TIPS, Volume 16, No. 2, 3 & 4, 1996

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It is a bit depressing to have to do three triple issues in a row. There are two reasons for this: it is almost as much work to do a single or double issue as a triple one, and being so pressed for time, the triple issues save a great deal of it. Secondly, triple issues save a small fortune on postage, which is a big issue in light of our small circulation.

The themes will be largely those that we traditionally cover in December issues: poverty --mostly as it relates to oppression; the prison, crime and punishment scene; religion in society and its interface with human service; issues of war and peace; philanthropy; plus miscellaneous topics, including a lot of updating on human service-related issues.

Poverty & the Poor

*In 1989, San Francisco passed an injunction forbidding feeding the poor without a public permit. Robert Kahn (who had once been homeless in the 1970s) applied more than 130 times for a permit to feed the poor, but had them all denied. So together with friends, he has been distributing food to the poor anyway, and became one of about 1,000 people arrested for this offense, but the only one to go to trial, where he received a 60-day sentence. Kahn announced that he would go right back to feeding the poor again once he got out, pointing out that feeding the poor is not the kind of thing that observers find offensive, such as urinating or defecating in the streets (Guardian, 23/7/96; source item from Rob Henstock).

*In 1996, 25,000 people showed up to apply for 100 poorly-paid openings for janitor positions for the city of Los Angeles. City Hall ran out of application forms, local buses had to be re-routed and police called in to control the traffic near City Hall (Guardian, 23/7/96; source item from Rob Henstock).

*Interestingly, our own city of Syracuse, NY, has one of the poorest white neighborhoods in the US (SHA, 9 Oct. 94).
*Newsweek (28/12/92) reported that political bosses in ghetto areas do not really want public housing for the poor to be widely distributed in an integrative and upgrading fashion because they would then lose their power base.

*The fact that Americans have been getting more obese over recent years may actually be a correlate of the rise of poverty, insofar as obesity is five times as prevalent among the poor as among the rich (Time, 16/1/95).

*Some states are vastly more generous to the poor than others. In New York State, a family of 3 with income below $25,000 a year was eligible for poverty benefits in 1995 (AP in SHI, 2 Aug 95).

*Research has show that one thing conservatives claimed to be true actually was correct, namely, that welfare recipients will move from state to state, wherever they can get the highest welfare benefits. Wisconsin, which has always been in the forefront of social consciousness, has found that 20% of its welfare recipients had moved there from other states, particularly Illinois, because of the benefits (Newsweek, 14/8/95).

*A Pennsylvania mother with 2 children would get more income on welfare than on a full-time job at the minimum wage--clearly a disincentive to striving for independence (Time, 3 July 95).

*In constant (inflation-adjusted) dollars, the minimum wage had actually decreased by almost 50% between 1969 and 1994 (Time, 23/1/95).

*Gratifyingly, poor people say they are much less prepared to marry someone for money than rich people (SHI, 19/94).

The Gulf Between the Haves & Have-Not

*On different sides of the same page of The Independent (27 Aug. 1996, pp. 3-4; source item from Rob Henstock) appeared stories on the poor treatment of people who are "incurably ill" at an institution in England, along with another about cuts in medical services that could jeopardize the health of people with complex medical conditions--and a story about the clothing bill for overseas trips by members of the royal family, which is paid for by taxes levied on the general population. Unfortunately, people rarely make the connections between such items, even when they appear almost side by side in the same issue of the newspaper. For instance, one connection is that the items illustrate the gulf--and it is growing--between the haves and have-nots all over the world.

*In the early 1920s, before the great depression, 1% of US households owned about 36% of all the wealth. The discrepancy became the smallest in the late 1970s (1% owned 18%), but by 1989, the old ratio had been restored (Newsweek, 1 May 95). Between 1970-1990, the family income of the poorest fifth in the US increased by only 3%, while that of the richest 5% increased by 35% (Newsweek, 8 Jan. 96). In fact, across the entire income spectrum, the more income one had, the greater was the percentage in further increase. As the economy columnist (Samuelson) for Newsweek (9 Oct. 95) put it, "the war on poverty is over, and the poor lost."

*In the 1940s, a US working class family of four paid about 2% of its income in taxes, but by 1995, it was paying 25%. Furthermore, even a person on minimum wage these days pays a much higher percentage of taxes than the person would have paid 50 years earlier (Fl, 2/96).

*About a third of US Social Security payments to individuals go to the richest 12% of the elderly (Fl, 2/96).
*A lot of already privileged people make huge profits on the stock markets by selling stock which they got originally for nothing or for a token sum.

*One explanation why there is a bull market at the same time when there is so much unemployment is that the growing inequality in wealth is putting money into the hands of the class that is most likely to invest.

*Government bonds are nothing but a costly (because of the interest) scam by governments that are unable to plan and budget their finances, and pay their bills. If people quit buying them, governments would find it necessary to run on balanced or surplus budgets. Yet some of the biggest buyers of government bonds are the rich people who are screaming the loudest about government deficits. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, people are never told this.

*Newsweek (26/2/96) carried a cover story on "corporate killers" who down-sized their corporations by tens of thousands of jobs while their own salaries were skyrocketing astronomically, and while many of them cited their own hard-scrabble origins, hemoaning that they "know what it is like when someone in a family loses a job" (said by an executive who walked away with $100 million in a single year).

*During 1995, the salaries of US company CEOs rose by an average of 15%, and their benefits rose by 30%--while during the same year, the wages of workers rose 4% while their benefits dropped (Mouth, 5/96).

*In 1995, it was discovered that clothes sold in upscale Neiman-Marcus and other stores were being produced in illegal sweat shops in California in which workers were working 17 hours a day for less than $1 an hour (Consumer Report, 5/96).

*Computer firms and other privileged parties are making fortunes from the recent trend of finger-printing the poor in order to contain "welfare fraud" (e.g., AP, in SHJ, 30/11/94).

*Efforts have been underfoot in Syracuse, NY, to move the bus lines so that the privileged people would not have to face the lowly who congregate downtown. As one citizen said, "It's a pity how you have to see people like that--the poor, people looking for money. Sometimes I see disabled or mentally handicapped people. With all these people you'd think they could be taken care of, somebody could look after these people. You see them wandering the streets. This is no place for them. No wonder people say it's an unpleasant atmosphere because they're around. And I feel bad" (SHA, 10 Sept. 95). Another citizen referred to the lowly at the major bus stop as "scum of the earth." But a lowly but wise waitress said,"I don't see the logic of moving it--you're are going to get the same people."

*Germany has become one of the richest countries, and yet there are 7.25 million poor and the number is rising, at least 180,000 citizens are homeless, and 700,000 live in shelters or temporary places. Many Germans are too ashamed to admit they are poor and suffer in secret (AW, 8 April 95). This underlines once again how post-primary production economies divide populations into a large rich and a large poor portion.

*Medieval robber knights (and "robber barons") used to sing the following song:

Riding and robbing is no sort of shame,  
The best of us do it without any blame.

About the peasants they robbed, they sang:  We'll hunt them from the plow  
And roast them like a sow.  
Until we've grabbed our loot--  
And strung 'em up, to boot.
About the peasant, they sang: Just grab him by the scruff
And let your hearts be gay!
Take all his finest stuff,
His horses lead away!
Undaunted be, and bold,
and if he’s got a groat,
Then slit his scraggly throat.
(M. Kunze (1987), Highroad to the Stake, p. 36 & 35).

*In 1842, the English poet Tennyson addressed the following words to a certain privileged and heartless Clara Vere de Vere who was flirting with a lowly yeoman.

Clara, Clara, Vere de Vere,
If time be heavy on your hands,
Are there no beggars at your gate,
Nor any poor about your lands?
Oh! teach the orphan-boy to read,
Or teach the orphan-girl to sew,
Pray Heaven for a human heart,
And let the foolish yeoman go.

*If people think that our workshops are demanding and the modules long, they should consider the following. St. John Chrysostom (ca. 344-407), who was a priest in Antioch and later archbishop of Constantinople, would often preach for two hours at a stretch—and his audiences would still call for more, even though in those days, they had no pews to sit in, but mostly were standing all this time (CH, 1995, Issue No. 44). Of his sermons, 90 have survived. One of his themes was very consistent with the Jewish teaching that what one acquires must be righteously acquired, even in its indirect dimensions. For instance, he said to the rich: "You say you have not sinned yourselves. But are you sure you are not benefiting from the previous crimes and thefts of others?"
"When your body is laid in the ground, the memory of your ambition will not be buried with you; for each passerby as he looks at your great house will say, 'What tears went into the building of that house? How many orphans were left naked by it, how many widows wronged, how many workmen cheated out of their wages?' Your accusers will pursue you even after you are dead" (p. 25).

The Transfer of Wealth from the Lower to the Higher Social Strata

Not only has there been an ongoing transfer of wealth from poorer to richer countries, but all over the world, there has been a massive transfer of wealth from the lower to the higher strata within nations. This means that societies are splitting into rich and poor; and in many countries the middle class is shrinking, which portends ill for long-term political stability. But historically, the rich classes never learn that their long-term interests are at odds with their short-term ones. While the bulk of the evidence below pertains to the US, the same overall trend can be documented for the UK, Japan, and many other nations. A major portion of this section will explain some of the wealth transfer mechanisms, many of which are not apparent to most citizens.

*Corporate Welfare*

*In 1995, the US federal government subsidized business corporations to the tune of $150 billion, either directly, or indirectly in the form of tax breaks—at the same time as the federal deficit was $130 billion, and social welfare spending was $145 billion! (SHA, 21/7/96). Among the "corporate welfare bums" were Campbell Soup (getting $1.1 million), Texas Instruments ($13 million) and Gallo Winery ($2.6 million) (Time, 25/3/96).
*In the US West, mining companies pay only token sums for the gold they extract from public lands. One foreign firm bought 1000+ acres from the US government for $5000, and extracted over $1 billion of gold from it—usually, this leaves a wasteland behind, too (e.g., Newsweek, 30/5/94). A similar give-away has been letting lumber companies cut lumber from public lands for token fees, often leaving devastated land behind (e.g., Time, 9 Dec. 91). In Idaho, 110 acres of federal land were sold for about $2 per acre, though it may contain $1 billion in minerals (Newsweek, 18/9/95).

*In 1991, the federal government gave $200 million(!) to US firms or industry associations to promote sales of their goods abroad. For instance, Sunkist got $10 million, Gallo got $5 million, Pillsbury got $2.9 million, etc. (SHJ, 3 Feb. 92). A major US sweets and candy bar firm (which makes Snickers, M&M, Milky Way and Mars), which has an advertising budget of more than $272 million a year, and which is closely held by some billionaires, received almost $1 million in subsidies from the US Agriculture Department in 1992 (SHJ, 20/5/93).

*As Senator and Senate majority leader, Robert Dole was instrumental in getting clauses included in various laws that benefitted only one single firm each—in most cases, the firms or its officers had contributed money to his election campaigns. Some of these firms and officers were already very wealthy (Time, 23/9/96).

*States also subsidize corporations. For instance, NY State gave General Motors $325,000 to train its workers in a local plant, which GM did—and then closed the plant because it would be too expensive to meet pollution control standards (SHJ, 4 Dec. 92).

*In the US, many housing projects for the poor are spun off by government to private firms, these firms often milk the project of public subsidies and rent until they are decrepit—and then walk out. Then the project is given by the government to another entrepreneur who does the same thing. Over a period of decades, the same project may be milked over and over, each time involving transfer of huge public sums to entrepreneurs.

*The middle class equivalent of the above are housing developments in which the buyers discover within a very short period that their medium-expensive houses are falling apart, and are so worthless they cannot be sold, and the developer makes off with the money. Being federally insured (under FHA), the owners lose only some money and their credit rating, the developers and bankers get their money—and the taxpayer picks up the cost (e.g., SHJ, 26/4/92).

**Subsidies to Better-off Citizens**

*The US government spends more money in various programs on families with income above $75,000 than it does on the poor! Some of the spending is indirect, as in home mortgage interest deductions, other tax breaks, and so on. In fact, on the average, an upper-income person gets more from the US government than a typical poor person. Among other things, the government has been spending more on medical care of affluent elderly people than on Head Start, job training, and nutrition subsidies for women, infants, and children combined. Yet worse, the wealthiest group receives the highest per capita benefits of all. In 1989, people with incomes above $100,000 received $11 billion in public benefits while the pie for the poor has been shrinking steadily over the preceding 25 years. The wealthy view what they get as an entitlement, and what the poor get as a handout (Newsweek, 12 Aug. 92).

*US students can get very cheap federal loans to go to college. Since vastly more wealthy than poor families send their children to college, this is a subsidy that disproportionately favors the wealthier classes (Newsweek, 2/9/92).
Farm subsidy laws, originally passed to help struggling small family farmers, have been sluicing billions of dollars to some of the wealthiest sectors in the US. Small farms receive little or no federal subsidies, while "factory farms" owned by corporations get vast ones. This has been going on for years. As of 1993, nearly half of the US federal farm subsidies went to farmers who earned more than $100,000 a year (Time, 22/2/93).

Wealth Transfer via Taxing Policies

A major way to transfer wealth--upward or downward--is through taxing policies. In the US, the Reagan administration started a "tax cut" and "tax reform" between 1981-88 that channelled vast benefits to the wealthy.

*Because of poor policies and stewardship by the higher-ups, more than 75% of US households pay more in social security taxes than income tax (Time, 3 July 95). This is extremely regressive taxing, in part the result of 1983 Reagan legislation.

*It is estimated that US federal income in FY 1996 comes only 10% from corporate taxes, and 39% from individual income taxes, unlike in the 1950s and 60s.

*Under a series of Republican administrations, the US Internal Revenue Service has been systematically withdrawing from tracking the taxes of the rich, and has instead been squeezing the middle classes and families, which of course was an extremely inefficient policy. For instance, during the 1980s, there had been a 27% drop in audits of corporations that had assets of $100 million or more, a 53% decline in audits of individuals earning more than $100,000--but an increase in audits of individuals with incomes less than $100,000 (SHJ, 19/6/91). Since the government was not responsive to warnings about this, the Democrats in Congress forced through a legal provision requiring increased auditing of the higher-income strata.

*Less than 20% of the poor in the US have been getting federal housing aid, while every rich person does who buys a home with loaned money (a mortgage), via the tax deduction on the interest payment.

*Someone has called tax-deductible business meals a federal food stamps program for the corporate classes (Time, 22/2/93).

Pension Thefts

Stealing people's pensions and retirement funds has become very big business, and we mean that wealthy and powerful parties have been alienating, or jeopardizing, all sorts of pension funds. Typically, people are not aware that their pension funds have been stolen until it's all over, or even long thereafter. There are well over 250,000 private pension funds in the US, plus many public ones which are often also plundered. The fact that there are $525 billion in these private funds, and more than $1.5 trillion more in others, is too big a temptation to too many people. These plans have no federal insurance protection. One way to steal is for firms not to deposit into these accounts the money they are supposed to deposit, and some of the biggest firms in the US have been doing this. One way to steal from a pension fund is for its officers to make loans from it to their cronies, who make off with the money. Another is to make bad investments, perhaps also in enterprises run by cronies, or in which an officer has an interest. Some financial corporations that handle pension funds have steered vast sums into shaky companies owned by their own managers.

*Every year, private pension plans in the US have been falling further behind in the pensions that they have obligated themselves to pay, and the assets they actually have available to pay them with. The 50 biggest such plans alone were $40 billion underfunded by 1993 (AP in SHJ, 14/12/94). Some very big and rich US companies have been chasms behind in paying their debts
to their pension funds. In 1992, LTV was $1.9 billion behind. At one point, it was $3.2 billion behind, leaving the fund 96% underfunded. Ravenswood Aluminum was 90% underfunded in 1994; and on and on. When Pan Am World Airways went bankrupt in 1990, its biggest debt was $914 million to its own pension fund.

*One huge pension fund in Calif. stole for years, and then went bankrupt. Executives had stolen about $125 million (Newsweek, 21/11/94).

*US firms regularly raid the employee health care and pension funds of their firms, and employees often do not find out until it is too late (e.g., Time, 11 Dec. 95).

Many corporations have concluded that having a pension fund is too much temptation, and so they are getting out of pension schemes, forcing their employees to put their retirement money into independent private pension plans--from the pan into the fire, because these private plans are often worse than corporate ones.

*One pension management firm alone stole $136 million--and then went out of business. Investors have so far not only had little recourse, but recent laws have even diminished their recourse (Newsweek, 26/6/95).

*An insurance company scam called "pension maximization" is actually designed to strip widows and orphans of their security, as Newsweek (7 Feb 94) reported.

*Similar pension thefts have also occurred in England. In one such theft, 32,000 people lost all or most of their retirement benefits, but investment firms decided to cover the loss in order to save the reputation and honor of their field (2/95 news; source from Joe Osburn). By the way, in Britain, pension fund scams are investigated by a Serious Fraud Office (Newsweek, 16/12/91).

*In Britain, the Maxwell family stole multi-billion dollars from their financial empire, including about $630 million from pension funds. It is good to know we are not alone in this.

*Pension funds are not only raided by private entrepreneurs, but also by government units at all levels: city, county, state, etc. For instance, in the early 1990s, the NY State legislature and the governor (Cuomo) conspired and borrowed $4 billion from the state employee pension fund to balance the state budget--which a court later ruled illegal. New Jersey balanced its budget by simply contributing less to its employees' pensions (Newsweek, 30/9/96).

*The federal Social Security system in the US was wisely so designed that it would not be part of the federal budget, but self-financing by workers contributing to it during their working lives. The governing hoods got around this by borrowing from the fund to cover federal deficits, meaning that future taxpayers have to pay more taxes to cover the pension deficit, because the US government never gets around to paying off its debt to the Social Security fund. If future taxpayers cannot or will not pay this debt, people will get much smaller pensions, even though Social Security pensions have never been high to begin with, and were never meant to cover all basic living expenses.

*Considering that corporate and government hoods are stealing billions from pension funds, one is almost relieved to learn that once in a while, a pension fund employee engages in old-fashioned embezzling on the order of mere thousands or hundred thousands--almost a breath of fresh air.

*As of 1992, fewer than half of full-time workers in the US had a private pension plan (Newsweek, 13/1/92). We doubt things are better now.

*Altogether, it is clear that they wheel and deal, while in the end, we reel.
Income Inequalities

*Between 1987-89, the percentage of people in the US reporting incomes of $200,000 or more increased by 40% (AP in SHJ, 20/11/91), and the richest 1% of American taxpayers pulled in 60% of all after-tax income gains made during the 1980s (Newsweek, 16/3/92). During the 1980s, the number of American millionaires tripled to over 1.5 million. The top 1% doubled its income (Newsweek, 1 March 93). The US has had the largest gap between rich and poor of any major industrialized nation for many years, so what has been happening lately is not exactly new, but merely worse. The gap was at its narrowest in 1968 and became the widest as of the statistical update in 1989 (USN&WR, 22/4/91).

*Comparable trends have been occurring in Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland, Canada, Britain, and other countries. In Britain, the top 20% almost doubled their wealth between 1977-91.

*When executives "downsize" their employees, they rarely take a cut in income themselves. In fact, they typically receive lavish awards.

*A sprinkling of US company executives have been earning over $100 million a year. Earnings in the scores of millions are not at all uncommon, while earnings below $1 million is considered chicken feed in the corporate world--all this despite the fact that there is only a modest correlation between how competently executives perform, and how much they earn.

*Only 1 American in 2000 thinks he/she is "rich," even though over 10% of them are millionaires (AW, 7 March 92).

Wealth Redistribution via Insurance Scams, Thefts and Collapses

Nearly half the money Americans put into their private pension funds has been entrusted to life insurance companies, and these have become very shaky since the late 1980s. The list of US insurance firms that have been embroiled in improprieties or insolvencies is a "who's who" of insurance: Prudential, John Hancock, NY Life, American General Life, Allianz Life, Monumental Life, National Benefit Life, and Met Life (Newsweek, 6 March 95).

*In 4/91, the state of California had to step in and take over an insurance firm that held $40 billion of life insurance and old-age annuities because it was teetering on the edge of bankruptcy. These sorts of things are part of the transfer upward scam, and there is massive theft of retirement funds involved here too. By the time the insurance collapse wave runs its course, the S&L scandal may look like greasy kid stuff.

*Shortly after the California scandal, the state of New Jersey seized Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Company in the largest such take-over in US history, because despite $13 billion in assets, it was going under. The firm, with 600,000 life insurance policyholders, was broke from bad real estate investments. Amazingly, until 5/90, the company had had an AAA rating. About one-third of all life insurers are, or may soon be, in financial trouble.

*Executives who sell a pension fund to an insurance firm (that subsequently goes broke) may get paid fortunes. One such in Calif. reaped $35 million selling his textile plant's pension fund to Executive Life Insurance Co., which shortly after went broke.

*In Fla., a slew of insurers went belly-up around 1990, at billions in cost to taxpayers. One such failed company rather amazingly was named Guarantee Security Life Insurance.
*In NY, the state bailed out several insurance firms in 1993 to the tune of $150 million—without a state senate debate, or even a meeting of the appropriations committee, but with a very fast roll-call, and the governor (Cuomo) signed the bill. Taxpayers will be paying the bill.

*Life insurance policyholders are told that their policies will be paid up after so many years—but in recent years, they were often told out of the blue that they had to continue paying, or resume paying. Also, many did not find out until too late that the so-called cash value of their policies no longer existed, in some cases because insurance agents had been levying charges against them without telling them.

*In Louisiana, 38 people were convicted for insurance fraud by 1993 after $180 million of claims went unpaid. A state overseer of insurance companies actually went to prison. Obviously, even the safeguarders are in on the scam.

*One insurance scam has been for one insurance firm to sell its policies to another without knowledge or permission of the policyholders, and the second insurance firm may then go broke, perhaps after all sorts of siphonings-off (Newsweek, 10/19/94).

*Another US transfer scam is for "health maintenance organizations" to get elderly people to sign up and get their money, and then refuse them the needed medical treatment measures, or to even drop them if they become expensive (e.g., Newsweek, 19/6/95).

*One massive new way of redistributing the wealth is for insurance companies to discontinue a group health insurance plan for every single member, thereby avoiding lawsuits, and then institute a new one which is only offered to the more promising candidates and former members at lower rates, forcing all the others to seek insurance at much higher rates. This not only excludes poor people from coverage, but even contributes to making economically marginal people poor (SHJ, 11 March 92).

*Many corporations take out life insurance on their employees with the corporation as the beneficiary, even if the employee leaves the firm. This costs the corporation nothing because it borrows 100% of the premiums, plus the interest, from the insurer. The interest is tax-deductible for the firm, which is the crux of this transfer scam. When the employee dies, the firm gets the benefit payment, and pays off its debt to the insurer from the proceeds of the policy. Both the firm and the insurer profit, the employee gets nothing, and the taxpayer pays for the tax deduction (Newsweek, 23/10/95).

*Some insurance sale brokers have been selling policies—but kept the premiums themselves. The companies that had issued the policies naturally cancelled them, without the customers ever finding out. E.g., in the Syracuse area, 1800 people suddenly discovered that they did not have the health insurance they had been paying for (SHJ, 17/3/93).

**Investment Scams**

*There is a mammoth industry devoted to bilking elderly Americans out of their savings. One investment firm alone got elderly people to invest $400 million in what turned out to be worthless securities. Another investment firm bilked mostly elderly people out of $1.4 billion, this time not at a total loss: courts forced an 80% restitution.

*One transfer scam is for investment brokers and firms to "churn," i.e., to do a lot of buying and selling of stocks, and charge the owners every time, who can end up poorer with every transaction. This scam is often perpetrated on old people and pensioners (e.g., Newsweek, 30/10/95).
During the late 1980s, millions of investors were pressured or seduced by investment firms to invest in worthless securities (e.g., junk bonds). One NY firm alone used deceptive practices that misled 275,000 investors into losing $1 billion.

Junk bond promoter/broker/scammer Michael Milken caused investors (many of them small ones) at least $1.3 billion losses. He got a 10-year prison sentence (of which he served 22 months!), and got to keep $125 million of his loot. Several other investment scammers still ended up rich or super-rich after spending a little time in jail and paying a fine or giving back some of their ill-gotten wealth. Examples are Dennis Levine, Ivan Boesky, and Martin Siegel (Newsweek, 7 Oct. 91). Even some of the most established investment firms (e.g., Salomon Brothers) have fooled their clients and engaged in illicit practices.

Half of the US investors who bought mutual funds through a bank thought they were federally insured; more than half thought that they did not pay a fee for their purchase, even though most banks charge one (Newsweek, 7 March 94). This is an example of how ignorant ordinary people are of how they are being fleeced.

Compassion for the poor? My foot! Hillary Clinton earned $100,000 in one year from a $1000 investment (e.g., Time, 9 May 94).

Banking Scams

Banks used to be pillars of solidity. Then the Reagan administration deregulated banking, resulting in endless scams that cost the US and its citizens well over $1000 billion. International or overseas banks have also gotten sleazy and run up huge fleecings.

The biggest banking system failure of all times was the collapse of most (at least 750 between 1989-1993) of the so-called "savings and loan" (S&L) banks in the US in the late 1980s. The bailout is still not completed, and the total costs may never be fully known, and may continue to mount for 40 years! Estimates have ranged to $700 billion! According to one estimate, in FY 1991 alone, 9% of the US federal expenditures went to this S&L bailout! (CW, 1/92). However, well-to-do speculators, bankers, investors, etc., ended up with much of this money to begin with. For instance, the president’s son, Neil Bush, earned $160,000 from a money-losing oil company in which he had invested less than $3,000 (AP in SHJ, 3 May 91). Many investors reaped $78 average for every dollar invested. As a bank officer, Bush also contributed to a $1 billion give-away to cronies, for which he got a mild reprimand and a $50,000 fine. He never apologized or showed remorse. And then lawyers, other bankers, and other parties got rich from the bail-out process. (2000 private law firms were paid $21 million in 1991 alone to help with the "clean-up," according to AP, in SHJ, 11 March 92). Someone called all this "welfare for billionaires." Most of the hoods and crooks never got caught, and the ones who did paid less than 1% on what they had lost, stolen, played fast with, etc. One defendant has been paying $30 a month toward a $1 million restitution, and obviously will die after having paid only a token amount. On the other hand, every American will eventually have paid several thousand dollars toward this bail-out/clean-up alone. Compared to the S&L calamity, the Star Wars program was a bagatelle. One company being paid to clean up a failed S&L bank had people to do photocopying at $35 per hour—but often, these people had no work. At any one time, up to 150 of them were seen playing cards waiting for work to be done (SHJ, 4 Oct. 93). There is a distinct possibility that within a few years, the S&L scandal may pale in comparison to financial disasters yet to come.

Even though the officials of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International were involved in the biggest single-firm financial scandal in history in 1991 when it was discovered that their bank had stolen, lost or misappropriated $20 billion, the jury acquitted one of its two legal counsels even though he himself made millions from the loss of billions (Time, 30/8/93).
*Rhode Island's entire banking system collapsed in 1991. This affected almost half the state's population, though "only" $1.2 billion (chicken feed as these scams go) was at issue. Many people even had to go on welfare because of this. Newsweek (7 Oct 91) described demonstrations by people who had lost their deposits as "aged rioters." Some got arrested! (AP in SHJ, 2 Jan. 92).

*In near-by Connecticut, many banks also failed in 1991, and the taxpayers had to cover the federally insured losses.

*Bankers abroad learned from all of this, and also went for broke. E.g., the People's Bank in South Australia had to be bailed out by taxpayers to the tune of $3.15 billion (source item from Peter Millier).

*Some lawyers trying to track down the S&L scandal crooks are being paid $600 an hour by the US government, in addition to a percentage of any money that might be recouped. Obviously, they have an interest in banks being crooked.

*The US President only gets $200,000 in salary, but there are other government employees who get higher wages. One government corporation hired a woman at $500,000 a year to dispose of property being taken over from failed savings and loan associations (SHJ, 26/8/93).

*From the frying pan into the fire. The US League of Savings Institutions had planned to host its annual 1990 meeting in Las Vegas, but in light of the S&L scandal, it decided that the gambling atmosphere was not good for its image, and so it moved the meeting to--Walt Disney World, with its Mickey Mouse imagery (AP, in 11/90).

*Some banks have tried to lure low-income people into taking out high-interest home improvement mortgages, which many are not able to pay back, thus losing their homes.

Miscellaneous Transfer Mechanisms & Scams

*The subtleties of the transfer of wealth are sometimes profoundly astonishing. Bank interest rates in the US have been the lowest in twenty years, and it now turns out that this, too, is a wealth transfer mechanism. On the one hand, elderly people and others who have been trying to save money are hardly getting any interest anymore, while businesses can borrow money very freely at low rates. It has been estimated that this will mean a transfer of $50 billion (possibly per year) from savings accounts into the business sector.

*So many US accountants and accounting firms have gone dishonest in recent decades by making company books look better than they were that as of early 1992, 4000 liability suits for more than $15 billion in damages were pending against them. The six largest accounting firms have already decided to pay out more than $300 million to settle such suits before they came to judgment (Time, 13/4/92).

*How the executive and legislative branches of the US government have been lying to their people for years now about the real budget and the real deficit has become ever clearer, but the lies still have been getting bigger every year. For instance, every year since the early 1980s, the government has borrowed money from trust funds (such as Social Security) and called the borrowed money "income" even though it has to be paid back somehow later on. This borrowed money has not been reported as being part of the national debt. Thus, in 1985, the national debt was under-reported by about 25%, and the under-reporting has been getting bigger every year, hitting about 45% in 1989. For instance, the reported federal deficit in 1989 was $152 billion when the real figure was $275 billion. The under-reporting was predicted to grow to about 60% or more by 1995 unless something drastic was done. All this money must be paid back by future generations who, at that time, may have much less to pay it with (Time, 19/2/90).
Yet another way in which a wealth transfer has been taking place in the US is that an astonishing large number of over 2 million poor elderly Americans have been paying $30 a month for health care benefits to which they had a free entitlement under Medicare, but the government had failed to notify them of their right, and one can only get the benefits if one applies for them. This defrauding apparently has been amounting to about $1 billion a year (AP in SHJ, 17/6/91).

Luxury items imported to the US are often tariff-free, while basic items (e.g., textiles sold in cheaper stores) may have a 50% tariff. This means that poorer people pay disproportionately for what they need, while richer people pay less for luxuries (Newsweek, 30/5/94).

NY State passed a law in 1989 that made it "virtually impossible" for non-profit groups to develop "life care" facilities, i.e., retirement centers that can escalate to total nursing care if needed (SHJ, 10 Aug. 94). This left the field to the profit-makers.

The poorer and less educated people are, the more they fall for lay-away buying that ends up costing them up to 3 times what the item would have cost in cash (e.g., SPS, 20/6/94).

One transfer scam is to sell "pre-need" funerals, especially to elderly people, in which case the money commonly goes into a certain kind of fund from which it gets de facto stolen--whereupon the fund declares bankruptcy. This has happened in several of the states (Common Cause, 11&12/90).

Ever since there has been a population explosion of lawyers in the US, there seem to have been more bad lawyers who steal their client's estates. In the Syracuse area alone, there has been a horror litany of predatory lawyership. Often, people are stripped by small-time lawyer of relatively small legacies, estates and trusts (e.g., SHJ, 17/10/96).

Many people in their 50s who have agreed to early retirement in return for a lump sum separation payment are apt to have gotten a nasty surprise on how much was taken by taxes under a law taking effect 1/93.

Conclusion to Wealth Transfer

A 1991 review by John Kenneth Galbraith of the book Sleepwalking Through History: America in the Reagan Years, by H. Johnson, claims that the author interprets Americans as "encouraged to short-sighted and even obscene self-indulgence. This, in turn, is held to have economic, social and political merit because it is so nice... In the end, as the rich get richer, the poor get both poorer and more numerous, and the central cities decline into lawlessness and decay, with the eventual and maybe early sacrifice of social tranquility as well as more general well-being." We believe this is not only true of America, but increasingly, of all nations and societies in the Western world, and those that aspire to emulate Western civilization (source item from Peter Millier).

All in all, the above list of mere examples of upward wealth transfer informs us just how diverse, well-concealed and relentless the mechanisms are.

The Gulf Between Rich and Poor Nations

First World countries have for years taken more wealth from Third World ones than they returned. A major contributor to this transfer pattern is the habit of Third World potentates buying First World armaments. These armament transactions have been increasing steadily since 1960.

In 1994, the US had 129 billionaires, but two poor countries--Indonesia and Mexico--had 10 each (Casa Cry, 8/95).
*The US population is 5% of the world population, but generates 30% of its garbage and 25% of its pollution (7/96 news; source item from Carol Flowers).

*The good news is that China and India are at least for the moment self-sufficient in food production, and Eastern Europe is predicted to regain its former status as a big food exporter (Globe & Mail, 21/6/95; source item from Barry Wever). However, China’s agriculture (like that of many nations) is conducted in ways that are destructive of the land, and will cause it to take vengeance in the future. In fact, the recent catastrophic floods in China are in part already a result of this policy (Science, 13/9/96).

*A British analyst has made the claim that the conditions laid by the World Bank on Third World countries in central Africa as the price for its financial help has led to catastrophes that have literally wiped out all the advances achieved during the 1960s and 1970s of an economic, social, health and educational nature.

**Homelessness**

*Testimony given about the homeless in Toronto, Canada, in 5/96 included the following inventory of their common health and mental problems (Globe & Mail, 1 June 1996):

- Kidney and heart disease.
- Pneumonia.
- Liver disease—so much hepatitis B (from contaminated needles) that the Health Centre doesn’t test for it anymore, just vaccinates.
- Septicemia and cellulitis (general and localized blood poisoning, the latter usually in the lower legs).
- Tuberculosis (about 40 percent of the homeless are infected).
- Widespread malnutrition.
- Lice.
- Horrendous dental problems (many homeless ask for their teeth to be pulled to get rid of the pain).
- Head injuries from falls and assaults.
- Chronic illnesses—diabetes and cancer, for example—significantly higher than in the general population.
- Pandemic foot ailments—infestations, skin ulcers, circulation problems—in a group that spends a considerable proportion of the day walking.
- Headaches.
- Second-degree sunburn from May to September, hypothermia and frostbite from November to March.
- Pre-natal complications.
- Sexual assault.
- Depression—an estimated 50 percent meet the criteria for clinical depression; severe psychological effects arise from the stress of coping with daily adversity (especially among those who have lost jobs, housing, financial security and family).
- Schizophrenia—the voices often become more intense and tortuous, exacerbated by living in a state of fear and isolation.
- Extreme sleep deprivation—in which a person finds it very difficult to think logically, develop a mental plan, or function at anything beyond a very basic level (“How can I stay safe? How can I stay away from people?”)
- Suicide—one-quarter of the homeless people seen by Street Health have considered it; 10 percent have attempted it.
- Drug and alcohol abuse—about one-third of Toronto’s homeless suffer from substance abuse.

*A Toronto coroner ruled that three homeless men freezing to death on the streets of Toronto in January and Feb. of 1996 had nothing to do with the fact that they had no homes, because after
all, there were other homeless people who did not die. (One had died in a bus shelter, one on the steps of a business, and one under an expressway.) Instead, the coroner wanted at least one death ruled a suicide, and the others from "undetermined causes" (Globe & Mail, 27/7/96; source items from Barry Wever).

*My Brothers’ Keeper Quilt Group, c/o Wheatley (717-289-4335), Strawberry Hill Farm, RR 1 Box 1049, Hop Bottom, Pennsylvania, USA 1882. This group, at least until recently, has been making sleeping bags for the homeless, using scrap material in a quilting technique. One could write to them for a simple 10-stage set of instructions on how to make such sleeping bags.

*The government of the Australian state of New South Wales has reported that an increasing number of "young people with intellectual disabilities" are homeless and living on the streets (Canberra Times, 9 Oct. 95; source item from Michael Steer). Not surprisingly, many end up in the sex trade. However, we are sure that these youngsters are exercising innumerable “choices,” particularly since some ran away from home when they could not do anything they wanted to there.

*A homeless woman (Sue Pressley)—apparently in Atlanta—wrote the following poem, entitled "No Room in the Inn."

Night time is approaching, and I must walk slow,  
two children and me with no place to go.
Finding shelter may be very slim,  
for everywhere I go, there’s no room in the Inn.

I found a place just the other day,  
they said I was welcome but my kids couldn’t stay.
Lord, I cried, can’t they see their sin?  
Just like your mother, Lord, no room in the Inn.

Can’t you see. I’m not looking for a handout  
for that’s not what I’m about.
Just one room with a bed, so we can rest our heads,  
but sorry is all we hear instead.
So I guess I’ll keep going, for I have no next of kin.
But tell me America, why is there no room in the Inn.

Penguin Books. Chapter 4 (pp. 115-147) is entitled, "The Servers and the Served." It is a "participant observation" study of shelters for homeless women, apparently in a big city, or possibly in more than one (at least one was Washington, DC). The chapter underlines how different servers’ perceptions are from those of the served, as regards the reasonableness of rules, the exercise of power and control by the service, and even what the women need to do. It also underlines how very much the women resent being controlled by others about almost everything. And, although the author does not come out and say so, the chapter strongly underlines how difficult it is to serve a large number of very deeply wounded and needy people (all the shelters are big—even the "daytime shelter" is for 35 people). Even the PPP-ness of the service system is illustrated by the fact that when the women say they need a job, or a cash loan so that they can dress right for a job or to get a place to stay, the servers say that they need "counseling" and training instead in how to prepare a résumé, etc., etc. And when the women do what the service requires (e.g., apply for public assistance), they have to go through so many hoops and delays—many of them intentional—that they end up worse off than when they were "simply" homeless and without contact with the service system (Source item from Judith Sandys.)
*Tongue in cheek, the newspaper of the Catholic worker community in Rock Island, Illinois, has proposed that providing virtual hospitality to the homeless would be so much easier than the real thing (Winter 96; source item from Ann O’Connor).

*The old Protestant hymn, "Just A Closer Walk With Thee," is one of the most popular ones among street people. Street people are constantly on the move, and are hassled by police to keep moving on when they try to sit or lay down somewhere. Thus, the image of a different kind of "walk" has tremendous appeal. However, someone noted that people in wheelchairs will have to sing the "Just A Closer Roll With Thee" version.

*Donal Babbit is a "homeless poet" in California. We were given the following poem he wrote (apparently in the 1980s) entitled "Mitchell Park." Among other things, it brings out that so many people on the streets go by names other than their real ones.

I was sittin' with some friends
over in Mitchell Park.
We were drinking wine, smokin' pot,
and havin' a helluva time,
When up walks this cop and says,"Pour it on the ground,"
I said "just a minute, Sir!"
We just spent our last dime."
"Well that's too bad, it's really sad,
But I want to see it seep into the earth."
So, I poured it out with tears in my eyes,
Then I looked around at all the other guys.
Old Bill Daily looked like he was ready to fight,
Pig Pen was slobbering in his beard, a truly pathetic sight.
Fast Eddy, a blank look on his face,
poor guy's mind couldn't keep up the pace,
John One was stumbling and mumbling, a really sad case.

Well fellas, it's all about another 'Frisco Circle,
begging and conning our way to another half a G.
So we hit the streets,
panhandling everyone in sight.
I asked a paper boy if he could spare a quarter?
He said "Go fly a kite!"
But I don't give up easily,
and ask this little old lady for a dime,
She told me to "Get a job!",
that begging is a crime.
But, I worked another hour and a half,
and I came up with a buck and a half.
So, I goes back to Mitchell Park,
sicker 'an a junkyard dog,
threw it in the circle and tallied the score.
We come up twelve cents over,
Oh man, we were sitting in tall clover!
I told John Two, "Get your nose out of the newspaper an' make a run!"
He said, "This is the last one,
and then I'm done."
Well, we got over the shakes,
an' was feelin' no pain,
This way of life is drivin' me insane.
Well fellas, it's all about another Frisco Circle,  
Conning and panhandlin' everyone in sight.  
Just another day in Mitchell Park, waitin' for the night.

*Street people so commonly wrestle with Demon Rum. An old Salvation Army song, intended to encourage people trying to resist him, had these lines:  
"The Devil and me, we can't agree,  
I hate him and he hates me.  
He had me once, but he let me go,  
He wants me again, but I will not go."

*We repeat our pleas for submission of hobo, drunk, poverty and homelessness songs and poetry.

**Crime**

*As we reported last year, violent crimes allegedly have declined, but we continue to receive mixed messages. Also, there is a distinct possibility that crimes in which both drugs and violence play a role are more apt to be reported as drug crimes than violence crimes, and this may account for the reported decline in violent crimes and the very high drug crime rate. We also suspect that bigger prisons and longer imprisonment for violent crime is a major factor in the reported decline, for better or for worse, at least in the short run. Another theory is that increased police frisking for minor violations has discouraged marginal elements from carrying guns (e.g., SHA, 30/7/95).

*Because a large wave of children in the US will soon be entering teen-hoodship, and because these teens will be extremely unsocialized, demographers are predicting an unprecedented crime wave, using gory language about mass bloodshed, "super-predators," "killing and maiming on impulse, without any intelligible motive," etc., and that 1995 will appear "like the good old days" (e.g., Newsweek, 4 Dec. 95). All this will also mean that more youths will be victims of crime, because many youths predate on other youths (SHI, 9/9/95).

*We predict that juvenile curfews will be inevitable in the US, and eventually other countries too. Already 25% of the largest US cities had them by 1995, though there has been little enforcement so far (Newsweek, 17/7/95).

*Murder has become the second leading cause of on-the-job death in the US, right after travel accidents, though such murders during robberies are more frequent than murders by disgruntled fellow workers (Time, 14/8/95).

*In the US, about 4,000 elderly men and women are conned, robbed, burglarized, wounded, raped or murdered in their own homes every day (SHI, 2 Dec. 94).

*We learned that in Syracuse, there are buildings inhabited by very anti-social people to which the police are called every single day for months on end (SHI, 13/7/95). We suspect that this means that there are similar buildings in probably all larger US cities.

*How many Americans (or anyone else) know that already since the early 1970s, there have been public housing projects so crime-ridden that the postal service refused to deliver mail there, and firefighters would not enter without a police escort? This has been a well-kept secret, rarely mentioned by the media (AP in SHI, 17/12/93).

*A crack-addicted sanitation worker in Syracuse sued the city for workers' compensation, blaming it for cocaine being so easily available among public works employees (SHI, 11 Oct. 95).
A man convicted of murdering an old woman was pardoned from prison by the governor of Pennsylvania—whereupon he went on a three-month crime spree of murder and torture. One day near New York City he got lost walking to a railroad station, and this enraged him so much that he grabbed a 78-year-old woman who was walking home from the opera and raped, robbed, strangled and stabbed her to death (SHJ, 28/9/95).

A study indicts teenage smoking as being an entry behavior into other kinds of unhealthy or anti-social behaviors. Smoking teens are 17 times more likely to take up marijuana than non-smoking ones, and twice as likely to carry knives and guns (Time, 8 May 95).

According to CBS "60 Minutes" of 3/3/96, 1,200 times a day in the US, a "name fraud" crime is committed, where somebody uses somebody else's name to steal something, usually money. One woman had her retirement account and her daughter's college savings fund cleaned out by people pretending to be her. She was told that in order to prevent continuing theft of her assets, she may have to change her name because a person and the person's family members may continue to be predated upon by the thieves of their names for years to come. For some peculiar reason, immigrants from Nigeria are particularly common in this scam. Amazingly, what no one ever seems to say (because it is not PC) is that perhaps immigrants or travelers from Nigeria should be more carefully checked over before they are let into the country.

Readers who have not yet had their memories taken away will recognize that until a few years ago, one never heard of stalking crimes. Stalking seems to have dramatically increased, though we have not heard anybody come up with a credible explanation. Since most stalking crimes are committed by men against women, one possibility is that this is a primitive male response to the collapse of constructive heterosexual relationships and marriages. Another possibility—which does not rule out the first—is that the publicity given to stalking crimes has made this a copycat crime. Copycat crimes are particularly likely to be committed by impressionable people.

A "stun belt" has been developed that can be locked onto the body of a person, such as a prisoner, so that the person can be given a very severe electric shock of 50,000 volts through a radio signal from a distance. The belt has already been used on prisoners who behave badly while in court, and may soon be used widely in prisons. When an electric shock is administered, the victim is immobilized, will probably fall to the ground, and may also involuntarily urinate and defecate.

According to surveys, the more money a crime stood to rake in, the more Americans would be willing to commit it if they thought they could get away with it, with 23% willing to commit a crime by the time the take is up to $10 million. A very bad sign is that young people have much poorer ethics than older ones (SHJ, 19/9/94).

In 1993, Los Angeles had an average of 7 bank robberies a day (SHJ, 22/8/95).

Robbing Peter to rob Paul. Three robbers got on a charter bus taking gamblers from California to a Nevada casino, and on the way, took everything of value from them. The Nevada casino "made up" for it by giving the victims a 3-day free trip to the casino (AP in SHJ, 23/1/95).

Amazingly, a New York State Court of Appeals ruled that even though a positive test for illegal drugs in a newborn means that the mother was using illegal drugs while she was pregnant, such a finding is not sufficient to deem the child neglected or in imminent danger (AP in SHJ, 1 Dec. 95).

The US Constitution says that no person shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, which is called a 5th Amendment right. The US judiciary, conspiring with the executive, has made a mockery of this constitutional freedom by simply declaring that a witness will be given immunity, and therefore would not be testifying against him or herself, and therefore
must either answer questions or be ruled in contempt of court. This practice is quite new, at least on a large scale, and people have been locked up with indeterminate sentences until they testify. Often, the testimony that prosecutors seek would be injurious to a loved one, or is part of a government witch hunt, such as against abortion opponents (LA, 1/96).

*We know that there are the ordinary local police, the state police, the federal Secret Service, the federal park police, the tax police, and some of us may know that there is once more a police for the housing projects of the poor. But how many people know that there now is also a garbage police ("trash cops") that goes around and checks the piles on curbs on garbage pick-up days to make sure that only the right kind of garbage is discarded, that it is properly discarded, and that no garbage is put where it is not supposed to get put? Apparently, elderly people are likely to be recruited for this job.

*Britain has more surveillance TV cameras mounted and running than any other country, all in the interest of fighting crime. However, the media have recovered footage from security firms, local governmental authorities and insurance companies, and have been selling them in video stores, showing such scenes as spouses squabbling, women undressing in department store changing rooms, and couples making out in office stock rooms, elevators and cars (SPS, 18/3/96).

*In Germany, (mostly juvenile) nihilists ("punkers" or "chaots") sometimes get together by the thousands and take over a city for a few days and trash it until armies of police can be mustered from elsewhere, and big street battles ensue that may last 3 days (e.g., AW, 12/8/95). An ancient giant linden tree under which Luther once rested, and which survived a lightning strike, did not survive the vandalism of the chaots.

*Russia has been spawning a very large number of very clever computer criminals. One reason is that there are so many bright computer-trained people there who have nothing to do. Via computer, they have been robbing money left and right from Western banks (AP in SHJ, 28/9/94).

*People who may have thought that Clinton’s crime bill that was rejected by Congress in 8/94 should have been passed should consider that it would have contained vast allocations for goofy things such as arts, crafts and dance programs, self-esteem programs, programs to persuade drug dealers to consider other lines of work, and sports and more sports. It would have been a bonanza for human service workers, and we know that that would not do anybody any good.

*The International Association of Police Chiefs has announced that one of the most efficient ways to reduce homicides of women is—to build more women’s shelters (Time, 16/10/95).

*A major story in US News & World Report (9 Oct. 95) spoke of "a system in crisis from cops to courts to prisons." We would say in collapse.

*The good news is that in the US, blue-collar crime--expensive as it is--costs only about 2% what white-collar crime costs (Casa Cry, 7/96).

*Every year, we report on someone proclaiming that the "war on crime" or the "war on drugs" is "won." Most recently, a cover of Time (15/1/96) proclaimed, "Finally, We’re Winning The War Against Crime." Whom do they think they are kidding?

*First Things (5/94) mused that when people no longer believe that there is such a thing as sin against God, natural law, the moral order, society, or even fellow humans, then when they commit an offense, they quite naturally have to turn to psychological constructs rather than moral ones, and end up feeling that they have to forgive themselves. Furthermore, when victimizers interpret themselves, or are seen by others, as being merely victims in another form or way, then it becomes
virtually impossible to administer any process of justice, and "we are left with crimes without
criminals where the crime is produced by conditions."

*It is amazing how many scientists fervently adhere to the extremely reductionistic notion that
people commit "crime" because of their heredity. After all, "crime" is legally defined, and is indeed
heavily socially constructed. What is a crime in one place and time is a heroic act in another. For
instance, the president of the Behavioral Genetics Association said that "blacks" commit more crime
because of genetic differences in "intelligence, lack of empathy, aggressive acting out, and impulsive
lack of foresight" (Science, 7/7/95). When protestors tried to interfere with a conference on
"Genetics and Criminal Behavior," one of the scientists arrogantly stated that protestors who interfere
with research along these lines would have the "blood of innocent victims on their own hands--the
victims of crime we could have prevented if biological research was allowed to continue" (Science,
29/9/95).

*Reflecting on the suspected Unabomber and what made him into a killer, Newsweek (22/4/96)
puzzled, "Perhaps it was biological. Or evil."

Punishment

*A California man beat and choked his girlfriend and then strangled her pet rabbit as she
watched in horror. For assaulting the woman, he was charged with a crime that carries a maximum
of a $1,000 fine and a year in prison, while for choking the rabbit, he was charged with a crime that
carries a $20,000 fine and a year in prison (SPS, 27/8/96; SHJ, 14/9/95). We suspect that if he had
raped the rabbit, he would have gotten the death penalty.

*In various US states, a teenager can commit as serious a crime as murder, but end up without
a criminal record if granted youthful offender status. This happened to an 18-year-old New York
youth who, after having already had a record of robbery, subsequently killed a fellow schoolmate--
but who got sentenced to only five years' probation for it, and will end up without a record (AP in
SHJ, 6 Feb. 96). These sorts of things turn Americans cynical and radical.

*One new version of the ship of fools phenomenon in the American criminal justice system
is the following. When a person has committed a crime in one jurisdiction and absconds to another
one--typically another state--then the jurisdiction where the crime was committed may decide not to
seek extradition of the offender, because this would be a costly process and add an additional load
to the already overloaded judicial and penal system of its own jurisdiction. Even when a person has
committed crimes that suggest that the person will commit further serious crimes in the future,
including murder (and at least half of such extraditable offenders do commit more crimes), the
attitude is that one is now rid of the offender, and what offenses he or she will commit somewhere
else are the problem of that respective locality (CBS "60 Minutes," 28/6/96).

*More ship of fools. Police in Syracuse took a 17-year-old boy who had committed a strong-
arm robbery to the airport in highly visible handcuffs and leg irons, and with air tickets to Miami
ready, they took him onto the plane. To the astonishment of the attendants, the police officers then
took the chains off the youth and were about to abandon him when the airline people swiftly
announced that they would not take off with the prisoner left unescorted on the plane (SHA, 12
March 95). Assuming the prisoner had been harmless, all of this could have been avoided by not
bringing him in extremely visible chains.

*A man twice convicted for sexual assaults on women for which he served only 2 years of a
20-year sentence, assaulted a third one--and then sued the victim for the emotional trauma she had
caused him. She died in the 1996 TWA 800 crash (Newsweek, 29/7/96). It is things like these that
make Americans turn to right-wing extremist causes.
*The law locks up the man or woman
That steals the goose from off the common;
But leaves the greater villain loose
Who steals the common from the goose. (A folk rhyme of the 17th century)

The Jail and Prison Scene

*Since at least the 1890s, a poorhouse or hostel for the afflicted was called a "pogey." The poorhouse of Onondaga County, NY, had a pond adjacent to it which came to be known as Pogeypond. Since about 1919, the word pokey (or poky or pogey), probably derived from the above word for poorhouse, came to mean "jail." All these words apparently come from the old adjective "poky" which describes a very small space, such as one would experience in a prison cell. Its root is also found in "pocket" and "pogue" (a bag, purse or container), whence also comes "a pig in a poke."

*Almost every year, the number of people imprisoned in the US has been setting new records.

*About 1630, poet John Tayler observed (Miller, 1991):
In London, and within a mile, I ween,
There are jails or prisons full eighteen
And sixty whipping-posts and stocks and cages.

*The multi-purpose institution in Milledgeville, Georgia, may have been the world's largest in ca. 1970, with about 14,000 inmates. It has since been converted into a prison, and now the Milledgeville area may hold one of the world's largest concentrations of prisons, namely, 17 (Hospitality, 2/96).

*In Los Angeles, a third of "black" men in their 20s in 1995 were in jail, on probation or on parole (Newsweek, 8 Jan. 96). Maybe one day, we will see fences around the ghettos.

*In 1995, the Texas prison system became not only the largest in the US, but even larger than the federal prison system, with 155,000 inmates, equivalent to the entire US prison population in 1948 (SHA, 19/3/95). If people then had been told this would happen, they would have said, "the end is nigh."

*Some prisons are so full that prisoners are sent home while still on prison status. They are not on probation but merely a form of furlough. In part, this is being done because prison officials fear lawsuits for overcrowding (SHJ, 9 Aug. 95).

*As of 1993, inmates in a Pennsylvania state prison were serving on the average only 20% of their sentences before being paroled, and 51% of violent offenders were discharged in 2 years or less. On the average, prisoners served only 5.5 years for murder, 3 for rape, 2.25 for robbery and 1.28 for assault (Newsweek, 13/9/93).

*We have reported before on the despicable practice of constantly trans-shipping prisoners from one prison to another in order to break their will and isolate them from their support systems, and sometimes even from their lawyers. The US federal government has acquired an entire airline of its own, called Conair (apparently, an allusion to "cons"), also known as the US marshall's airline, that as of mid-1996 had 13 planes. This airline flies daily all over the country, transporting prisoners in chains, and there are now even "prison hotels" at airports to store such prisoners while in the process of transfer. The prison hotel at the airport for Oklahoma City can hold as many as 800 people, which is a staggering thought.
*Among people in the US prison system, federal prisons are considered to be so much less worse than state prisons as to be viewed almost as "rest homes" (SHJ, 26/6/95).

*Apparently, a new prison (Pelican Bay) in California, costing about $250 million, is one of the worst in the US. It has no windows and is totally panoptic. About a third of its inmates are, or become, psychotic, much like they did in the 1820s in the first Pa. penitentiaries.

*The juvenile detention centers in NY State have been plagued by years of exposes and scandals. A university professor defended the abuses--and shortly after wrote a holocaust book about concentration camps. A good example of what we call segmentation, which is a hallmark of modernism: nothing is connected to anything else.

*News coverage in recent years has amply revealed that on the one hand, almost every community wants a prison located in it because of the jobs it provides, but nobody wants a prison in which the death penalty is inflicted--even though almost everybody approves of the death penalty.

*Because New York City sends almost all of its prisoners to prisons in remote rural areas far away, an urban crime wave is an economic boon to the communities near the prisons. Of course, the city's practice guarantees recidivism because maintenance of family ties is one of the single biggest preventors of recidivism, and yet is systematically undermined by the above practice (SHA, 19/3/95).

*Between 1975 and 1994, prisoner lawsuits in the US jumped from 6,600 to 39,000 (AP in SHJ, 28/9/95). The New York State attorney general reported that his Syracuse office alone devoted 35% of its time to defending against prisoner lawsuits, but in some locations in the state, this was up to 60% (AP in SHJ, 19/10/95). About 25% (63,000) of federal prisoners filed suits in 1995, about their ice cream being melted, their peanut butter being chunky instead of smooth, and so on. Suits on all levels cost about $200 million to defend against (R. Digest, 4/96). One male Mo. prisoner sued (filed a brief) for the right to wear women's underwear, clothes and make-up (SHJ, 7/7/95). One prisoner in Va. sued himself for $10 million for violating his legal rights, and wants damages from the state, promising to pay back when he gets out in 23 years (SHA, 2 July 95). A prisoner in Mississippi convicted of child molesting petitioned to have a penile implant in order to be able to "live a normal life," and amazingly, this request was granted and paid for by taxpayers (SHJ, 14/7/95). The National Association of Attorneys-General in the US has gotten so fed up with frivolous lawsuits by prisoners that it has begun to make an inventory of them. In Ohio alone, prisoners have sued because they felt that their rights had been violated to have soap-on-a-rope, to meet the governor, to wear sunglasses, and to have Rolling Stone magazines delivered to their cells when they are in isolation (Newsweek, 7 Aug. 95). Things like these could turn one against prisoners.

*Some local jails have begun to charge a daily fee for "room and board" and medical services to those prisoners who have the means to pay (Newsweek, 15/7/96). NY State wants prisoners to repay the expense of prison college courses after their release (AP in SHJ, 16/5/95).

*Chain gangs in the US are once again crushing rock. This is the so-called "Rock Pile Blues," written in 1925 by Spencer Williams:

My hammer's heavy, feels just like a ton of lead,
If they keeps me slaving someone's gonna find me dead.
Don’t mind the rock pile, but the days are oh so long,
Ain’t no end of misery, that is why I sing this song.

*In the 12/95 issue, we carried the mournful "Birmingham Jail" song, with its famous lines, "Write me a letter, send it by mail, send it in care of the Birmingham jail." Someone in 1996 noted the new version: "Write me a letter, send it by e-mail..."

Judicial Killing

*"After walking eleven hours," a traveler of the early centuries relates, "without having traced the print of human foot, to my great comfort and delight, I saw a man hanging upon a gibbet. My pleasure at the cheering prospect was inexpressible, for it convinced me that I was in a civilized country" (Lawes, 1932).

*Prejean, H. (1993). Dead man walking: An eyewitness account of the death penalty in the United States. New York: Random House. By now, everyone will have heard of this book or "seen the movie." The book is by a nun who has become an activist against the death penalty, and who tells the story of how she became involved in this issue, focusing on the first two condemned prisoners whom she befriended while they awaited execution, and of the families of their victims (they both had committed multiple murders, among other crimes). Interwoven with these stories are all sorts of facts about: the death penalty, its history, its enactment in various states, its cost, the various laws that govern it, how the appeal process works, the racial and social class bias in the pursuit and application of the death penalty, the effect on prison personnel of executing the death penalty, and how the latter engage in all sorts of word and mind games to excuse themselves from personal responsibility for carrying it out, as well as many facts on rates and costs of US imprisonment, and the oppression of the poor in the US, which is so deeply connected with crime and imprisonment rates.

The first of the two men, Elmo Patrick Sonnier, is rather more sympathetic, evincing contrition for these crimes. The second, Robert Lee Willie, is much less so, though the reader is left to wonder whether his apparent unrepentance is more due to his strong desire to "keep up a good front" and not let his feelings show, especially not vis-à-vis powerful parties. The suffering of the families of the murder victims is very clearly depicted, even many years after the crime. Prejean raises the question whether even the infliction of the death penalty on the perpetrators really helps ease the suffering of the victims’ families (it does not appear to).

When the death penalty by electrocution was introduced into the US in New York State in 1890, it was detoxified by being described as "euthanasia by electricity" (Prejean, 1993, p. 18). Prejean (1993, p. 150) notes that prisoners are suspicious of the prison chaplains because they get their paycheck from the same state that imprisons them, whereas "free-agent" visitors and spiritual advisers do not, underlining not only our point about actual conflict of interest, but also about situations perceived as such by service recipients or advocates.

*The shenanigans that the imperial powers put on when they go about executing a condemned person are unbelievable. The last time they executed a person in Utah in 1977 by a firing squad, they expected prison custodians to clean up the mess, which to their everlasting credit they refused to do. Now, officials want things to be neat. In 1995, they put a huge metal pan underneath the chair of the victim so that the bloody mess can be cleaned up easier, though they explain this away as actually being for the sake of containing "blood-borne" pathogens even though the victim was apparently free of any. Furthermore, the victim gets strapped very tightly so that the moment he is shot to death, "we don’t want him to slump down," because this might distress the volunteer executioners, all of whom are "peace officers" (Newsweek, 29/1/96). While the old way was much cruder, it was also much more honest.

*Killing condemned prisoners is expensive business. The death chamber built by the US government for its Midwest region cost $300,000 (Newsweek, 7 Aug. 95).
*Even jurors who favor the death penalty in the abstract are extremely loath to see it imposed on the specific people they convict (Newsweek, 7 Aug. 95). This underlines how depersonalization facilitates deathmaking, and how personalization inhibits it.

*New York State has a "capital punishment assistance team" headquartered in the office of the State Attorney (AP in SHJ, 5 Oct. 95).

*Being 15 years on death row is not unusual in the US. As of mid-1995, a man had been on Florida's death row for 22 years! (Newsweek, 7 Aug 95). This seems like "cruel and unusual punishment" to us. Some states have 400 prisoners on death row.

*Most people are totally unaware that the vast majority of people on death row in the US die from suicide and diseases rather than from a judicial killing (AP, in Athol Daily News, 4 March 96; source item from Jan Dooty).

*One of the reasons cited why the majority of US states that have death penalty laws have switched from other forms of execution to lethal injection is that it was supposed to be more humane. This has turned out not to be the case, as one hears of one horror story after another. For instance, many victims get poked and cut--some for up to an hour--before a blood vessel can be found into which a needle can be inserted. For a person who has a horror of such things, half a dozen other forms of execution would be more merciful. Also, there seemed to be occasional difficulties with the administration of the proper combination of drugs, and their rate, and many deaths have not been of the quiet slipping-away sort promised.

*We recently learned that in those states where the death penalty is legal, every judge on the court level at which that penalty can be imposed is required at some point in his/her tenure on the bench to witness an execution. This would mean that people who are seriously opposed to the death penalty, and trying to live coherently with their principles, would not be able to seek or accept a judgeship, or would have to resign it if the death penalty became legal in their region, or would have to undertake civil disobedience.

*Being concerned with the health of prisoners on death row, US prisons have been banning smoking for inmates awaiting execution. As one wit put it, "healthy dying, smokeless frying" (EI, 6/95).

*As we reported before, we can be grateful that the American Medical Association has ruled that physicians should not participate in judicial executions. However, some physicians have defied the ban and have participated (e.g., Indianapolis Star, 19/7/96, source item from Joe Osburn).

**Slavery**

*An article in the 5/96 issue of First Things documented the continued problem of slavery in the world, particularly the resurrection of traditional slavery practices of northern African Arabs against their more dark-skinned southern neighbors. These problems are worst in the Sudan and on the west coast of northern Africa, such as Mauritania. Arab bands go on regular old-fashioned slave-catching expeditions during which men are often killed, and captured women raped. We suspect that slavery is a human universal that has always existed and always will; it may be pushed back once in a while and here and there, but always has a resurgence whenever there is an assertion of raw power.

*Diversity most absolutely and certainly has not been working in the Sudan. Among many other atrocities, the more powerful northern Moslem Arab population has not only been committing genocide on its dark-skinned southern residents, but has reintroduced slavery on a large scale. This is ironic because it was in the very same area that the British and Egyptian governments had long
sought to stamp out the slave trade during the 19th century. In the slave raids on villages, the men are usually killed because they might make trouble if they were enslaved, with women and children making up the bulk of the slave population. As is rather standard with slavery, younger women are freely used as sex objects. On top of it all, the Arab-controlled Sudanese government has blatantly lied about what is going on. There is a very good chance that the indigenous "black" population will be exterminated and driven out of the south of the country, and that it will become settled entirely by Arabs and the Islamized offspring of their slaves. Not surprisingly, the Arabs talk about "cleansing" the south. Sudanese slaves are now also being exported to other Arab countries ranging from the west coast of Africa all the way to the Persian Gulf.

*Arabs have been buying very young boys from India, Pakistan and elsewhere to work as jockeys in camel races. Their light weight and high voices are believed to make camels run faster (AP in SHJ, 25/7/95).

*In Berlin, there are now about 5,000 prostitutes, half of them from abroad, many forcibly imported. Thai women--who are at the top of marketability--may have to pay $30,000 to get themselves smuggled into the country. Until the women have paid off their smuggling debt, they sometimes get to keep only 5% of their take (AW, 5 Aug. 95).

*On the Internet, one can now preview, and buy, women from Eastern Europe and Asia, either as wives or prostitutes (SHJ, 27/11/95).

*An estimated 200 million children in the world are working full-time under slavery-like conditions, without schooling or playtime. Those who try to run away are sometimes maimed or blinded. Many produce goods sold in the West (Time, 17/6/96).

Morality in Society

*A gunman burst into the gym of an elementary school in Chicago and started shooting. A physical education teacher spread out his arms to shield the children and took a bullet in one of them. The Chicago Board of Education denied him Workers’ Compensation on the rationale that it was not part of his teacher’s job to save children from gunmen, even though the claim was only for a measly $13,500, and he had lost 20% functioning in one hand. Only public outrage brought the board to finally agree to the claim (AP in SHJ, 30/9 & 1 Oct. 94).

*The New York State legislative assembly has a Committee on Standing Committees, which never meets, but its chairperson gets $16,000 a year on top of his regular salary.

*An article in Newsweek (9 Oct. 95) described the Democrats as practicing a form of "post-ethical moralism": don’t smoke, don’t drink, but by all means do have an abortion.

*According to a survey, 75% of entering collegians said that it was essential or very important that they be "very well-off financially," and ranked this a higher goal than "raising a family." In 1970, only 39% felt that way. At the same time, the proportion of those who felt it very important to develop a meaningful philosophy of life fell from 76% to 43% (Science, 24/3/95).

*Christopher Lasch has written a number of works, including The Culture of Narcissism, that are largely concordant with our teaching on modernism and hedonism. In a 1990 article (furnished
by Michael Kendrick), he made the point that people so often mistake conservative values (such as family, community, the bearing of suffering, the acceptance of the imperfection of the human estate) with political conservativism (right-wing and capitalistic economic views). He believes that the very assumptions and practices of the kind of capitalism lionized by conservatism are actually antithetical to conservative values because they treat humans as commodities, and destroy family and community.

*We use the term "mutual disablement" to refer to modernistic situations where each party does dirt to the other to the point where neither party can act effectively anymore thereafter. A classic example is a set of 28 rules drawn up by an Indiana Catholic Bishop which included the stipulation that a priest was never to be alone with a minor except in the confessional (NC Register, 4 June 85). What a sadly formalized life!

PERVERSION ALERT: *A word of warning that the very valid expression that one is or should be looking at things "from the bottom up" has become a bit of a craze that has already been profoundly perverted. In one instance, we have seen the expression used to refer to how professionals in mental health look upon their work, which of course to us is an example of the opposite, namely, of looking at things from the top down. This exemplifies how the meaning of some phrases can be turned around 180° in order to serve some purpose of perversion.

*"Terminal nonjudgmentalism" (TNJ) is the phrase used by some writers (e.g., Wesley Smith, IAETF Update, 7/95) to refer to some people's tendency to avoid making any kind of moral judgment on anything, or saying that something or someone is evil.

Religion in Society

*Issue No. 2 of 1996 (Vol. 15) of Christian History was entirely devoted to the religious beliefs of the "founding fathers" of the American republic. While few of the "founding fathers" were orthodox Christians, none of them appeared to have been atheists. Almost all were inspired by Enlightenment ideas. Most of them valued institutional religion for its teaching function and the upholding of a high moral code. What many of them did not like about the typical Christian denominations was what they called "dogma" that had nothing to do with morality. Similarly, unlike most Christians, most of them did not put faith first and interpret morality as a secondary derivative, but put morality first and saw faith as the instrument.

For instance, shortly before he died (in 1790), someone asked Benjamin Franklin what he believed, and he said the following: "Here is my creed. I believe in one God, Creator of the universe: that he governs the world by his providence. That he ought to be worshipped. That the most acceptable service we can render to him is doing good to his other children. That the soul of man is immortal and will be treated with justice in another life respecting its conduct in this. These I take to be the fundamental principles of all sound religion, and I regard them as you do, in whatever sect I meet with them" (p. 28).

Also, even the deists among the founding fathers strongly believed in a God-given moral law and the human capacity to discern it. Enlightenment thinkers such as John Milton, Algernon Sydney, and especially John Locke had believed in a theory of natural rights, i.e., rights rooted in a natural (God-given) law. Locke had spelled out that humans possessed natural rights to life, liberty and property, and that sovereigns did not have a right to interfere with these, and lost their privilege to govern if they did. These ideas found themselves, via Thomas Jefferson, into the Declaration of Independence. It made 4 references to God, as "nature's God," "the Creator," "the Supreme Judge of the world," and "Divine Providence"—all deist terms to which Christian congress members agreed because they did not negate Christian truths. However, the fast-day and Thanksgiving proclamations issued by Congress during 8 years of revolutionary war, and observed throughout the colonies, were couched in explicitly Christian terms.

The founding fathers also had a very different idea from our current courts what separation of church and state meant—a phrase coined by Thomas Jefferson. For instance, it was George
Washington who, upon taking his oath of office in 1789, spontaneously added "so help me, God" after having pronounced his oath with his hand on the Bible. This is also underlined by the fact that it was not until 1833 that Massachusetts disestablished its state-sponsored congregational church. Patrick Henry specifically (first governor of the state of Virginia after its independence) was even opposed to separation of church and state because he was convinced that a republic could not survive without "virtue, morality and religion," and he wanted to see the state support all Christian denominations. Some people consider him the "real father of the US" since without his influence, the revolution might not have happened.

*Apparently, no one has noticed that the US Declaration of Independence would today be "unconstitutional," because of its reference to moral laws that derive from "nature and...nature's God."

*The PC people do not like to hear it mentioned that many religions demanded human sacrifice. For instance, the 15-volume Encyclopedia of Religion published by Macmillan in 1987 hardly mentioned human sacrifice when it explained Inca religion. Very deceptively and detoxifyingly, it reported that "offerings" were made from "the great complementary ecosystem of nature..." In other words, the sacrifice of humans, maize, birds and shells is all casually equated and put in the background against the grandiose concept of "a great complementary ecosystem of nature." Of course, we know that sometimes, the Inca priests sacrificed thousands of humans in a single day by cutting out their hearts so rapidly that the victims were often still alive to see it before they passed out.

In contrast, a book entitled The Highest Altar documents the prevalence of human sacrifice in cultures everywhere around the world. It also documents the high likelihood that human sacrifices continue to this day in some parts of the world--including in the Andes (Newsweek, 6 Nov. 95).

*In 8/96, about 80,000 worshippers went up a mountain in India to pay homage to Shiva, the Hindu god of destruction--and the mountain killed over 200 of them.

*It is not generally known that one of the greatest waves of persecution of Christians since the days of the early church took place in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s, eradicating the lives of 140,000 priests, monks and nuns, the vast majority Russian Orthodox. Another wave of persecution took place after World War II. For instance, 11 Ukrainian Bishops of the Greek Catholic Church died in prison (Sunday Visitor, 12 Nov. 95).

*As a "counter-ceremony" to Christian youth rites of First Communion and confirmation, the East German communists had instituted a new ceremony of Jugendweihe, a solemn youth initiation into adulthood. Strangely enough, several decades of communist culture made this such a popular event (a bit like the Hispanic coming-out parties) that it has survived the fall of communism and the reunification with West Germany.

*A good example of an imperial claim to eternity more generally, is a provision in the customs or even laws of certain countries that the command or edict of a ruler was immutable and irrevocable, which usually meant that even the ruler who had issued a decree could not change it even if he later wished he could. Persia, now called Iran, is an example where such a law has prevailed for at least 2,300 years, and probably much longer than that. In fact, even the last shah of Iran insisted on the absolute and irrevocable nature of his decrees. Interestingly, even his revolutionary successors have done the same. When they issued a sentence of death on the writer Salmon Rushdie, they pronounced it irrevocable even if Rushdie should repent. We can thus see that what is happening here is that an eternity of the word is claimed, such as really could only be pronounced and/or claimed by an omnipotent and omniscient divinity--and interestingly, only by such a divinity who lacked mercy, because in the sacred scriptures of Judaism and Christianity, God frequently changed his decree in response to the pleading of his faithful human servants, or in response to repentance.
In 1/96, we saw a truck belonging to a firm called "Guaranteed Overnight Delivery," with the acronym GOD prominently printed on the truck.

One thing that is amazing these days is to hear so many people who claim to be Marxists espousing modernistic self-determination ideologies. This is totally inconsistent with Marxism which exalted the collectivity, not the individual. For instance, Soviet psychology drew very heavily on the work of V. M. Bekhterev who taught that the group was the locus of socialization of the child, the formation of personality, the process of indoctrination, the emergence as well as the overthrow of leadership, the development of powerful perspectives for problem-solving, and of generativity of energy and mood that is so commonly needed to get anything done.

A materialistic world seeks all sorts of materialistic religions and moralities. A striking example of "hope from physics" is a 1994 book by the physicist Tipler, entitled The Physics of Immortality. Even though the author claims to be an atheist, he has embraced major elements of de Chardin’s "Omega Point Theory," but converted it into a peculiar mixture of materialization and computer New Age hope. The immortality which he stipulated in the title of his book consists of a state in which information processing never ends. He also stipulated the evolution (here comes evolutionary biology to assist) of super-minds which—when cosmic entropy brings about an implosion of the cosmos to a black hole singularity—would continue to persist indefinitely in their own virtual reality. The author has brought in all sorts of theories from physics in support of this fantasy, and instead of laughing hilariously and throwing the book on a trash heap, it has been given serious reviews in major serious scientific journals, such as Science (7/2/95). In fact, this particular review described the author’s scenario as "optimistic."

Evolution is the defining paradigm of biology, which is why so many scientists have been treating it as a religion. Now, a 1995 book, entitled The DNA Mystique, argues that DNA has become a cultural icon of religious importance to people, carrying a large mythical load of non-biological meaning—indeed, that it has become something like the "secular equivalent of the soul—the immortal site of the true self and the determinor of fate." The author says that the discourse about DNA "parallels theological narratives." We believe that these assertions are true.

Carl Sagan is the epitome of an idolizer of "the cosmos" (thus nature), and of science which he seems to see as the priesthood that reveals "the cosmos" to humanity. A 1996 book of his is entitled The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark. The ad for the book in Science (19/4/96) revealed that among the demons are "fundamentalism" and "faith healing," together with "alien abduction, channeling, astrology" also all lumped together under "superstitions" and "the dark" which the "candle of science" illuminates.

A 1927 book was entitled, The Religion Called Behaviorism.

A quality of life rating system published in 1991 includes in its inquiry the question, "Is God important to you?". A person who answers "yes" is highly at risk of having his or her quality of life down-rated. The question is grouped together with "Do you hear voices?" (source material from Susanne Hartfiel).

A feminist theologian claimed that the devil is an invention of "male religion," because "a god without an adversary is inconceivable to the masculine mind" (Newsweek, 13/11/95).

There is a story that when the famous mathematician Euler encountered the famous French Enlightenment leader and agnostic Diderot at the court of Catherine the Great in Russia, Euler said "Sir, (a + b^n)/n = x, hence God exists." Poor Diderot knew little math, did not know what to say, and soon went back to France.
*We continue to marvel at the explosion of superstitions and false religions in American society, and interpret this development as a response to severe societal stresses and people's sense of impending doom. We remember a similar phenomenon happening near the end of the Nazi regime in Germany when it became pretty obvious that the war would be lost. Books on New Age-type topics and all sorts of superstitions have been crowding the best-seller lists. Of Americans, 48% now believe in UFOs, and 29% believe that aliens have made contact with humans. As *Newsweek* (8 July 96) put it, *"all manner of weirdness has taken hold of otherwise sensible people."* As we have all learned, New Age religion was also invited into the White House. The end of the American experiment must be near.

*It is rather reassuring to learn that a prominent Harvard psychiatrist (John Mack) who founded the psychiatry department at Cambridge Hospital which serves Harvard believes that aliens are having sex and babies with humans, and that humans can have alien wives in a parallel universe. It is less reassuring that his book on this substitute for religion could have become a bestseller (AP in SHJ, 5/5/95).*

*An article in the 1/96 issue of the *Smithsonian* documented the explosive growth of dowsing in the US. But people are hardly ever dowsing for water anymore, but are now using dowsing for divining purposes, interrogating the method for virtually any question in their lives, including what to shop for, thus working very much like palm and fortune readers. Dowsing seems to be an offspring of the New Age mentality. Even physicians are involved in dowsing--and probably not surprisingly, some psychiatrists and psychologists. Dowsers hardly ever use the old-fashioned wooden implements anymore, but exotic metals and synthetics. Furthermore, unlike formerly, dowsers will often dowse out situations up to 5,000 miles or many lifetimes away. As we have told our readers, whenever religion goes out the door, superstition ("the kobolds") comes flying in through the window.

*Psycho-babble and New Age-ism dominate the personal growth consultancy and speaking circuit. One of its most popular gurus is a woman who used to be a cocktail waitress and cabaret singer. Another one used to be a janitor who makes people walk barefoot over hot coals after they have learned "neuro-linguistic programming." When asked what their philosophies are, they come up with the most inane babbles, such as "your reality is the reality you create," or "you can let the same force that makes flowers grow and planets move run your life. Or you can do it yourself" (Time, 23/1/95). Nonetheless, these people get hired for huge sums both by public figures as well as by mainline corporations and government branches.

*For months on end, we have seen commercials on major network TV channels at prime times, that invite people to call New Life Psychics for advice or help.

*About 200,000 French youths are believed to engage in satanic rituals. This is against the backdrop of the growth of all kinds of cults, and half the population holding to some kind of superstition: astrology, palmistry, divining of the future, and so on. This yet once again confirms the old saying that when religion gets kicked out the door, the kobolds come flying in through the windows (NC Register, 25/8/96).

*Research has also shown that people tend to invoke entirely different moral principles depending on how closely they themselves are affected. For instance, when young women discuss the morality of military service, they tend to invoke very abstract moral considerations, whereas young men confronted by the draft give much more concrete and practical rationales for their stance --as do young women when they are confronted by questions of abortion, when they mostly invoke very immediate and down-to-earth concerns rather than high level abstract moral principles (Lind, Hartmann & Wakenhut, 1985).*
According to a Gallup Poll, when Americans are asked who is most likely to influence their views, 42% say the news media, 30% their family and friends, and only 7% their own religious leader. At the same time, 16% of conservatives and 34% of liberals say that the influence of religious leaders is too great (First Things, 5/96).

Huge chasms have developed between the intelligentsia of religion and the flock. At least two-thirds of Americans believe that religious miracles can happen, while hardly any theology professors believe it any more (Time, 10 April 95).

It appears as if the Episcopalian church has become the free-sex church. In 1991, its House of Bishops rejected a resolution asking all of its clergy to refrain from sex outside marriage; and in some urban areas like San Francisco and Chicago, homosexual clergy are believed to outnumber heterosexual ones. Pro-sex clergy support these phenomena in the name of "inclusivity" (Newsweek, 26/2/96).

There is a new kind of Church growing in the US that consists of huge congregations each (in some cases more than 10,000), and that are mostly Protestant, Caucasian and affluent. Their Sunday services resemble a blend of a pop entertainment event and a business motivational seminar, delivered by means of videos, slide shows, overhead projections and sophisticated sound systems. In fact, these churches use a great deal of business idiom, talking market shares, product placements, and other management terms. Some of them have refreshment concessions right on the sides of the nave so that "worshipers" can get themselves a cup of cappuccino when they feel the urge (Globe & Mail, 1996; source item from Barry Wever).

Mainstream comics have become so raunchy that Protestant churches have begun to stage clean comedy events, often peppered with religious jokes (Newsweek, 6 March 95).

We are amazed to read that among "black" urban youth, church attendance is a better predictor of behaving in socially constructive ways, and of who will manage without drugs, crime and poverty, than any other single variable, such as family structure and income, and that this was already found as long ago as 1986 in a Harvard study (FT, 4/96). The reason this has come to our attention is because it was largely confirmed by a study published in Criminology in 1996.

At least in some circles, ECT does not stand for electroconvulsive shock, but for another kind of shock: Evangelicals and Catholics Together (FT, 3/96).

There is a body called Survival Research Laboratories. For some reason, it participates in arts festivals. And what does its "participation" involve? It burns Bibles (CM, 30/8/90).

At Syracuse University, a course is entitled, "In Praise of Religious Diversity," taught by the chairperson of the religion department. Apparently, the more religions there are, the better; and when every person has a religion different from every other person, that is the best.

While people like Plato and Aristotle had a very clear idea about the existence and nature of the divinity, the hoi polloi of Athenian society seemed to be quite confused. One of their prayers was "Hear, Lord, whoever you are."

In African countries, Europeans during the colonial period were sometimes interpreted by the natives as being either "trade Europeans," "war Europeans," or "God Europeans," the latter referring to missionaries.

A woman by the name of Christ wrote a book. When it was reviewed (Parabola, Summer '96), the reviewer could not bring himself to write that "Christ said" this and said that, but engaged
*Although Jean-Paul Sartre was supposed to be an atheist, he said that he would remain pessimistic as to history, but optimistic as to the human person.*

*Max Weber is credited with having invented the concept of the "Protestant work ethic." In 1995, E. Michael Jones came up with the construct of Catholic work ethic, which is vastly simpler: one's incoming or earned money decreases in direct proportion to one's effort.*

*We have known of Jews who were terribly upset that there was such a thing as "Jews for Jesus," but we wonder what they would think about a group called "Jews for Mohammed."*

**The Interface of Religion & Human Service**

*Sometimes, the line between a religion craze and a human service craze becomes rather blurred. Nowadays, a large proportion of human potential programs, self-improvement crazes, motivational cults, etc., are really more like crazes of religion than of human services, in part because they are aimed at the valued society in general, rather than at a relatively narrow service sector or for use by highly credentialed human service professionals.*

*We were interested in a 1996 Mennonite conference presentation entitled "A theological basis for ministry to persons with special needs." But then we were taken aback by the following description of this speech: "This presentation will be based on recent studies of the brain and how brain function and/or dysfunction can impact our spiritual nature, and upon the Carmelite contemplative listening model of spirituality." It seems to us that brains these days rarely function coherently anymore.*

*Someone gave us three pages of a Catholic newspaper that contained advertisements by 17 Catholic conferences and retreat centers announcing their various programs, and we were amazed that the vast majority of them dealt with contemporary crazes, both of a secular and religious nature. Major themes were "holism" and feminism. Some centers were characterized by virtual orgies of secular crazes translated into a religious idiom, such as "grieving childhood losses," "discovering your precious child," and "Jesus in a codependent world." At least one such center appears to specialize in nothing but crazes, some apparently inconsistent with Catholicism. Where specific coordinators were mentioned by name, they were--with one single exception--all women (almost all nuns).*

*A book entitled Sin as Addiction proposes a "new model of sin as addiction," citing alcoholism as a relevant analogue.*

*The 1988 book, The Tyranny of Malice, is yet another naive attempt to explain evil and collective violence--such as the slaughter of 100 million people during the preceding 50 years--in terms of rather low-level psychoanalytic constructs. The major one advanced in this book is envy, and particularly childhood experiences of envying somebody for their breast, their womb, or their penis, with greed also being granted a role, and greed and envy combining into "grenvy."*

*The latest edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association included a list of problems of living that are not classified as "psychiatric illnesses," but as "foci of clinical attention." Among these, it lists all sorts of "religious and spiritual problems," including all sorts of conditions that it would formerly have classified as insanities. Apparently, the shift was instituted as a sign that the organization was more "sensitive" to "cultural diversity" (FT, 5/94).*
*Just how unreliable experiments can be, even though carefully designed, if they deal with things about which strong religious beliefs prevail is underlined by extrasensory perception experiments. In one of the ESP studies sponsored by the CIA, the clairvoyants were able to identify an image across space correctly to a significance level of .0000000000000000001, even though the experiment was double-blind (Discover, 4/96). However, the fact that this kind of research was conducted secretly for 20 years meant that there was no public peer review. Apparently, in an effort to spare themselves embarrassment, the CIA referred to this kind of phenomenon as "remote viewing" (EI, 1/96).

*An Anglican priest in England told us that he was invited by a church in his area to conduct "the annual handicapped service."

*A California government official asserted that it is probably unconstitutional for government funds to go to a center serving the poor if it has the name St. Vincent De Paul Center, but that it might be constitutional if it was named Mr. Vincent De Paul Center (FT, 5/94).

The Family

Artificial Baby-Making

*As of 1994, the percentage of childless infertile couples in the US has risen to 18.5, which is an amazingly high rate, including 27% of married people. In some cases, women will start going to fertility clinics only a few months after not conceiving once they have decided they wanted to conceive (Newsweek, 4 Sept. 95), and if whatever the fertility clinics do does not bring relatively prompt results, they lose very little time suing (entitlement again!). The good news about all this is that it is almost exclusively the well-to-do who are the guinea pigs in this extremely over-hyped human service area, rather than the poor, as is usually the case.

*In the US, there has been a dramatic rise in multiple births, from twins to quintuplets, and for the first time it is a fairly common trend in larger schools to have quite a few sets of twins, triplets, etc., attending. This is the result of people's idolatrous quest to be in total control of their reproduction, both in respect to the children they do not want and the ones they systematically plan for. Recourse to fertility technology has also meant that the children of a multiple birth all look different from each other because each comes from a different artificially implanted fertilized egg, quite possibly even from one or two parents other than the birth parents. Of course, as reported before, many parents opt to abort the "excess" babies they are bearing (euphemistically called "reduction") when they find out how many of them there are, which is itself made possible by yet more technology and wanting to be in control. No sooner had multiple births become relatively common than national organizations of parents or even only mothers of such babies were founded. Some of these groups are called "support groups," which is now a watchword for any number of groups that formerly would have been called something else, such as voluntary associations, clubs, national organizations, interest groups, self-help groups, etc.

Once parents have their multiple babies, it often turns out that they do not cope well as parents; child abuse is up to nine times higher in families with twins than with singletons. On the other hand, parents of triplets are apparently much better than parents of singletons in setting clear limits to children, which one rarely sees done anymore these days (Smithsonian, 9/96).

Enmity Against the Family

*A public policy guru observed that the US has had a 40-year experiment of shifting the population away from ideals of responsibility and sacrifice, and toward ideals of autonomy, choice and personal happiness and fulfillment (Newsweek, 19/2/96). At least correlated with this development has been--among other things--a disastrous trend of indices of family breakdown.
*One of the US Supreme Court decisions that declared it unconstitutional that the husband of a woman seeking an abortion be even as much as notified of her intent said that spousal consent laws embody ... a view of marriage... repugnant to our present understanding of marriage" (Planned Parenthood of Southern Pennsylvania v. Casey, 1992).

*In Denmark, 70% of young people cohabit out of wedlock. It will be interesting to see what this does to family and society in 1-2 generations (Guardian, 19/9/96).

*It is an indictment of the anti-family attitude of so much of the child placement field that Americans by the tens of thousands go abroad to adopt children because adopting in the US is so bureaucratic, takes so long, is so expensive--and then may ultimately be undone when the birth mother or the biological father suddenly shows up years later and wants to reclaim the child.

*US Supreme Court Judge Scalia pointed out that communication between a citizen and a psychotherapist enjoys more privileged (legal) protection than that between a child and a mother (Time, 8 July 96).

PERVERSION ALERT: *In 1989, the UN General Assembly adopted, without a vote, a new Convention on the Rights of a Child (CRC), which was accepted by 130 nations within a year, and 175 by 1995. It defines peculiar "privacy" rights for children, and a "right to freedom of expression, including the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers... for any medium of the child's choice" (FT, 8/95). In essence, it is a modernistic rights declaration for children, and for all practical purposes destroys almost all parental authority, and thereby the family. It also appears to give government the responsibility of protecting a child from the power of parents. One writer has called this "abandoning children to their rights." The statement also reflects a very peculiar concept of the nature and the role of the state. One impact that the statement has had across the world is that national laws have deferred to it. One possibility is that many nations that endorse CRC have simply not understood it, or what is behind it. This is underlined by the fact that early on, even the Vatican endorsed it.

*Liberal notions of individualistic liberty have gone so far in the US as to get parents convicted of child neglect or child abuse for restricting their children's TV viewing, or leaving a responsible child home alone for a few hours; and on the other hand, liberalism has granted children the right to get abortions without parental consent or even knowledge, and to obtain legal counsel to sue their parents. Increasingly, parents are beginning to fear that any kind of disciplining of their children might bring the state down upon them, either via the courts or the welfare system. Of course, when the state tries to take over the parent role for a child, we almost always end up with a junked and destroyed child that will in turn have dysfunctional children in the future (FT, 12/95).

*In London, Ontario, a 5-year-old girl slammed the car door on her brother's finger. The father lost his cool and gave the girl a little spanking--upon which outraged bystanders called police, testifying that he was "angry and yelling." A doctor was called in, but after he testified that there were no bruising, redness or tenderness on the girl's buttocks, the father was acquitted (AP in SHJ, 27/4/95). We did not learn whether the boy's hand was also attended to. While we believe in non-violence, we also do not believe in calling in the law every time a parent spanks a child, and especially not a child that came close to amputating her brother's fingers.

*While we were in Britain recently, we noticed how pervasively people spoke of their "partner," by which one could never know whether they were speaking about a business partner, a spouse, a person of the opposite sex that they were living with, a person of the same sex, whether they were a citizen advocate to a protégé or a protégé of a citizen advocate. Apparently, this ambiguity is now politically correct, and even people who are living with their spouses but try to be politically correct no longer refer to them as "my spouse," "my husband/wife," but as "my partner."
*One way the media have dissed the family is by bringing out TV shows in which parents are imaged as shmucks, exemplified by "My So-Called Life." And writers are churning out one novel or play after another about "dysfunctional families" that get celebrated by reviewers.

*Guest columnist Joe Klein opined in Newsweek (29/4/96) that the social work community was committed to a "disastrous ideology of 'family preservation'." Of course, first of all, it is untrue that family preservation has been such a clear-cut consistent major goal of the profession; and secondly, it is only liberals and modernists who see family preservation as a disaster.

*A guest columnist in Newsweek (29/4/96) claimed that "right-wingers" are inconsistent by "pushing family values but condemning gay marriage."

*A man who has been married five times, and owed $18,000 in child support to the child of his third marriage, became the director of the Center for Family Values (SPS, 27/8/96).

**"The ruin of a nation begins in the homes of its people" (Ghanaian Proverb, from a 1992 Amer. Red Cross poster series.)

Hostility Toward Children (Kinderfeindlichkeit)

*At the present rate of reproduction, there will be no more "real Germans" in 100 years, Italians in 150 years, and Britons in 500 years. This is one of the reasons why some European countries have tolerated a high immigration rate even though they have not been traditional immigration societies like the US, and despite the fact that these immigrations very strongly affect the fabric of the culture.

*A couple in New Jersey had three children, but after seven years of parenting decided to give them all up for adoption, saying that they had become increasingly disillusioned with family life, and the children crying, fighting, and demanding toys. The mother said, "We are both still young, and we have a lot of other interests. We started to question whether this was where we could be most effective." They described their decision as "a difficult one" (which reminds us of all the rhetoric that accompanies "difficult ethical dilemmas" of abortion, "euthanasia," etc.), and said, "what it finally came down to was...we were ready to move on" (NY Times, 3 Feb. 96; source item from Robert Flynn). All this is also a marvelous exemplification of modernistic self-actualization babble.

*CBS TV ran yet another Kinderfeindlichkeit ad on 27/5/96 (during its "60 Minutes" program) that showed a family with two children, when suddenly, the children--puff--disappeared, upon which the parents deliriously embraced each other in an outburst of joy and took a weekend vacation at a Best Western motel.

*The medicine and health columnist for the Syracuse Herald-Journal (3 Aug. 95) had this to say: "Breastfeeding is all kinds of wonderful, but it's also very confining. It makes a mother a slave to her baby's tummy. Those careful eating habits of nine months must continue. Breasts get heavy and achy, full of milk that needs to be squeezed out every few hours. And almost inevitably, a mother has to become intimate with a breast pump. It's hard to avoid. Pumping milk and storing it for later feeding becomes necessary if Mom wants a break for more than a few hours; if Dad wants to feed the baby a bottle; if Mom wants to avoid breastfeeding in public; or if Mom works outside the home."

*A sign of the times is that now, new mothers are apt to be given a gift of "bottle tags" for their infant's bottles, on which they write the infant's name. This is so that at the babysitter's or day care center--where it is automatically assumed the infant will be going--the caretaker knows which bottle goes to which child.
*In 1994, nearly 70% of married women with children were in the labor force, which may have many advantages to the women, but is bound to have fewer advantages to their children (Newsweek, 8 April 96).

*The New York Times ran a story on research that found rather deleterious effects of farming one's children out to babysitters, nannies and daycare centers, but its headline proclaimed virtually the opposite of the article itself. This is how modernistic media handle modernism-adverse truths.

*A most amusing PC "research" result is that absence from the home by working mothers may be bad for boys but good for girls, implying that mothers of girls should quickly get a job if they do not have one already (SPS, 2 May 96).

*A new cultural phenomenon is called "stealth baby-sitting," which means that parents drop off their children in libraries, movie theaters, restaurants, and computer and video stores, as an alternative to getting babysitters. This is often done by professional and suburban parents. Some children will then play computer games for hours or a day until they are picked up again. The entitlement attitude of some parents has gone so far that when they come back and do not find the child where they abandoned it, they blame the facility (Newsweek, 14/8/95).

*Obviously, the idea that schools could take over from parents when parents de facto fail could never work. Consequently, one new development appears to be that more parents are calling the police about their children's misbehavior (source information from Susan Gatautis). Since this is not going to work very well either, one wonders what will be next. One possibility is that more parents will simply kill their misbehaving children--most likely their misbehaving teenagers.

*As of early 1995, interracial adoptions were officially or unofficially forbidden in 43 of the US states, even though 67% of children waiting for homes were "black," while only 31% of the families seeking children were. Apparently, one of the major lobbies against interracial adoptions are "black" social workers, of which there are a relatively large number (Newsweek, 20/3/95). This is a classical case of human sacrifice to the idol of an abstraction.

Impact of Family Breakdown on Children

*The attack of modernism on the family is turning out to be exceedingly expensive. Society pays a huge tab for broken families, e.g., in terms of welfare subsidies, and the resultant disfunctionality of children raised in one-parent households, which often boils down to crime, imprisonment, and another generation of disfunctional offspring. In just about every way imaginable, the liberalism of modernism has shot itself several times in the foot.

*When parents separate, whoever gets the children is more likely to live in poverty, but the women who get the children are twice as likely (38%) to end up poorer than the men (17%). However, there are still hold-out social scientists and lawyers who perpetuate the old saw that children are better off with a single separated or divorced parent than in an intact but unhappy family situation (Newsweek, 19/2/96).

*The single most powerful predictor of whether a child will drop out of school, face unemployment and commit a crime is not race, poverty, or neighborhood of residence, but whether the child is growing up in a single-parent family (Newsweek, 29/4/96).

*Some experts claim that unwed motherhood "drives everything else": crime, drugs, poverty, illiteracy, welfare and homelessness (Time, 3 July 95).
*About 70% of young men who commit violent crimes come from single parent households--
but the liberals continue to keep telling us that broken families aren't such a bad thing, and are often even a good thing.

*About 95% of parents who are supposed to pay child support to the other parent of their child or children but fail to do so are fathers. So-called "deadbeat parents" default on their payments to the tune of $34 billion in child support a year, which to a significant degree then gets made up by public subsidy to the other parent and becomes a tax burden. A major excuse by many deadbeat parents is that they are supporting a new family. Amazingly, more than 100,000 US federal and postal employees failed to pay child support, and three-quarters of these are working for the defense department (AP in SHJ, 22/2/95).

*On 26 Sept. 1996, BBC television broadcast a one-hour program entitled "The System" on the one-year old Child Support Agency, established by parliament in Britain, to enforce the collection of child support payment from parents (mostly fathers). The intent of the legislation was to lessen the demand on the public purse by single parents (mostly women) who collected government benefits for their child(ren). The new law requires that women must identify the father of their child, permits the wages of the delinquent parent to be garnished, and even prescribes imprisonment for those who will not cooperate. However, the broadcast documented that this program, like so many similar ones, has been defeated by several elements of modernism. One is that some women will not reveal the name of the father for fear of alienating him or getting him "in trouble," and thus very long, drawn-out bureaucratic procedures are employed that are quite costly. Another is that couples who have split up are now using the provision as a weapon against each other, resulting in long and costly court proceedings. The program also revealed the decadence of young people who admitted having sex with strangers, many one-night stands, and that they sometimes went out with another person "just for sex."

*NY State threatened in 1996 to take away the driver's licenses of deadbeat parents, but since nothing else has worked, this probably won't either.

*Though the US is one of the richest nations, its poor children fare worse than in all Western countries save Ireland and Israel (SHJ, 15/8/95).

*Of all the babies born to unwed teenage mothers, 60% are fathered by adult males who had sexual relations with the mothers while the mothers were below the legal age of consent. The younger an unwed teenage mother is, the older is usually the father. Among mothers age 11-12, the father is on the average 10 years older (Newsweek, 29/4/96). This has, of course, made a mockery of the kind of "statutory rape" law which has been virtually unenforced until recently, not to mention that these fathers are rarely held financially accountable for their offspring (Time, 29/1/96).

*From Newsweek (19/2/96), we learned for the first time that there is also massive family breakdown in the Caribbean island of Jamaica, and in good part because parents virtually abandon their children and seek their fortune in the US. (Nor did we know that the same thing is happening in many other countries from which many adults emigrate.) Nearly 30% of all Jamaicans now live in the US, and tens of thousands of children have been left behind. The more time goes by before the families are reunited, the less likely is it that this happens; and not surprisingly, the children grow up disordered or anti-social, and also vastly more vulnerable to all kinds of abuse. These children are called "barrel children" because their parents sometimes send home industrial-type heavy cardboard barrels filled with clothing and consumer goods.

*The least-involved fathers reportedly are the Japanese, averaging 3 minutes a day of contact with their children--and yet, there is nowhere the amount of child and juvenile problems in Japan that in other societies is heavily attributed to uninvolved fathers. Perhaps the presence of a father
without serious disfunctionalities in a family is more important than the father's involvement with a child, provided the children are otherwise nurtured and directed. In other words, childbearing out of wedlock, or break-up of the parents, may be vastly more traumatic to children than paternal distance in an otherwise intact family (Newsweek, 17/6/96). However, one is not likely to be told anything along these lines from Western social scientists today.

*There is a nationwide publication entitled Single Mother that "deals with the joys and concerns of single parenting." Its editor writes a syndicated column, one of which (SHJ, 1 Aug. 95) was headed, "One-Parent Families Stable For Most Kids"—a good example of the liberal denial of the disaster of unwed parenthood and single parent households.

Other News About Families

*There is now lively stealing and selling of babies in the Ukraine, for adoption abroad. One immature childless US couple returned their already adopted child to a Ukraine orphanage to die when they discovered that it was handicapped. The crying mother said (honestly) that she simply did not have the strength to cope (CBS TV "60 Minutes," 14/6/96).

*Mainland China has become the No. 1 source of adopted babies for Americans (Newsweek, 15/1/96).

*Adoptive Families of America is trying to reform the language of adoption by yet another form of language policing, or what we call language tyranny. Here is part of its list of "say" and "don't say":

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Language</th>
<th>Negative Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birthparent</td>
<td>Real Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological Parent</td>
<td>Natural Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Child</td>
<td>Own Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Child</td>
<td>Adopted Child, Own Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born to Unmarried Parents</td>
<td>Illegitimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terminate Parental Rights</td>
<td>Give Up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make an Adoption Plan</td>
<td>Give Away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Parent</td>
<td>To Keep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiting Child</td>
<td>Adoptable Child; Available Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Contact With Parent</td>
<td>Reunion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Adoption</td>
<td>Adoptive Parent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adoption Triad</td>
<td>Foreign Adoption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permission to Sign a Release</td>
<td>Adoption Triangle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search</td>
<td>Disclosure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Placed for Adoption</td>
<td>Track Down Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court Termination</td>
<td>An Unwanted Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child With Special Needs</td>
<td>Child Taken Away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child From Abroad</td>
<td>Handicapped Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was Adopted</td>
<td>Foreign Child</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Is Adopted</td>
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*In some state legislatures, there are efforts to prevent children who were separated from their birth relatives early in life from ever finding out their identity by even criminalizing their search for their birth relatives (Newsweek, 27/5/96).

*A public policy institute has come to the conclusion that two-parent families with children where both parents work are simply not making it, at least if one looks at the situation probabilistically and society-wide. Ironically, one major recommendation was that jobs should be
made more "family-friendly," rather than that modernistic people settle for a less opulent lifestyle, the desire for which is one of the major motives of both parents working full-time.

*One thing that is remarkable about the new valuing of intact families by at least some people is that so often, they cite "research" about the bad effects of children growing up without two parents (e.g., illustrated both by and in Robert Samuelson's column in Newsweek, 8 April 96). Apparently, some people are so alienated from fundamental wisdom that only formal research can make even the most patently obvious truths credible. To his credit, Samuelson made it clear that none of the usually-cited shortcomings of marriage and family can prevail against the facts in favor of them. One might call this the utilitarian argument on behalf of the family--after all, Samuelson is an economist.

*While domestic violence is high all around these days, it is particularly high among people on welfare. According to one survey, 85% of the women on welfare enrolled in a work training program in Chicago were victims of domestic violence at that very time (Time, 3 April 95).

*On a TV show, people were arguing the pros and cons of putting children in daycare, when a discussant asked all members in the audience to imagine that they were going to be born the next day, and would they prefer to be raised at a daycare center, by a babysitter or a nanny, rather than by their parents. Not a single person volunteered--which ended the discussion (SPS, 2 May 96).

*Even intact families are becoming so incompetent in childrearing that schools are taking over ever more family functions. For instance, every year, more schools are required to serve breakfast.

*Nowadays, children receive a large--often, the major--portion of their socialization and character formation from equally clueless peers, and the media (Science, 10 Nov. 95).

*The latest dogma in the process of abdication of adult child-rearing, and of education of children by adults, is that child peers can be more effective than adults in educating other children, including handicapped ones. It is also interesting to ponder the rationales that may be cited: a peer tutor may be more directive than an adult, more familiar with the material being taught, may use more meaningful and age-appropriate vocabulary and examples, and understand the other child's frustration (Inclusion International, 5/96)--all things a good teacher should know.

*Amazingly, the author of Life Without Father, sociologist David Popenoe, presents himself as a "family advocate," but does not believe that the "old nuclear family can be or should be restored" (Newsweek, 8 April 96).

*Newsweek (17/6/96) columnist Meg Greenfield said, in essence, that the family is dead for better or worse, that family values talk will not bring it back, and that we need to "address life as it is, not as it used to be."

*Material on man-hating, which usually is also an expression of hatred of family, will be carried some other time.

The Collapse of Finance, Society & Polity in the US & Elsewhere, & the Ascendancy of Military Rule

Readers are reminded that also relevant to this topic is our coverage above of the financial collapses.

*In the last 10 years or so, it has become increasingly common for state legislatures to enter new fiscal years without having acted on a new budget. Some are months late, operating on very expensive interim arrangements, including expensive loans.
*The breakdown of government on the state level in the US is exemplified by what happened in New York State when, in one 1995 legislative session of 16 days, 6,541 bills were introduced, only three of which ended up becoming law (SHJ, 22/2/95).

*The very cover story of Time of 17/9/90 was devoted to the collapse of both civil order and viability of New York City. Among the tidbits it related are the following.
   Many nursery schools teach even tiny children how to take cover at the sound of gunfire.
   While crime is skyrocketing, the police force has been getting steadily smaller since 1975, as has the number of street cleaners and trash collectors.
   Every day, 155,000 people ride the subway without paying.
   About 60% of school children achieve below the expected grade level. A third of the local school boards have been investigated for corruption.
   For 12 years, Mayor Koch pretended that everything was wonderful even as every index got worse. His successor said that the federal government was to resolve the problem rather than the city government.
   New York City has one of the greatest concentrations of wealth in the world—and what a wonderful place it is to visit!

*Time (29/4/96) explicitly characterized the District of Columbia as "falling apart... signs of breakdown are all around." The police have advised citizens to get guns to defend themselves; schools are virtually non-functional despite $7400 a year in spending per pupil; 1500 traffic signals at a time may not be working. Amazingly, 1 out of 9 adults in the district is working for the local government. The inhabitants deserve all of this because they voted in as mayor a megalomanic convicted drug addict. Not only was the government of the District of Columbia broke in 1995, but its books and record keeping were so worthless that its total indebtedness could not even be ascertained. This is all the more revealing considering that DC is supposed to be governed by Congress (SHJ, 22/2/95). Considering all of this corruption and mismanagement, it is incredible that members of Congress would try (in 5/96) to reduce the federal tax paid by DC residents in order to make DC less insolvent.

*Between 1966 and 1994, confidence of Americans in Congress declined by 81%, 71% in the executive branch, 68% in medicine, and 55% in the press; 76% said they rarely or never trust government "to do what is right." These numbers have been creeping up every year recently. No sector is highly trusted anymore, colleges and universities being near the top with a mere 25% of trust (Newsweek, 8 Jan. 96; AP in SHJ, 1 Aug. 95).

*It is an interesting phenomenon that loss of confidence in government is not only sweeping the United States but the entire globe. This is probably a rather unique and new historical development that historians apparently have not as yet been able to deal with. When something akin to either violent or non-violent revolutions take place, and governments that are no longer trusted by people are swept away, we may not only see the rise of authoritarian and dictatorial regimes but possibly also of more genuine democracies such as in Switzerland, where the entire population has an opportunity to vote on all sorts of important measures. Imperial forms of government, including in the US, are profoundly opposed to this kind of democracy because it diminishes the power of political cliques and political structures. However, in countries where specific legislation and policies are voted upon by the entire population, there usually also develops a culture of healthy public debate prior to such votes, contrary to many popular initiatives in the US on which the population may also be able to vote, but which often are unintelligible to people who may not have been informed what these polls are about until days before the voting.

*We find it highly appropriate that in both Tokyo and Osaka, comedians were elected as governors of Japan’s two largest states, stunning the traditional political structures (4/95 news).
Because over a period of several decades, a small handful of people have sent letter bombs to other people, and because commercial airliners carry US mail that might conceivably conceal a bomb, all stamped US mail pieces weighing 16 ounces or over, destined for either domestic or international addresses, have to be presented in person at a US post office as of 10/96.

In his book, The Death of Common Sense, Philip Howard charged that laws and regulations have become so numerous, have invaded so many areas of functioning, and are so contradictory that they breed paralysis, and generate contempt for the law, which we believe to be true. Because they are the ones who are largely behind all of this, liberals generally dispute that the law and the courts have gone too far (e.g., Time, 10 April 95). On the other hand, conservatives would prefer a robber baron society in which the poor and lowly would be at the mercy of privileged predators. A pox on both their houses.

A vulture lawyer sued the company that made the fertilizer that was used to make the bomb that blew up the Oklahoma City federal building in 1995 (Time, 12/6/95). This is like suing the manufacturer of a steak knife that someone used to stab someone else.

It is possible in the US to file a class action suit even though no member of the class agrees to it.

People suing for damages cost the US public up to $300 billion a year—a sort of tort tax of up to $2400 per American, and 5 times what is spent on police and fire protection. No wonder the trial lawyers have put more money into Clinton’s campaign than almost all the other major interest groups together (Newsweek, 23/9/96).

A 1992 text on psychiatry and the law, published by the American Psychiatric Association itself, has a section entitled, "We are Belegaled."

By 1994, the average length of employment of US school superintendents had shrunk down to three years.

Newsweek (13/3/95) put it this way: "Barings. Chemical Bank. Mexico. Orange County. Kidder, Peabody. Procter & Gamble. GibsonGreetings. Askin Capital. For a year now, it's been one damn thing after another: a seeming chain of financial breakdowns, a frightening series of crises in the most unexpected places, a bull market for doomsayers. 'There have been so many mysterious stories,' marvels Hyman Minsky, a scholar of economic catastrophe. 'It's sort of peculiar that it's reaching all around the world.' Is some evil virus upon us? Actually there is."

It is particularly amusing that major financial empires have been brought down by quasi-children to whom they had entrusted their trading on the financial markets. It turned out that the higher-ups often simply did not understand what their whiz-kids were doing.

The world kicked in $52 billion ($20 billion from the US) to bail Mexico out of its financial collapse in 1995. The reason was not altruism, but fear that the Mexican collapse could trigger a world-wide collapse (Time, 6 March 95), much like there are fears that a collapse in Japan could take the world financial markets down with it.

Time (22/4/96) carried an article that rings an alarm bell about the possibility that a world financial collapse could be triggered by a financial collapse in Japan, which apparently has gone on the skids not only financially but socially as well. Drug use and crime are climbing, fewer women are getting married while, on the other hand, as many as 27% of high school students (in even middle class and good schools) occasionally work as prostitutes or for telephone sex clubs.

There are hardly any functional governments now in sub-Saharan Africa.
Zaire was once known as the Belgian Congo, and was very rich in resources. Now it is poor, and ravaged by Ebola, rabies, polio, measles, cholera, sleeping sickness and HIV, has had civil war for decades, and has been invaded by hundreds of thousands of Hutu, many of them belligerent. This is how countries collapse. Time (29/5/95) described a town in Zaire “where the government exists mainly to extort money,” which is a phrase worth keeping in mind.

In Germany, every 5th juvenile has already committed a criminal offense. In some German states, one-third of criminal suspects are youths between 14 and 21. Parents, teachers, police and social workers have declared themselves helpless (AW, 15/6/96).

A good lesson as to what may happen in other countries as the judicial systems collapse is happening in Mexico, namely, an outbreak of lynch law by frustrated citizens who no longer trust the government, the judiciary, the police or the prison system (NC Reporter, 22/9/96).

A little schizy? When the 1994 Statistical Abstracts of the United States came out, the NY Times said it showed "an overall rosy picture," and "good news" "on some of the most basic measures of well-being." When the Index of Social Health came out in 1995, the Times said it showed "America socially sick and getting sicker" (SHI, 13/10/94; SHA, 15/10/95). How peculiar!

The CIA director said to expect ever-increasing "electronic attacks" on government records, the military, air traffic control, power plants, and financial institutions. He predicted "very, very large and uncomfortable incidents," adding not particularly reassuringly that defense against these should not prove "unsurmountable" (AP in SHI, 26/6/96). We suspect that we will be saved by a collapse of the Internet.

There is increasing worry about the spread of radical right-wing ideology in the US armed forces, and especially in its elite units (e.g., Newsweek, 25/3/96). We keep pointing out how ominous it is when the armed forces are the most functional sector of a collapsing society.

War & Preparation For War

We refer to previous TIPS December issues that explain how war, and preparations for war, have multiple connections to poverty, impairment, domestic violence, and hence human service.

For decades, anthropologists had promoted the arch-anthropological myth that the Mayans had been a peaceful people that lived in "blissful coexistence" with each other, until more recently it came to light that warfare was an apparently normative facet of Maya civilization. This "has come something of a shock to many Mayanists" (Time, 9 Aug. 93) who must be a bunch of fools.

Shortly after communism fell in 1989, Francis Fukuyama wrote a book, The End of History and the Last Man, which asserted that in the absence of major competing ideologies in the world, there would be no more major conflicts, and hence "less history" because "history" is fueled by conflict. It is amazing how puerile simplicity like this can be taken seriously in the scholarly world.

In 1943, some psychologists issued a "Psychologist’s Peace Manifesto" that declared that "an enduring peace can be attained if the human sciences are utilized by our statesmen and peacemakers" (Books & Culture, 11/95). What incredible hubris!

When the atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, more than two-thirds of the largest Christian congregation in Japan died (Time, 7 Aug. 1995). Even after the nuclear bombs had been dropped on Japan, conventional bombing of the country continued, killing an estimated 15,000 more people (Time, 7 Aug. 95).
*We are horrified at the number of dead from a single bomb each on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but on 10 March 1945, a single air raid with fire bombs destroyed about 20% of Tokyo and killed about 100,000 people (AP in SHJ, 3 Aug. 95). Also, 50% more Germans were killed in allied air raids than the total number of Japanese conventional and nuclear bombing victims (SHA, 6 Apr. 95).

*The US, the Soviet Union and China at one time all used relatively untested missiles to launch live nuclear warheads (Science, 12 April 96).

*As of 1990, the US had 12,000 nuclear warheads aimed at the Soviet Union, targeting every single city with a population of more than 25,000 and with 120 aimed at Moscow alone. There has only been a partial step-down from this targeting.

*For years, the Canadian government had been helping the Romanian dictatorship to build nuclear reactors—and to do so with slave labor. The reactors were even named Candu, an allusion to the Canadian benefactors. The revolution slowed down the construction, but did not stop it.

*The US has sent plutonium to 39 countries, including ones (Israel, South Africa, Iraq, Iran) it did not want to develop nuclear weapons. This has been revealed only in 1996 (AP, 6 Feb. 96).

*Quietly, the US administration has tolerated the sale to Pakistan (by China) of medium-range missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads (AP in SHJ, 3 July 95).

*A group of physicians showed that even without nuclear detonations, merely having to mine, transport, transform and destroy nuclear materials is creating huge toxic or radioactive wastes, pollution, sickness and deaths all over the world (SHJ, 26/7/95).

*It is estimated that there are 100 million land mines or more planted in the earth around the globe. These are scattered through 60 countries. Some have been there a long time, and others are still being planted. Unfortunately, miracles of modern technology have been able to produce mines that are tiny and can cost as little as $2 apiece, in addition to larger ones all the way up to a size that blows up a tank. In Cambodia alone, 60,000 people have stepped on land mines. Unfortunately, it can cost up to $500 per mine to clear mined land. The greatest criminals in producing and selling land mines are the Chinese, the Pakistani and the Russians. In some cultures, the custom has even arisen of civilians buying and planting inexpensive land mines against each other, for instance, in order to maim or blow up neighbors whom they do not like (CBS "60 Minutes," 29/10/95).

*Reportedly, more than 450,000 Afghans have lost lower limbs to mines, and about 3% of the population is said to have been killed by them. In fact, close to 10% of the world’s 110 million mines are said to be planted in Afghanistan. It is estimated that it will take more than 4,000 years to clear them all (Globe & Mail, 26/12/95; source item from Doug Mouncey).

*The US continues to be the biggest arms dealer in the world, selling $9 billion worth in 1995, often arming both sides of a conflict, e.g., Greece and Turkey. Also, many countries are given arms free, also to the tune of billions (Parade, 14/4/96).

*When US troops in action face US arms in the hands of their opponents, they cry "uncle." But the US government has very gladly permitted arms sales to outlaw nations around the world--often with tax subsidies (SHA, 9 April 95).

*One piece of good news is that in England in July 1996, four women who had admitted to damaging military aircraft in protest against their use to kill people—in this case, political opponents in Indonesia—were acquitted by a jury (The Guardian, 1 Aug. 1996, p. 6: source item from Rob Henstock). This is called "jury nullification," and is perfectly legal. Juries can acquit in defiance of not only the evidence but also the law itself. This is one of the few ways citizens can directly
"vote" on a law. In other instances where such cases have gone to trial in the US, the protestors
have been convicted, and sometimes even received very harsh sentences.

*We thought it rather peculiar and unfortunate that it was during Holocaust remembrance week
in 4/96 that in Lebanon, Israel rocketed an ambulance and a UN refugee camp, and killed about 120
civilian refugees (many women, children and old men) who had sought sanctuary there. (A UN
investigation later concluded that the evidence was not compatible with a "mistake" (Time,
20/5/96).) It was during the same week that we read about the preparations for a trial in Italy
(which may very well turn out to be the last trial for war crimes of the second World War) of a
German officer who had participated in the execution of Italian civilians in retaliation for a partisan
killing of German soldiers.

*Once again we note that genocide has been going on in the Sudan, with the Islamic Arabs in
North Sudan killing and dispossessing the southern dark-skinned and largely Christian population,
and all this with utter and incredible cruelty. As many as 3 million Sudanese have been slaughtered,
and sometimes the males of entire villages have been literally crucified. Many have been sold into
slavery or concubinage. Many southern Sudanese have fled to neighboring countries where they are
totally demoralized (FT, 8/95).

*It is estimated that the Chinese killed 1.5 million Tibetans in their efforts to incorporate this--
mostly nonviolent--country (Casa Cry, 1/96).

*It has become normative in Third World countries on at least 3 continents to impress children--
even below their teens--into military units. One development that has made this more practical is
that weapons have been getting lighter and smaller. In some such countries, the children are often
drugged up before anticipated battles. The good news is that this way, the children get a good diet
and medical care (Newsweek, 14/8/95).

*Here is one of the few good news from Rwanda. When Hutu militia came to kill all the
Tutsis in a family in a certain town, the handicapped son of the family ran out toward them with his
arms outstretched to welcome them. The militia men were so overtaken by this that they left
(Christmas Letter of Jean Vanier, 31/12/95).

*People are not aware of how many indirect financial contributions to war the US government
makes. For instance, it has been subsidizing the US merchant marine with $4.2 billion in the last
7 years, the reason being that it wants this fleet functional in case of war (Newsweek, 20/11/95).
Also, military pensions and veterans' benefits ($70 billion) are not counted in the "defense" budget,
nor is the Department of Energy that makes nuclear weapons (Time, 23/9/96). The Pentagon also
made $7 billion in unauthorized purchases in 8 years, spent $14.7 billion over 10 years without
being able to tell on what, and erroneously overpays private contractors between $500-750 million
a year (Casa Cry, 7/96).

*It has apparently not been widely disseminated that a very disproportionate number of US
soldiers who were in the World War III Gulf War have had congenitally impaired children,
particularly children with limbs missing or deformed, much like children whose mothers were taking
the drug Thalidomide some decades ago (Band, 3/96).

*While it has finally come out that allied troops in the Gulf War were negligently exposed to
chemical warfare agents, and that the Pentagon had been lying about this all along, there also
continues to come in evidence for our hypothesis (see 12/95 issue of TIPS) that the largely untried
"vaccinations" (anti-chemical pills) given to troops caused irreversible nerve damage.

*Almost 6 years after Patriot anti-missile missiles were used in the Gulf War, the evidence
whether they worked or not is still hotly contested. E.g., the Pentagon claims that most of the Iraqi
Scuds were shot down, while an MIT study concluded that the Patriots were a near-total failure, and even fell on civilian areas (e.g., Science, 23/2/96). How can one trust the people who lied about the chemical warfare damage?

*A UN official investigating Iraq’s arsenal said "chemical weapons now sound nice, compared with biological ones" (Newsweek, 9 Oct. 95).

*The US government has very cleverly yoked the academic and research culture to war-making, by having over 50% of civilian research and development (R&D) money come out of the Department of Defense (Science, 6 Sept. 96).

*Christian Morgenstern (1871-1914) was a well-known German poet influenced by the anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner. Many of his poems were quite whimsical, and are not well known by non-German audiences because they are difficult to translate. Below is one of his poems entitled, "Palmstrom Becomes a Citizen."

Palmstrom refuses (as we might expect) Any form of military service. This act's abused by most as cowardly and abject.

For everyone around is Catholic, still Or Protestant etc.; and A man is still thought diabolical who will

Not murder any Christian fellow when God, the king, and fatherland command. Palmstrom is arrested, there and then.

In jail sits Palmstrom, true and brave, But tells himself this: Into jail Should every man who is no slave.

Every truly unfettered soul Should make sure not to miss this spot-- For him, the only worthwhile goal.

The liberated shall not wince, Shall not complain, but duck his neck Under the yoke of power, since

Man's mainstream, thus, also may be --at first astounded, then through thought-- Clarified toward liberty.

Korf passes through the midst of guards Who eagerly grasp after him. All they can grasp is empty air.

They stick their rifles, here and there, Right through him; meanwhile, he Walks on toward Palmstrom, cheerfully.

With the guard who brings in food He enters the bare cell Where his friend, the villain Palmstrom, has to dwell.

The guard, stuttering, stumbling, storms Out, fabling of spirit-forms Which he does not know how to master

Men Come running, in a body, then, And hurl themselves on Korf-- In vain: Von Korf has ever been Spirit...

They find Palmstrom impossible to detain (Though he himself has chosen to remain) Since Korf's appearance cannot be turned off.

In some twelve jails, Palstrom has been confined. Everywhere, both directors and understrappers Have very rapidly gone out of their mind.

At last, they conjure him with upraised hands To choose for home; he'll have to go ahead And not shoot anybody dead.
Philanthropy News

*A scholar of philanthropy, Marvin Olasky, reported that ca. 1890 was the "golden age" of American charity, during which the people in the charitable bodies cultivated close personal contacts with recipients. This had all sorts of advantages, including bridging class gaps, the discernment of what a recipient needed, and whether money was put to good use or drunk or idled away. As government took over, discernment went out the window, and charity turned first into hand-outs and then into entitlements which begot generations of dependency. But now, he says, private philanthropies have become "government look-alikes" (Time, 4 Dec. 95).

We were surprised to learn that the YMCA is the biggest charity in the US, and that Catholic Charities is second with a budget of almost $2 billion, of which 64% comes from government bodies (Newsweek, 18/12/95). The top donation recipients in the US in 1994 were the Salvation Army, way ahead with $726 million, the American Red Cross with $497 million, and a national food bank network with $425 million, though the latter mostly in-kind. Further in descending order came the United Jewish Appeal, YMCA, the American Cancer Society, Catholic Charities, Harvard University, Boys & Girls Clubs, and the University of Pennsylvania (AP in SHJ, 30/10/95). However, one is somewhat surprised (or scandalized) to learn that 63% of the 1994 budget of $1.9 billion of Catholic Charities USA came from federal, state and local government (Time, 4 Dec. 95). But one Goodwill unit got 89% of its money from government. One national organization that relies 99.9% on private giving is the United Jewish Appeal. Individuals gave $114 billion in 1994, foundations $10 billion, and corporations $6 billion (MM, 12/95).

*The large US non-profit organizations that keep bombarding the citizenry with mail solicitations for funds have a policy that the more often you send money to them, the more frequently do they send solicitations back to you (Newsweek, 18/12/95).

*We found it a big peculiar to learn that there is such a thing as a Center for Effective Compassion which promotes private giving. Its founder, immensely rich Arianna Huffington, said that she "cared passionately about effective compassion" (Time, 6 Nov. 95).

"In America, you are not required to offer food to the hungry. Or shelter to the homeless. There is no ordinance forcing you to visit the lonely, or comfort the infirm. Nowhere in the Constitution does it say you have to provide clothing for the poor. In fact, one of the nicest things about living here in America is that you really don't have to do anything for anybody." (Full-page ad, Business Today, Winter 1995; apparently intended to foster voluntary giving and service).

*In the US, one does not have to be a "charity" in order to be exempt from paying federal income taxes, and often also state or local taxes. A number of scandals in the domain of not-for-profit and philanthropic organizations in recent years in the US have revealed that the number of organizations that are tax-exempt but are at least indirectly commercial or money-making has been increasing dramatically. In fact, by 1990, the number had reached 280,000, with revenues of more than $48 billion. For instance, few people know that the Blue Cross and Blue Shield health care giant is tax-exempt. Furthermore, executives of such organizations draw gigantic salaries, hundreds of thousands of dollars being very common, and in some cases reaching into the millions. In 1992, at least 100 executives working for so-called non-profit organizations were awarded more than $200,000 a year in compensation. Often, the amount of compensation is hidden from the membership (Indianapolis Star, 21/5/95; source item from Joe Osburn). To some degree, all this constitutes yet another avenue of transfer of wealth from lower to higher classes.

*Bennett, J., & Dilorenzo, T. (1994). Unhealthy charities: Hazardous to your health and wealth. New York: Basic Books. The authors argue that the original missions of some of the leading health charities have been subverted in a quest for fund-raising which benefits primarily the staff of the organizations and the medical establishment, rather than the people who have the
respective health problems. Particularly fingered are the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association and the American Lung Association. Actually, one should not be surprised about such developments in the light of the well-known organizational dynamics of goal displacement.

*We continue being annoyed by all sorts of "charity" fund-raisers. One of these is "hilarity for Charity," consisting of "stand-up comics" amusing audiences with their peculiar jokes, most of which leave us looking grim.

*Here is another poem by Christian Morgenstern, entitled "The Two Festivals:"

Korf and Palmstrom each hold a feast.

Palmstrom invites the whole world as his guest
But only on condition that they--fast!
Nothing to eat, all day, from first to last!
An antifaminefoundation is the rest.

Korf, though, goes through countryside and city
To the poor, to cripples, to the unfortunately vicious
And tries to make their spirits more propitious
Not being enraged, all day, by thwarted wishes;
Thus in their hearts arises a delicious
Every-foe-embracing pity.

Both, thus, permit Mankind not to receive
But give. Pleasures come, as they believe,
To creatures (who, after all, do
think) only at such truly new
Festivities.

**Human Service-Related News**

*American higher education has become extremely lavish at handing out higher degrees. In 1940, there were given out 187,000 bachelors degrees, 27,000 masters and 3,000 doctorates. By 1991, there were close to 2 million bachelors, 337,000 masters and 39,000 doctorates (Newsweek, 5 June 95). One would think that this would be reflected in a tremendous increase in self-esteem, for what that is worth.

*An article in Newsweek (8 April 96) observed that educators who are trying to write school standards for English barely know English themselves.

*A poll of US grade school teachers found that only 36% considered themselves science-literate, but 56% felt very qualified to teach science. This is believed to reflect the low expectations these teachers have for science learning on the part of their students (Science, 28/4/95). We would add that the same teachers can probably be expected to have low expectations all around.

*Even the best high school students these days are not as well prepared to go to college as they used to be (USN&WR, 29/10/90).

*A sizable percentage of US students cannot perform the simplest arithmetic computations without a calculator. On the more advanced levels, math educators are even abandoning the ancient tradition of teaching proofs of mathematical theorems (Science, 16/2/96).
*While nearly all American adults can read and write at least at a very basic level, fewer than half are competent enough to use a bus schedule or accurately record car maintenance information (Time, 30/1/95). All this despite the fact that education is the biggest line item in most state budgets, and was almost double in 1994 what was spent on "defense." However, less than half of the average $5,300 spent per pupil per year went toward academics.

*The US Department of Education went on a campaign to get families more involved in their children's learning, calling this a "critical link to achieving a high-quality education." While there is some truth to this, it fails to explain why children are not learning what they could be learning at least during the hours that they are in school (AP in SHJ, 8 Sept. 94).

*The hubris and unconsciousness of the education profession in the face of mounting evidence of the incompetence of schools and their products was underlined by a study that found that more than 75% of public school principals were convinced that public schools were successfully turning out students who knew how to solve problems and think independently, while only a minority of US industry executives agreed with that, and 75% believed that the skills of entry-level workers would continue to decline even further for at least another decade (Science, 10 May 96).

*Because the Mormon-controlled school system in Utah is still functioning competently, people from all over the US are coming to Utah to have their children schooled there, or they send their children there. A large proportion of these are children who have been in trouble, which could backfire if the assimilation potential of the Utah schools gets exhausted. Until 1995 at least, this has been a net drain on Utah finances because the outsiders paid less in taxes and tuition than it costs to educate their troublesome children (Newsweek, 20/2/95).

*The International League of Societies for Persons with Mental Handicap published a remarkable statement as recently as 11/95: "It is a fact that regular schools and regular classroom environments often fail to accommodate the educational needs of many students, not in the least those of the disabled... Until regular schools have developed a capacity to cater for them, it is difficult to argue for integration; the fundamental requirement of integration is to ensure that pupils with disabilities receive a good education in the regular school setting. One of the major challenges to achieve this lies in the changing task of the regular classroom teacher. Supported by special education professionals where needed, he or she will have to develop a greater knowledge and responsiveness with respect to special learning needs in the classroom" (Inclusion International, 11/95, No. 2, p. 3). The statement (a) admits that regular education is bankrupt, and (b) implies that regular teachers can somehow be forced to not only function non-bankruptly for ordinary children, but for handicapped ones as well. And with that, the organization endorsed "inclusion," even changing its name to Inclusion International--The International League of Societies for Persons with Mental Handicap, and the name of its newsletter to Inclusion. We smell "normative insanity" and "cracking behavior."

*A survey of special education teachers found that 55% of them thought that the individual education plan (IEP) of the students constituted, or should be, the curriculum (Exceptional Children, 9/95). That despite the fact that other research had shown that IEPs are often written primarily for compliance purposes rather than to actually guide instruction, and the fact that there is often very little congruence between the goals and objectives stated on IEPs and instructional content or classroom practice. In fact, some educational leaders have concluded that the IEP is "a document of unproven validity and impact." The study also found that what teachers said they thought was important to teach, and what they actually taught, was very significantly discrepant, probably reflecting a great deal of unconsciousness on the part of the teachers.

*While regular education is undergoing severe funding crunches, special education keeps increasing in size and funding. Among the reasons are the following: by putting children into special education, local districts shift the financial burden from the locale to the state and federal...
level; by shunting low-performing students into special education, their scores are not counted when standardized tests are administered to the rest of the students every year; and as has always been the case, students presenting teachers with disciplinary problems are sometimes fobbed off onto special education. In New York State, once a student has been put into special education, only about 2% ever make it back again into regular education (Albany Times Union, 22/8/95; source item from Christopher Ringwald).

*A CBS "60 Minutes" TV program of 9 June 96 documented some of the excesses—as well as mere dilemmas—of the special education arrangements in US schools today. There are some school districts where one-quarter of all the school money now goes to special education, and where one child in eight is actually in a special education program. The documentary showed some handicapped children being transported to their schools in one school bus apiece, and some being flown 300 miles in special airplanes once a week back and forth to a special school elsewhere. And among the things that were supposed to be so special at the special school to warrant this flying back and forth was—to our amazement—"parachute therapy," on which we have reported before. (It consists of playing group games with surplus parachutes from the armed forces.) It also showed segregated classes trying to teach the color red for one full year. The amazing thing is that there is no legal mandate for an appropriate education for the non-handicapped child, while there is one for handicapped children, and this has put the handicapped and their families in an intense conflict-of-interest situation vis-à-vis the non-handicapped, their families and the funding sources. Even children who are said to be merely mildly retarded or "learning disabled" may have up to three times the amount of money spent on them as the typical school child. Also, unlike non-handicapped pupils, the handicapped ones have a right to an education through age 23. One commentator said that the law that underlies all this is the "Guaranteed Employment of Attorneys Act."

*Plans were underfoot in 1996 to set up a residential retirement community of academicians in Tucson, Arizona, and attach something like a facility for academic activities to it. Of course, one big disadvantage is that the vast majority of participants would have to dislocate from their long-time homes, but many of them foolishly do so anyway. This will be an interesting development to watch.

*Here is some very good news: in Lancashire County, England, two service workers—a clinical psychologist, and a university lecturer—were preparing in 8/95 to be imprisoned for refusing to pay a fine that was levied on them after they held a sit-in to protest the exclusion of two handicapped boys from schooling in ordinary local schools. (According to the news article, the issue is not even whether they would be integrated in the school, but merely educated in it.) Instead, the 9- and 12-year olds have been languishing in special schools, assessment centres, and at home. As is so often the case, the schools have engaged in every delaying tactic they could. The two servers had been working voluntarily to help families with handicapped children, but finally got fed up when they realized they were fighting the same battles over and over with the schools for each different family (Source item from Michael Steer).

*A Michigan school district developed a most remarkable "lifetime planning guide for parents of handicapped children." This 50-page booklet was given to parents to study. After an assessment of their handicapped child, a counselor and the parents met for a 2-hour session during which the guide book was used to help parents understand the future prospects for their child and to set goals for at least 3 years, which might include such things as writing their will. This service technology package is yet another example of extravagant claims (lifetime planning) that are made in human service, and which might mislead people—such as parents—that such lifetime planning is possible even for a newborn baby, and that it can be done during a 2-hour session. Another grandiose aspect is the claim that this package can be used for all kinds of handicapped children and by any number of educational and social agencies.

Yet another resource on "life services planning" for elderly and handicapped persons was developed by the American Bar Association—with a $400,000 federal grant. What this will consist of remains yet to be seen.
The TIPS editor remembers many occasions where it was important to learn a great deal about a particular impaired person, and where the only practical or even possible way of doing so was by reading the person's case record. But then, it often turned out that some of the most important facts about a person had not been recorded in that case record. Also, sometimes after reading a case record, and then meeting the person for the first time, one is amazed at what appears to be a gross discrepancy between what the case record says and what the person looks like and acts like. Thus, we were taken aback by the proposal of a prominent actor in the field of mental retardation to eliminate much of the content of people's case records. The rationale is that handicapped people in the human service systems should not live under greater scrutiny than other people (SACL Dialect, 9/96). Such an assertion may at first appear to have much on its side, but falls apart under more critical analysis.

A California firm has begun to market a "person-centered planning software" entitled "Personal Quest," which is supposed to help people who do things which have variously been called personal future planning and by similar phrases, such as individual service and support planning.

A human service worker told us a story of one handicapped man who had a chronic incontinence problem. A human service agency spent $100,000 to construct a special toilet for him, after which the client said, "I pee in my pants, I wear diapers, I want a job and not another bathroom."

We were told of an incident where a human service helped a man "spend off" $30,000 in a single month so as to qualify him for public Medicaid support. One of the stupid elements of this is that the money could instead have been put into a trust of which the man could have been listed as the beneficiary.

Kohn, A. (1993). Punished by rewards: The trouble with gold stars, incentive plans, A's, praise, and other bribes. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. Because behaviorism has been a virtual religion in psychology, and so many people have learned a smattering of it, there has been very little publicity on the mountains of research that have revealed the limitations—or even counter-productive effects—of reward-based learning and behavior change strategies. This book systematically summarizes this research, and does so in a user-friendly fashion.

Segmentizing, concretistic, individualistic modernists constantly keep harping on the importance of experience in learning, but on the other hand we were struck by the truth of the phrase, "a moment of insight is worth a lifetime of experience" (ET, 4/96), which suddenly wakes us up to the fact that experience should only be used as a means toward deeper knowledge, and not an end in itself, as is so often the case now.

US experts in vocational rehabilitation (N = 149) were asked to rate the importance of 14 domains of competency of human service workers specializing in helping handicapped school graduates make a transition to the job market. By far of lowest importance was judged to be "philosophical and historical considerations," which got a score of only 8 as compared to the top-ranking domain, "assessment, delivery and evaluation of job training," which got a score of 190. Advocacy was also rated low, third from the bottom. This finding is quite consistent with what we have all long-known about the end-point orientation of Americans, and their reluctance to get very deep into the highest level issues that overarch and control everything else (Exceptional Children, 9/95).

While from a programmatic perspective, so-called supported employment is a sound idea and consistent with SRV (as long as it is not somehow perverted, as it often is), we never thought it conceivable that in the contemporary societal context, it would be permitted to be implemented on such a large scale as to render sheltered workshops unneeded. Indeed, one of the fathers of the supported employment movement, Paul Wehman, lamented in 1995 that the movement appears to
have lost much of its momentum. Another 1995 article documented that while there has been an increase in integrated supported employment since 1986, there has also been an increase in enrollment in segregated "facility-based" work programs. All of this underlines again that people in human services so often do not adequately take into account the larger societal context and what it augurs. In fact, our skepticism has been hardened by recent employment trends which marginalize a very significant proportion of non-handicapped people in the US labor market. Would anyone really be foolish enough to expect handicapped people to be taken care of in the generic job market while valued people suffer high unemployment?

*This is further coverage of the peculiar US government provision that pays parents money under the SSI Social Security Childhood Disability Program. The poor have invented the terms "crazy money" and "crazy checks" for this kind of subsidy. Families of many children deemed handicapped get a large initial check that can be over $10,000, which has to be spent within 11 months and often is spent on family luxuries or vices totally unrelated to the child's impairment, particularly since the money often goes to families that are very disfunctional to begin with. Many parents tell their children that they must fail mental tests so that they will qualify for crazy money. Some children are told that they will no longer be allowed to live at home if they no longer qualify for crazy checks, and some parents even abuse their children so that they will become mentally handicapped for sure in order to qualify. Some families eventually get so many of their children into this category that they get more crazy check money than the teachers of these children (AAMR News & Notes, 5/96).

*People who are deaf who would like to use sign language are in a bit of trouble if they have only one hand or arm. They can then use a technique called "half-signing," which is a little like speaking with very bad enunciation, so that only a portion of one's communication is understood.

*There actually is such a thing as a World Deaf Magicians organization, and in 1996 it held its world festival in Rochester, NY.

*Members of the Alliance For The Mentally Ill in Rhode Island complained that the Crazy Burger Cafe served Neurotic Burgers, Loco Burgers and Just Plain Nuts Burgers, and kept a cuckoo clock on the wall (AP in SHJ, 10/10/95).

*A weekly radio program put on by inmates of a mental institution in Argentina has become one of the country's most popular radio programs, broadcast on 12 stations to millions of listeners. For better or worse, the program's name (Radio La Colifata) is (translated into English) "Loony Radio." The program is interpreted as a bridge between the mental institution world and the larger society. Among other things, the inmates comment on current news or furnish songs and poetry. One of Argentina's top radio talk show hosts observed that often, the commentary from the inmates is more intelligent and insightful than what he gets from callers in the community. In 1996, the program received a special broadcasting award (Globe & Mail, 18/5/96; source item from Doug Mouncey).

*Here is good news, though we are a little late reporting it. In 1885, the inmates of the Bedlam Insane Asylum played a correspondence match with the Cambridge University Chess Club, and the asylum won in 25 moves, playing the Sicilian defense as black.

*A Los Angeles man makes his living as a "stand-up comic" even though he lives out of a wheelchair and describes himself as a "sit-down comic who's always on a roll." He also works with other sit-down stand-up comics who call themselves "Comics on a Roll."

*We continue our ongoing coverage of dwarf-throwing. A dwarf appealed a legal ban on dwarf-throwing at the European Court of Human Rights, claiming the ban is discriminatory. He
described himself as a professional acrobat who has been thrown on the dole after a dwarf-throwing circus act had been ruled illegal by a court (Speak Out, 3/96).

*Apparently, the British journal Speak Out (11/95) is the only one that noticed the irony in the announcement that a gene for a certain kind of dwarfism was found on the short arm of chromosome 4.

*The ARC of the US decided that it would no longer accept funds from industries whose primary business is the sale of alcohol or tobacco (The ARC, Summer 96).

*We reported before on the so-called Jerusalem Syndrome, i.e., pilgrims and tourists to Jerusalem suddenly falling into frenzies of religious insanity. While many of them have had mental problems before, it also strikes people who have not previously had any evidence of such. Christians and Jews are equally vulnerable, but Moslem tourists somehow manage to keep their wits together. About half of the stricken are from North America (Time, 17/4/95).

*It was revealed in 1995 that nearly a fifth of all the people in mental institutions in Israel were Holocaust survivors. Most of these had arrived without families in the late 1940s and were almost immediately and automatically institutionalized on the assumption that they were mentally disordered on account of their experience--and whether they were or not, one reason they were not released was because there was nobody outside the institutions to give them support. It was alleged that there had been "a conspiracy of silence" among health authorities about this situation (AP in SHI, 27/11/95).

*In Germany, applicants for a driver's license who failed three times are sent to a shrink (Newsweek, 24/4/95).

*According to Mouth (3/96), the term "Code 7" is used in ambulance and similar services to signify that someone is "mental," though this has to be understood as an informal signification rather than an official diagnosis. Does anyone know how "seven" came to mean "mental"?

*A study of 188 "free-standing outpatient mental health clinics" run by the State of New York in 1992 at a total of $217 million a year found that a session between a clinician and a patient, lasting between 30-60 minutes, might cost anywhere from $30 to $339, and apparently nobody questioned the difference. Nor did cost have any relationship with the severity of the client's condition (NYS Commission on Quality of Care, 5/96).

*Through our mail, we received a flyer announcing an international conference in the Netherlands entitled "First Psychotic Episode of Schizophrenia."

*We have been told that the governor of Michigan decided to close one of the mental facilities, and sent armed state police to evict the residential clients. These were herded into buses and dumped at other mental institutions, some of which had no beds for them so that some had to sleep on gurneys in the hallways for days (CAN, 7/95).

*In 8/95, the NY State Commission on Quality of Care for the Mentally Disabled published an in-depth inquiry into the death of a man who was living "independently" in the community who had died from the effects of prescription psychoactive drugs. In the three years prior to his death, at least 10 service providers had been involved with the man, but "each saw some aspects of his life," the information was not shared with other providers, and no one single party focused on the larger picture of his needs and life, or took responsibility for coordinating or addressing them. Once again, this is a typical case study of innumerable instances lionized by the contemporary human service culture as "independent living," "self-determination," and "choice." An awful lot of people are making an awfully good living promoting these ideas while their beneficiaries are dying from them.
*A federal human rights commissioner in Australia said: "I didn’t spend five years of my life compiling a major report on the mentally ill and then try to follow it up only to see people who are seriously sick living in substandard accommodation with the maintenance man or the janitor handing out their psychotropic drugs" (Sunday Age, 23/10/94; from John Armstrong).

*A 1994 article in the International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry reported that a mentally retarded 69-year-old woman who screamed all the time was given electroconvulsive shock, and that this reduced her screaming and "improved mood." (Of course, once one’s mind has been zapped like this, one is hardly in a condition to scream.) The article further proposed that such shock should be given to elderly people routinely if they scream incessantly. The callousness of such a proposal is stunning; even drugging somebody, bad as that is, would be less worse. Beware of geriatric psychiatrists!

*A New York man who called himself Mr. Apology has established a hotline which people can call in order to apologize for some wrong-doing or crime they committed, though all they will get is an answering machine. They can also listen to taped confessions of others, if that makes them feel better. Because the police might listen in, people who have committed a crime are advised to call the apology line from a pay phone. Certainly beats the cost of shrinkery, and the damage it inflicts.

*In Gulliver’s Travels, one of the countries visited by the narrator is inhabited by intelligent horses with a high moral culture. In their language, everything that is bad is called "yahoo," and one way to designate that something is bad is to call it by its proper name and then add the word yahoo to it, as illustrated in the recently-released new "Gulliver’s Travels" film production. The film makers took a bit of liberty with the text, perhaps based on their own bad experiences with shrinkery. They had Gulliver refer to all psychiatrists as yahoos after he had returned to his home and they had committed him as insane to Bedlam.

*A multi-handicapped mentally retarded man in the Syracuse area was living in a group home, getting specialized nursing care from a private nursing corporation. One day he was taken to a generic hospital in Syracuse "for respite purposes only and not for any medical purpose"--but three days later, the corporation notified hospital officials that it would no longer provide nursing services to him, which meant that he could not return to his group home. It took 15 months of red tape and advocacy to find another place for him to live, and chances are extremely high that it cost vastly more to keep him in a generic hospital place all this time than it would have cost to provide nursing support wherever he might be living under more normative conditions (SPS, 26/5/96).

*People are beginning to talk about a "moral crisis" in medicine.

*A guidance officer in Australia recommended to a family that they consider the possibility that their son might be allergic to certain foods, be more careful what he ate, that they buy a trampoline for him to exercise, and similar recommendations. The TIPS editor himself is rather liberal with these kinds of recommendations to parents, but in 8/89, the Australian Medical Association exploded into an uproar, claiming that the guidance officer was acting as a physician and was improperly "prescribing treatments." This underlines again that if it were up to the imperial sectors of medicine, living would be identified as a disease requiring ongoing medical supervision and treatment, with physicians holding all public offices. Actually, this is not a new thing, since similar recommendations were once made in France in all seriousness, including the recommendation that Sunday sermons be replaced by health lectures.

*The 6 May 1996 episode of CBS-TV’s "Chicago Hope" featured four physicians and nurses who dressed up as clowns and went through the hospital visiting patients. They especially tried to cheer up one little boy among a group of children whose school bus had been in a traffic accident,
and who were described as "traumatized." This little boy refused to cheer up and smile at the clowns' antics, and was eventually interpreted as the child who had sense--being sad about a tragedy--much like the child in Andersen's fairy tale who was the only one who had sense enough to call out that the emperor's new clothes were no clothes at all.

The other theme of this episode was a crazy family who were seeing a therapist. The daughter tried to commit suicide by jumping out of a building, the mother went into cardiac arrest, and the son threw the father into a vending machine, causing him to be imbedded with glass and have a cut artery. The therapist continued to try to counsel the family in the midst of these various crises, saying that it was important to "use this precious time of emotional nakedness to keep exploring our feelings," and "not to shut down."

*When public housing complexes were built in Syracuse in the 1970s, they were hailed as "saviors to a city in need of safe, comfortable homes for its poorer citizens" (SHJ, 8 May 96). By the early 1990s, poor people had had enough of these projects and no longer wanted to live in them because of the many problems. They would rather live in the lowest grade of available slum housing on the open market instead of the massive steel and concrete public housing project. As a result, vacancies shot up, and the projects went broke.

*The General Accounting Office of the US Congress reported that in the health care and nursing home business, managers encourage clinical staff to engage in so-called "negative charting," i.e., to write down only negative aspects of a patient's condition so as to permit the milking of government funds, especially under Medicare (CP, 10/95).

*The US government suspects that as much as 10% of the staggering $328 billion spent annually on Medicare and Medicaid may be lost to fraud. That includes nursing home fraud (SHA, 11 June 95).

*Medicare has 223 full-time employees that try to sniff out fraud in its $170 billion program, but this only scratches the tip of the fraud iceberg. The American Association of Retired Persons has called the many human services that systematically cheat the Medicare system "Medicare riffraff" (AARP Bulletin, 2/96).

*It is rather ironic that a former administrator of the HI-LI (pronounced "hi, lie") Manor home for the aged in Far Rockaway, NY, was convicted of embezzlement and bank fraud in 10/95 (QOC, 11/95).

*In Ontario, Canada, a resident of an old age home threw blankets, pillows and clothing out his window, then tied bed sheets together and tried to climb down and escape from his third story room. However, he lost his grip and died in the fall, which apparently was not adequately cushioned. The physician of the facility who also owned 90% of it certified that the man had died of a heart attack. When he got caught he was given a light penalty (Globe & Mail, 27/6/95; source item from Barry Wever).

*In Rochester, NY, a woman quadriplegic and comatose for 10 years in a nursing home was found to be pregnant, obviously the victim of a rape by a staff member. Quite naturally, a number of other conditions were first tested for after a swelling was detected, since pregnancy would not exactly be high on one's mind as a likely diagnosis.

*Jury awards in suits over improper care in nursing homes used to be rare in the US, but have recently increased because new state laws and federal regulations have made it easier for families to win in court. In addition to some large damage awards, there have also been an increasing number of punitive damages imposed. Many of these cases have involved deathmaking, such as permitting people to lay in their own waste and in one case, failure to feed a patient for six days. Nursing homes are particularly likely to lose suits if they had previously been warned about a
problem by family members or staff, and failed to do anything. A persistent defense invoked by nursing homes is along the lines of, "they were going to die anyway" (Wall Street Journal, 5 Sept. 95; source item from Margaret Sager).

*Sending in-home caretakers to the homes of elderly people is, of course, one of the most cost-beneficial ways of helping them, but increasingly, and as we have reported before, home helpers are not only hired from the least-employable sector of society, but also from a very crime-prone one. Many simply do not do much when they get to a home, and are indifferent to the needs of their charges; some steal everything they can from them, from relatively petty items that are within reach, all the way to hundreds of thousands of dollars in money, jewelry and clothes. Some are outright brutal and mistreat the elderly. The more dependent elderly people are on this kind of help, the more they are likely to be thusly victimized (e.g., NC Register, 8 Aug. 95).

#30~ __ PERVERSION ALERT: People need to be aware of how dangerous it is to get home care for impaired people under any kind of public funding scheme such as Medicaid. Unless one simply hires private helpers with one's own money, one falls into the clutches of the service super-system with all of its peculiar dynamics of disincentives, destruction and dependency-enlargement. It is a bit like letting the demons into the house. One trick that Medicare home servers are widely employing these days is to threaten a family that is trying to keep an impaired person at home that they will be reported for abuse unless the impaired person is placed into a nursing home. Thusly, home helpers actually serve to a significant degree not as an alternative to nursing homes, but as a feeding mechanism for it. The very fact that one tries to take care of a dependent person at home may already be interpreted as a form of abuse because it is seen and interpreted as less expert and less professional than nursing home care, despite the fact that so normatively, nursing homes are hell holes.

*A woman who had an adventitious impairment from a stroke made it her business to find out who was hogging handicap parking spaces. A surprisingly large number of offenders were people who knew or were related to a handicapped person, or worked in human service. Apparently, knowing a handicapped person made them feel entitled to park in the spot reserved for handicapped people. Also, they are the kind of people who--she found--litter, spit and cuss.

We were also surprised to learn that if one suffers a temporary handicap, one will not be issued a permit in many states to park in a handicap spot, though temporarily handicapped people can be just as handicapped as permanent ones (Newsweek, 19/2/96).

*In California, there has been a black market of counterfeit "disabled person" placards that could be bought for a much as $400 and then put on the dashboards by drivers who want the convenience of being able to park in handicap parking spots. Also, some families have kept and used legitimate such placards of their deceased relatives.

*In certain of our teaching contexts, we have kept pointing out how things go very ill with handicapped and other vulnerable people at times of societal calamity and collapse, including war. We have since learned that in the former Yugoslavia, "even" the shrink people have been cracking up in the face of years of awful civil war conditions (Syracuse Herald American, 31 July 1994).

*Here is how child welfare offices and workers cope. One way is to put their telephones on hold so that callers cannot get through (we knew all about that). Some go to shrinks, and it is certainly better for shrinks to shrink each other than to do harm to other people (Time, 11 Dec. 95).

*More and more human service agencies are adopting a management model and calling themselves "firms," "companies," or "industries." Some have also adopted names that are not revealing of what it is they do. For instance, one calls itself PC Contract Management Services, Inc.
Early anthropologists defined "culture" in such a way that only humans could be said to possess it. A few decades ago, anthropologists, having become increasingly materialized, redefined culture so that animals could possess it as well, thereby—and intentionally—reducing distinctions between animals and humans. For instance, one of the newer definitions is "socially transmitted adjustable behavior," which of course is so broad that it could include a mother cat teaching her young how to use the litter box.

In 1996, scientists came up with yet another version of the promise of immortality that first began to be made with seriousness in the early 1970s. This time, the promise is to perfect a method for extracting so-called stem cells from males (which are the cells that make sperm), to freeze them, and then to thaw them when it is desired to have them produce both further stem cells and sperm cells. Thereby, as one scientist put it, "we can make any individual male biologically immortal." Also, there is a promise here that the stem cells of the genetically most fit males can be used as a perpetual source bank for artificial insemination (e.g., Time, 10 June 96).

A 1993 book, entitled Survey Methodologies (CP, 2/96), summarized the research on survey methodology. One finding is that the more sensitive the subject matter of the survey is, the more likely are respondents to lie. Further, questions that are impersonally administered, e.g., via paper questionnaires, are more apt to be answered honestly than face-to-face interrogations during which respondents unconsciously try to give answers more pleasing to the interviewer.

Meta-analysis, i.e., the pooling of research data from many different studies, has become a big thing in recent years, but we are rather skeptical about them. For instance, one meta-analysis of other meta-analyses (in other words, a meta-meta-analysis) dug up 302 meta-analyses on the efficacy of psychological, educational and behavioral treatments, and only six of these found negative effects, and few of them (10%) found negligible effects (Science, 11/11/94). It should be very obvious that a tremendous bias is built in here in that historically, journals tend not to publish results that lack statistical significance. Furthermore, insofar as so few studies are properly controlled, a meta-analysis will end up canonizing faulty results that are based mostly on the ubiquitous placebo effect.

A striking development we have noted in the professional literature in recent years is that a very large proportion of publications only cite literature from relatively recent years. It appears that authors are going to some kinds of computer base, and anything prior to a certain date that had not been entered into the respective computer base does not show up there and consequently does not get cited. Accordingly, a rather ludicrous situation exists in that one would infer from so many of the publications that everything worthwhile citing had been done quite recently. Another peculiar phenomenon associated with this is that original ideas are commonly cited second, third, or later—hand, often being attributed to the earliest publication in the computer base that mentions it rather than to its inventors or originators. Failure to go beyond the computer base is also creating a form of institutional memory loss. Strangely enough, we have seen so far no printed analysis of this phenomenon.

The United Nations General Assembly adopted a set of 22 rules and 128 subrules entitled "Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities." How much these rules represent a world view of society as a conglomerate of individual solo rights-bearers is underlined by one of the articles on "equalization of opportunities." Article 25 says: "The principle of equal rights implies that the needs of each and every individual are of equal importance, that those needs must be made the basis for the planning of societies and that all resources must be employed in such a way as to ensure that every individual has equal opportunity for participation."

According to a review of these rules by Lemay (ISRVJ, 12/94), the rules also embody a top-down view that puts all of its hopes into governmental laws and allocation of money, and on reliance on a highly sophisticated technologized and professionalized service system. Also, it views all benefits from the perspective of the "persons with disabilities," and nowhere mentions the welfare
of others who are expected to live up to the rules, such as children who are supposed to transact integration in school settings. By constantly harping on "states should" and "states shall," handicapped persons are interpreted as people of the state rather than people of the community. Another corollary of course is that only force will bring all these benefits about. Lemay made the striking comment that the UN would invest tremendous authority and responsibility for the standard rules in the very "same folks that bring us war, famine, genocide and corruption. These are the people who don't trust the community."

It is also amazing how many people put their trust in the UN being able to accomplish the welfare of handicapped people from so far away when people in their own communities and neighborhoods cannot accomplish what they would like to, and when the UN can hardly accomplish anything anywhere even when it has the money, the personnel and the guns.

*MacDonald, R. (1995). Working and caring: Social solidarity co-operatives in Italy. Care in Place, 2(1), 7-21. This article described "social solidarity cooperatives," which are a particular type of cooperative in Italy, begun in 1980. They "strive towards solidarity with, and welfare for, marginalized members of the community." and "their aim is to enable and empower disadvantaged groups to tackle their own problems" (pp. 8-9). As with other cooperatives, these organizations are small-scale, they try to work collectively rather than hierarchically and bureaucratically, and they have regional representative bodies and are part of a larger federation. People can be associated with a co-op in a number of ways. They may be voluntary members who work part-time and unpaid. There may be volunteers to the co-op who are not members. There may be employees who are members, and ones who are not. And there may be people who work in co-ops as an alternative to mandatory national military service. Co-ops rely heavily on the support of volunteer workers from the community to provide service and employment for disadvantaged people, who may or may not become members of the co-op themselves. In Italy, the delivery of all social service is contracted out by the government to such co-ops. Also, as a result of a 1993 law, such co-ops have to decide to be either a social service channel or an employment co-op. This means that some co-ops function as social service agencies, but with a different kind of agency/governance identity than we are familiar with, and with more involvement (often of a voluntary nature) by people from the local community. Both kinds of co-ops are non-profit, so those that provide some kind of employment, and that make a profit, must plow that money back into such things as more jobs, capitalization, etc. All the co-op employees work for about 20% less than they could earn in non-co-op jobs, and they do this intentionally in order to show solidarity with the disadvantaged who so often do not have the option of higher-paying jobs. All the above actual information was gleaned from the article. However, the article did not do a very good job of explaining (as opposed to describing) the co-ops, and there was no analysis of the shortcomings of the scheme. Overall, it seems that this is yet another way to try to incorporate marginalized people into their communities, and could be used to give them valued roles, and even jobs (e.g., in the employment co-ops). The advantages of the co-ops that are strictly social services seem to be that the local community has both more control and more involvement, and they claim that they use the money more efficiently than do centralized government service bureaucracies.

*There is a county in Nebraska that has no lawyer, no psychiatrist, not even a drug store or motel, and only five one-room schools--but it also has no jails, and almost all the graduates of its tiny schools go on to college. We are reluctant to tell where this place is lest it get junked by people wanting to move there.

*Concluding that successful men have little time for making friends, but have enough money to buy them, a US entrepreneur has started a business in which, for $1200, he finds other men who seem to be friendship-compatible with a buyer and matches them up. Much as some marriage brokers do, he has albums of pictures of men who are prepared to serve as paid friends, though a major aspect of the matching has to do with finding mutual interests. He does not wait for businessmen to come to him, but scours the news media for names of a city's business elite, and then brashly makes a personal approach with his offer, which is taken up by one-third to one-half
of his contacts. The entrepreneur tried to franchise this business, but found that this did not work because other people did not seem to have the same knack for this kind of relationship-launching as he did (Globe & Mail, 10 May 94).

*A peculiar development in spending on support to families (cash subsidies, or what we call "person funding") in the US is that from 1988 to 1992, such spending went from $158 million to $279 million (up 77%), but the number of families supported only went up from 168,000 to 194,000 (15%) (The State of the States in DD, 1995). This implies an astronomical rate of increase of cost per family, and could harbor ill for this way of helping which has been closely tied to the "brokerage" model.

*In the US at least, what later became sheltered workshops for the mentally retarded usually started in the 1950s as so-called "opportunity centers." Now we read with some distress that a parents' organization in British Columbia announced proudly that a sheltered workshop was being closed and converted into an opportunity center--"a place where self-advocates can learn new activities and have opportunities to enhance their lives" (BCACL News, Summer '96). Except for the term "self-advocate," one might have heard this language in the 1950s. Maybe "sheltered workshops" have become so politically incorrect that having handicapped people go to "activity centers" where they do nothing has become preferred.

*A study (AJMR, 1994, p. 204) found that the strongest predictor of aggression by a retarded person was a history of such aggression.

*In the teaching and writing of the TI, we often make the point that societally devalued people, and particularly handicapped ones, fare very poorly at times of disaster and calamity. In 1995, a Washington-based think-tank forum looked into the topic, but came up with a very disappointing report (AAMR News & Notes, 11&12/95). One of its biggest points was the importance of communication at times of national disasters. In fact, it had very little to offer that was of unique relevance to handicapped people. It was outright amusing to read that as an anticipative measure, the President's Committee on Employment of People With Disabilities had furnished the American Red Cross with computer listings of more than 9,000 "disability advocates."

*Under Stalinist communism, Romania had up to 500 institutions. Some of them had outrageous names, such as "home for the deficient and unsalvageable." At any one time, there were about 125,000 handicapped or abandoned children in them, but the death rates (20% being apparently common) were so high that many more would actually pass through in a given year. Sometimes, there was only one staff person for a hundred children (The ARC, 11/90).

*In the Soviet era, the existence of handicapped people was largely denied because it might reflect on flaws in the system. One way the situation was dealt with was to establish thousands of institutions for the handicapped. Now, parents commonly abandon their children to institutions; unfortunately, there is no tradition of adoption in the former Soviet Union. Also, there still is very little integration of handicapped people of any age.

*A federal district attorney compiled an 11,000-page indictment listing all of the infractions that he discovered that had been committed by the Pinecrest Developmental Center for the mentally retarded in Louisiana during a single 10-month period of 1994. For instance, despite having 1000 residents, there were times when not a single nurse was present on the grounds (Our Voice, 10/95).

*A phenomenon that has so far received relatively little attention is that mentally retarded people who were deinstitutionalized after circa 1970 have begun to enter the elderly population in large numbers, and are often placed into generic nursing homes, sometimes after enjoying maybe 15 to 25 years of a precarious and marginal independence. Because many of these individuals are
not clearly identified as mentally retarded, we are not sure that they are counted as reinstitutionalized retarded people in the various surveys and statistical reportings.

* A prominent phenomenon in all North American cities has been the high concentration of deinstitutionalized people visible on downtown streets. However, we have begun to note that the very large cohort of people who were deinstitutionalized in the 1970s is very rapidly and literally dying out. For a combination of reasons, they have catastrophically high death rates, and thus, they are beginning to constitute a rapidly declining proportion of the deviant city street population, being replaced by other devalued classes.

* Kelly, T. B., & Kropf, N. P. (1995). Stigmatized and perpetual parents: Older parents caring for adult children with life-long disabilities. Journal of Gerontological Social Work, 2(1-2), 3-16. The authors have coined an interesting concept of "perpetual parents," referring to parents whose children are so impaired that they never attain independent functioning, and who remain the primary caretakers of such an offspring as long as they live or manage to function.

* A Calif. woman was caught speeding in her wheelchair. Her defense was, "The only time I've ever hit someone is if they jump suddenly in front of me. But I always stop and apologize and make sure they're OK" (Newsweek, 4 Sept. 95).

* Here is one more reason not to congregate together too many people in wheelchairs into a single residence. In Pennsylvania, a fire destroyed a group home, and even though it was a ranch-style facility from which escape is supposed to be easy, all three residents as well as a staff person died from smoke inhalation. At least two of the residents tried to escape in their wheelchairs, but failed. One can just imagine what chaotic congestion in passageways can take place when more than one person in a wheelchair gets into an escape panic (SPS, 21/8/96).

* With fire consuming a house in San Francisco, someone threw 3 children from a third-floor window to a bystander below who caught them all safely. However, when the mayor wanted to honor the man, 4 men stepped forward and claimed to have caught the children (AP in SHJ, 20/1/95).

* Some lifestyle service groups, such as the Institute for Circadian Physiology, will undertake to teach business people to survive on catnaps so that they can stuff more doing into their lives. However, the Japanese have a very good word for death from overwork, karoshi (Newsweek, 6 March 95).

* Films involving handicapped people in recent years have had a disproportionate likelihood of receiving an Oscar academy award. In fact, major such films have an almost 50% chance of being at least nominated for an Oscar (AAMR News & Notes, 5/95).

* There have been several episodes on TV and in the popular media about the parents who adopted 23 children, all or most with Down's syndrome, and who are associated with the Up with Down Syndrome Foundation. Some of the children were adopted literally out of the jaws of death, having been "dead-talked" by medical authorities. Unfortunately, the mother said about one of the children that it "chose" to live, and "we support three babies' choice to live." Despite the splendid care that the children appear to receive, their home has really become an institution with four employees plus two mentally retarded adult helpers.

* People interested in the history of mental retardation are directed to an article by Phil Ferguson in the summer 1996 issue of Disabilities Studies Quarterly. As far as we can recall, it is the only publication of any length on the history of the history of mental retardation, being a critique of the way such history research has been conducted and published.
*The British Minister for Disabled People assured the House of Commons in 2/90 that "anyone who is given the terminally ill allowance will keep it for life" (A&E, Spring 91).

*We have been informed of a new peculiar unethical practice in the British academic culture, at least the one connected to human services. Professionals submit topics to present at conferences, get the topic listed on the program that gets printed and sent out—but then they will not show up to give their paper. The point is that they then nonetheless list the presentation on their vitae, being able to point to the printed program as evidence.

*There exists a speech-output communication device called SuperWolf. There is also another communication device called a Scan-wolf.

**Major Study Topics for Human Service Moral Leadership Competency**

We have occasionally been asked what are the most important, and even essential, areas of study and knowledge in order for people to function as competent human service workers, regardless of the kind of service at issue. Because of our own Training Institute’s emphasis on leadership, there has been particular interest in what human service leaders should study, and strive to become competent in. In response, we drew up a list which we submitted to several trusted associates for critique. We revised and resubmitted the list several times over a number of years, until no one was able to think of improvements. Below is the list. Please note two things: (a) the list is meant for leaders; (b) the items are what one can study, but if a person lacks certain qualities, all the study in the world will not suffice for the exercise of competent moral leadership.

1. The fundamental importance of values and ideologies in shaping services.
2. The concept of universals.
3. The universality and dynamics of social devaluation.
4. Social Role Valorization (SRV), including the common "wounds" of devalued people, and the recurring SRV themes, including in turn the reality and impact of image transfer, how unconscious image transmission is, and the role imagery plays in the perpetuation of devaluation.
6. How to design maximally "model coherent" and social role-valorizing services.
7. The difference between programmatic desiderata/ideals, and implementive constraints.
8. The mutually incompatible functions of activities related to human service, including conflicts of interest.
10. Decision theory.
13. Dynamics of leadership.
15. The dangers and limitations of human service technologies.
16. The universality and inevitability of suffering, and an adaptive response thereto.
17. The concept of an "act validity" morality.
18. The importance of ongoing personal commitments and involvements with devalued people, no matter how high one's position, nor how busy one's life.
19. The importance and modes of participation at all levels of service decision-making, by service recipients, their representatives, their families, advocates, and members of the public.
20. Safeguards on service quality: their role and limitations.