a Florida "militia" said: "The low-life scum that are supposedly representing us in Washington, DC, don't care about the people back home anymore. We're grasping at straws here trying to figure out what we can do to get representation, and this is our answer" (Time, 19/12/94).

*Because for decades, the US government has lied about virtually every major issue, many people expect lying to be its normative mode, and suspect it may be involved in all sorts of bad things. This reasonable paranoia has gone so far that patriot groups even suspect it as complicit in the 4/95 Oklahoma explosion.

*The percentage of US citizens who vote declined steadily between 1960 and 1972, then held about even until 1992 (through with a deep dip in 1988), and then declined again. This reflects in good part citizens' sense of futility. Why vote when, for all practical purposes, one's vote does not count?

Collapse of Civic Institutions

*There is obviously something about the culture of modernism that makes it increasingly difficult and even impossible for governments to function. This seems to be as true of democratic as of despotic governments. One can read one story after another of a particular government skidding toward nonfunctionality. For instance, commentators on the government of Austria have said that even the simplest things are not working there anymore, and that neither of the two major parties is able to come to grips with any problems. Observers have applied the phrase "tilt" to Austria, borrowed from pinball machines that stop working when they have been rattled too hard (AW, 19/1/97).

*In Alabama, at various times in recent years, its mental institutions, foster care system, and public schools have been declared by federal courts to be inadequate.

*It has been said that DC is approaching Third World standards. TB and infant mortality are the highest in the nation, city schools have to close for weeks because of decrepit buildings, and the high school drop-out rate has surged beyond 50%--all despite DC spending more money and having more employees than any other US city. When the mayor, after a jail term for crack addiction, had some of his powers taken away, he screamed that "democracy has been raped" (Time, 18/8/97). Such disfunctionalities in the governing district of the US symbolize the collapse of the nation's institutions and governments.

*Miami is home port to many luxury cruise liners, but like DC, is run like a Third-World country and is one of America's poorest cities (Time, 16/12/96).

*In the last days of the 1995 legislative session, the NY State legislature dumped 500 bills on the governor to sign.

*By 1995, the state of NJ was running several of the largest school districts, because local governance had broken down.

*In Chicago, where street gangs are everywhere and corruption has long been normative, ghetto gangsters have gotten together and started running for public office under the banner of a new organization called Voices of Total Empowerment, which abbreviates to VOTE.

The Tottering Financial Structures

*Some leading economists have confessed their puzzlement over the world and US financial systems. The stock market soars even as many of the Asian economies, and several others elsewhere, are in disarray, and as stocks trade far in excess of earnings. They keep saying that a "correction" is bound to come--is, in fact, overdue--but the stocks keep rising. Perhaps the economy is fueled by debt. E.g., by 1995, citizens were spending \$1.03 for every \$1.00 earned. If this is so, the chickens will come home to roost some day.

*After the Bank of Thailand suspended 42 cash-short financial companies in 8/97, sending shock waves through the Thai economy, a top Thai government official said that Thai citizens should go and seek psychiatric help instead of releasing their frustrations about the country's economic conditions "on the streets." He further suggested that the country's fortune-tellers should help cheer up depressed citizens (Mercury Mail, 7 Aug 97; source item from Ray Lemay).

*Most poor households in the US have neither savings nor pension plans, foreboding huge future demands on the public purse.

The Spectre of Military Dictatorship

We have long warned against giving civilian functions and powers to the military. In a collapsing society, the military is often the only, or major, functional entity, and therefore is apt to be called upon to take over, or does so without invitation.

*President Clinton asked the Pentagon(!) to train civilian child-care workers, because it manages to run model day care (Newsweek, 28/4/97). People didn't notice as they should have because they couldn't take their eyes off his distinguishing characteristics.

*The proposed 1999 budget for the Pentagon includes \$809 million to fight drugs.

*The US Dept. of Defense also runs a \$106 million(!) breast cancer research program, as if this work could not be done by civilian bodies (Science, 11 April 97).

*After a marine patrol shot a shepherd youth to death on the Mexican border in 1997, it came to light that the US military had taken over a great deal of security work along the border to Mexico since 1989 (Time, 25/8/97).

*The emerging militarization of local US police departments was documented on CBS "60 Minutes" of 21/2/97. The military has been giving local police departments almost a billion dollars worth of armaments. Some counties have acquired a de facto air force, with one not very large county alone getting 23 helicopters and several other planes as well. Universities have established and equipped their own private SWAT teams with military give-aways. One problem for the local taxpayer is that once the police has acquired all this free equipment, more and more of the local

budget has to go for training in the use of this equipment, and for maintaining it, and less and less into actual community policing.

*One of many other alarming signs of the federalization of local police departments is how many of them (even very small ones at that) receive federal grants (and sometimes very big ones) in order to function. As the TIPS editor's Swiss grandmother used to say, "stupid calves go out to fetch their own butchers."

Entitlement Mentalities & Litigiousness

*Entitlement, litigiousness, and formalization have progressed to the point where in the US, the Girl Scouts must sell 80,000 boxes of cookies every year just to pay their liability insurance (Newsweek, 12 May 97).

*California is the most litigious state, perhaps because it long has been a magnet for crazy people. For years, more than 1.5 million civil suits have been filed every year, earning lawyers \$17 billion annually (Time, 4 Nov. 96).

*A woman was visiting the Syracuse Zoo when a zoo employee was walking through the area, carrying a 60-foot-long snake from one place to another. The woman promptly sued the zoo for \$100,000, claiming that the curator was "chasing" her with the snake, and that ever since she has suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and severe anxiety (SHJ, 12 Jan. 95).

*A 16-year-old boy sniffed cleaning fluid in order to get high, then drove a car (which his parents should not have allowed him to have) into a lake and drowned. His parents promptly sued the store that sold him the cleaner, the firm that designed the lake and the firm that had built the road to the lake (Newsweek, 30/12/96).

*Regular Newsweek columnist Robert Samuelson wrote a very angry article (15/1/96) about lawyering in the US. In essence, he is joining other people who are saying in so many words that the lawyers are destroying America. His premise is very simple: the law belongs to the people, not the lawyers. Lawyers have discovered ways of so harassing defendants that they will settle suits out of court merely to save money. For instance, merely reproducing documents demanded by a suing lawyer would have cost one firm \$1 million. Samuelson called this kind of lawyering legalized extortion. He noted that even in class action suits which are often interpreted as being something of a public advocacy nature, lawyers are the biggest beneficiaries, collecting close to \$1 billion from such suits between 1991-1994. In such class action suits, many of the members never even get a cent. "Pain and suffering" suits in auto accidents now account for 25% of auto insurance premiums. All of this amounts to a corruption of the law because it is no longer seen as operating fairly, predictably or honestly. And of course, what the author points to constitutes only part of the corruption of American constitutionalism by the legal system.

Disfunctional Formalization as a Response to Disfunctionality

*A US Congressman has been working on getting federal legislation passed that would require judges to base their Social Security-related rulings on federal law. In other words, we are now at the point where we must pass laws that stipulate that laws passed previously must be followed by employees of the federal government. This happened in response to the Social Security Administration telling its employees (including so-called administrative law judges who are supposed

to decide disputes between citizens and the government) that they must enforce administrative policies to withdraw or withhold benefits from citizens even in cases where the policy was contrary to law (Mouth, 5/97).

*It has been speculated that business firms in the US operate under so many legal mandates or restrictions that possibly all of them are in violation of the law, particularly the smaller ones. Perhaps the increased formalization in the society of modernism has been contributing to the rise of big business firms at the expense of small ones, because small ones can hardly afford to meet all the legal requirements.

*Tax analysts have deemed the 1997 US Taxpayer Relief Act one of the most complex tax laws Congress has ever passed (AARP Bulletin, 1/98).

Miscellaneous Collapses

*By 1994, a majority of Americans had concluded that their society was falling apart--but that their own lives were satisfactory, and that it was somebody else's school, neighborhood, city, Congress member, etc., that was bad. A poor basis for reform efforts!

*Rush hours in an increasing number of US cities are getting longer--up to 3 hours twice a day. In the 50 most congested cities and suburbs, the average driver wastes a fifth of commuting time stuck in traffic, at an extra cost to each of \$500 in gas per year (SHJ, 14/8/97).

*In Austria, citizens who feel themselves dispossessed by waves of legal and illegal immigrants have spread chaos by leaving bomb dummies everywhere, which take an elephantine effort of the security forces to remove.

*A major division of the US Department of Agriculture could not document how it had spent 27% of its \$36.7 billion budget of 1994.

*Ecological collapse in the former Soviet Union, caused by short-sighted Soviet policies, has continued despite the collapse of the Soviet Union, which was--unbeknownst to most people--caused in good part by ecological degradation. This bodes ill for the future stability of the new countries of the area (SHA, 22/6/97).

*The one kind of collapse that gives us great satisfaction is that of computer systems, as when hackers break barriers, viruses eat programs, computer systems crash, etc. In many firms, laboratories, etc., the computer systems get probed by hackers every single night! Computer systems operators routinely cover up, or lie about, the problems hackers give them, and very newsworthy crashes are commonly not reported in many news media.

*By means of mere laptop computers, people in Russia have been able to electronically steal money from CitiBank accounts in New York City, and people with laptops in Sweden have managed to shut down the entire 911 emergency telephone system in northern Florida--things we are hardly told about (Time, 28/4/97).

*In Brazil, information networks are collapsing because various species of ants have begun feeding on components of computer boards, and they are on a northward march (SPS, 14/5/97).

*As Newsweek (2 June 97) put it, "The World Laid Low by Two Lousy Digits." It added that "any idiot" could have figured out that the year 2000 would arrive, and would bring about computer catastrophe, but no one wanted to draw it to the attention of "management." In the US alone, the cost of converting computer programs could be as high as \$600 billion, which is as much as an entire year's worth of all US educational costs from preschool to graduate school, and this does not even cover whatever money will change hands as a result of litigation, which might eventually amount to at least \$1 trillion, or three times the yearly cost of all civil litigation in the US. We found it particularly amusing that the original program that started this foul-up was often written in a language called COBOL, a kobold being something like a poltergeist. Amazingly, by mid-1997, neither the US Veterans Administration, NASA (the federal space agency) nor the US Departments of Labor, Energy and Transportation had plans for the change-over in place. Our advice is that at midnight of 31 Dec. 1999, people be at home in bed and stay there (or at least in the house) until the dust settles. One should also have a full tank of gas and a supply of cash and travelers checks in case the financial system based on computers doesn't work.

*Collapsing systems feed into each other. For instance, as families and schools collapse, more youths drift into decadence, which feeds crime and violence, adds burdens to dysfunctional service systems, produces adults who are civically nonfunctional, etc. (Newsweek, 5/5/97).

Violence in Society

We usually cover issues of violence in society in the December issue, and/or in issues dealing with deathmaking and the sanctity of life.

*Blowing things or people up with homemade bombs increased almost five-fold in the US between the early 1980s and early 1990s. Apparently, the MacGyver TV series inspired a lot of people to get into bombing, and even gave rise to a certain type of bomb being called a MacGyver bomb that people learned to make by watching this series. After the 4/95 Oklahoma federal building bombing, there was a small explosion of demand for a pamphlet that told people how to make ammonium nitrate bombs. The TV and movie people claim they are merely reflecting reality, while obviously, they are actually playing a teaching role.

*As recently as 1973, women were only half as likely as men to be victims of physical violence. Since then, the rates have gradually crept closer, though contrary to what we are apt to hear, there is still an equality gap: 60 vs. 43 per thousand (Hospitality, 6/97).

*Killings by children are not merely on the rise in slums, but even all the way up to the most privileged families. Such killings can range from children killing infants, their parents, or other adults. A professor who studies violence said it was a "new thing that kids will kill for almost any reason." However, kids who kill have often had a previous history of trouble, though the first media stories about such killings often depict such children as coming from a solid background, and the killings as coming out of the blue, which is rarely the case (Newsweek, 9 June 97).

*Impact Personal Safety is a nationwide US organization that teaches self-defense primarily to women. Project: Blind Ambition is an organization that teaches self-defense to blind people from childhood through adulthood through a 21-hours course. A similar program, started in 1993, is called Safe Without Sight. Since 1990, a program in Canada called Wen-Do has been teaching self-defense to women with all sorts of handicaps. In Los Angeles, the Kung Fu San Soo Academy teaches fighting and self-defense in an integrated fashion to both handicapped and non-handicapped

people, with the admirable philosophy that when they come in, it doesn't matter whether they have an impairment or not, "they are all students, that's all." Its program is open-ended (One Step Ahead, 6/97).

*A Swedish research study showed that people are much more prepared to commit violent acts in an environment in which weapons are displayed, even when they themselves are not using them. Apparently, the sight of weapons is an unconscious cue to people that functions as a violence releaser. This is certainly a powerful argument against war toys (Time, 8 May 95).

*South Africa is regarded as one of the most violent countries in the world, probably at least in part the fruit of apartheid. But on the other hand, perhaps one should not be surprised when one learns that the acronym for the name of the South African Police Service is SAPS for short (NC Register, 27/4/97).

*It is rather interesting to consider that a stance of nonviolence has to be signified by a compound term that negates violence, rather than by a distinct different word that is not merely a negation. Perhaps this phenomenon has its source in some real problems in trying to live out non-violence. Namely, the word "peaceful" or even "peace-loving" would not necessarily be accurate, because some people are non-violent in action despite the fact that they are not necessarily peace-loving in nature, or peaceful in their demeanor or verbal interactions.

War & Preparations For War

*The German martyr of Nazism, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, once wrote that "any violent display of power, whether political or religious, produces an outburst of folly in a large part of mankind" (ET, 8/96, p. 28).

*A firm that furnishes mercenary troops for conflicts anywhere in the world, with its headquarters in South Africa, is named Executive Outcome.

*In 1995, children as young as 7 were recruited as fighters in 33 different wars. To harden them, they are routinely forced or enticed into torture, mutilation, assassinations, executions, cannibalism, etc. (SHA, 24/11/96).

*Accordingly to Science (31/10/97), one-fifth of all the ships in the world that have engines are military; and while most commercial ships with engines are slow-speed diesel vehicles, most of the military ones are medium-speed diesels and give out more pollution.

*As of mid-1997, the Russians and the Americans still had an unimaginably large and roughly equal arsenal of nuclear weapons targeted at each other. On the US side, this involved 7,000 nuclear weapons, many of them still targeted on locations that used to be in the Soviet Union but are not in Russia. The Pentagon is midway through spending \$5 billion to modernize 580 ICBMs. In turn, the Russians are more prepared than ever to launch nuclear weapons "on warning" because they have lost much of their early warning system, and now view these weapons as a first rather than a last line of defense. Because a phase-down of nuclear weapons would diminish Pentagon prestige, the US military is opposed in principle to such measures (Newsweek, 23/6/97). Thus, in certain respects, there is now greater rather than lesser danger of a nuclear exchange. Some people have called this an addiction to nuclear weapons which casts a spell that people cannot break.

(In 1995, when a Norwegian research rocket streaked toward Russia, Yeltsin had actually begun the activation of launch codes before the mysterious "attack" was cleared up.)

*Something that is often forgotten is that total governmental spending on the military is always much higher than official current allocations. For instance, among the things that must also be counted is the interest currently paid on deficit spending of the military in previous years. For instance, in the 1997 fiscal year of the US government, 22% went toward the military, but 14% went to interest on the national debt, a lot of which had been incurred on military spending. Nor does this include yet other layouts, such as pensions and social programs that are the consequence of previous militarism, such as military pensions and disabilities payments to people who de facto lost their minds in the military, as so many soldiers did in Vietnam (Hospitality, 8/97).

*It is rather amusing to learn that B-2 bombers that were supposed to be able to fly from the US into Russia and drop bombs there fall apart when they get wet (SHA, 26/10/97). Now the Pentagon doesn't want anymore, but members of Congress want the air force to buy more so that their districts get business, and they get reelected.

*For the cost of a single American Stealth bomber, the debts of the world's 20 poorest nations could be forgiven (Casa Cry, 8/97).

*More US soldiers in the Korean war were killed by "friendly" mines than by enemy mines, but either way, they ended up equally dead (Economist, 23/8/97).

*It is very amusing that the Pentagon wants to keep certain mines legal because "they can be the difference between life and death" (Time, 15/9/97).

*The US has become the world's biggest arms dealer, and much of the arms sales is taxpayer subsidized. The US has been selling arms to 89% of the world's governments (Casa Cry, 4/97). Whenever there is an armed conflict in the world today, chances are that about half of the arsenal on each side comes from the US, and we are paying for much of it (SHJ, 1 Oct. 97).

*We couldn't help but guffaw upon learning that the United States signed an agreement to combat illicit arms trafficking (SHJ, 15/11/97). Obviously, having become the world's single biggest licit arms dealer, the US would not want competition from illicit dealers.

*It is estimated that up to 20% of the bombs dropped on a suburb of Berlin in World War II are still buried in the ground. In Germany overall, 6,000 large bombs are defused yearly. Every once in a while, one of the buried bombs in the country explodes spontaneously. Bomb removal is considered a very secure occupation for many decades to come for those who don't get blown up in the process (AW, 11/2/95). In one Berlin township, four schools had to be evacuated in early 1997 because of old bombs. Little known in the US is that entire series of US-made bombs in WWII did not explode as intended, but their explosivity is still increasing as they age.

*For much of World War II, British bombing of German civilian targets killed fewer able-bodied German males than the British lost in air crew casualties (Newsweek, 22/5/95).

*It only recently occurred to us that the Korean War was actually World War III, at least as far as concerns the number of participant countries, even though it was fought out in a small area, similar to the Persian Gulf War.

*Apparently, so many Vietnam veterans did indeed commit such awful atrocities that a major problem has been that when they get psychotherapy, even their trained therapists feel revulsion toward them (Newsweek, 29/8/88). It is awesome to contemplate the degree to which the US military became degraded in Vietnam, and apparently from the ranks up into the officer corps, since the officers, including the West Pointers, were right there when the atrocities were being committed. Quite obviously, one thing that has been lacking from the entire Vietnam veteran craze has been an appeal for the veterans to confess and repent, and to do penance. Many might be healed thereby instead of carrying on with their craziness and letting it spill over destructively into society, and having the confused human service people of a confused society try to deal with all this without efforts to bring these moral offenders to a moral conversion.

*Among the many parties who gave or sold nuclear technology to Iraq was the International Atomic Energy Agency. It continued to provide countries like Iran with such technology.

*In World War IV (the so-called Persian Gulf War), the Saudi government could not accept the idea that female US soldiers were coming to their defense, and therefore decided to designate them as "males with female features" (Time, 25/2/91).

*Men in Afghanistan say that the main reason they become fighters for one of the many warring factions is that there are no jobs for them, and they hate being idle.

*Rape has always been a major concomitant of war, and one of the spoils of the victor--and always will be! The most recent episodes of mass rape occurred in Bosnia, and in Africa (mostly of Tutsi women). Surprisingly, many raped women nonetheless come to love the babies they bear (Newsweek, 23/9/96). Considering the link of war to rape, it is an amazing puzzle that more women are not opposed to have their sons and men go off to war, since it is their men who will be doing the raping.

*Well into the 1970s, US troops marched to the chant, "Two, four, six, eight, Rape, kill, mutilate" (Time, 2 Dec. 96). That's what it always is about.

*As many as 1 million US veterans had been exposed to nuclear weapons-related radiation (AP in SHJ, 24/1/95).

*In light of the fact that secular "peace" groups tend to be rabidly pro-abortion, it should not surprise one that they have begun to take up animal rights issues as having equal rank with such things as opposition to nuclear proliferation, domestic violence, etc.

*Joseph Rotblat was a major developer of the atom bomb. Eventually, he turned against nuclear armaments, but rather incoherently advocated medical uses of nuclear technology, apparently not aware that as long as there is any nuclear technology, there will almost certainly exist a nuclear weapons technology. In 1995, Rotblat received the Nobel Prize for peace.

*Apparently, so many Vietnam veterans did indeed commit such awful atrocities that a major problem has been that when they get psychotherapy, even their trained therapists feel revulsion toward them (Newsweek, 29/8/88). It is awesome to contemplate the degree to which the US military became degraded in Vietnam, and apparently from the ranks up into the officer corps, since the officers, including the West Pointers, were right there when the atrocities were being committed. Quite obviously, one thing that has been lacking from the entire Vietnam veteran craze has been an appeal for the veterans to confess and repent, and to do penance. Many might be healed thereby instead of carrying on with their craziness and letting it spill over destructively into society, and having the confused human service people of a confused society try to deal with all this without efforts to bring these moral offenders to a moral conversion.

*Among the many parties who gave or sold nuclear technology to Iraq was the International Atomic Energy Agency. It continued to provide countries like Iran with such technology.

*In World War IV (the so-called Persian Gulf War), the Saudi government could not accept the idea that female US soldiers were coming to their defense, and therefore decided to designate them as "males with female features" (Time, 25/2/91).

*Men in Afghanistan say that the main reason they become fighters for one of the many warring factions is that there are no jobs for them, and they hate being idle.

*Rape has always been a major concomitant of war, and one of the spoils of the victor--and always will be! The most recent episodes of mass rape occurred in Bosnia, and in Africa (mostly of Tutsi women). Surprisingly, many raped women nonetheless come to love the babies they bear (Newsweek, 23/9/96). Considering the link of war to rape, it is an amazing puzzle that more women are not opposed to have their sons and men go off to war, since it is their men who will be doing the raping.

*Well into the 1970s, US troops marched to the chant, "Two, four, six, eight, Rape, kill, mutilate" (Time, 2 Dec. 96). That's what it always is about.

*As many as 1 million US veterans had been exposed to nuclear weapons-related radiation (AP in SHJ, 24/1/95).

*In light of the fact that secular "peace" groups tend to be rabidly pro-abortion, it should not surprise one that they have begun to take up animal rights issues as having equal rank with such things as opposition to nuclear proliferation, domestic violence, etc.

*Joseph Rotblat was a major developer of the atom bomb. Eventually, he turned against nuclear armaments, but rather incoherently advocated medical uses of nuclear technology, apparently not aware that as long as there is any nuclear technology, there will almost certainly exist a nuclear weapons technology. In 1995, Rotblat received the Nobel Prize for peace.

Advocacy-Related News

*The coordinator (Sonia Berardi) of the state-level Citizen Advocacy office (which supports and stimulates local Citizen Advocacy offices) in New South Wales, Australia, made a moving and eloquent statement about Citizen Advocacy in 1/97 (CA News, NSW):

"In the past twelve months we have been bombarded with media stories about abuse, neglect and exploitation occurring within the service system. The stories are tragic, because they are about the lives of very vulnerable people. What's really sad is that it is occurring within a Government system whose mission is to care for those in need..." "Regardless of the money spent on services, the quality of service and the safety and well-being of individuals who rely on these services is not guaranteed..." "The problem is that the system has become so big and so complex that the personal approach to caring for people has become eroded."

She then tells us that the newsletter is telling stories of what citizen advocates have done "Their stories are inspiring because what they offer to their Citizen Advocacy relationship comes from the heart. They don't get up in the morning to visit their protégé because they are paid to, they don't sign on and off or wish they had different clients. They take calls after hours and don't claim overtime. And when things don't go as planned they don't move on to greener pastures or claim 'stress leave'..." "Their skills lie in their compassionate approach, a desire to do something for someone else and a willingness and persistence to see it through for as long as it takes... They take responsibility for doing what needs to be done, often the things that seem to fall outside everybody else's job description. They do it with sincerity and a genuine desire to help or change something for the better. Furthermore, they ask for no thanks or favours in return."

*A Youth Advocacy Center was founded in New York City in 1993 to teach teenagers in foster care adaptive skills such as conflict resolution, problem solving, and apparently also self-advocacy. The center receives support from some major and glamorous foundations and personalities. However, the name of the center is certainly misleading.

Human Service History

*The youngest uncle of Queen Elizabeth II, on her father's side, was Prince John, one of six children of the royal couple, and a brother of King Edward VIII who became the Duke of Windsor, and of George VI, Queen Elizabeth's father. At the age of six, he was diagnosed to have epilepsy. By all accounts, he was not mentally retarded, or at least not so initially. His parents said that he was "not quite right." At any rate, he was housed with a nanny at a remote farm estate lest he embarrass the royal family, and his parents never saw him again alive, even though they often stayed on the grounds of the estate where he was hidden away. Apparently, only his brothers occasionally visited him and were fond of him. The one person who had loved him perhaps the most was his nanny. His seizures became more severe, and when he died at age 14 (even as his parents were on the estate), his mother said that his death "came as a great relief." Had he lived longer, he would have remained a hidden phantom, something like "the man in the iron mask." In any case, after being sequestered he was never mentioned again, and all pictures of him were made to disappear; only one was accidentally discovered when the possessions of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor were gotten ready for auction in 1998 (Sydney Daily Telegraph, 13/2/98; source item from Michael Steer).

*A classic in the area of handicap, the 1821-1838 book Biography of the Blind by James Wilson, is once more available in a reprint edition for \$16.95 for the paper version from Friends of Libraries for the Blind, 1555 Connecticut Ave. NW, Ste. 200, Washington, DC 20036.

News Related to Social Role Valorization (SRV) & Human Performance

*Siperstein, G. N., & Leffert, J. S. (1997). Comparison of socially accepted and rejected children with mental retardation. American Journal on Mental Retardation, 104, 339-351. This study attempted to clarify what factors contributed to mildly mentally retarded children in regular elementary grades being accepted or rejected by their peers. Acceptance and rejection were ascertained by sociometric tools. It was found that the accepted and rejected children were similar in age, racial/ethnic background, etiological diagnosis, "cognitive functioning," verbal ability, functional academic skills, and in the amount of time that they spent in regular classrooms. Not surprisingly, the more accepted children were seen by their non-retarded peers as being friendlier and more helpful than the rejected ones. The latter were often seen as "sad" or "upset," but they were not reported to be seen as aggressive. However, while there was a clear difference between the extremes of accepted and rejected children, none of the accepted children were actually out-and-out popular. Interestingly, and perhaps most significantly of all, the more accepted children were relatively submissive in their friendly outreach behavior while the rejected children often chose friendly but assertive goals, and this was obviously not as well accepted. In other words, the non-retarded children expected the retarded ones to be submissive rather than assertive in their friendliness, and rejected retarded peers who did not conform to this expectation. The authors failed to note that this finding is consistent with a larger body of data that informs us that people respond rather negatively toward less intelligent people who are disproportionately forward in relation to their cognitive skills, i.e., where the cognitive skills are not sufficient to steer the assertive behavior in adaptive ways. The authors also failed to draw the rather obvious conclusion that so much of the assertiveness promotion craze in recent years, aimed at people of poor cognitive skills, is extremely misplaced and apt to be highly counterproductive. This also has implications to the so-called self-advocacy movement in that retarded people are often egged on to be assertive in their self-advocacy without attention being paid by the eggheads to the negative consequences of such assertiveness.

*A 1995 book on Skill Acquisition and Human Performance concluded that a person needs about 10 years of steady practice in a particular skill area in order to attain a level that could be characterized as "expert."

*Expert singers of Southern Slavic poetry are able to recite 6,000 lines of an epic, lasting approximately eight hours, after hearing the epic only one time. According to most contemporary theories of cognition and memory, this is an impossible feat (Contemporary Psychology, 7/97, p. 583).

Miscellaneous Human Service-Related News

*Having recently travelled not only in the US and Canada, but also in England, Germany, Australia and New Zealand, and having heard reports from yet other countries, it is rather clear that there are two macro developments in human services. One is a growing backlash against societally devalued people, and against the benefits to which they had gained formal or informal entitlements over the recent decades. The second is a systematic conversion of the human service system to a commercial model, despite the fact that there are fundamental differences between business operations and human services which anyone sophisticated about organizational dynamics and theory should know, but often either does not know or does not believe. Thus, even national experts in organizational theory are endorsing the commercialization of human services.

Neither development has received the attention it deserves, and the first one is even being denied or played down by some people.

The rise of the commercial management model in human services coincides with the waning of ideological systems underpinning governments and even many political movements. In other words, materialism of the obsession with mammon type is replacing all sorts of other religions--including many philosophical materialistic religions--on the political scene, and derivatively on the human service scene.

While each of these developments has its specific problematic consequences, these converge in some instances. For instance, they converge in fueling the devaluation of devalued people, in that the commercial service model sees them as no more than marketable commodities. However, this development should not surprise us, considering the strong and continuing materialization of people's worldview within the culture of modernism, about which we have been teaching for decades. This culture contributes to social devaluation by interpreting humans as objects, and all sorts of devalued people as obstacles to one's own individualism and sensualistic pursuits. Therefore, this culture cannot provide a bulwark against the kind of commercialization that comes out of materialization. At any rate, these developments bode ill, and are bound to feed the deathmaking culture as well.

Major sectors of human services go along with these developments while verbally objecting to the commercialization model. One consequence has been a drop-off in interest in the kind of training that focuses on people's needs, and that tries to build service models on these, as the model coherency construct does. Once again, the culture of modernism feeds into this alienation from a needs-based perspective by exalting self-determination to a religion. Self-determination does not necessarily reflect needs, but people's unbridled individual willfulness. By switching to an emphasis on "choice" and self-determination, human services increasingly fail--even more than they had previously--to address people's real needs. One result is that the service system becomes its own end of employing human service workers and thereby circulating the wealth of the post-primary production economy and society.

In combination, the two developments are giving a powerful impetus to the perpetuation or resurrection of the asylum, because it is argued that some severely impaired people can actually be taken care of more cheaply in asylums than in the community (which is probably true in at least some instances), and that furthermore, whatever advantage may be gained from trying to educate and develop many impaired people is simply not worth the amount of money that it would cost.

One of the urgent challenges to handicapped people and their allies is to come to an understanding of what kinds of actions by them, or on their behalf, might have a backlash effect far beyond any benefits that they might achieve even if the actions at issue were successful. Sadly, handicapped people and their allies seem to be almost totally oblivious to what constitutes unreasonable--or even outright irrational--demands on their part, and/or what is apt to elicit backlash.

*We used to think that many physicians were making big money, but now executives of many HMOs are making as much as \$10 million a year. Also, HMOs may pay out only about two-thirds of their intake for patient care (*Science*, 2 May 97, p. 750). We predict that the rise in medical expenditures in the US that was somewhat contained by the advent of HMOs will soon resume, in part because HMOs are unlikely to effect further economies, and in part even because of their high administrative costs.

Furthermore, we asseverate that the movement to include mental disorders under health insurance on a mandatory basis, which has already been partially successful, is almost certain to bankrupt the entire country (until it is checked first) because, with the shrink culture defining virtually everybody as in need of its services, such services are an absolutely bottomless pit. Not only that, but one such law in Vermont has broadened even further the definition of mental disorder to include alcohol and drug addiction.

*Bickman, L., Guthrie, P. R., Foster, E. M., Lambert, E. W., Summerfelt, W. T., & Breda, C. S., & Heflinger, C. A. (1995). Evaluating managed mental health services: The Fort Bragg experiment. New York: Plenum Press. This work reports on a very major "mental health" study that compared a large sample who received traditional mental services with another one that received "managed mental health services," and found (a) no difference in outcomes, but (b) that the managed services were over three times as expensive as the traditional ones. We suspect that the big lesson is that when one uses a bankrupt service model, merely giving more of it will increase the cost but not improve the outcome. In fact, we were surprised that the people in the managed programs did not fare poorer.

*The invasion of the body snatchers. Considering that national corporations are moving into virtually every sphere of commercial endeavor, it should not be surprising that the same is happening in what is now being called the "death care" business which mostly refers to the funeral business. It is entering what has been called the "golden era of death" because the baby-boomers will soon be dropping like flies, and Florida is considered the Eldorado of the death business. One death care chain has had annual profits of more than 40% in recent years. It uses the term "normalization" to refer to the process of buying up Mom-and-Pop funeral operations and "bringing them up to financial expectations" (Time, 9 Dec. 96).

*Breggin, P. R. (1997). Brain-disabling treatments in psychiatry: Drugs, electroshock, and the role of the FDA. New York: Springer. This is now an indispensable resource on the practices and impacts of material brain manipulations by the shrink culture. There are also chapters on the damaging impact of electroshock. The greater part of the book is devoted to the devastating impacts of prescription mind drugs. To some degree, this replaces the previously indispensable but out-of-print Dr. Caligari's Psychiatric Drugs (1987). Some of the impacts are characterized by the author as "chemical lobotomies."

*A new drug that is hoped to prevent stroke recurrence is unfortunately named Persantin Retard (Science, 20/12/96).

*Hospital-acquired infections are sweeping the British hospital population. About 10% of in-patients catch one, and about 20,000 a year die from such an infection or its interaction with other diseases. This amounts to more deaths than result from road accidents (Independent, 16/9/97; source item from Damian Gardner).

*In a study of 3,300 patients at five hospitals across the US, 30% said that they would rather die than live permanently in a nursing home, and 37% said that they would be extremely unhappy but would not prefer death instead. Interestingly, only 35% of family members were able to predict their patient's response, and only 18% of physicians did (Mouth, 9/97).

*People who have taken comfort in the fact that the US government has clamped down on human cloning research are warned that the relevant commissions so far have emphasized again and again that such research is only unethical "at this time." In fact, it is extremely disquieting how often this phrase has come up in these deliberations and reports (e.g., Science, 11 July 97). Unless something like a revolution takes place in the US, we must fully expect eventual legitimization of this kind of research.

*After the great flood of 1997 all but wiped out Grand Forks, ND, computer firms donated computer sets and software to be placed in each of the local schools. What for? One would have

thought this would be to catch up with all the learning that the children had missed, but not so. "To connect with other children who suffered similar disasters, such as the Mississippi River flood of 1993." A public school official interpreted this to mean, "our children need to see that there is light at the end of the tunnel" (Newsweek, 12 May 97).

*Betsy Latsha sent us an employment ad, presumably for work in a group home. It reads "GET PAID TO GO TO THE MOVIES & SHOP while helping adults with mental illness. EOE. Send resume." Thus, people are getting paid to do with handicapped persons what other people do for free. Also, the ad appeals to a pretty low-level motivation to work with handicapped people (getting paid to do such fun things as going to the movies).

*As early as 1965, sociologist Edwin Schur wrote a book entitled Crime Without Victims, which dealt with abortion, homosexuality and drug addiction. It is staggering to consider that the author believed that there were no victims to these behaviors. For instance, he must not have considered the aborted babies as victims, nor any of the women who got abortions and suffered grievous consequences, nor the incredible destructiveness wreaked on family and society by drug addiction, to mention only a few.

Miscellaneous News

*In the US, almost all organizations and clubs conduct their business according to Robert's Rules of Order, though very few people know anything about who (Henry M.) Robert was. He was born in 1837 of Huguenot ancestry on a South Carolina plantation. He graduated from the US Military Academy and remained loyal to the Union during the Civil War, though some of his family fought for the Confederacy. All his life, he functioned as a military engineer. Attending meetings both of churches and secular organizations, he was scandalized by how unruly their conduct was. Aside from Congress, very few bodies had adopted any kind of parliamentary rule. So he read what he could find on it, and constructed a new set for "deliberative assemblies" which was based in part on customs and rules of the English Parliament. He was particularly concerned that in a democracy, the majority should not run rough-shod over a minority, as becomes clear in his own words below. "The great lesson for democracies to learn is for the majority to give to the minority a full, free opportunity to present their side of the case, and then for the minority, having failed to win a majority to their views, gracefully to submit and to recognize the action as that of the entire organization, and cheerfully to assist in carrying it out, until they can secure its repeal." He also had something trenchant to say about the need for individuals to forfeit their rights for the common good--so relevant to our culture today. "The object of Rules of Order is to assist an assembly to accomplish in the best possible manner the work for which it was designed. To do this it is necessary to restrain the individual somewhat, as the right of an individual, in any community, to do what he pleases, is incompatible with the interests of the whole. Where...ever man does what is right in his own eyes, there is the least of real liberty."

He had difficulty getting anybody to publish his book because all the publishers thought that there would only be a very small demand for it. So he had the first edition published privately in 1876. The 4,000 copies sold out almost immediately, and so he spent the rest of his leisure time, parallel to his occupation, revising the manual until he died in 1923. By 1914, more than 500,000 copies had sold. The most recent edition appears to be the 9th one of 1990 (American Scientist, 3/96).

*How meaningless governmental budget and deficit figures are becoming to most people was dramatically underlined in a US News & World Report article (24/12/90) that said that the US

government deficit for 1989-90 was \$220 million when the real figure was \$220 billion, but few people noticed it. The periodical had to carry a correction later on.

*The people who help citizens fill out their tax forms make mistakes in most of the returns they help prepare. Surprisingly, they are more wrong than employees of the tax service (IRS) who also used to be wrong 41% of the time in 1989, and 28% in 1990.

*A guest columnist in Newsweek (30/12/96) came to the conclusion that 1996 had not been a real year, but a virtual year--one giant computer-generated special effect.

*Playgrounds of the future will lack almost all the play equipment previous generations grew up with: monkey bars, see-saws, swings and slides--all because these toys are of the kind that prompt parents to bring lawsuits against playground owners, operators or equipment manufacturers (Newsweek, 13 May 97).

*A subscriber wrote us after the 12/96 TIPS issue, "we couldn't live without TIPS," though we are willing to assume that this was a slight overstatement. Another former subscriber who had been extruded from the service system begged for back issues and promised to pay whenever he could.

*State fairs in the US have a very traditional appeal particularly to people of the lower classes--a tradition that goes back a long way, at least a thousand years. We had not been aware of the fact that some of the large state fairs are major hideaways for runaway people, particularly youths. E.g., every summer, scores of New Yorkers abandon their families to disappear among the churning crowds of the 10-day-long State Fair. Finding a missing person at the NY State Fair is said by the police to be a virtually impossible task, unless there is something very unusual about the appearance of a missing person (SHJ, 29/8/97).

*Most people seem unaware what problems legal gambling brings. A Florida study concluded that legalizing gambling would bring the state almost \$470 million in tax revenue, but cost \$2.16 billion in crime and other social costs. In a South Dakota town, the advent of casino gambling almost immediately was accompanied by an 80% increase in domestic violence and a 43% increase in child abuse reports. A Harvard study concluded that when adults are exposed to gaming, 3.5-5% can be expected to develop pathological gambling habits (Time, 1 April 96).

*Among the people receiving the IgNobel prize in 1996 were two Norwegians who proved that gonorrhea can be transmitted via an inflatable doll, and an Englishman who proved that tumbling toast always falls on the buttered side (Science, 18/10/96).

*We are strongly struck by the contrast between the murder of a family member of a celebrity figure--namely Bill Cosby's son--and the totally unremarkable low-profile way in which vast armies of lowly people go to their murder-deaths. The difference seems to indicate that not only the lives of wealthy or celebrity figures, but even of their family members, really are believed to be more valuable than the lives of lowly people. We were also struck by how the young man's death was de facto made into a media event by his family. By the way, probably nothing would have happened to the young man if he had not been driving around in a super-expensive (about \$130,000) car his father had given him, suggesting that neither of them have much common sense.